Intern 112

Chapter 112

Before she could speak, Ashcroft clapped his hands once-breaking the tension like a

bubble.

“Well, I’m gonna grab a quick shower before heading down to the beach.” He pivoted with his usual flair, but when he looked at Maya again, his voice softened. “And remember what I told you earlier, sis…”

His gaze held hers for a beat.

“Take the risk.”

He didn’t say it out loud-just mouthed the words, eyes steady on hers.

Then he saluted lazily and slipped into his suite.

The door clicked shut.

James turned next. “Everything’s already been placed in your room, sir,” he said to Damien, then looked at Maya and gave a slight bow. “Ms. Maya.”

Then he disappeared down the private stairwell at the far end-where he and Lee were staying, one floor below.

And then…. They were alone.

Just the two of them.

The corridor was silent, save for the faint echo of ocean wind through a high clerestory window. The golden sconces glowed against the walls like candlelight.

Maya didn't move.

Damien stopped in front of his door.

And turned.

His eyes found hers. Held her.

Steady. Calm. Intense enough to melt the air around her.

“If you

need anything…” he said, voice soft. Almost tender.

Her breath hitched.

She nodded. Too fast. “Thanks.”

She fumbled for her card and slid it into the lock.

Green light.

The door clicked open.

Her fingers brushed the cool brass handle a moment longer, the quiet hum of the lock vibrating beneath her touch. Closing the door behind her felt heavier than she expected-like stepping into a space that wasn’t quite hers, yet already pulling at her heart.

Click.

Silence.

Maya leaned back against the door, eyes closed, her pulse pounding like a wild drum.

Her body still buzzed where he'd touched her. Her chest ached with unspoken feelings she didn't know how to name.

And on the other side of the wall…

She knew he was still standing there.

Give him a chance. Give yourself a chance…

Ashcroft's words whispered through her memory like a ghost caught in her bloodstream.

"You're strong. Maybe you don't realize it yet, but you are."

Her throat tightened and her eyes flicked to the lock.

Damien Blackwood… are you really the risk worth taking?

Meanwhile…

Behind the closed door, Damien stood with one hand still in his pocket, the other gripping the door handle to his suite.

But he didn’t turn the knob.

Instead, his eyes remained locked on Maya’s door. On the space where she had just stood. On the memory of her body crashing into his chest-soft, warm, breathless.

His jaw flexed. He could still feel her.

Then, silently, he turned and stepped into his suite.

The door closed behind him with a muted click.

His penthouse was exactly as he left it-cool, precise, understated in its luxury. A long sweep of space that opened into vaulted ceilings and full-length glass walls, framing the sea like a living painting.

But Damien didn’t look at the view.

He walked to the bar counter. Poured a glass of water.

Set it down without drinking it.

His hand still tingled with the memory of her skin beneath it.

The feel of her stumbling into him-it undid something.

The way her breath had caught, right beneath his jaw…

And that scent-God, that scent.

Lavender.

And underneath it-vanilla.

Soft. Clean. Maddening.

He’d craved it from the moment he first caught it.

Now it wrapped around him in the confined space of the elevator, sinking into his blood like a drug.

Not all at once, but in waves-quiet, delicate, devastating.

It threaded through his control, tested the frayed edges of restraint he'd held onto all damn day.

And the worst part?

He hadn't wanted to let go.

Everything in him had responded-sharp, primal, unthinking.

Not just to catch her.

But to keep her.

Every time she looked at him with those wide, uncertain eyes… every time her voice trembled just a little when she said his name…

He felt the walls inside him strain.

The ones he'd spent years fortifying. Brick by brutal brick.

And then earlier-on the yacht-

Her voice. That confession.

It hadn't been dramatic.

It had been honest. Raw. Undeniably true.

His jaw clenched.

Because now… she finally knew.

And he couldn't hide behind business or timing or logic anymore.

She knew.

And still-she stood there.

Close. Open. Beautiful in a way that undid him.

He could still feel her imprint on his chest.

Still smell her in his lungs.

Still taste restraint like blood in his mouth.

It was getting harder to lie to himself.

Harder to walk away when her presence felt like gravity.

He stared out at the endless ocean through the glass wall, the water glittering under the sun.

But all he could see was her.

And in the silence of that penthouse…

le didn’t stop thinking about the way she felt in his arms.

She was the first person who made him hesitate.

The first who made him hope.

He closed his eyes.

He could still see her on the yacht-honest, pure, disarmingly innocent. The way she’d voiced

her thoughts without filter… her confusion, her curiosity, her quiet vulnerability.

The way she felt when his arms wrapped around her slim waist-so small, so warm, like she fit there.

The closeness. Their heads leaning in. The almost-kiss that still haunted his mouth.

And later – The way she laughed with Harper and Ashcroft. Unrestrained. Unmasked.

That soft, vulnerable smile she rarely gave anyone.

And yet… every time it did, it wrecked him.

Every look. Every moment. Every accidental brush of her skin against his…

He needed to be patient.

Give her time. Let her come to him on her own terms, in her own time.

He couldn’t rush this-not if he wanted to do it right.

And for a man like Damien-impatient, decisive, used to control-that was pure torture.

And when that time came…

He just hoped she’d still be standing by his side.

Frustrated, he pulled off his watch, set it on the nightstand, and ran a hand through his hair.

Cold shower. I need a damn cold shower.

He was halfway to the bathroom, unbuttoning his shirt, when-

A knock.