Intern 116

Chapter 116

She nudged Maya's foot.

"So I learned. Want the fairytale? You have to risk the messy middle."

Maya swallowed. "It's scary."

"Yeah." Harper nodded. "Because it's real."

A comfortable silence settled between them, soft and full of unspoken things.

Harper nudged her playfully.

"Besides, have you seen Damien Blackwood? If you don't go for him, I might. I mean-strictly for science, of course."

Maya groaned and buried her face in a pillow. "You're the worst."

Harper smirked. "And yet, here I am. Your personal cheerleader-slash-wingwoman."

Silence stretched between them.

Then Harper shifted. Her teasing faded, replaced by something softer-something real.

She sat up straighter, voice low but firm.

“Okay, enough fluff.”

She reached out, gently turning Maya to face her, fingers curling lightly around her wrist.

“Be honest with me, Maya. Look at me in the eyes,” she said. “No deflecting. No brushing it off. Just tell me the truth.”

Maya’s brows furrowed slightly, but she met Harper’s gaze.

“Do you like him?”

The question wasn’t loud-because it didn’t need to be. It carried the weight of genuine friendship and trust, a knowing when to stop joking and ask what truly mattered.

Maya's lips parted, but no words came right away. Her throat felt tight. Her heart was pounding.

After a slow breath, she nodded-first barely, then with growing certainty.

"Yes," she whispered. "I… think I do."

Harper's gaze held hers, steady and warm.

"Then you have to understand-his world isn't like yours. He is different. But the thing that matters? He wants you in it. Not just as a part of his life, but in his world. And that's not something everyone gets."

Maya swallowed hard, eyes searching Harper's.

"But… what if I'm not enough? His world is so complicated-maybe dangerous even. Can I really fit in?"

Harper shook her head gently.

"It's not about fitting in perfectly. It's about him seeing you-the real you-and wanting that. Not some version of you that changes to match his world, but you."

Maya’s voice trembled.

“And what if he changes? What if the man I’m falling for isn’t the man I end up with?”

Harper smiled softly.

“That’s a risk with any love, Maya. But isn’t it worth it? To find out, to try, instead of always wondering what could have been?”

Maya bit her lip, eyes glossy.

“I’m scared. Scared of losing myself. Of getting hurt.”

Harper reached out, squeezing her hand.

“Being scared doesn’t mean you’re weak. It means you’re human. And you won’t be alone in this. You’ve got me-and whatever comes, you’ll handle it.”

Maya swallowed hard, eyes searching Harper’s.

“He told me he’s trying, that he needs time, and that I have to trust him.”

Harper nodded gently.

“That’s all anyone can ask for. Maya, their world is different from ours. They do things most normal people like us don’t. But if you’re stepping into that world-and opening yours to his- you always have to hold on tight to your core, okay?”

Maya blinked, absorbing the weight of Harper’s words.

“You fell in love with him,” Harper continued softly, “not his world. Not what he has, or what

he does. That means accepting him-all of him-including his flaws. That’s the only way

work.”

Maya’s voice trembled.

“Including the dark parts?”

Harper smiled gently.

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“Especially the dark parts. Because love isn’t about perfection. It’s about choosing someone, flaws and all. It’s messy, it’s complicated. But it’s real- besides, who doesn’t have dark parts anyway?”

Maya bit her lip, her heart pounding.

“And what if I lose myself trying to fit in?”

Harper squeezed her hand reassuringly.

“You won’t lose yourself if you hold on to who you are. That’s what keeps you strong. You don’t have to change for anyone, least of all him.”

Maya took a shaky breath, feeling the fear and hope swirl together.

“Okay,” she said quietly. “I’m ready to try.”

Then-

Harper perked up.

“Okay. First step: meet him at lunch. Be chill. Be open. Don’t overthink it.”

Maya gave her a look.

“That’s like asking me to walk on water.”

Harper grinned.

“Then start by walking into the dining hall like you own the place. Because guess what?”

“What?”

“He owns the place. But he looks at you like you do.”

Maya looked toward the balcony, where the island breeze stirred the curtains like a whisper.

“What if I go down there and make a fool of myself?”

Harper stood and offered her hand.

“Then you’ll be a beautiful fool in a linen dress. And I’ll be behind you the whole way.”

Maya hesitated… then reached out, letting Harper pull her up.

Her voice was quiet, but steady.

“Okay. Lunch it is.”

She looked into Harper’s eyes, vulnerability shining through.

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“Harper… thank you. For everything. For seeing me when I couldn’t see myself. For believing in me, even when I was too scared to believe in myself.”

Harper's smile softened, and she pulled Maya into a genuine, tight hug-one that spoke of unspoken promises and unwavering support.

"You're not alone, Maya. Not now, not ever. I've got your back-through all the messy, beautiful chaos that's coming. You're stronger than you know, and you don't have to carry the weight by yourself."

Pulling back just enough to meet her gaze, Harper's voice was steady, tender.

"You deserve to be happy. You deserve love that makes your heart soar and your soul breathe. And I'll be here-cheering you on, picking you up, and reminding you of your strength whenever you forget."

Maya blinked back tears, a soft smile breaking through.

"I don't say it enough… but I'm so grateful to have you."

Harper's eyes glistened with warmth and fierce loyalty.

"Always. Now go freshen up and change- because it's Damien Blackwood realizes just how lucky he is."