

The Billionaire's Intern (Maya Thompson)

The silence inside the car had been louder than any noise.

It clung to her skin long after they were dropped off at the hospital – the scent of expensive leather, the low hum of the engine, and most of all... him.

Damien Blackwood.

She'd been close to him. Too close.

Her skin still burned. Every nerve lit up like a fuse had been sparked and then left to smolder.

He hadn't even looked at her-not really. Just a curt nod. A single word: "Morning."

Low and smooth, like gravel wrapped in silk. Lethal and devastating.

But that brief contact?

That accidental graze of his thigh against hers, the heat of his body seeping through their clothes, the faintest brush of her shoulder against his chest-

It had sent something wild and shameful racing through her blood.

A jolt. A rush. A craving.

She hated herself for noticing.

She hated even more how much her body remembered.

She shouldn't feel like this.

Not for a man like him.

Not when her baby brother sat just inches away.

Not when she was supposed to be grateful for a ride – not aching for the ghost of another brush,

the echo of his scent, the tension that crackled like fire beneath her skin.

It had been Jamie's fault, really. He'd climbed halfway out, then shoved the door shut too quickly – pulling her right into Damien.

Shoulder to chest. Thigh to thigh.

A split second.

A half-breath.

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Chapter To Close Enough to Bura 1

But her body went still, too aware of everything.

His scent was intoxicating – not cologne, not really. Just something clean and masculine and

sharp, like leather and midnight and power.

Her cheek had nearly brushed his chest. Her knee had pressed to his.

And his body?

Stone still.

Except for one small thing.

His breath.

It hitched.

Just once. Barely audible.

But enough to make her pulse race with something dark and forbidden.

She'd pulled away fast, cheeks burning, heart slamming against her ribs like a guilty secret.

And even after she'd settled, even after Jamie's voice filled the space again, her hands refused to unclench. Her thighs were trembling and her chest rose too quickly.

And Damien hadn't said a word.

But she'd felt it. That spark.

That unspoken charge between them.

Something had shifted.

And now, she couldn't un-feel it.

But what had surprised her more... was how he spoke to Jamie.

He didn't talk to her brother like a patient. Or some kid to be pitied. He spoke to him like he

mattered.

Not with condescension. But respect.

Jamie had lit up beside her. Sat taller. Smiled more. For once, he wasn't defined by illness. He was just a smart, curious kid with real potential.

And Damien had seen it.

Maya hadn't missed it – the way her heart ached just a little watching them. Or the way her stomach flipped when Damien mentioned mentorship programs, offered help like it was nothing to

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him but everything to them.

For a moment, she'd looked at him differently.

Not as the cold, ruthless, untouchable billionaire CEO.

But as a man.

A man who could make a small, tired boy feel seen.

And maybe it was stupid. Maybe it was dangerous. But for just one second, Maya had let herself

wonder what it would feel like to be seen that way too.

Then they'd pulled up to the hospital.

And Jamie had spotted him.

“That weird doctor is there again. Look!”

Beckett.

Holding a takeout bag. A rose.

She groaned inwardly. Her stomach twisted. Heat crawled up her spine – but not the good kind.

And then she'd felt Damien beside her.

Something shifted.

Not visibly. But viscerally.

The air turned sharper. The space between them changed.

He hadn't moved, but his energy had. It coiled tight, crackling just beneath the surface.

When James asked, "Boyfriend?" with that too-smooth tone, her breath caught.

"No!" she'd blurted-too fast, too sharp-but Jamie jumped in with his usual brutal honesty.

"Pfft! He wishes! May already turned him down like, a thousand times. He's weird."

"Jamie-" she hissed, but it was too late.

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The Billionaire's Intern (Maya Thompson)

Chapter 16 Close Enough to Burn 2

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Chapter 16: Close Enough to Burn-2

Because Damien spoke.

“What’s his name?”

Not who is he. Not what’s going on.

Just – his name.

Low. Dangerous. Final.

“Dr. Beckett,” Jamie answered.

And she swore the temperature in the car dropped.

He didn’t say anything else.

But he didn’t need to.

When they finally stepped out, she could still feel it – that invisible thread that had wrapped around her spine and pulled tight. She thanked James politely, nodded at Damien, kept her head down.

But when Damien said, “Don’t be late on Monday,” her throat tightened.

Because it wasn’t just a reminder.

It sounded like a warning.. Or a claim.

And she felt it.

All the way through her bones.

The check-up itself was uneventful. Dr. Brown was kind, thorough, and straight to the point

always.

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Jamie's blood pressure was stable. His white blood cell count had improved slightly. The new medication seemed to be helping, but it had to be taken on schedule. No skipped doses. No off days. His weight had gone up slightly. His color was better.

But the surgery still loomed like a monster on the horizon.

"He's doing well," Dr. Brown said, flipping through the chart. "But the surgery isn't optional. It's still necessary. If we delay too long, we risk complications that meds won't be able to fix."

Maya nodded slowly, gripping her purse tighter in her lap.

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Chapter 16 Close Enough to Burn 2

“I understand,” she whispered. “I just... I need more time.”

She did understand.

But understanding didn’t print money. It didn’t pay hospital fees.

She just needed time.

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The doctor gave her a sympathetic look. “I know. And we’ll do what we can on our end. But try not to wait too long, Maya. The sooner we move, the better his chances for a full recovery.”

She thanked him. Shook his hand. Then held Jamie's tighter than usual as they left the office.

They'd barely made it to the hallway when Beckett appeared.

"Maya!"

Beckett walked over quickly, too quickly. His white coat flared slightly with each step, and the forced smile on his face made her stomach twist.

"I waited earlier," he said, holding up the takeout bag and the sad-looking rose like they were some kind of peace offering. "Didn't see you. I thought maybe something happened."

Jamie stepped subtly in front of her, just enough to block part of Beckett's view. "We came in through the other entrance," he said coolly.

Beckett blinked, clearly not expecting the interruption.

"Well... I just thought I'd catch you after your appointment. Maybe we could talk."

Jamie's brows pulled together. "About what?"

Maya gently touched her brother's shoulder. "Jamie," she said softly, then looked up at Beckett with as much calm as she could manage.

"Dr. Beckett... thank you, but I can't accept this." She gestured to the bag. "And I'm not comfortable with the attention. Especially the gifts. I've said this before, and I mean it – I'm not interested."

Her voice didn't waver. Not this time.

Polite. Firm. Clear.

Beckett's smile twitched.

Not fully. Not obviously.

But it darkened.

For a second, Maya saw it.

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Chapter 16 Close Enough to Burn 2

Something twisted behind the mask.

He stepped forward, and Jamie stepped right between them.

+25 Points

“Maya... come on,” he said with a laugh that didn’t quite reach his eyes. “I’m just being friendly.”

Jamie’s arms crossed tightly. “You’ve been ‘friendly’ enough.”

Beckett’s gaze flicked to him, then back to Maya. His voice dropped just slightly. “It’s just

breakfast. No pressure.”

Maya shook her head. “No,” she said again, softer this time – but there was no room for argument.

Beckett’s jaw tightened. Just barely.

Something in his eyes shifted. Not rage. Not yet. But something darker. Quiet. Cold. Like rejection wasn’t something he was used to – and didn’t quite know how to process.

“Fine,” he said after a pause, slipping the rose into the side of the bag. “If that’s what you want.”

“It is,” Maya said quietly, keeping Jamie close.

“Then... see you around.”

He turned without another word and walked away.

Maya didn’t breathe until he was out of sight.

“Come on, May,” Jamie said flatly. “Let’s go.”

She looked at him – and saw it then.

His posture. His tone. His narrowed eyes.

Protecting her.

That cut deeper than anything Beckett could say.

Outside, the heat wrapped around them like a blanket. Maya exhaled, rubbed her temples.

“You okay?” Jamie asked.

“Yeah,” she lied.

“You want to go somewhere?” she offered softly.

Jamie looked up at her. “It’s your off day, right?”

She nodded.

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Chapter 16 Close Enough to Burn 2

“Then let’s go home.”

Maya blinked. “You sure? We can go somewhere. Do anything you want, today’s for you.”

+25 Points

He smiled softly, that older-than-his-years kind of smile. “How about we grab ice cream at that

place I like... then head home?"

"Home?" she repeated, surprised.

"Yeah," he shrugged. "It's hot out. And I kinda just want to stay in and read. Plus..." – he looked away, pretending to be nonchalant – "if I'm gonna apply to that mentorship Mr. Blackwood mentioned, I gotta get smarter, right?"

Maya felt her heart tug. She knew Jamie well enough to read between the lines.

She hugged him, soft and tight.

He wasn't tired.

He knew she was.

She blinked fast, her throat suddenly tight. "Okay," she whispered. "Ice cream and then home."

Jamie slipped his hand into hers as they started walking.

And somehow... that only made her heart ache harder.

Not from fear.

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But from the part of her that wished – just once that someone else would carry it for her.

Even if that someone was dangerous.

Even if that someone made her body burn.

Cedella