

The Billionaire's Intern (Maya Thompson)

Chapter 19: The Last Coffee-1

+25 Points

The bell above the café door had long stopped chiming by the time Maya finally untied her apron.

Sunday shifts were always brutal, but today had been relentless. A coworker had called in sick, and with the extra six hours she'd picked up, Maya had been on her feet for nearly fourteen straight. Her legs ached, her shoulders burned, and even her breath felt heavy in her chest as she stepped

into the cool night air.

The sidewalks were quiet now. The streetlamps flickered overhead, casting long shadows on the pavement as Maya adjusted her worn backpack and began the long walk home. The city had its own rhythm at midnight – softer, but not silent. A few cars passed. Somewhere in the distance, a siren wailed. The breeze carried the faint scent of oil and old asphalt.

She walked fast.

Her sneakers barely made a sound, but every few steps, she felt... something. A flicker of unease. Like eyes on her back.

She slowed once, turned subtly to glance behind her.

Nothing.

Just dark windows and empty sidewalks.

Still, her heartbeat quickened. The kind of quiet that felt too still. Her hands curled around the strap of her bag tighter.

Probably nothing.

Still, she quickened her pace.

When she finally reached her building, her hand shook as she unlocked the door. Once it clicked open, she slipped inside and turned the lock behind her, chest heaving as the silence of the hallway greeted her.

Safe. She was safe.

Inside the apartment, it was dim and peaceful. Jamie was already asleep, curled beneath his blankets in the room down the hall. His breathing was soft, steady. Maya let herself exhale.

On the small table by the kitchen, a covered plate waited beneath a neatly folded note.

Ms. Janice.

“Eat this while it’s still warm, sweetheart. You work too hard.” – J.

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Maya smiled faintly. The warmth of the gesture almost made her cry.

+25 Points

She lifted the lid. Steamed vegetables and garlic chicken over rice. Her stomach growled, but the

fatigue was heavier. She hadn't eaten since a sandwich at lunch, but now even chewing felt like too

much work.

Damien's voice echoed in her head:

"Don't be late Monday."

She closed the lid again, slid the meal into the fridge.

No time for dinner.

She moved on autopilot – clearing stray clutter from the living room, preparing Jamie’s meds for the morning, lining up his vitamin bottles and water on the counter. She laid out his favorite hoodie in case it got cold, then checked the apartment door one more time before retreating to her tiny

room.

The shower was quick and cold. Her eyes were half-closed by the time she dried off and crawled

into bed.

It was almost 2 a.m.

Her body screamed for rest..

The alarm buzzed two hours later.

Maya's eyes snapped open, heart pounding like she'd been yanked from deep underwater. Her body protested with every movement, but she rolled out of bed anyway, half-stumbling into the

kitchen.

She made Jamie's breakfast – scrambled eggs, toast, and a slice of apple. Her own breakfast was just a dry piece of toast she nibbled as she got dressed. By 6:45, she was almost ready to go.

Jamie emerged from his room, hair tousled, rubbing sleep from his eyes.

"Hey," she said softly, pouring him a glass of water. "I'm leaving in a bit. Don't forget your meds,

okay?"

"Okay," he yawned. "You have classes after work?"

"Yeah. I won't be back until late. Do you need more library books? I can stop by."

He shook his head. “I still have three. But maybe a book on Python or something with code. That’d

be cool.”

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chapter 19 The Last Coffee 1

Maya chuckled. “Python or something with code. Got it.”

At 6:59, she kissed his forehead, grabbed her bag, and stepped out into the early dawn.

The sky was still a smoky gray, sun barely cresting the horizon.

She took two steps... and froze.

A dark vehicle idled across the street.

Then the driver's door opened.

And Beckett stepped out.

Maya's heart skipped. Her breath caught in her throat.

Cedella

The Billionaire's Intern (Maya Thompson)

Chapter 19 The Last Coffee 2

+25 Points

Chapter 19: The Last Coffee-2

He shouldn't be here.

How did he even know where she lived?

"Maya!" he called, like they were old friends meeting by chance on a morning stroll.
"Good

morning!"

She hesitated, brows drawing together.

"Dr. Beckett?" Her body tensed. "What are you doing here?"

He smiled-wide, warm, practiced.

“I hope I didn’t scare you,” he said quickly, hands raised in a calming gesture. “I just... wanted to see you before I go.”

“Go?” she echoed.

“I’m leaving tonight,” he said, voice low and slightly breathless, like this conversation mattered deeply. “Director picked me for this year’s outreach program. Humanitarian rotation. I’ll be gone for months – maybe a year. Rural placement. So... we won’t be seeing each other again.” He gave a sheepish shrug. “So... this is goodbye.”

She blinked, unsure what to say.

“I just...” Beckett scratched the back of his neck, playing at humble. “Before I leave, I wanted to ask

–

– one last time. Just coffee. Fifteen minutes. As friends.”

Her lips parted. She didn’t know what to say.

“I know you’re not interested. I get it,” he said quickly. “You’ve got a lot on your plate – your brother, your internship, classes. I’m not trying to pressure you, I promise. I just thought... maybe we could talk. No pressure. Just two people getting coffee. No strings. Closure, maybe?”

He glanced toward the sky, then back at her with a sheepish smile. “Besides, if you’re heading to work... we could go to the café near your office? You won’t be late. I’ll drop you off right after.”

Maya hesitated.

Something about it felt... off.

But his tone was soft. His expression, disarming. And it was daylight. Public. Near her workplace. Her gut whispered no. But she was tired. He was leaving. And fifteen minutes wasn’t a lifetime.

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And maybe – maybe it was her exhaustion, or the weight of too many sleepless nights, or the fact that she was so used to putting others first that she couldn't bring herself to say no – but she

nodded.

“Okay,” she said quietly. “Fifteen minutes.”

Beckett's smile widened. Too much.

“Perfect,” he said, too smoothly. “You won't regret it.”

He opened the passenger door for her like a gentleman.

As soon as she slid inside, he closed the door gently behind her – too gently.

But when he turned away, his expression changed. This time, there was no softness in it.

His eyes darkened.

His lips curved into something twisted.

Not kind. Not friendly.

Only triumph. And malice.

Because Maya had just made a mistake.

One she wouldn't realize... until it was far too late.

Inside the car, Maya fidgeted with the strap of her bag, her fingers lightly trembling. She told herself it was nothing. Just nerves. She hadn't slept. She hadn't eaten. That was all.

But as the engine purred and Beckett slid into the driver's seat beside her, something inside her

refused to settle.

He didn't speak right away. Just started the car and merged onto the quiet street, one hand on the wheel, the other resting too casually near the gearshift.

"I'm glad you agreed," he said after a moment. His voice was smooth. Practiced. "I wasn't sure you

would."

Maya forced a polite smile. "You caught me on a tired morning, I guess."

He chuckled lightly, but something about it grated against her. "Well, I'll make it worth your while. Promise."

She gave a faint nod, staring out the window, trying to focus on anything but the tension coiling in her stomach.

“So,” Beckett said casually, like they were two friends on a morning drive, “where is it you’re

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interning again?”

“Blackwood Enterprises,” she said, carefully.

That got a reaction.

+25 Points

It was subtle – the way his grip tightened slightly on the wheel. The faint twitch at the corner of his

mouth. But it was there.

“Oh,” he said. “That’s... impressive.” His tone was unreadable. “Didn’t realize you were one of those interns. Isn’t that, like, top-tier?”

Maya gave a soft shrug, not liking the edge in his voice.

“It’s just an internship.”

“Right.” He smiled, but it didn’t quite reach his eyes. “Just curious. Wouldn’t want to drop you off at the wrong building.”

She nodded again, unease crawling higher up her spine.

Something in the way he said “drop you off” scratched at the edge of her nerves.

She turned to glance out the window. The city passed in soft morning colors – gray buildings, sleepy sidewalks, a few early joggers weaving past storefronts.

This road doesn’t lead to my office.

The thought crept into her mind quietly, like a whisper she didn’t want to hear.

She glanced at the dashboard. No GPS.

Then the mirror.

Then him.

“Um... Dr. Beckett?” she asked, gently. “You said the café near my work, right?”

“Oh, I know a better one,” he said smoothly, his eyes still on the road. “Less crowded. You’ll love it.”

She hesitated.

“Don’t worry,” he added, his voice warm. “We’ll still make it in time. I wouldn’t let you be late, Maya.”

Her name in his mouth felt wrong.

Like something sacred was being handled with bloodied hands.

Something’s wrong.

Cedella