

The Billionaire's Intern (Maya Thompson)

Chapter 26: Aftermath-1

He gathered her into his arms, slow and reverent, cradling her against his chest. Her head fell beneath his chin. Her body felt like ice.

Behind him, Beckett roared.

“She’s mine! You can’t take her! YOU DON’T DESERVE HER!”

Ashcroft took a step toward him – but Damien turned.

Just one look.

One venom-laced glance.

“He’s mine.”

Ashcroft's man, about to land another blow, froze mid-swing-his fist suspended inches from Beckett's ruined face.

"Throw him in the trunk. I need him alive and conscious and able to feel every... single.. thing.

Damien's voice was pure frost. The room stilled.

Ashcroft exhaled sharply. "Tsk. You just made the biggest mistake of your life, boy."

He turned to his men. "You heard him. Load up the trash."

Two of them hauled Beckett up-one slammed a fist into the side of his head, hard enough to drop him limp-then dragged him out.

As the door shut behind them, Damien spoke again, voice tight with urgency.

"She needs a hospital. Now."

Ashcroft raised a brow. “That’ll be messy. Press might catch wind of it. Someone’s bound to recognize you. You want this tied to your name? To hers?”

He tilted his head, almost amused. “Why not take her to your penthouse? I’ll have a doctor waiting before you even arrive.”

Damien shook his head. “No. I... I can’t.” He hesitated. His voice cracked. “I... she...”

For the first time, Damien Blackwood couldn’t find the words.

James cleared his throat gently as he stepped forward. “Sir-Monroe and I can take her. We’ll say she didn’t report to work, and we were sent for a welfare check. That covers why we went

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to her apartment earlier. We can frame the whole thing as an internal rescue.”

Damien’s jaw locked.

Then, finally, he nodded.

It was better this way. For now.

While he figured out what this emotion clawing at his chest really was.

While Maya recovered.

She didn't need pressure. Not after what she'd survived.

She needed space. Patience. Safety.

And when the time came – He would do it right.

+25 Points

As they cleared the room, Damien lifted her as though she were something sacred-fragile, irreplaceable, already half-lost.

She didn't stir.

But he felt her heartbeat.

Faint. Fragile.

Still fighting.

He laid her carefully in the back of the vehicle, his hand brushing her forehead once more. Then turned to James and Monroe.

"I

want updates every fifteen minutes."

"Yes, sir."

He stepped back and watched them drive off into the trees – Maya disappearing into the

night.

Back at the cabin, a black van had already arrived. Men in black gloves and matte tactical gear fanned out with precision, not a word spoken. One glanced at Ashcroft and gave a tight

nod.

“You know what to do,” Ashcroft had said, lighting a cigarette in the clearing’s edge. The answer was a low chorus of voices: “Yes, boss.”

Ashcroft stepped up beside him, eyes hard. “Let’s go. Time to collect. My men will strip this place to the bones-no trace, no connection. Not to you. Not to her. By the time we’re done,

<Chapter 26. Aftermath-1

it’ll be like she was never here.”

Damien gave a slow nod, eyes still on the road.

And in that moment –

+25 Points:

Damien Blackwood, who didn't believe in rescue, or redemption, or fate, knew only this:

Whoever had tried to take Maya Thompson from him... Would regret being born.

Inside the vehicle, Damien and Ashcroft sat side by side. The silence was thick, almost suffocating – broken only by the engine's low growl. Ashcroft's eyes never left Damien, his brother in all but blood. Damien stared out the window, fists clenched tight enough to turn white, jaw set like stone.

Ashcroft finally cut through the quiet, voice low and rough.

"So... Maya Thompson."

Damien didn't flinch but kept his gaze locked outside.

"What about her?"

A dark smirk tugged at Ashcroft's lips.

"She's not what I expected. Too damn simple. Too clean for a world like yours. But damn...

she's hot." He let out a slow whistle.

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The Billionaire's Intern (Maya Thompson)

<Chapter 26: Aftermath-2

+25 Points

Chapter 26: Aftermath-2

Damien snapped, voice sharp and cold.

“Watch yourself, Ashcroft.”

Ashcroft threw up his hands in mock surrender.

“Alright, alright! I’m a man. I see beauty when it’s there. Don’t blame me for noticing.”

Damien’s glare was ice.

“Keep your filthy thoughts locked up.”

Ashcroft laughed, then his tone shifted, harder, serious.

“But tell me-are you really sure about this? About her?”

Damien’s eyes darkened, silence stretching before he finally said, “I don’t know. All I know is she matters. More than anyone’s mattered in a long time.”

Ashcroft’s gaze hardened.

“Look, D... It broke me too. Lost someone close, I get it. The pain. The rage. The hole it leaves.

He took a breath, voice rough with something like regret.

“But grieving doesn’t mean we get stuck. We move on. Doesn’t mean we forget. But we gotta let go of the past or it’ll kill us. It’s a cruel truth-sometimes surviving means losing a part of yourself. But it doesn’t mean we have to die in the process.”

Ashcroft’s eyes locked on Damien’s.

“If Maya’s the one who can crack through your walls without even trying, make your heart beat again... then hell, I’ll take that as a sign that she’s the one.”

His voice dropped, fierce.

“I got your back, D. Don’t let the ghosts drag you under.”

The words hung heavy in the tight space between them – two warriors scarred by loss, learning to fight for something new.

Ashcroft Family Medical Pavilion

The SUV's tires screeched gently as it pulled into the private emergency intake bay-tucked

<Chapter 26 Aftermath-2

+25 Points

behind the grand west wing of Ashcroft Family Medical Pavilion, the city's most elite medical

institution.

Owned and operated by the Ashcroft family for over three generations, the Pavilion wasn't just a hospital-it was a fortress of confidentiality. A place where NDAs were signed at reception, and silence was more sacred than steel. Heads of state, billionaires, tech giants, and stars had passed through its halls without a single photo leaking.

And tonight, every hallway between the ER wing and intensive trauma had been pre-cleared.

Because Ashcroft had made the call.

A full trauma team in navy scrubs was already waiting as Monroe stepped out of the SUV and opened the rear passenger door.

James climbed out from the other side, face hard, suit wrinkled, hands steady. Then he

turned and leaned into the vehicle.

Wrapped in Damien's jacket, Maya lay unconscious, pale and still.

"Now," James ordered quietly.

The trauma team didn't waste a second.

They took her from him gently but quickly, moving her onto a gurney and wheeling her toward the ER entrance. IV drips were prepped mid-stride. One nurse was already calling vitals into a headset.

“Female, 25. Suspected head trauma. Potential chemical sedatives in system-confirmed injection site in upper left arm. Unresponsive to external stimulus minimal. No verbal output.”

Monroe closed the vehicle door and turned to James. “I’ll go check on Jamie and Ms. Janice.

”

James nodded tightly, watching Maya disappear into the bright hallway.

James pulled out his phone and hit a number he didn’t have to look up.

The moment the line connected, all James could hear was the sound of Damien’s breathing- steady, clipped-and the low hum of the engine in the background. No greeting. No need.

The silence was sharp, cold, and brimming with tension.

“Sir,” James began, tone low but precise. “We got her in. Ashcroft Pavilion, as you instructed. Trauma team was waiting. They’ve taken her into the private ER. Still unconscious.”

A long exhale came through the line-controlled, but heavy.

< Chapter 26: Aftermath-2

+25 Points>

“Monroe left to check on Jamie and the neighbor. He’s on standby. I’ll call him when it’s safe to bring them in. I’m staying here to coordinate.”

Damien’s voice came like ice across steel. “Good. You know what to do. No delays. No discretion. I want everything-every update, big or small.”

“Understood.”

James hung up, jaw tight, eyes flicking toward the hallway where Maya had vanished.

LUCK DRAW >

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The Billionaire's Intern (Maya Thompson)

+25 Points>

Chapter 26: Aftermath-3

A little over an hour after Maya was brought in, The attending physician-Dr. Levin, a senior trauma lead personally requested by Ashcroft-walked out holding a folder.

“You’re her proxy for the evening?” he asked, voice calm.

James nodded. “Personal Secretary of Mr. Blackwood. I’ll be her point of contact until further notice.”

Dr. Levin gave a short nod and opened the confidential file in his hand. “Vitals are stable. No internal bleeding. She has bruising consistent with restraint and struggle. There’s trauma to the back of the skull – not blunt force from an object, but from an impact with a hard surface. Floor, most likely. A sudden pull, or a fall.”

“Mild concussion?”

“Likely,” Levin confirmed. “She’s showing typical signs – slow response, light sensitivity, shallow breathing. We’ve sedated her for comfort. No need to induce a coma. She should wake on her own in a few hours.”

James’s jaw clenched. “The drugs?”

Dr. Levin’s expression darkened. “There are two in her bloodstream. The first is an aerosolized sedative – minimal dose, but fast-acting. Likely introduced through ventilation. That would explain her initial blackout. The second... was injected directly. Far more concentrated.”

James stayed silent, his expression unreadable.

“Fortunately,” the doctor continued, “she was still fighting. Her body metabolized only part of the second dose before we intervened. There’s no sign of paralysis or neurological damage, but she’ll be weak. Disoriented.”

Dr. Levin closed the file. “She’s safe now. We’ll monitor her overnight in isolation. Room 614. No visitors except pre-cleared staff.”

James nodded. “She’ll have visitors before sunrise. I’ll send them through. Thank You!”

James stepped into the marble-lined hallway outside the trauma wing, where the air was cool and still-too still.

He pulled out his phone and dialed.

One ring.

Chapter 25. Aftermath-3

“Update,” Damien’s voice came-quiet, sharp, dangerous.

James cleared his throat, steadying his voice.

+25 Points

“She’s stable. No internal bleeding. But there’s confirmed trauma to the head. The doctor said it looks like she was pulled or thrown backward and hit the floor. Hard. Bruising around the

skull.”

He paused, jaw tightening.

“They moved her to a secure recovery suite. Room 614. She’s in isolation-monitored around the clock. The doctor says she’ll wake up within a few hours. She’ll be weak, disoriented, maybe confused... but she will wake up.”

A beat of silence followed-tense, stretching like a wire pulled taut.

“Two drugs found in her system,” James continued. “The first-an airborne sedative, likely administered through the AC system. The second was injected. Direct. Potent.”

He drew a breath.

“But she fought it. Physically. Mentally.”

Then came the sound on the other end-faint, but unmistakable.

Something dragging.

A dull thud.

A wet cough.

Then a scream-raw, male, cut off too fast.

Another sound followed. Not pain. Not anger.

Begging.

Damien's voice returned-quiet and lethal.

"He'll wish he never touched her."

James swallowed hard, throat tightening. His chest burned with something sharp-something close to rage. He wasn't just an executive secretary tonight.

He was a man watching over the woman his boss would destroy the world for.

And that meant something.

Chapter 26: Aftermath-3

+25 Points

“I’ll stay here until she wakes,” James said firmly. “I’m calling Monroe now to bring Jamie and the neighbor in. I’m sure Ms. Thompson will ask for her brother first.”

“I want to be updated the moment they arrive,” Damien replied, voice like broken glass.

“Understood.”

The call ended with a click.

James lowered the phone slowly and looked down the hallway toward Room 614.

He exhaled.

Whatever Maya meant to Damien... that hospital bed wasn't just holding a survivor.

It was holding the future queen of Blackwood's empire.

And somewhere deep in the dark, Beckett began to learn that Damien Blackwood's version of mercy was worse than death.

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The Billionaire's Intern (Maya Thompson)

Chapter 27: Broken and Breathing-1

Somewhere underground.

The room was cold, Stone walls. A single bulb hanging from rusted wire.

Beckett was strapped to a steel chair, his wrists bound tight with barbed cable. Blood dripped from his nose, mouth, and a split above his brow. One eye was swollen shut. His shirt, once white, was soaked-sweat, blood, and whatever Ashcroft's men had done to him.

Across from him stood a man in black. Silent. Patient. Watching.

A scalpel in one hand. A cigarette in the other.

"You scream a lot," the man finally said, tone almost bored. "But you're not good at it. Sounds like a dying coyote."

Beckett tried to spit. His head barely lifted. His throat was shredded from hours of screaming and begging.

Now, he was just trying to breathe.

The door creaked open.

Footsteps. Slow. Measured.

Damien entered-immaculate in a dark suit, not a wrinkle on him. Not a drop of blood.

He didn't look at Beckett right away.

He simply plucked the cigarette from the man's fingers, took a long drag, then exhaled.

Smoke drifted between them.

Then his eyes locked on the wreck of a man in the chair.

"You drugged her," Damien said softly, conversational-almost gentle. "Twice. One airborne. One direct. You hit her head hard enough to cause a concussion."

He stepped closer. Then crouched.

Close enough that Beckett could see his own blood reflected in Damien's eyes.

"And you almost touched her."

That was when Damien smiled.

<Chapter 27: Broken and Breathing-1

It didn't reach his eyes.

“That’s what earns you this.”

+25 Points

He ground the cigarette into Beckett’s chest-hard. Beckett’s body seized in the chair, a strangled sound ripping from his throat.

Damien didn’t flinch.

“Twelve hours,” he said quietly. “That’s how long she was in your hands. That’s how long she was in danger.”

He leaned in closer, his voice turning to steel.

“For every hour... you’ll suffer a full day. Twelve days. Each one worse than the last. And each day... twelve different ways to break you.”

His tone was deadly calm.

“You’ll beg for death. You’ll scream for it. And when it doesn’t come, you’ll wish you’d gotten on that damn plane.”

A beat.

“But you didn’t. You crossed my line. And no one-no one-crosses my line and walks away.”

He straightened, cold and merciless.

“When the twelve days are over... you’ll be free to go. But you won’t forget. You’ll live the rest of your miserable life with what’s left of you – until you finally decide to end it yourself.”

A pause.

“A daily reminder... of exactly who I am.”

Beckett sneered, blood coating his teeth.

“I know who you are... Damien Blackwood.” He laughed-a wet, broken sound.

“I just thought you’d be willing to share.”

He spat the last word like venom, mocking even through the pain.

Damien stared down at him-at the bloodied, broken mess that dared to speak his name.

His voice was calm. Controlled.

Deadly.

<Chapter 27 Broken and Breathing-1

+25 Points

“Sharing...” he echoed softly, as if tasting the word. “Sharing was never part of my world.”

He took a slow step forward, the soles of his shoes echoing against the cold concrete.

“Especially not with low-life filth like you.”

He walked past Beckett-silent, precise-until he reached the metal table against the wall. A surgical tray gleamed under the flickering bulb. Damien’s hand hovered, then selected something without hesitation: a bone saw, small and handheld. Quiet. Personal.

He turned the tool once in his hand-then walked back, his eyes never leaving Beckett’s.

“What’s mine,” he said, voice dark as a grave, “is mine.”

He knelt again, this time pressing the cold edge of the saw gently against Beckett's cheek. Not enough to cut. Just enough to make him flinch.

“And anything that touches what's mine...” He smiled-slow, cruel.

“...pays the price.”

Without warning, Damien stood and drove his fist straight into Beckett's jaw with a sickening

crack.

LUCK DRAW >

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The Billionaire's Intern (Maya Thompson)

apter 28: What's Left After the Storm-1

She let out a soft, fractured cry as Jamie rushed to her.

+25 Points

James stepped aside just in time as the boy reached her bedside. His arms wrapped around her waist, trembling with the weight of days spent in fear. He held on like he might lose her

again.

And Maya clung to him like she'd never let go.

Her baby brother.

Her reason for everything.

Maya's breath hitched as she buried her face in his shoulder. Jamie smelled like home-like worn cotton, detergent, and city air. The warmth of his arms grounded her more than the heart monitor, the sterile white walls, or the IV drip in her vein.

She squeezed tighter. Tighter.

Just to feel that he was real.

"Jamie," she whispered, voice breaking. "Jamie..."

Ms. Janice entered more slowly, her hand pressed over her mouth, tears spilling freely. The moment her eyes landed on Maya-tired, bruised, but awake-her knees nearly buckled.

"Oh, Maya," she breathed. "Thank God."

Maya couldn't speak. Her throat burned. The back of her skull throbbed. But Ms. Janice came closer, brushing hair gently from her forehead the way only a mother figure could.

And for one precious moment, the room stilled.

No one moved. No one spoke.

It was the first breath of calm after a hurricane-fragile, trembling, full of things unsaid.

Slowly, Maya pulled back just enough to look at Jamie. Her hands shook as they settled on his shoulders.

“Are you okay?” she whispered, hoarse.

Jamie nodded quickly, though his eyes were rimmed red. “I’m fine. Just.. scared. Mr. Horton and Monroe came to the apartment when you didn’t show up for work. Then Ms. Janice arrived and told them she saw you leave with Beckett. That’s when we knew...”

<Chapter 28 What’s Left After the Storm-1

He swallowed. “They went after you. They found you. You’re safe now.”

Safe.

The word echoed in her chest, trying to root itself-but the fear hadn't let go yet.

+25 Points

She looked at Ms. Janice, who nodded tearfully. "You scared us half to death, sweetheart. Jamie stayed up all night. He didn't eat. Couldn't sleep."

Maya's chest twisted. Her brother's face-too pale, too tired-looked older than fifteen.

"I'm so sorry," she choked out, gripping his hand. "Jamie, I'm so sorry."

But he shook his head quickly, fiercely. "No. You don't get to say sorry. You didn't do anything wrong. He took you. I.. I couldn't do anything."

The helplessness in his voice shattered her.

"No," Maya said, voice trembling. "Don't say that."

Tears stung her eyes. “I should’ve known better. I should’ve been more careful. I shouldn’t have agreed to go with him. I.. I thought he was just saying goodbye...”

Her throat tightened.

“It’s my fault.”

Jamie’s jaw clenched. His hands curled into fists.

“No. It’s his,” he said bitterly. “He tricked you. He used you. You were just being kind. And he-

he-”

His voice cracked.

“If Mr. Blackwood’s people hadn’t gotten to him first, I swear I would’ve...”

He trailed off, fists shaking. Rage and grief warred in his expression.

Ms. Janice rubbed his back gently. “You have every right to feel that way, sweetheart. But what matters now is, she’s home and she’s safe.”

But Maya didn’t feel safe.

Not yet.

The cabin lingered in her mind like smoke.

Beckett’s voice. The locked door. The way he smiled when she begged.

<Chapter 28: What’s Left After the Storm-1

+25 Points

She ran a hand over the back of her head, wincing at the tenderness. The pain made it real.

It hadn't been a nightmare.

She was out. She was safe.

But the storm hadn't passed.

Her tears returned-slow, quiet, relentless.

And when she lifted her gaze again, it landed on James.

He stood silently across the room, still as stone-but there was something in his eyes that steadied her. Not pity. Not sadness.

Assurance.

She couldn't explain it. But she felt it-like a weight being carried for her without words.

~

Vote

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The Billionaire's Intern (Maya Thompson)

Chapter 28: What’s Left After the Storm-2

+25 Points

Chapter 28: What’s Left After the Storm-2

“Where is he?” she asked. Her voice was thin, trembling. “Beckett...”

James’s expression didn’t change, but his gaze turned sharp.

“Gone,” he said simply. “You won’t have to worry about him again.”

Maya’s breathing quickened. “No-I need to know. He said things. He was going to-he...”

She couldn’t finish.

Jamie gripped her hand tighter. Ms. Janice rubbed her shoulder.

James stepped forward, voice lower. “Ms. Thompson, I promise you.. he’ll never come near

you again.”

She nodded slowly, but her eyes said otherwise.

A quiet knock broke the silence.

The door opened.

Monroe stepped in, a towering presence in a dark coat. Composed. Alert.

He bowed his head respectfully. “Ms. Thompson.”

James gave a short nod. “This is Monroe. Head of security for Blackwood Enterprises. He led the rescue operation.”

Monroe’s expression didn’t shift, but his tone was calm. Measured.

“It’s good to see you safe, ma’am. Rest assured, he won’t get near you again. Not now. Not ever.”

Maya stared at him, wide-eyed.

Head of security?

They’d sent someone that high up... for her?

She was just an intern.

Her voice trembled. “Thank you, sir. I.. I’m sorry for all the trouble I caused. I didn’t mean to

be a burden.”

Monroe’s eyes softened. “You weren’t. You never were. We did what had to be done.”

Chapter 28 What’s Left After the Storm 2

+25 Points

She looked down, overwhelmed. They’d moved mountains for her. The security. The silence.

The effort.

Why?

Why her?

She glanced at Jamie again, brushing his messy hair from his forehead.

“You stayed up?” she asked gently.

He nodded with a sheepish shrug. “Couldn’t sleep without you. It didn’t feel right.”

She exhaled shakily and kissed his temple. “I’m here now.”

But her hands still trembled.

James noticed.

He turned slightly, quiet for a beat, then said, “We’ll give you some privacy. But we’ll be just outside if you need anything.”

Maya hesitated. Then looked up, heart in her throat.

“Thank you, Mr. Horton,” she said quietly. “And please... tell Mr. Blackwood thank you. I’m sorry for all the trouble I caused.”

James gave a slight nod. Then stepped out with Monroe, the door clicking shut behind them.

Just outside, the hallway was quiet. Dimly lit. Sterile. Cold.

But not nearly as cold as the fury still burning in James Horton’s veins.

He gave one last glance toward Room 614, then stepped away and pulled out his phone.

One ring.

Two.

“Speak,” came the low, clipped voice on the other end.

“She’s awake,” James reported. “Still shaken. But aware. She asked for Jamie first.”

“And?”

“She’s talking. Processing. Exhausted but coherent. No major injuries. Mild concussion and dehydration, but nothing life-threatening. She’s stable. Doctor will provide a full update by

morning.”

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Chapter 28. What’s Left After the Storm-2

There was silence.

Then James lowered his voice. “She asked about Beckett.”

The pause on the other end turned to steel.

“I told her he’s gone. That she doesn’t need to worry. Monroe confirmed. She also... apologized. Said she was sorry for being an inconvenience. Asked me to thank you.”

Another pause.

Then Damien’s voice dropped lower.

+25 Points?

“She didn’t cause any trouble,” he said quietly. Then colder: “The only one who caused trouble is learning what worse than death feels like. And he’ll never have a chance to breathe near her again.”

James nodded once. “Understood.”

“Keep me updated.”

The line went dead.

James tucked the phone away.

Monroe spoke quietly beside him.

“She’s more worried about causing trouble than about what she’s been through.”

James exhaled slowly. “She’s too innocent for the world she just stepped into.”

He paused.

“I just hope... when she finally sees the truth-how she broke through everything the boss built around his heart-it doesn’t scare her away.”

A beat.

“Because if she leaves... it’ll break that man’s world all over again.”

And Maya Thompson may not have realized it yet-

But someone very powerful had just taken her survival personally.

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The Billionaire's Intern (Maya Thompson)

Chapter 29: Fear Beneath the Flame-1

Damien's Penthouse

The shower was hot, almost scalding, steam clouding the glass as water poured over him. Blood-not his, but Beckett's-ran down the drain, washing away like a curse being purged. As if scrubbing him from the world.

And still, it wasn't enough.

The anger didn't fade.

Neither did the traces of her-Maya's-that clung stubbornly to his skin.

It lingered in his chest, a sharp, cold flame that refused to die.

He clenched his jaw, feeling it deep in his bones.

But underneath the rage pulsed something else.. something worse.

Fear.

An unfamiliar, unwelcome weight.

Fear for her.

For Maya Thompson.

For what could have been taken-her innocence, her spirit, her light.

Her.

The woman who, without even trying, had managed to slip past his defenses. Past the walls he'd spent a lifetime building.

Into his mind. Into his emotions.

Into a heart he thought had been dead for years.

So he believed. Until her.

He pressed his palms hard against the cold tile wall outside the shower, eyes shut tight.

He could still see her face-the moment Beckett first approached.

Caught off guard.

+25 Points >

Chapter 29: Fear Beneath the Flame-1

The awkwardness.

The hesitation.

The worry.

All of it raw, unmasked, flickering across her eyes like a silent scream.

He replayed it over and over.

The hours she was missing.

The silence so loud it burned.

And then-his rage.

The fury that flooded his veins at the thought of her being hurt, scared, taken.

But beneath the fury was something else-something deeper.

The desperation.

To hold her.

To be there for her.

To take care of her.

To be the first person she saw when she opened her eyes.

He wanted that.

Needed it.

But he couldn't.

Not yet.

He couldn't deny it anymore. Not to himself. Not even to the walls that had held him tight for so long.

Maya Thompson was inside those walls-quietly, patiently dismantling every brick with just a glance, a word, a presence.

A vulnerability flickered in his chest that no amount of steel could smother.

He turned off the water, the cold air hitting his bare skin like a shock.

Ashcroft's words echoed in his mind, said in the vehicle hours ago:

<Chapter 29: Fear Beneath the Flame-1

+25 Points

“Look, D... It broke me too. Lost someone close. The pain, the rage, the hole it leaves. But grieving doesn’t mean we get stuck. We move on. Sometimes surviving means losing a part of yourself. But you don’t have to die in the process.”

Damien wanted to believe him. Wanted to move past the ghosts that haunted him. But moving on meant something he hadn’t dared allow himself before-letting someone in.

Letting Maya in.

The thought was a double-edged blade.

He toweled off slowly, eyes dark and stormy in the mirror.

She matters. More than anyone in a long time.

But would that be enough?

Could he truly protect her this time? Or would he fail again-just like he did with the woman who once held his heart?

What if history repeated itself? What if the moment Maya fully stepped into his world... it destroyed her?

He exhaled, jaw tight, chest aching with the truth he could no longer outrun.

I need to do it right. I need to take it slow. I need to find a way to make her want me-choose me. Be willing to stand beside me, live in my world, fight with me... for me. Without breaking her. Without stealing her spirit. Her innocence.

I want her attention. Her love. Her trust. All of it. All of her.

You're mine, Maya. Only mine.

Hospital Room 614

The slow rise and fall of Jamie's breathing was steady now-finally asleep beside her. His small body curled tight in the chair, exhaustion digging dark trenches beneath his eyes.

Ms. Janice packed silently, careful not to disturb the fragile calm.

“I’m going home,” she said softly, voice almost a whisper. “You need rest. Jamie needs rest. I’ll be back with something warm for you. Don’t worry... Monroe offered to drive me.”

Maya nodded, every muscle heavy, her mind swimming in pain and fatigue.

Cedella

Cedella’s storytelling style is immersive and addictive—perfect for fans of heated romances and heart-pounding twists.

The Billionaire's Intern (Maya Thompson)

+25 Points

Chapter 29: Fear Beneath the Flame-2

“Thank you, Ms. Janice. I don’t know what I’d do without you. Please... take care. Get some

rest, okay?”

The door clicked shut behind them, leaving a heavy silence that pressed down on her.

Alone with the echo of Beckett's words-sharp, poisonous, clawing at her from the dark.

"You were so easy. I told you it was goodbye-and you believed me. God, you even smiled! Hahaha... you sweet, tired little fool. All I had to do was turn on the AC. You didn't even notice."

I'm such a fucking idiot. Every move I make just drags me down. I'm a mess. A goddamn

burden.

His voice slithered back:

"You don't have to pretend anymore, Maya. None of it matters now. I'll erase every trace of his touch from your body. And you'll crave only mine."

And then the sickest memory:

“What did you two do during those times, huh? Did he fuck you hard in the break room? Bend you over that fancy desk? Or maybe.... you rode him hard inside the conference room after hours?”

Heat flushed her cheeks, burning deep and unwanted. Her mind betrayed her, drifting to the worst places-the twisted “what ifs.”

What if it’s true? What if Damien did touch me that way? What would it feel like? His hands, his mouth, his body pressed into mine-rough, commanding, consuming. His voice low and fierce in my ear, whispering my name, fucking me hard until I’m trembling, gasping.

A rush of warmth spread in places that should have stayed cold. She bit her lip to stop a shudder.

She shook her head, desperate to stop the flood of thoughts, but the ache tightened her chest.

This pull toward Damien-how her heart slammed when she thought of him, how every memory of his rare, quiet kindness made her skin crawl and tingle at the same time.

But it wasn’t right.

They were worlds apart.

<Chapter 29: Fear Beneath the Flame-2

He was danger incarnate-unreachable, wild, impossible.

And her?

Broken. Scared. Barely held together by thread.

Invisible to someone like him.

+25 Points

She swallowed hard, tasting the bitterness rising in her throat, biting back tears that burned

too hot to fall.

He wouldn't look twice at someone like me, she thought, raw and cruel.

Her hands trembled as they gripped the thin hospital sheet, knuckles white.

Still, a flicker of desperate hope flickered inside her-maybe she deserves more. Maybe she deserves to be wanted, held, fought for. Maybe... just maybe, he would spare her a glance. Maybe it wouldn't be just a fantasy. Maybe it could be real-being wanted, protected, loved,

craved.

But fear screamed louder.

Fear of rejection. Fear of being nothing but a liability.

A weight.

A burden.

Maya closed her eyes tightly, wishing, begging for the storm inside to settle – just for a

moment.

She must have drifted off at some point -she wasn't sure when. The pain, the exhaustion... they'd finally pulled her under.

But it didn't last.

She woke to the faint sound of voices. Muffled. Low.

Her eyes fluttered open, hazy with sleep. The soft hum of machines filled the room-but something felt... different.

She blinked, her gaze shooting to the chair beside her bed.

Empty.

Jamie was gone.

Her breath caught.

Chapter 29: Fear Beneath the Flame-2

425 Pos

Panic surged through her chest like ice. She sat up too fast, heart racing, eyes scanning the

room.

“Jamie?” she rasped, voice breaking.

She tried to swing her legs off the bed, tried to move, get up, find him-anything-until a low, deep voice cut through the silence like a blade.

“Ms. Thompson.”

She froze.

That voice.

It couldn't be.

Her head snapped toward the sound.

And her breath left her.

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The Billionaire's Intern (Maya Thompson)

Chapter 30: Too Close. Too Dangerous-1

+25 Points >

Damien Blackwood sat in the chair across from her bed-still, composed, a shadow of control wrapped in a dark, perfectly tailored suit. His tie was still knotted, his posture straight. Unmoving. Unshaken.

But his eyes... They burned.

“Ah... Mr. Blackwood. Sir...” she stammered, heart hammering wildly against her ribs.

Her voice cracked as she scrambled to sit up straighter, tugging at the hospital blanket to cover her bare shoulders. The IV in her arm tugged, stinging. Her cheeks burned.

He didn’t speak at first.

Just sat there.

Watching her.

His elbows rested on his knees, hands clasped loosely. But there was nothing casual about him. His suit was immaculate, but his eyes

God, his eyes.

That color-it hit her first. A rich, sinful shade of molten amber, like whiskey kissed by firelight. Warm and wild. Dangerous.

They didn't just look at her.

They devoured her.

Every glance burned. Searched. Branded.

Like he wasn't just seeing her-but claiming her, piece by piece, without touching her at all. Like he was searching for cracks in her armor... or maybe the softness beneath it he already owned.

And somehow, she couldn't look away.

Studied every inch of her as if to confirm she was really there. Alive. Breathing.

His jaw ticked once, then –

“How are you feeling?,” he said quietly.

Maya swallowed hard, throat dry. “I... i’m feeling better, thank you sir... umm.. Where’s Jamie?”

Chapter 30. Too Close Too Dangerous-1

+25 Points

“He’s downstairs. With James. Getting breakfast.” A pause. “He didn’t want to leave your side, but I told him I’d stay until he got back.”

“You... stayed?” Her voice was barely a whisper.

“I arrived ten minutes ago.”

His eyes flicked briefly to the monitor beside her. Then back to her face.

“He will never bother you again.. I won’t allow it.”

She blinked. “I... I don’t understand.”

He leaned forward slightly, voice like silk over stone.

“That piece of shit doctor, he’s paying the price of touching what’s not his.”

Touching what’s not his, what does he mean by that.....

Her breath hitched. Heat crept up her neck.

“You were gone,” he said at last, voice rougher now. “Twelve hours.”

“I... I’m sorry for the trouble,” she said softly, her fingers twisting in the sheets. “I didn’t mean

“You never need to apologize,” he said. The words landed like a slap-too sudden. Too final.

He cut her off, voice low and firm-almost harsh, but it was the restraint behind it that caught her off guard. Like he was holding something back.

Maya stared at him, stunned.

He let out a slow exhale, then leaned back in the chair. The shadows under his eyes weren’t from lack of sleep-they were from something deeper. Something frayed and angry and barely leashed.

He kept going.

“Twelve hours I didn’t know where you were. What he was doing to you. If you were still alive.” His voice broke slightly on that last word-only a fraction, but it cracked something inside

her.

Her eyes welled again. She couldn’t look at him.

“I didn’t mean to worry anyone,” she whispered.

“That’s not what this is about,” he growled, low and raw. “It’s about the fact that he touched

Chapter 30 Too Close Too Dangerous-1

you. That he drugged you. Took you.”

He stood suddenly-pacing once, dragging a hand down his face.

“And I wasn’t there.”

“Mr. Blackwood...”

“Maya.”

Her heart stuttered.

His voice dropped lower. Quieter. But intimate in a way that made her insides tremble.

+25 Points

He turned to face her again, eyes unreadable but dark with something intense. “You were never supposed to be dragged into my world. I told myself you were just another intern. That I didn’t care.”

He stepped closer.

“I lied.”

The room shrank. The air changed. She felt it.

“I care,” he said, almost to himself. “Too much. And I didn’t even realize it until the moment I

saw the footage... and you were gone.”

LUCK DRAW >

529

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