Intern 76

Chapter 76

Suddenly, she couldn't bear to look at it anymore.

She placed the phone face-down on the bedside table, pushing it away like it was something too fragile to hold.

Curling beneath the covers, her heart continued its frantic rhythm in the dark, echoing louder than any words.

Then-her phone lit up once.

She snatched it, breath held.

Harper: I'm home!

Maya groaned softly into her pillow, the quiet stillness of the hospital room wrapping around her like a fragile shield.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the city, in the dimly lit private dining room of Rivage

The wine was fine. The food was impeccable. The client was important.

And Damien couldn’t focus on a single damn word.

His phone sat silent on the table beside his wine glass. His thumb kept drifting toward it, eyes flicking to the lock screen every other minute.

James noticed-but said nothing. As usual.

Damien wasn’t just distracted.

He was agitated. Jealous. Stupidly hopeful. Then resentful for feeling hope at all.

By the time dessert was served, the client noticed his distance. But Damien didn’t care.

He gave the signal. James stood. The meeting wrapped.

The moment Damien was in the backseat of his car, the dark, bitter edge of his mood sharpened.

He needed an outlet.

“Tell Ashcroft to get the usual ready, I’m coming over.” he said coldly. “I don’t care how fragile the bastard is. Make sure he still knows pain.”

James’s face didn’t move. He simply nodded and texted the command.

Beckett, still breathing-barely-wasn’t going to be spared.

Ashcroft had his own twisted system of punishment. He’d ordered his men to deliver one part of Beckett to him each day-starting with fingers, then eyes, ears, toes, arms, legs… even kidneys, probably. Anything Beckett had in pairs, Ashcroft wanted one gone. And Damien, though not the one giving the order, didn’t object. Not this time. Not for him.

What was left of him existed only because Damien allowed it.

And tonight… Damien needed to hurt something.

The car pulled forward.

He stared out the window, letting the silence pool between them.

Just as the fire sharpened inside him –

Ding.

The private phone lit up on his lap.

Damien froze.

Then slowly, he picked it up.

One message. From her.

Hi. I just wanted to say thank you.

For everything… it meant more than I can say. I hope you're having a good night.

His grip tightened around the phone.

For a second, he didn't move. Just stared at the screen, re-reading the words as if they might change.

Then, without meaning to… a smile tugged at the corner of his mouth. Subtle. Quiet. Real.

He didn’t even notice it forming.

But James did-from the rearview mirror, eyes flicking up just long enough to catch the impossible: Damien Blackwood, smiling like a man who’d just been handed salvation.

He stared at the message again.

“Meant more than I can say.”

What did she really mean by that?

Was it just polite?

Or… was it something more?

His mind raced.

Maybe she likes me. Maybe she has feelings for me.

A flicker of hope stirred in his chest-swiftly smothered by doubt.

She’s probably just being courteous.

But then the next line-“I hope you’re having a good night.”-soft, thoughtful, like a whisper meant just for him.

Did she think about him now?

Did she want him to be okay?

He felt a strange fire flicker inside-a warmth that was almost foreign.

The rage he’d been nursing-the sharp edge he’d planned to unleash on Beckett-dissolved like smoke in the air.

That burning need to hurt something vanished, replaced by a yearning he wasn’t ready to

name.

He had to reply.

He must say something.

But what?

Romance wasn’t part of his vocabulary-not really.

If he wanted something, he took it.

No words wasted. No games played.

Yet with Maya…

Something inside him softened.

He wanted to be slow. Gentle. Safe.

The last time he’d felt anything remotely like this, it had been… different.

It was easy, because she was from his world. Same bloodlines, same ambitions.

No romantic lines needed.

No effort required.

She’d taken the initiative.

They’d been partners by arrangement-a family obligation wrapped in convenience.

But this?

With Maya?

This was new.

He’d never courted anyone on his own terms.

Never pursued anyone without a reason beyond business or power.

He’d never even allowed himself to like someone just because he wanted to.

And now… here he was, caught off guard by a simple message.

He cleared his throat, forcing the cold mask back into place.

Take me home.

He didn’t want to drown the night in the metallic scent of blood or Beckett’s muffled cries

anymore.

Not when a single message from her had done what violence never could – Stilled the

storm.