Intern 77

Chapter 77

breath held. A war waiting to resume.

And Damien sat in it now.

Maya's message still burned in his chest like a brand, soft and disarming. Too gentle for the kind of man he was. Too honest for the world he lived in.

But it had reached him. Somehow.

And that scared him more than he'd ever admit.

His phone screen lit up.

He started typing-a quick, clipped message. Then deleted it.

Typed something softer, almost too soft for him. Deleted again.

His thumb hovered, restless.

The words wouldn’t come right.

Frustrated, Damien glanced up at James through the rearview mirror.

“James,” he said, voice low but curious.

James didn’t flinch. “Yes, sir?”

“Do you have a girlfriend?”

James blinked, caught off guard by the unexpected question.

“Um… no, not at the moment, sir. But Finn here,” he nodded toward the driver in the front seat, “he’s married.”

Finn, the seasoned driver, was pushing sixty-he’d been with the Blackwood family since he was twenty-five. He’d started working for Damien’s father and had stayed loyal through the years, witnessing Damien grow from a boy into the man he was now.

Damien's gaze lingered on Finn briefly-an unspoken acknowledgment of the long years of service, stability, and quiet presence in a life filled with chaos.

Finn cleared his throat in a gruff, fatherly tone. "Thirty years… and still happily married. What I've learned about marriage is-it's like owning a very expensive car. Beautiful, sure, but you

better be ready for the maintenance. Lots of patience, a little sacrifice, and the occasional… stubborn engine trouble."

Finn gave Damien a steady, knowing look through the mirror. "I'll tell you what I told my son," he said quietly. "Love… it's a wild thing. Beautiful, yes-but dangerous too. It stirs up every feeling we've got-joy, pain, hope, fear. It can build you up or tear you down.

But here's the thing: love's a battle you choose to fight every day. And if it's worth fighting for, then fight like hell. Scared? Of course you will be. Nobody knows how it'll end unless they take the chance. So don't hold back, kid. Sometimes, you just have to dive in and see where it takes you. And when it's real? Hold on tight, because it's worth every moment."

A long pause stretched between them, broken only by the soft hum of the engine. Then Finn spoke again, quieter this time-gentler.

"Kid, if I may…"

Damien's gaze

flicked up.

“I saw you the day you were born,” Finn said with a faint smile. “Front row seat to your whole life. I’ve watched you rise, watched you fall. Watched you build an empire with your bare hands-and carry pain no one should carry alone.”

His eyes softened in the mirror.

“That girl… Maya, is it? The one we picked up at the bus stop, brought to the hospital? Is she the one?”

Damien didn’t answer. But the silence… and the way his fingers tightened around the phone… said everything.

Finn didn’t wait for an answer.

He didn’t have to

“I’ve been around long enough to spot something real,” Finn continued, his voice steady. She’s beautiful, sure-but it’s more than that. She’s humble. Strong. Innocent. Got a kind, pure heart.”

He glanced at Damien through the rearview mirror.

“She’s the kind of balance a man like you needs… the kind that makes all the noise in your head go quiet.”

A pause. Then a soft exhale, full of quiet certainty.

“She’ll be your anchor, son. If you let her.”

The words landed with the weight of truth, sharp and disarming.

An anchor… when all he’d ever known was war.

Damien didn’t speak. His jaw tightened slightly, a flicker of resistance in his posture-but it wasn’t defiance. It was fear. Quiet, unfamiliar, and gnawing.