Intern 78

Chapter 78

An anchor.

Was that what she'd become?

He didn't know how to be soft. He didn't know how to trust someone to hold him without using it against him later. Every relationship in his past had come with rules, expectations, power plays. This-she-was different.

Maya wasn't born from his world. She didn't crave the power or the luxury. She didn't flinch at

his coldness or chase the status.

The car rolled on in silence, city lights flashing past like memories he couldn't quite hold

onto.

Damien turned toward the window, catching his own reflection in the glass-a flicker of something softer beneath all that steel.

And for the first time in a long, long while…

He didn’t look away.

By the time the car eased to a stop outside his private entrance, the storm inside him had quieted-but not gone. It hummed beneath his skin, restless and unfamiliar.

He didn’t move right away.

Then, just as his hand reached for the door handle, he paused.

“…How should I respond?” he asked quietly-almost to himself, but loud enough for the front

to hear.

Finn glanced at him in the mirror, his face calm and fatherly.

“Well, son,” he said, voice low and steady, “it’s good to listen to your brain-but don’t ignore your heart.”

Damien didn’t reply, eyes fixed ahead.

“Don’t overthink it,” Finn added gently. “Just say what your heart wants to say. That’s all she’s really hoping for.”

A long silence stretched between them.

Then Damien gave a subtle nod and stepped out, the night air cool against his skin.

The message was still on his screen.

Waiting.

He walked into the building without a word, the private elevator already waiting. James

followed, silent as ever.

Neither of them spoke during the ascent, but the air between them was different now-less tense, more uncertain. As if both men were waiting for something unspoken to fall into place.

When they reached the penthouse, James stepped out behind him and followed Damien’s familiar path across the marble floor, stopping only when Damien paused by the bar.

James cleared his throat and shifted slightly. “Tomorrow morning, your first meeting is with the Shanghai investors. 9 a.m. sharp. Then a debrief with Elle about the Isla Aurelia contracts, and-”

He trailed off as Damien remained silent, still staring at his phone.

James hesitated.

Then-cautiously-he added, “Sir… if I may.”

Damien didn’t look up, but his silence was permission enough.

“I may be single now, but I’ve been in a relationship before,” James said carefully. “And from my earlier conversation with Ms. Thompson… she’s scared.”

That made Damien’s gaze lift, just slightly.

James continued, a bit more quietly now. “I don’t know what she texted you. But the fact that she did-means she’s finally willing to take the risk.”

He paused. “This whole thing is new for her. All of it. The attention. You.”

His voice softened, the way it only did when the walls between them lowered for just a

moment.

“I think she wants to trust you, sir. But she’s afraid. Not of who you are, but of what she might mean to you. What it might cost her.”

A beat of silence followed.

Then James straightened, falling back into professionalism. “That’s all, sir. I’ll see myself out.

Damien didn’t speak. He just gave the faintest nod, and James disappeared down the hall.

He was alone again.

In the silence of his penthouse.

The lights were low, his phone still glowing-like a whisper waiting to be heard.

And for once-he didn’t feel like Damien Blackwood, the CEO.

Not the name. Not the legacy. Not the man the world feared.

He just felt like a man.

Stripped down to something raw. Human.

Wanting.

And somehow, it all hinged on one message.

Quiet. Unsteady.

One message away from something he didn’t know how to name.

Something real.

Something that could ruin him-or save him.

And as the city lights flickered across his reflection, he let the truth settle low in his chest, warm and dangerous:

He didn’t just want her.

He wanted to be hers.

Even if he had no idea how.

The message was still on his screen.

Simple. Sweet. Utterly disarming.

He stared at it, heart tight, thumb hovering.

He’d built empires. Broken rivals.

Could shift markets with a single move, make entire economies tremble, or make someone disappear without a trace.

Yet here he was, caught off guard by a simple message.

This was the hardest thing he'd ever had to do.

He typed something. Deleted it.

Typed again. Erased it.

Everything sounded too cold. Too calculated. Too… not enough.

He closed his eyes for a moment.

Finn's words echoed in his chest:

"Don't think too much. Just say what your heart wants to say."

Damien exhaled, low and slow.

And finally… he let himself answer as a man.

Not a Blackwood.

But just-him.

He typed slowly:

I wasn't. Not until your message came through. You don't need to thank me. I'd do it again a hundred times.

Then, after a moment's pause, he added-

Are you still awake?

If she answered… if she was awake and thinking of him too-he didn't know what that would

mean.

Only that he'd want more. Much more.

He hit send before he could second-guess it.

The screen dimmed in his hand.

And he sat there in the quiet, every part of him still buzzing-from restraint, from longing, from something dangerously close to hope.

But it wasn't just hope.

It was need. Restless. Raw. Unfamiliar.

He wanted to hear her voice… To know she was still awake… More than that-he wanted to

see her.

And for reasons he couldn't explain-reasons that unsettled him more than betrayal or blood -he needed to be near her.

Close enough to hear her breathe.

Close enough to feel her calm seep into the chaos he carried.

He imagined her lying under those hospital sheets, phone in hand, cheeks flushed with uncertainty.

He wanted to see that flush.

To touch the curve of her jaw, to confirm she wasn't just a dream.

To lean in and breathe her in-slowly, like a man who'd never known softness until now.

This wasn't the kind of madness that fueled vengeance or power.

This was something quieter. More dangerous.

He wanted her beside him.

Her warmth, her stillness. Her silence.

And if he let himself-just once-

He could see her in his bed, bathed in moonlight, sheets slipping from her bare shoulder as she turned to him in the dark.

He didn’t just want her close. He wanted her everywhere.

And that scared him more than anything else ever had.