Intern 80

Chapter 80

“Take it one step at a time. You’re stronger than you think. Just don’t forget that.”

Those words gave her courage.

Maybe they were right.

If she didn’t take the risk… she’d never know.

She knew it was a dangerous world she was stepping into.

But maybe… it wasn’t all danger.

Maybe… it was time to allow herself to learn what love really meant.

Not the kind she’d given to her parents or her brother.

But love-the terrifying, consuming kind.

The kind she'd never let herself imagine she could have.

So she hit send.

Her screen dimmed slightly as the message disappeared into the ether.

And with it, a little piece of her heart.

She exhaled softly and placed the phone down again. But she didn't move.

Didn't try to sleep.

Because her entire body was suddenly… awake.

Her fingers tingled. Her chest felt too tight.

And her mind kept looping that one soft line – Are you still awake?

She imagined him asking it out loud.

That voice-low and velvet-smooth, the kind that curled around your spine and lingered.

She didn't even want to admit how often she thought about that voice. How it sounded when he said her name.

Her toes curled under the sheets.

God. She was in deep.

Across the city, beneath the glow of skyscraper lights and endless night, Damien's phone vibrated softly in his hand.

He glanced down-her reply. I am. Are you still working?

His heart caught in a way that felt both thrilling and terrifying-like a teenager sneaking a glance at a crush's text.

For a moment, he just sat there, fingers twitching, unsure if he should say more-or do more.

Then, with a breath he didn't know he was holding, he typed: Can I call you?

He sent it before he could overthink it.

The phone was silent for a beat.

Then her reply blinked on the screen: Ok.

Damien stared at the screen-and smiled.

Not the cold, rehearsed smile he gave cameras and clients.

This one was unguarded.

The kind he hadn’t felt on his face in a long, long time.

Then he stood, pacing a little in the quiet of his penthouse, a nervous energy sparking beneath his calm exterior.

Meanwhile, Maya held her phone tightly, cheeks still flushed.

She slipped quietly out of bed, careful not to wake Jamie, and tiptoed to the bathroom. Her socks barely made a sound on the cold floor as she gently closed the door and turned the lock with a soft click.

Leaning back against the cool tile wall, she tried to steady her breathing.

Her phone rang.

Once.

Twice.

Three slow, heart-thudding rings-then-

“Hello?” she whispered, voice barely above a breath.

Damien’s usual steel softened as her voice reached him.

He smiled softly, warmth flickering in his eyes.

“Maya.”

Damien’s voice poured through the line, low and hesitant-like velvet over gravel. “I just… wanted to hear your voice.”

She swallowed, heart tightening, the warmth in her chest blooming.

“Um… hi,” she murmured shyly. “I’m in the bathroom,” she added, embarrassed. “Jamie’s sleeping.”

A soft chuckle met her ear.

“That explains the cave-like echo,” Damien said gently. “I just… wanted to check on you.”

Maya’s breath caught.

“I’m feeling better. I want to go home already but… they won’t let me yet.”

She pouted without realizing, sounding a little like a sulking child.

There was a pause, not awkward-just filled with something new. Gentle. Present.

“Thank you… for everything,” she said quietly.

“I told you,” Damien replied, voice lower now, like a confession. “You don’t need to thank me. I’d do it again. A hundred times.”

Silence lingered-soft, tentative.

Then Maya cleared her throat.

“Are you still working?”

“No. I’m home.”

“Oh.” She fidgeted with the hem of her cardigan. “Um… have you eaten dinner?”

“I have. Client dinner.” A small pause, then a warmer tone. “Ms. Lin told me about some legendary lasagna.”

Maya let out a quiet laugh. “Yeah. Ms. Janice made it. It’s Jamie’s favorite.”

“I can see why,” Damien said. “James mentioned he’s excited about the surgery.”

Maya smiled faintly but then grew quiet. “He is… He’s really looking forward to having a normal life again.”

She hesitated. “But… I’m scared.”

There was a pause. Her voice softened even more.

“And about that… the surgery. I’ve been saving for a while now. It’s still not enough, but… I’ll pay you back. I just need a little more time…”

Damien cut her off gently, but firmly.

“No.” His voice was quiet, but resolute.

“Maya, I don’t want your money.”

He took a breath. “I just want you happy.”

A pause-then, softer, steadier:

“And don’t be afraid. It’ll be okay… I’ll be there with you.”

Her throat tightened.

He didn’t say it like a man expecting gratitude. He said it like a man who couldn’t stand the thought of her facing it all alone.

And when he added, almost in a whisper, “I’ll be there with you,” it wrapped around her like a quiet shield-steady, sure, and impossibly tender. Not just a promise. A vow.

Silence bloomed again-soft, weighted.

Damien was the one who broke it.

“It’s late,” he said gently. “You should rest.”

She nodded, even though he couldn’t see it. “Okay.”

A soft breath.

“Thank you… again.”

“For anything,” he said, voice low. “Always.”

She hesitated, heart thudding. Then whispered, “Goodnight, Damien.”

He froze. His name on her lips-quiet, unguarded-landed like a blow to his chest.

No one said it like that. No one ever had.

Something stirred deep inside him, something he hadn’t expected.

“…Goodnight, Maya.”

For a long moment, Damien held the phone to his chest, as if trying to capture the warmth of her voice and keep it close. The quiet of the penthouse felt different now – softer, charged with a new kind of hope he hadn’t dared to let himself feel before.

He sank into the leather chair, fingers curling around the phone like it was the most precious thing in the world.

Tonight, the distance between them felt a little smaller.