Intern 88

Chapter 88

Morning light sifted through hospital blinds-soft yet unforgiving. Outside, the city stirred awake, oblivious to the quiet battles fought behind these walls.

Maya stood by the window, arms wrapped tight around herself, watching the city yawn awake in soft shades of muted gray. Her things were already packed. Her bed neatly made. The chart clipped to the foot of her bed now bore one final note: Discharge confirmed.

She was going home.

—

But why did her heart still feel hollow, as if waiting waiting for something… someone?

A quiet knock broke the moment.

James stepped in with a polite nod, dressed as impeccably as ever. “Good morning, Ms. Thompson. Are you feeling well enough?”

Maya smiled, warmth returning. “Good morning, Mr. Horton-please, just call me Maya. ‘Ms. Thompson’ sounds like I’m about to get graded.” She chuckled softly, a flicker of light in her eyes. “Only my professors call me that. And I’m pretty sure you’re younger than most of them.”

James gave a faint, amused smile-his version of a chuckle. “Fair enough. Then let’s drop the formalities.”

He extended a hand with a slight nod. “Maya… if you’ll call me James.”

She took it, her smile a little brighter now. “Deal.”

James’s tone softened as he continued, “Mr. Blackwood sends his regards. His morning’s tied up with meetings, but he’s made sure everything is arranged for your comfort.”

The light in her smile faltered-just slightly.

James noticed, but his expression didn’t shift. Instead, his voice dropped a notch, gentler now. “He also wanted to be certain…” He paused, then added, “That nothing interrupts your peace today. His words.”

Maya looked down for a moment. Her chest tightened, a sudden warmth spreading there, fragile and confusing. She nodded. “Thank you.”

Within minutes, the discharge process was underway-papers signed, final checks made. Monroe and Lee waited just outside the room, a quiet wall of security and steadiness.

Claim

By the time Maya stepped into the corridor, the sun had fully risen, pouring gold through the hospital windows like a promise.

Outside, a sleek black SUV idled by the curb.

Monroe greeted her with a warm smile. “Must feel good to feel the sun on your skin again, huh?”

Maya stepped out, tilted her face upward, and took a long, deliberate breath-fresh air, warm light, and a sky that wasn’t framed by cold hospital walls.

“Mmm… yes,” she exhaled with a smile. “It feels like I’m alive again.”

He nodded warmly. “Good to see you in a different light, Ms. Thompson. Healthier suits you.”

Maya raised a brow, teasing. “Hey… what’s with the formality again? I thought we had a deal?

”

Monroe chuckled, scratching the back of his head. “Right… Maya. Force of habit.”

James, standing by the open door, glanced over with a faint smile. “You’ll have to be patient with him. He still calls me ‘sir’ sometimes.”

Lee, finishing up with the bags, gave a soft snort of agreement.

Maya laughed, the sound light and genuine. “I’ll try my best.”

She paused for just a second, a strange sensation prickling at the back of her neck-as if eyes were on her. She glanced around, searching the quiet street, but found nothing. Just sunlight and silence.

Still, the feeling lingered.

She drew a quiet breath and slipped into the SUV, the soft leather interior wrapping around her like a whisper of luxury-and a silent reminder.

Things had changed.

And there was no going back.

Across the street, unseen by her, a black Bentley waited-sleek, silent, like a shadow holding

its breath.

Behind the tinted glass, Damien watched.

His gaze never wavered-not when her smile brightened the sunlight, not when she laughed freely at Monroe's words, not when she seemed more at ease with James and Lee than she

ever had with him.

A bitter ache settled deep in his chest.

He wanted that smile to be for him.