Intern 90

Chapter 90

Not long after, the SUV pulled up in front of her apartment building – familiar, yet somehow altered now, as if the city itself had taken a breath and waited with her.

The moment the engine quieted, Maya felt her stomach twist. Relief warred with hesitation, and woven between them was the fragile thread of the morning everything changed. The deception. The fear. The pain. It lived in her, still – but so did something new. Something steadier.

For a few seconds, she didn't move.

Then James, ever composed, turned slightly toward her. His voice, low and calm, carried the quiet weight of someone who understood more than he let on.

"It's alright," he said gently. "You're safe now. We've made sure of that."

Those words-simple, steady-wrapped around her like armor she didn't know she needed. Not just safe… protected.

From the front seat, she caught Monroe's gaze in the rearview mirror. His nod was small, but it held the silent conviction of someone who would put himself between her and anything that tried to hurt her. Lee, already stepping out, moved with a quiet precision that spoke volumes without a single word.

She wasn't used to this.

To being looked after.

To being seen.

To mattering – enough for men like them to treat her like something more than fragile.

The rear door opened, and Lee offered his hand-not because she needed help, but because it was his way of showing respect. Something about the gesture settled something deep in

her chest.

She stepped out slowly. The pavement was cool beneath her shoes, but it felt like solid ground.

By the time they reached the door, it opened before she could knock. – Jamie.

His eyes lit up the moment he saw her. “Maya!”

She barely had time to brace herself before his arms wrapped around her. She sank into his

embrace, her heart catching in her throat.

“Welcome home,” he whispered, his voice trembling ever so slightly.

Behind him stood Ms. Janice, her warm, lined face crinkling into a smile that felt like sunlight.

“I’m so glad you’re home, sweetheart,” she said, gently brushing a hand down Maya’s arm.

And just like that, the tension that had wrapped around her chest since the incident began to melt. The ache dulled. The fear receded.

She was home.

They welcomed the others in. James moved quietly, Monroe gave Jamie a soft pat on the head, and Lee scanned the perimeter one last time before placing Maya’s bag near the hallway.

James approached and handed her a sleek black box with polished edges.

“This arrived earlier. From Mr. Blackwood.”

Her breath caught. Damien.

Fingers trembling slightly, Maya opened the box.

Inside, nestled in black velvet, was a Montblanc Meisterstück Classique pen. The black lacquer shimmered under the light-sleek, timeless, quietly powerful. Her initials-M.S.T.- were engraved in gold with exquisite precision.

Beside it rested a journal bound in deep, supple leather. Rich. Inviting. When her fingers brushed across the surface, it felt like more than a gift.

It felt like a promise.

Her throat tightened.

Her fingertips paused over the gold initials, heart stuttering. For a second, she just stared, unsure if that heat rising behind her eyes was from surprise or something dangerously

close to being seen.

_

To anyone else, it might've been just a luxury pen and paper. But to her… it was a dream.

Ever since she was old enough to spell her name, writing had been her anchor. Her therapy. When the world turned cruel, when the weight of responsibility crushed her chest until she could barely breathe, her journal was the one place she could release it all. The pain. The fear. The exhaustion she never dared admit aloud.

She didn't have time to break down. Not when Jamie needed her. Not when rent was due. Not when the entire weight of survival rested on her shoulders the moment she turned eighteen.

There were days she wanted to scream. Days she wanted to disappear beneath the blankets and shut the world out. Days where hope felt like a luxury she couldn't afford.