Intern 92

Chapter 92

Across the city, far beyond the reach of her eyes, a phone buzzed on a dark wood desk.

Damien didn't look up right away. The glow of the screen lit the edge of his peripheral vision, but his gaze remained fixed on the skyline beyond the glass. Rain tapped faintly against the windows, soft and steady- like the heart he was trying too damn hard to ignore.

Then he reached for the phone.

Her name was the first thing he saw.

Maya.

He sat forward slowly, shoulders tense beneath the crisp black of his dress shirt. One thumb unlocked the screen, and there it was-her message.

Thank you for the gift. And for everything you don't say.

The air thickened.

He stared at the words longer than he should have, as if reading them once wasn't enough. As if he could summon the sound of her voice through the glow of text alone.

His jaw tightened.

There were so many things he didn't say.

Things he couldn't.

GROW

Not to her. Not yet.

Not when the truth still curled like a blade behind his ribs.

Damien exhaled-slow, quiet. Then stood. He walked to the bar and poured himself a small drink he wouldn't finish, the scent of aged whiskey sharp in the room. A gift. That's all it had been. A small gesture. Clean. Distant. Safe.

And yet it had landed too deeply. Too honestly.

Because she had seen it. Understood it. Felt it.

She always did.

She'd seen through the quiet better than anyone ever had. And maybe that terrified him more than anything else.

Finn's words echoed in his mind, low and unrelenting:

"Sooner or later, she'll have to know everything. If she's willing to stand by you, to fight with you… that's the kind of love worth everything."

Damien exhaled, dragging a hand across his jaw.

Will she stand by me?

Will she fight with me?

Will she survive the weight of my world?

And if I reach for hers… will she let me in?

She wasn’t supposed to soften the edge he’d spent years sharpening.

But she had-without even trying.

Just by existing.

Damien turned back to his desk. For a moment, his fingers hovered over the screen. He could have ignored it. Let the silence stretch like he always did.

But not tonight.

Not with her.

He typed with practiced ease-but the words that formed were anything but detached.

You don’t need to thank me, Maya.

There are things I don’t say because I’m not sure I know how to.

He paused, thumb hovering over send.

Then, almost imperceptibly, he added one more line.

But I'm glad you hear them… even in silence.

He hit send.

And across the city, the light in his eyes dimmed again – but only just.

Because somewhere in the stillness between what was said and what wasn't, Damien

Blackwood allowed himself one truth.

He wasn't just protecting her.

He was falling.

The following weeks passed in a blur.

Maya returned to work, her days split between Blackwood Enterprises and her university classes. Strangely, it didn't feel as draining as before. Her steps felt lighter, her focus sharper. Maybe it was the clarity of knowing where she stood – or who stood behind her, even if silently.

There were still whispers. Still side glances in hallways-the kind that carried questions no one dared to ask aloud. But with Harper at her side-bubbly, loyal, and fiercely protective- Maya learned to let the noise fade into the background.

Trina remained professional. Distant, yes-but not unkind. It was obvious she'd been instructed to keep things strictly by the book. No favors. No special treatment. Business as usual.

Damien and Ashcroft, meanwhile, had seemingly vanished from the public eye-buried in boardrooms, encrypted calls, and off-the-grid operations no one dared to question.

Just three days after Maya returned to work, Damien called.

"I'll be away on a business trip for a week," he told her, voice calm but clipped. "If you need anything-anything at all-let Monroe know."