Intern 98

Chapter 98

Ashcroft turned to her, tilting his head slightly.

“And you are?”

Harper straightened at once, smoothing her dress with mock elegance and a bright grin.

“Harper Lin. Blackwood Enterprises PR department superstar, Maya’s best friend -”

Then she leaned in just enough for their little circle to hear.

“-and yes, I’m also the proud president of the Daya fan club. Trademark pending.”

Maya groaned inwardly. Oh God. Not that nickname again.

She finished it off with a cheeky salute, eyes sparkling. “At your service!”

Ashcroft blinked. “Daya?”

Harper gave him a conspiratorial grin. “Damien and Maya. Daya.”

For a beat, silence.

Then Ashcroft barked a laugh, warm and delighted. “Well, I really like you now.”

Maya groaned, covering her face with one hand, utterly mortified.

Damien’s jaw ticked again-just barely.

And James? He gave a quiet cough, like he was trying to suppress a laugh but failing

spectacularly.

Harper, on the other hand, beamed with pride-unbothered, unrepentant, and completely in

her element.

Then-Harper's eyes slid to the side, landing on James, who was still recovering from his barely stifled laugh moments earlier.

She grinned. "Well hellooo, Mr. Horton. What's with the three-piece suit? You do know we're heading to a tropical island, right?"

James cleared his throat, composure mostly restored. "Ms. Lin, I'm well aware. We came directly from a business trip. Some of us don't get the luxury of traveling in flip-flops and floral shirts."

Harper stage-whispered to Maya, "Next time, I'm sneaking board shorts into his briefcase.

Man needs a vacation."

Maya elbowed her, trying hard not to laugh.

James-still recovering from earlier-cleared his throat, a faint flush creeping up his neck.

"Then I suppose I'd better start locking my suitcase."

Harper gasped, grinning. "Oh, he does have a sense of humor. I knew it!"

James gave a faint smile-rare, but genuine-before slipping back into his usual polished

composure.

The captain, still standing nearby, checked his watch, then lifted his gaze to the group.

“Ladies and gentlemen, we’re preparing to depart. If you’d like to make your way to the main salon or the upper deck, we’ll be underway in a few minutes.”

Crew members moved with quiet efficiency, untying ropes and making final checks. The engines stirred to life beneath their feet-a low, thrumming vibration that sent a shiver through the deck.

Slowly, the guests began settling on the upper deck, the warm sea breeze brushing their skin as the yacht slipped away from the dock. The crew offered a brief tour before returning to their stations, while servers circulated with trays of refreshing drinks and light bites-tropical fruit skewers, delicate finger sandwiches, and chilled glasses of sparkling wine.

The tour itself was brisk but impressive-FORMOSA was even more decadent inside than out. Each hallway was a study in understated elegance, the scent of polished teak mingling with hints of citrus and fresh linen. Velvet-lined walls, silent doors that slid open with a whisper, and soft, ambient lighting made the space feel more like a five-star hotel than a

yacht at sea.

The atmosphere was relaxed yet refined, laughter and conversation mingling with the gentle splash of waves against the hull.

The yacht glided, cutting cleanly through the water as the sun climbed higher overhead.

On a quieter corner of the upper deck, Maya and Harper had found a shaded lounge bench, their sandals kicked off and fruit skewers balanced on delicate porcelain plates between

them.

“Well?” Harper asked, leaning in dramatically. “Are you going to tell me how you know Mr. Tall, Broody, and Billionaire-Adjacent?”

Maya blinked. “Mr. Ashcroft?”

“Yes! Him!” Harper echoed mockingly. “Girl. That’s Nicholas freaking Ashcroft. And he hugged you. Like you were the long-lost heroine in his summer romance.”

“It didn’t mean anything.”

“It meant something to someone,” Harper muttered, her eyes flicking across the deck.

Maya followed her gaze-just as the three men who had arrived earlier rejoined the group.