Mafia Mask 17

Chapter 17 Office Wars and Dangerous Territory

Ivy's POV

I clutched my coffee mug with trembling hands, settling into my desk chair as my legs continued to shake from this morning's encounter. Minutes later, an encrypted email from Caleb appeared in my inbox with detailed instructions for tomorrow's territory meeting preparation. I dove into the work immediately, and by the time other operatives began filtering into the office, I had organized every document and intelligence briefing perfectly.

Heidi breezed through the entrance with a man's arm linked through hers, her eyebrows shooting up when she spotted me.

"Ivy, what happened to you? You look like you wrestled with a tiger and lost. Good morning, honey."

"Morning, Heidi. Caleb requested I arrive early to set up for tomorrow's operations meeting."

"That demanding Don of yours better not make this your new normal."

"He won't, Heidi. Actually, it worked out well since I managed to finish everything ahead of schedule." I forced a smile, hoping she wouldn't notice the flush still warming my cheeks from memories of his hands on my skin.

The gentleman beside her was studying me with an appreciative grin that made me self-conscious. He possessed classic dangerous good looks with sun-kissed skin, impressive height, warm brown eyes that held secrets, and slightly tousled black hair that complemented his well-groomed stubble. His tailored suit and designer glasses completed the polished killer image.

"Heidi, my boss mentioned the new assistant was attractive, but he seriously undersold the situation. She's absolutely lethal." His voice carried genuine warmth and friendliness that immediately put me at ease. "You're going to turn this entire operation upside down."

"Jude's right, she's devastating, and the chaos has already started," Heidi responded with knowing amusement. "Let me handle introductions properly. Jude, meet Ivy. Ivy, this is Jude, Xavier's lieutenant. You two will collaborate frequently, but don't worry about Jude. He's completely professional despite his reputation."

"Ivy, the pleasure is entirely mine. Consider me your office guardian, especially when it comes to fending off the inevitable parade of admirers." Jude extended his hand with genuine sincerity, and something told me we'd develop a solid alliance.

"Nice meeting you, Jude."

We dedicated the morning to synchronizing our intelligence systems, ensuring seamless coordination between our respective operations. Throughout these hours, Caleb remained conspicuously absent from his office. By eleven o'clock, we had established foolproof procedures that would function with military precision. Jude suggested lunch together while Heidi would spend her afternoon managing secure video conferences with the Boston operations. As Jude returned to collect some classified files, I finally stood to refill my coffee when that familiar whistle echoed through the space, making me look up with involuntary amusement.

"Is this performance scheduled daily, Xavier?"

"Ivy, it wasn't planned this way, but honestly, what did you expect wearing that particular weapon? You're well aware of your effect on people. Your boss is in serious fucking trouble." His mischievous grin widened as he continued. "Speaking of Caleb, is he available in his fortress?"

Before I could respond, we heard Caleb's office door slam open like a gunshot, followed by his irritated voice cutting through the air with lethal precision.

"Xavier, I've already warned you about this shit."

When his gaze landed on me, I witnessed pure fire blazing in those ice-blue eyes as they traveled over my body with undisguised hunger that made my skin burn. I couldn't resist seizing this perfect opportunity.

"Sir, perhaps some calming chamomile tea would help?"

His eyes narrowed dangerously as a low growl escaped his throat that sounded like a predator ready to strike. Xavier observed our exchange with growing confusion before addressing his boss.

"Since when do you drink chamomile tea, Caleb?"

"Since my assistant decided to test every fucking limit of my self-control," he replied, never breaking eye contact with me in a stare that promised retribution.

I smiled sweetly, placing my palm against my chest in mock innocence.

"I would never deliberately provoke you, Mr. Thorne. Xavier, would you prefer coffee?"

"Absolutely, Ivy, thank you."

I walked deliberately slowly toward the break room, acutely aware of both men watching my every movement like predators tracking prey. Caleb was probably already regretting his decision to challenge me this morning.

I prepared both beverages carefully, arranging everything on the silver tray with military precision. As I prepared to leave, Katelyn intercepted me near the doorway, reaching for the tray.

"Ivy, sweetheart, let me handle this. Serving drinks isn't part of your job description."

"Katelyn, I genuinely don't mind. Allow me to deliver this to my Don personally this time." I smiled warmly before continuing past her with the tray.

I approached Caleb's office door, knocked softly, and entered with practiced grace. Moving smoothly across the room, I positioned the tray on his desk's edge, placed Xavier's coffee cup before him with a crisp napkin, then circled around to Caleb's side. In a deliberately provocative move, I leaned forward to place his teacup directly in his hands, ensuring my neckline aligned perfectly with his line of sight. His

eyes flashed with recognition and dangerous promise, understanding exactly what deadly game I was playing, and with Xavier present, he was completely powerless to retaliate.

As I reached for the napkin, I allowed it to slip from my fingers onto the floor. Bending slowly to retrieve it, I positioned myself strategically so Caleb had an unobstructed view of my backside, taking considerably longer than necessary to collect the fallen napkin and straighten up. His frustrated growl confirmed I had successfully created another uncomfortable situation for him.

Standing upright, I noticed Xavier's entertained expression as he observed our entire interaction with obvious amusement. I felt no embarrassment since they were blood brothers, and I suspected Caleb shared everything with him anyway. Before I could speak, Caleb rose abruptly, grasped the napkin still clutched in my hand, and spoke in that devastatingly husky voice while positioning his face mere inches from mine.

"The next time you present that beautiful ass to me so blatantly, I'm going to bend you over this desk, forget completely that you work for me, and fuck you so thoroughly you'll beg me to stop. Are we clear?"

I glanced downward and spotted the unmistakable bulge straining against his expensive trousers. I swallowed hard, my mouth suddenly dry. This man was absolutely lethal to my sanity. I was completely aroused again, my body responding traitorously to his proximity. He resembled a dark angel, a walking temptation designed to destroy my resolve. I was in serious danger.

"Did you understand me clearly, Ivy?" he pressed, his voice dropping to a lethal whisper.

"Y-yes, sir."

From across the desk, Xavier erupted in laughter at our heated exchange. Studying both of us with obvious entertainment, he couldn't resist commenting.

"You two should just fuck and end this torture, because the sexual tension radiating between you is absolutely explosive. It's completely inevitable, so save yourselves the energy and stress of fighting the obvious."

We both whirled to glare at him simultaneously, which only increased his amusement. He chuckled, collected his coffee cup, and headed toward the door while calling over his shoulder.

"Don’t claim I didn’t warn you both."

When our eyes met again, Caleb closed his eyes tightly and dragged both hands down his face in obvious frustration. I had begun noticing this particular gesture whenever he felt nervous, frustrated, or uncertain about how to proceed—a crack in his lethal armor that was surprisingly endearing.

Taking advantage of his momentary distraction as he settled back into his chair, I spun quickly on my heels and made my escape before he could exact revenge.

I utilized the remaining time before lunch break focusing intensely on my assigned intelligence tasks. At noon, Jude appeared at my desk with infectious enthusiasm.

"Ready for lunch, Ivy? I’m absolutely starving."

"Definitely, Jude. Let me just confirm my boss doesn’t require anything first."

I picked up my phone to call Caleb rather than risk entering his office again and facing whatever retribution he’d planned. He approved my lunch break but still sounded agitated from our earlier encounter.

We visited a charming restaurant near the office known for exceptional cuisine—and probably money laundering, given the neighborhood. Jude proved entertaining, conversational, and genuinely pleasant company. He shared that he married his childhood sweetheart but they haven’t started a family yet due to the dangerous nature of their work. When he asked about my background, I explained my situation as a single mother. We spent lunch exchanging life stories and war experiences. He would definitely become a valuable ally. He mentioned his wife and I would connect wonderfully, and I felt excited about potentially expanding my circle of protection in this new city. Returning to the office, we stopped at the bakery across the street where I purchased a slice of decadent chocolate cake for later.

By one o’clock, I sat professionally positioned at my desk, though still facing my morning wardrobe malfunction. I had intended to purchase replacement underwear during lunch, but Jude insisted on

waiting at the bakery, and I felt too awkward abandoning him for such a personal errand, leaving me still uncomfortably exposed beneath my dress.

The afternoon stretched ahead like a minefield, and I had a feeling Caleb Thorne wasn’t finished with his games.