Mafia Mask 18

Chapter 18 Strategic Counterattack

Caleb's POV

I sat across from Xavier at our usual secure restaurant, laying out every detail of what happened with Ivy. His expression shifted from curiosity to complete fucking disbelief.

"Wait, you're telling me she walked around the compound with no underwear under that dress?" Xavier's voice dropped to a whisper, his eyes wide with shock.

The realization hit me like a sledgehammer to the chest. I had left her completely exposed in that provocative little weapon. Any wrong move, any slight bend, and she'd be in a mortifying situation in front of my entire crew. The thought should have concerned me more, but I had destroyed her underwear in a moment of pure savage madness. Even if I hadn't, there was no fucking way I would have returned it to her.

"This woman is going to be the death of me, Xavier. Today she decided to declare all-out war on my self-control."

"Don't act like the victim here, Caleb. You fired the first shot with those midnight messages. What exactly were you expecting?"

I ran my hands through my hair, frustration building in my chest like pressure in a bomb. "Look, I called her in early just to mess with her head a little. Maybe push her buttons, see her squirm. I never intended to actually touch her. But then she showed up dressed like she was ready for battle. That tight dress that rides up her thighs every time she sits down, those heels that make her legs look like weapons. The second I saw her, my brain just shut down completely."

"And clearly, hers did too. Face it, Caleb, this woman has you completely twisted around her finger. Whatever's building between you two is going to explode, and I'm going to enjoy watching you try to fight it."

"She’s not going to break first. She’s playing this game like a master strategist, and I refuse to be the one who caves."

"So what’s your next move in this war?"

"I don’t know yet, but I guarantee she’s planning her next attack right now. I’m going back to that office ready for whatever she throws at me."

An idea began forming in my mind, wicked and perfect. Ivy’s little game was about to come to a very dangerous end.

"I know that look," Xavier said, his amusement clear. "You just thought of something devious, and I want every detail."

"I’m going to apologize to my dear assistant. I’m going to buy her replacement underwear." The smile spreading across my face was purely predatory. Xavier burst into laughter, shaking his head in disbelief.

"You’re a sick bastard, and I love it."

We left the restaurant, and I headed straight to the most exclusive lingerie boutique in the city—the kind of place that catered to men with dangerous tastes and unlimited resources. I selected a lacy thong that was more suggestion than coverage, with the word "MINE" spelled out in golden charms and rhinestones across the back straps. The delicate fabric would tear easily between my fingers when I wanted it to. I shook my head at the thought. At this rate, I’d leave that woman with no underwear collection at all. The idea made me laugh out loud. I had the saleswoman wrap it in elegant packaging and left the store feeling like I’d regained the upper hand in our deadly game. Ivy wouldn’t dare continue her provocations after what I was about to do.

When I returned to the office, she was already at her desk, typing away with lethal efficiency. A small package sat beside her computer with what looked like a slice of chocolate cake inside. Perfect. This was going to be even better than I’d planned.

I approached her desk with my most serious business expression. "Miss Brooks, I need you to get a printed copy of the quarterly territory report from Jude's office. The physical copy, not digital transmission."

She could have easily requested this electronically, but I needed her away from her desk for a few minutes. She nodded and left immediately, her heels clicking down the corridor like gunshots. The moment she was out of sight, I grabbed her cake and headed to my office, settling onto the leather couch with my prize.

When she returned with the report, I maintained my professional facade.

"Miss Brooks, please lock the door. We'll be discussing sensitive territorial information, and I don't want any interruptions."

She looked suspicious but complied, walking over and handing me the thick document. I accepted it and began reviewing the first pages, my expression serious and focused. She remained standing, uncertain.

"You can sit down, Miss Brooks. This review will take considerable time."

Her eyes immediately noticed the gift bag positioned strategically beside me on the couch. She moved to the far end of the sofa, settling into the exact spot I'd anticipated, since I was occupying the other end with predatory precision. That's when she spotted her cake on the coffee table, and her eyes widened with dangerous realization. But she said nothing, which impressed the hell out of me.

She was tense, clearly knowing I was orchestrating something lethal, but I wanted to keep her guessing. The anticipation was delicious, and I was firmly back in control where I belonged.

For the next hour, I genuinely focused on the territorial report, giving her detailed instructions which she dutifully recorded on her tablet. This helped her relax slightly, and she seemed to convince herself that maybe I wasn't plotting anything after all. For the first time all day, our interaction was purely professional.

After thoroughly analyzing every page and providing comprehensive instructions, I set the papers aside and reached for the cake. I leaned back into the plush cushions, slowly opening the package and taking a

deliberate bite. The chocolate was rich and decadent. I closed my eyes and made a soft sound of appreciation, fully aware that she was watching my every move like prey watching a predator.

"This is absolutely incredible. I hope you don't mind me sampling your dessert." I looked at her with completely innocent eyes, as if I hadn't orchestrated this entire scenario like a military operation. She seemed confused and shook her head, indicating she didn't mind. Then I picked up the gift bag and extended it toward her. "Consider this a peace offering, Miss Brooks. I sincerely hope you find it... acceptable."

She accepted the bag from my hand, her fingers brushing mine briefly, sending electricity through my system. I had to fight to suppress the satisfied smile threatening to break across my face.

Game on, Miss Brooks. Let's see how you handle this next move in our dangerous dance.