Mafia Mask 181

Chapter 181 Ring of Legacy

Ivy's POV

The day had been a whirlwind of preparations for our blood oath ceremony, but every moment felt absolutely perfect. My sisters in the syndicate had proven themselves to be incredible organizers. In a short time, we had secured everything needed for the sacred ritual - black roses for the altar, trusted catering from our territory, a string quartet loyal to the family, ceremonial daggers blessed by Father Murray, the guest list of allied families, a traditional wedding cake, and most importantly, my dress. Since I wanted something intimate rather than a massive display of power, the planning moved quickly while still capturing exactly what I envisioned for a mafia queen's wedding.

We had also coordinated with the priest that Jude recommended, and met with Father Murray about performing the ceremony. Initially, he hesitated to conduct the blessing since Caleb and I hadn't completed the traditional family counseling that most syndicate marriages required. However, Zoe worked her persuasive magic and convinced him to meet with us the following morning for an abbreviated session. After that discussion, he agreed to provide the religious blessing we wanted, knowing full well the dangerous world we inhabited.

Gemma and Lila had designed gorgeous digital invitations with our family crest and scheduled them to go out during dinner time, ensuring our enemies wouldn't discover our plans prematurely. They had volunteered to handle all the RSVP responses the next day, screening each guest for potential security threats.

Zoe had completely taken over the next day's schedule with military precision. The day would include the pre-marriage counseling session, which she had already informed Jude to communicate to Caleb, followed by a full spa treatment, hair salon appointment, and final dress fittings for both myself and my bridesmaids. I had specifically chosen to let each of them select their own dresses and colors. I wanted them to feel confident and beautiful in whatever they chose, rather than forcing them into something that might make them uncomfortable just to satisfy some bridal vision. I wasn't the type of future don's wife who worried about being overshadowed - after all, I would be the one standing at the altar taking the blood oath in white.

My sisters were all so different from each other, with varying body types and personal styles. What looked stunning on one might not flatter another. I wanted each of them to feel radiant standing beside me as we entered this dangerous new Chapter. That's why they each chose their own dress in their

preferred color, and I absolutely loved their selections - beautiful, vibrant hues that were all different from each other. It would be perfect, like being surrounded by loyal soldiers in a garden of deadly flowers.

Before heading home to prepare for the family dinner, Lila asked me to send her my wedding vows so she could have them engraved on the ceremonial blades.

"Lila, I'm not writing personal vows," I explained.

"What do you mean? Every modern syndicate wedding includes personalized blood oaths written by the couple," Lila responded, as if I was completely out of touch with mafia traditions.

"That might be the current trend, Lila, but I want ours to be traditional. The classic and sacred 'I swear by blood and honor to be faithful to you, through prosperity and war, in power and in exile, in wealth and in poverty, loving you and protecting you, all the days of our lives, until death claims us both.' It's absolutely perfect! Nothing could be more meaningful than promising loyalty, faithfulness, and protection through good times and deadly times, for our entire lives."

"Oh, Ivy, you're such a hopeless romantic," Zoe laughed.

"Besides, those vows sealed the union for Caleb's parents and grandparents, so we're continuing the family legacy," I said with a smile.

"You're going to be the boss's wife, so you make the rules!" Gemma agreed.

When I arrived home to our fortified compound, I found Caleb looking somewhat irritated. He informed me that Zoe had mandated he spend the following nights at Xavier's safe house and couldn't see me again until our wedding day. The men would use this opportunity to have their own gathering, like a war council mixed with celebration. Dominic had promised to organize a bachelor party that would involve weapons training and strategic planning. I warned Caleb that this bachelor party better not involve any female entertainment from rival families, which made him laugh heartily.

After finishing my preparations, I ran my hand over my dress while examining myself in the mirror. I wore a midnight blue dress that hugged my waist before flaring into a midi-length skirt. The front was

modest, but the back featured an elegant low-cut design that revealed the small Thorne family crest tattooed between my shoulder blades. A thin fabric belt in matching material was sewn into the waist, creating a beautiful bow at the back. I left my hair flowing loose over my shoulders and completed the look with subtle makeup and nude heels with a matching clutch.

I walked into the living room where Caleb was waiting. He looked incredibly dangerous, as always, wearing a dark gray suit with no tie and a crisp white shirt. When he saw me, he approached with his eyes absolutely burning with possessiveness.

"You look absolutely breathtaking!" He smiled and gave me a possessive kiss. "I'm going to marry the most beautiful queen in the entire underworld!"

"You're being dramatic!" I smiled, wrapping my arms around his neck. "Where is everyone else?"

"They already left. Your parents took Max with them. They went with the armored car and armed guards."

"Well, then we should go too."

"Do I really have to stay at Xavier's compound? I promise I won't tell Zoe anything!" His tone was practically begging.

"Yes, you absolutely do. Because she will inevitably find out, and I refuse to face her fury," I smiled and pulled him by the hand. He followed with an exaggerated sigh.

When we arrived at the private dining room of our family restaurant, everyone was already gathered. Our inner circle and both sets of parents were there, along with Carmen, Walter, and Daisy - the nickname Gemma had given Dona Katelyn that somehow stuck, and now everyone called her that. We greeted everyone and I received numerous compliments on my appearance. Max was sitting on Xavier's lap, enthusiastically telling him about the action movie he had watched that afternoon, and Xavier was giving him the same focused attention he would give an important territory meeting.

I felt overwhelmed with happiness having all the most important people in my syndicate family gathered together. We were assembled in the private dining room with armed guards posted at every entrance,

and servers from our trusted network circulated offering champagne. Caleb called for everyone's attention and began speaking:

"Family and allies, this week we endured some truly brutal conflicts, but they brought us even closer together as a unit. However, everything that happened made me realize that when we're absolutely certain about something we want, we shouldn't waste time waiting. That's exactly why we're all gathered here tonight. I want to thank each and every one of you for being here supporting us and for standing with me during the bloodiest battles." Caleb paused to take a breath. "When my parents were murdered, I felt completely isolated and alone in this violent world, and all of you surrounded me with loyalty and unwavering support. And when I thought nothing could ever bring me peace again, I found the woman of my dreams and my son, and now we're expecting another child. I would like to make a toast to exactly that - to all of you, to family, to my children, and to the most precious woman in the world who brought light into my darkness."

Everyone raised their champagne glasses in a toast and applauded Caleb's heartfelt words. He continued speaking:

"I am absolutely certain that you are the love of my life, Ivy, and that I want to spend my entire life with you." Caleb took my hand and walked with me toward my parents. "Therefore, Thomas and Diane, I would like to ask you for the tremendous honor of making your daughter my queen. I promise you, and all our family gathered here, that I will protect her and love her every single day. I will work tirelessly to give her a secure territory and a peaceful life within our dangerous world. I ask for your blessing to marry Ivy and I promise to dedicate myself so that we have a marriage as strong as yours and like my parents had."

"Caleb... ahem..." my father needed to clear his throat, and I noticed he was just as emotional as my mother, who was already crying. "You are definitely a man who keeps his word. When I first met you, you said you wanted to court my daughter and that it wouldn't be a long engagement. You certainly weren't kidding." My father smiled and made everyone laugh along with him. "I am a straightforward man, Caleb, but I am completely sure you will make my daughter very happy, because anyone can see in the way you look at her just how much you love her. And where there is genuine love, everything can be endured, faced, and conquered. You have our complete blessing. You are welcomed into my family as a son."

I was crying freely, and a member of our trusted staff handed me a small packet of tissues that she was already distributing among the emotional guests. My father and Caleb embraced, and then my mother also hugged Caleb and kissed his cheek.

Caleb turned toward me, took a small velvet box from his pocket, and opened it carefully. Inside was the most beautiful engagement ring I had ever seen. It was crafted from white gold with the metal designed to look like delicate thorns and leaves, and in the center sat a round diamond, with triangular aquamarine stones on each side connecting to the diamond at its base. The design was absolutely perfect and deadly beautiful.

"The diamond, Ivy, represents durability and loyalty, exactly as I want our union to be," Caleb began explaining. "Aquamarine symbolizes the quality of being unique, and you are completely unique to me. I want you to be absolutely sure of that. This was the ring my grandfather used to claim my grandmother. Later, this was the ring my father used to claim my mother. And now, this is the ring I'm using to claim you as mine. This ring represents my commitment and my complete dedication to you. Choose me to be yours, Ivy, for the rest of our dangerous lives."

"Yes... a thousand times yes... I will say yes to you every single day for the rest of our lives," I said through tears and sobs.

I placed both hands on my future don's handsome face and gave him a gentle kiss on his lips. Caleb removed the ring from the box and showed me the inscription "Maktub" engraved on the inside of the band, which I knew meant "it was already written." This made me cry even more. Caleb slipped the ring onto my finger and kissed my hand possessively. We were officially engaged.

"Oh, before I forget, you'll all receive formal invitations, but our blood oath ceremony will be this coming weekend," Caleb announced with a dangerous smile.

For the following hour, we explained to my parents and the other guests exactly why we were having the ceremony so soon and assured them that everything was already completely organized and heavily guarded.

"I won't lie, I'll go home feeling much more relaxed knowing that you are married, that you will have someone protecting you from now on, my daughter," my father said, hugging me tightly after dinner.

My father knew I was perfectly capable of taking care of myself and my son in this violent world, but like every loving father, he wanted to see his daughter safe beside someone who loved and protected her. I completely understood his feelings.

"Jude, you kept your promise - this dinner was absolutely magnificent. Thank you!" I said, hugging my loyal friend gratefully.

"It was my pleasure, my queen." Looking at Zoe with a mischievous smile, he said, "I want to see you top this!" He challenged her, knowing she was coordinating the wedding preparations with absolute determination.

"Jude, don't activate her perfectionist mode," I pleaded, and everyone burst into laughter, but it was already too late - Zoe had accepted his challenge with gleaming eyes.

Chapter 182 After Hours Business

Ivy's POV

After saying goodbye to everyone at the family celebration, Caleb and I lingered at the Thorne estate while Walter supervised the cleanup of our private reception. Caleb had planned to drive me back to my apartment, but his encrypted phone buzzed with an urgent message from Sawyer, his trusted contact who managed our Boston territory operations.

"Tesoro, would you mind coming with me to the corporate office for this call?" Caleb asked, his expression growing serious as he read the coded message.

"Of course. It's still early in the evening, and I haven't turned into a pumpkin yet," I replied, trying to lighten the tension that had suddenly appeared in his shoulders.

"If you're Cinderella, shouldn't you become a servant at midnight?" he teased, though his smile didn't quite reach those ice-blue eyes.

"I'm not Cinderella. I'm the carriage, sturdy and reliable," I shot back, earning a genuine laugh that made some of the worry lines around his eyes soften.

We drove through the city to Thorne Group's headquarters, the legitimate front for our family's operations. The building's top floors housed Caleb's real office, equipped with military-grade encryption and surveillance countermeasures. He handled the encrypted video conference with his usual commanding presence, introducing me to Sawyer, who offered warm congratulations on our upcoming

marriage. After resolving what turned out to be a territorial dispute with rival families, Caleb ended the call and found me sprawled across the leather sofa, my heels kicked off beside the coffee table.

"My feet are killing me," I groaned, wiggling my toes in relief.

"You're carrying our child now. You need to take better care of yourself, especially in those heels," Caleb settled beside me, gently lifting my feet onto his lap with the reverent care he always showed when touching me.

His strong hands began working their magic on my aching arches and toes. I melted into the expensive Italian leather, my eyes drifting closed as waves of relief washed over me. Soft moans of contentment escaped my lips as his skilled fingers found every tender spot with practiced precision.

"I'm not planning to limit myself to just your feet, angel," Caleb murmured, his voice dropping to that husky tone that never failed to make my pulse race.

He helped me stand, his hands reverent as he slowly removed each piece of my designer clothing. When I was completely bare before him, he guided me back to the sofa, his ice-blue eyes drinking in every curve of my body like a man dying of thirst in the desert.

Caleb resumed his foot massage, but now his heated gaze roamed freely over my exposed skin. I stretched one leg out while bending the other, my knee raised in invitation. His hand traveled upward along my calf, gently pressing my leg wider, opening me completely to his hungry stare. The evidence of my arousal glistened between my thighs.

My nipples hardened into tight peaks under his intense scrutiny, silently begging for his touch. Heat pooled low in my belly, building like pressure in a volcano ready to erupt. Caleb's hands moved to my neck, his fingers working the tense muscles there, drawing another satisfied moan from my lips.

"Turn over for me, angel," he commanded softly, his voice carrying that undertone of absolute authority that made my body respond instantly.

When I complied, he positioned a small cushion beneath my rounded belly, protecting our unborn child with the same care he showed in protecting our territory. His palms cupped my bottom, kneading and

caressing with deliberate slowness. Electric currents shot through my nerve endings as his thumbs traced the sensitive cleft between my cheeks, venturing lower to brush against my most intimate places.

I couldn't stand the sweet torture any longer. Rolling onto my back, I spread my legs wide, draping one over the sofa back in blatant invitation. Caleb fought for control, returning his attention to massaging my foot resting on his thigh, though I could see the hunger burning in his eyes.

Sitting sideways to face me, his hands began a slow journey from my ankles to my knees, his grip firm and possessive like everything else about him. When he reached my inner thighs, my entire body trembled with anticipation. Every muscle tensed under his touch as he maintained that maddening, gentle pressure.

Desperate for more stimulation, I cupped my breasts, rolling my nipples between my fingers while he watched with dilated pupils. My back arched as pleasure sparked through me, a low moan vibrating in my throat.

Caleb remained motionless except for his eyes, which tracked every movement of my hands with laser focus. Almost imperceptibly, his palms slid higher up my thighs until he reached their junction. While I continued pleasuring my breasts, he began massaging around my sex, his touch firm and deliberate against my swollen flesh.

My body responded instantly, contracting and pulsing with desperate need. I rolled my hips in rhythm with his caresses, chasing the building sensation that threatened to consume me. Caleb leaned down, pressing his lips to my heated skin just above my mound. His warm breath against my belly made me writhe beneath him, my hands never ceasing their work on my breasts.

Before I could reach my peak, Caleb covered my body with his own, supporting his weight on his forearms as he captured my mouth in a searing kiss that tasted of possession and promise. Our tongues danced together as he maneuvered us both onto our sides, spooning me from behind.

I felt his hardness pressing against my bottom as he abandoned my lips to trail kisses along my nape. His hands claimed my breasts, drawing a sharp gasp from my throat. He lavished attention on my peaked nipples, rolling and pinching them until waves of sensation shot straight to my core.

Caleb lifted my top leg, draping it over his hip to open me completely. My body wept with desire, clenching desperately around emptiness. His fingers found my slick heat, stroking from my entrance to my sensitive bundle of nerves with feather-light touches that had me begging for more against his lips.

I was drowning in sensation, my arousal coating my inner thighs, but he wanted to prolong my sweet torment. When his hand moved back to my breasts, I grabbed his wrist and pressed his palm against my aching center, silently pleading for more. My other hand reached behind me to wrap around his hard length, earning a sharp intake of breath.

Turning to face him, I kept my thighs spread wide, one leg hooked over his hip. I guided his swollen tip to my entrance, rubbing him against my slick folds as our mouths fused together in desperate hunger. Inch by delicious inch, he filled me completely while my breasts pressed against his chest.

A deep sigh escaped me as his impressive size stretched me to my limits. I pressed closer, crushing my breasts against him as he thrust upward, each stroke hitting spots that made me cry out with pleasure.

My body welcomed him greedily, trying to take every inch of his considerable length and girth. The sound of our joining filled the secure office as he claimed me with increasing intensity, marking me as his in the most primal way possible.

Tension coiled tight in my core, warning of my approaching climax. My moans grew louder, more desperate, as incoherent pleas spilled from my lips. The explosion hit me with devastating force, my inner walls clamping down around him as waves of ecstasy crashed over me.

As I trembled through the aftershocks, Caleb continued moving slowly inside me, building toward another peak. A series of smaller releases followed, each one making me grip him tighter, my body desperate to hold onto this connection.

"I’m not finished with you yet, angel," he whispered against my ear before increasing his pace to a punishing rhythm that made the expensive sofa creak beneath us.

Sometimes he would withdraw almost completely before slamming back into me, reaching impossible depths that made stars burst behind my eyelids. His raw words of possession and praise in my ear pushed me toward an even more intense climax.

"Come for me, angel. Feel how your man fills you completely. You love this, don't you? Love how I stretch you, how I make you fall apart."

His explicit whispers combined with his relentless thrusts shattered my control completely. I screamed his name as the most powerful orgasm of my life tore through me. My body convulsed around him, milking him as he surrendered to his own release with a roar of satisfaction that echoed through the soundproofed office.

We collapsed together, limbs tangled and hearts racing. Even after such intensity, he remained hard inside me, a testament to his seemingly endless stamina. Caleb began moving again, this time with slow, loving strokes while murmuring endearments against my lips. Soon he brought me to one final, gentle climax before finding his own release.

Utterly spent, I curled into his embrace as he told me how beautiful I was and how much he loved me. Sleep claimed me instantly, safe in the arms of my dangerous, devoted beloved.

Dawn light was streaming through the bulletproof windows when we finally stirred. Caleb drove me back to my apartment before returning to Xavier's safe house, promising to collect me later for our meeting with the priest who would officiate our public ceremony.

Before I entered the building, he pulled me close for a lingering kiss that made my knees weak, his hands possessive on my waist.

"I love you beyond measure, my angel. I can hardly wait for the first day of our forever," he said with a radiant smile, and I knew he meant our wedding day that would cement our union before both the legitimate world and our criminal empire.

I reluctantly left his warm embrace and walked into the building, already missing his commanding presence beside me.

Chapter 183 Legacy and Lace

Ivy's POV

Friday disappeared in a whirlwind of pre-wedding chaos orchestrated by the Thorne family's security protocols. Zoe kept teasing me about having an unfair advantage since I'd spent the night in Caleb's heavily fortified penthouse, claiming I was glowing while she looked exhausted from coordinating with the family's event planners. After our morning session with Father Basil, who specialized in conducting ceremonies for families like ours, Caleb and I separated according to tradition. The women escorted me to the main estate for final preparations while the men disappeared with Caleb for their own mysterious rituals involving the family's inner circle. By evening, I collapsed into the master suite completely drained from the intensity of mafia wedding preparations.

My wedding day arrived with Zoe bursting through the reinforced bedroom door at dawn, carrying a silver tray laden with my favorite breakfast foods. Armed guards had already swept the perimeter multiple times before sunrise. The room quickly filled with excited chatter as my friends, my mother, Carmen, and Heidi gathered around the antique table. We were getting ready at the Thorne family compound, a sprawling estate that would soon become my fortress and sanctuary in this dangerous world.

The drive through the estate's iron gates felt surreal. Everything looked the same yet completely different, knowing this fortress would protect my family now. Zoe had transformed the estate's library into a professional salon overnight, complete with mirrors bordered by Hollywood-style lights and enough electrical outlets to power a small military operation. Soon the beauty team arrived, their equipment cases checked by security before being rolled inside like they were preparing for a high-profile assassination target's transformation.

The preparation ritual began immediately. Hair dryers hummed while expert hands worked through my hair, creating an elegant updo that somehow managed to look effortlessly regal. Servers appeared periodically with champagne flutes and delicate finger foods, maintaining our energy through the hours of primping. The atmosphere buzzed with excitement as the stylists worked their magic, their infectious enthusiasm making even the longest procedures feel like a celebration worthy of a mafia queen.

When the final touches were complete, I stood before the full-length mirror hardly recognizing myself. The only thing left was the dress. My mother and friends formed a careful circle around me, lifting the ivory silk creation over my head with reverent precision. Each button, each fold of fabric fell into place like armor designed specifically for my ascension to power.

Once I was fully dressed, everyone quietly filed out except my mother. She stood behind me in the mirror, her hands resting gently on my shoulders, tears already streaming down her cheeks despite her earlier promises not to cry.

"My darling girl, you look absolutely magnificent," she whispered, her voice thick with emotion and pride.

"Mom, please don't start crying or I'll lose it completely," I pleaded, though my own eyes were already welling up as I turned to embrace her.

"Ivy, I know you're going to find incredible happiness, but remember that marriage in this world requires more than just wisdom. You need to learn when to stand beside him in battle and when to let him lead, which enemies deserve your personal attention and which ones you should let him eliminate. It's no longer just about what you want, but what your family requires to survive. Do you understand what I'm telling you?"

"I understand completely, Mom. I love you more than words can express. Thank you for standing by me, especially when things became deadly."

"Sweetheart, I will always be in your corner because my love for you is unwavering and infinite, a bond that nothing in this violent world could ever break." Her words broke down my last defenses and I sobbed openly, grateful for waterproof mascara.

A gentle knock interrupted our moment. We called out permission to enter, and my father stepped through the doorway. His face lit up with pure joy, though his eyes immediately filled with tears he tried unsuccessfully to blink away.

"Ivy, my beautiful daughter, you look absolutely stunning," he managed, dabbing at his eyes with his handkerchief. "Seeing you this happy, watching you build a life with such a powerful man and join a family that commands respect throughout the underworld, fills me with overwhelming pride and gratitude for the privilege of being your father."

"Dad, you're going to make me cry all over again," I laughed through my tears as I fell into his arms. The embrace lasted only moments but felt like capturing eternity. This feeling would live in my heart always, even through the blood and violence ahead.

"Ivy," my father said as he released me, "your mother and I wanted to give you something special." I noticed he was holding two small velvet jewelry boxes. "We hope you'll treasure them."

The first box revealed exquisite pearl drop earrings. Each pearl hung gracefully from a gold hoop embedded with three perfectly cut diamonds. They were elegant and timeless, exactly befitting a mafia queen's style.

"Dad, Mom, they're absolutely gorgeous! Will you help me put them on?"

My mother carefully fastened each earring, and they complemented my dress flawlessly, adding the perfect touch of deadly elegance.

The second box contained a stunning rosary made of luminous mother-of-pearl beads that seemed to glow in the afternoon light streaming through bulletproof windows.

"This rosary has special meaning. I would be deeply honored if you carried it with your bouquet. It belonged to my mother, who carried it on her wedding day. Now it belongs to you," my father explained, his voice heavy with emotion. The weight of family history and protection in my hands moved me to tears again.

"The honor is entirely mine, Dad," I said with absolute sincerity.

Another knock came at the door. Xavier entered with his characteristic grin, surveying the emotional scene before him, his hand instinctively checking the concealed weapon at his side.

"They sent me to check if you're crying in here," he announced, then turned toward the hallway. "She's got tears flowing like Niagara Falls, but give me a few minutes alone with her first."

Xavier closed the reinforced door and looked me up and down before letting out his signature whistle that never failed to make me laugh, reminding me of countless similar moments throughout our dangerous friendship.

"Ivy, I don't have adequate words to describe how beautiful you look," he said with genuine admiration. "I'm here as Caleb's messenger since family tradition forbids him from seeing you before the blood ceremony, but he wanted you to have this."

Xavier handed me an elegant box and a small cream envelope. I opened the note first and read Caleb's familiar handwriting.

"Please don't feel pressured to wear this. I simply want to share a piece of my family's legacy with you. If my parents were here today, they would adore you like their own daughter and celebrate that I found someone worthy of our name. This belonged to my mother and now it's yours. With all my love and protection, Your Caleb."

My heart swelled as I opened the box to reveal the most exquisite tiara I'd ever seen. The delicate gold work resembled rose vine branches and leaves, with perfectly sculpted roses throughout. Little diamonds covered every flower and leaf, with pearls nestled among the foliage like morning dew. It was breathtaking and unmistakably regal.

I thanked Xavier for delivering something so meaningful, precious not for its monetary value but for what it represented in our dangerous world.

Xavier escorted my mother out, explaining she would make her entrance with Scott under armed escort, then sent the beauty team back in for final touch-ups. They refreshed my makeup and positioned the tiara perfectly in my hair.

Taking my father's steady arm with a radiant smile and my heart hammering with anticipation, we walked slowly toward the ceremony. French doors opened onto the garden where Zoe had arranged security screens disguised as curtains to keep me hidden until the perfect moment.

"Girl, you look like a goddess descended from heaven," Zoe exclaimed, pressing her hands to her cheeks. "Caleb walked in with Heidi, Gemma managed her entrance with Dominic despite being emotional about the family politics, and little Lila has the wedding coordinator practically swooning. I already made my entrance with my prince, but I ran back because I needed to give you your bouquet personally."

Zoe presented me with a stunning arrangement of white and red tulips bound with white satin ribbon that wove elegantly through the flowers. She'd kept the bouquet design secret, calling it her special surprise for the family's new queen.

"Zoe, it's absolutely perfect," I breathed, feeling emotion rising again.

"Sweetheart, this is it. When those barriers drop, everyone will see you and Caleb will be waiting at the altar. He might actually faint because he's incredibly nervous and you're the most gorgeous mafia bride in existence," Zoe teased before pulling me into a fierce hug. "I'll be right beside you through everything, for the rest of our lives in this family," my sister-like friend whispered.

Zoe departed and I returned to my father's steady arm. He asked if I was ready, and after taking a deep, centering breath, I nodded. He signaled the security team to remove the white barriers. The music began immediately. I looked at my beaming father, then forward with my brightest smile, seeing the love of my life waiting for me at the altar, ready to bind our souls together with blood and vows.

Chapter 184 Claiming My Queen

Caleb's POV

Walking down the aisle with Heidi's steady arm supporting me, I surveyed the transformation Ivy had orchestrated in our estate's private gardens. Every detail reflected her meticulous planning and understanding of our world. Heavy oak chairs mixed with ornate wrought iron seats created an intimate yet imposing atmosphere for our family and allied associates. Massive arrangements of white roses and blood-red tulips lined the walkway, their stark contrast speaking the language of our domain - beauty paired with danger.

The altar commanded respect. A solid mahogany table stood beneath an archway draped in flowing silk, more roses cascading from every corner in arrangements that could have adorned a king's coronation. But what threatened to break my composure completely was the front row. Two chairs held silver-framed photographs of my parents, each adorned with a single white rose. Ivy had ensured that even in death, the former Don and his wife were present for this moment, their legacy binding this union in the eyes of all who mattered.

Heidi settled beside their photos, her presence a bridge between the old guard and our new reign. I had to steel myself against the emotion threatening to surface before our assembled guests.

When our wedding party began their procession, I was struck by Ivy's brilliant strategy. Each of the women wore different colored dresses that commanded attention while maintaining harmony. Deep purple, crimson, golden yellow, burnt orange, and rose pink moved down the aisle like a royal court. They looked like living jewels, powerful and elegant against the estate's backdrop. Ten chairs flanked the altar, five on each side, positioned so our inner circle could witness this moment while facing our broader family of associates. The women took one side, my lieutenants the other, creating a perfect display of united strength.

Then the music shifted, and my world stopped.

The silk curtains parted, revealing Ivy on her father's arm, and breathing became impossible. Her dress was perfection crafted for a queen. Ivory silk flowed from a halter neckline, secured with silk straps that wrapped around her neck and cascaded down her bare back in an elegant bow that spoke of both vulnerability and power. Layers of silk created a skirt that seemed to float with each step, while intricate beadwork decorated the bodice and scattered across the flowing fabric like captured starlight.

My mother's diamond tiara nestled in her hair, which was swept into an elaborate low chignon that showcased the family heirloom perfectly. As she moved toward me, she seemed to glide rather than walk, regal and luminous. When our eyes met, her smile held the warmth of absolute devotion mixed with the steel of a woman ready to rule beside me.

This woman was about to become my wife and partner in every sense. The magnitude hit me like a physical force.

The ceremony began, each word carrying weight that went beyond traditional vows in our world. When the time came for rings, Max appeared carrying a small wooden box, his young face serious with understanding of this moment's importance. He walked directly to the altar and handed me the box before positioning himself between Ivy and me, completely ignoring the choreography but making the moment absolutely perfect.

Inside lay the rings I had commissioned specifically for this union. My parents' wedding bands had been redesigned with my grandparents' pieces, yellow gold merged with platinum and diamonds to create something entirely new yet deeply rooted in family power. Each ring was forged from two, symbolizing how our separate reigns were becoming one empire. The engraving inside read "From this January to forever" - a promise that spanned all seasons, all territories, all time.

After we exchanged vows and I finally claimed my bride with a kiss, I asked our family for one more moment. This was for Max, something I had been planning since discovering the truth about his parentage. I called him over and pulled out a small leather box, removing the bracelet my father had given me at birth.

Two small platinum plates hung from the chain. The original bore the inscription "May you always walk protected. Your father's strength guides you" along with my name engraved on the back. I had added

Max’s name beside mine and included a second plate with my own message: "It took me years to find you, but you’ll never be alone again."

As I fastened it around his small wrist, I felt the weight of our family’s legacy passing to the next generation. Then I took the official documentation from our family lawyer, Max’s new birth certificate with my name listed as his father, and handed them to Ivy with hands that trembled slightly.

Lifting Max into my arms, I turned to face our assembled family and allies. "I present to you my son and heir, Max Thorne."

Taking Ivy’s hand, the three of us walked back down the aisle together as rose petals fell around us and respectful applause filled the air. We were officially united as both family and ruling partnership.

The reception reflected everything Ivy had envisioned. Despite our dangerous world, she had managed to create the perfect gathering. Her former colleagues mixed seamlessly with our associates and allied family representatives. We celebrated until the evening shadows lengthened and our guests began their carefully orchestrated departures.

Our honeymoon would wait until I could properly delegate responsibilities, but tonight belonged to new beginnings. Our people had transformed our private quarters into a sanctuary worthy of a queen, complete with candles, silk, and flowers that promised intimate hours ahead.

Ivy had planned the reception to conclude precisely at sunset, and like everything she orchestrated, it proceeded flawlessly. The catering staff efficiently restored the gardens while security personnel maintained our privacy. Walter assured me they would work quietly and ensure complete discretion, staying only long enough to clean and prepare breakfast service for morning.

With everything handled and our family departing with satisfaction and renewed loyalty, I finally had my queen to myself. I pulled Ivy into my arms, her wedding dress rustling softly against my suit, and whispered against her ear, "Time for the private celebration."

She looked up at me with eyes that sparkled with anticipation and absolute trust, her smile promising everything I had claimed. "Finally," she breathed, the word carrying years of waiting and wanting.

Without another word, I swept her into my arms and headed for our quarters, carrying my wife toward our bedroom and the beginning of our reign together as husband and wife.

Chapter 185 Lost Memory Found

Ivy’s POV

Caleb swept me up into his powerful arms with the fluid grace of a predator. Pressed against his chest, I felt weightless as he carried me through the sprawling mansion, past armed guards who averted their eyes respectfully, up the marble staircase, and down the shadowed corridor until we reached the master suite’s heavy oak doors.

"Would you mind getting the door for me, tesoro?" His voice held that dangerous softness that made my pulse race.

I reached out to grasp the brass handle, turning it slowly before pushing the reinforced door open. Caleb stepped inside with me still cradled in his arms, then gently set me on my feet before turning to engage the multiple locks behind us.

My breath caught as I took in the transformed space. Gemma had clearly orchestrated every detail with military precision. Floor-to-ceiling bulletproof windows dominated one wall, with reinforced French doors that opened onto a private terrace overlooking the moonlit gardens and guard towers below. The room glowed with intimate lighting from dozens of candles nestled inside ornate wrought iron lanterns positioned strategically throughout the space.

The massive bed commanded the center of the room, draped in luxurious pearl-colored silk sheets that probably cost more than most people’s cars. What stole my breath was the canopy that hadn’t existed this morning. Delicate cream fabric cascaded from an elaborate ceiling fixture, creating an ethereal sanctuary around the bed. The gossamer material was artfully draped and tied back on three sides like theatrical curtains, while tiny lights were woven throughout the fabric, casting an almost magical glow.

In the corner, a round mahogany table held an elaborate display fit for a Don’s private celebration. A towering arrangement of deep red roses served as the centerpiece, flanked by a silver ice bucket cradling Dom Perignon, crystal flutes that caught the candlelight, and a porcelain plate of chocolate-dipped strawberries. But what made my heart skip was the single slice of decadent chocolate cake positioned beside everything else. Every element had been carefully chosen, every detail planned to

perfection for this moment. Caleb stood watching me, his ice-blue eyes bright with nervous anticipation I'd never seen from the ruthless Don.

"Caleb, this is absolutely breathtaking. Everything is perfect." My voice was barely above a whisper, my eyes shining with unshed tears.

Soft romantic melodies began flowing from hidden speakers, filling the room with gentle music that seemed almost innocent compared to the violence that usually surrounded our world. Caleb's hands found my waist, drawing me against his powerful frame as he buried his face in my hair, breathing in deeply before his lips curved into a satisfied smile. We began moving together in a slow, intimate dance, swaying to the tender rhythm.

"Forever mine, Ivy. You have no idea how many sleepless nights I spent thinking about you, replaying every moment of what happened between us at that underground auction. You completely captivated me that night." His words were punctuated by feather-light kisses along my jawline and down my neck. I wound my arms around his broad shoulders, pulling him closer.

"You consumed my thoughts just as much. I still have that dress, those shoes, even the mask carefully preserved in a box. I kept the perfume too, but when I started working for your organization, I made the decision to wear it every single day."

"I knew your scent was familiar." Caleb's confession was warm against my ear. "That day when I caught you to stop that unhinged woman from storming into my office, when I held you close, I recognized your fragrance but couldn't place where. You had already begun to cloud my judgment, even then."

"When I first heard your voice over the phone during my interview, something stirred in my memory too. Deep down, your voice felt familiar, but I couldn't quite grasp why. Something was blocking that connection."

"All the clues were right there in front of us, and I was completely blind to the fact that you were the mysterious woman who had driven me to distraction at that auction. The one I had my people search for relentlessly across every underground venue in the city. And then years later, you walked into my office and turned my world upside down all over again. Why did you disappear that night, Ivy? Why didn't you stay and wait for my return?"

"I assumed you had left and that the phone call was just an excuse to escape. I thought you only wanted a meaningless encounter with some nameless woman and then planned to vanish back to whatever dangerous world you came from. When I went back to find Zoe and Finn at our table, we decided it was time to get out before anyone noticed we didn't belong there."

Caleb's chest rose and fell with a heavy sigh, his arms tightening around me protectively.

"The truth is, when I first asked you to dance, intimacy wasn't even on my mind. I noticed you the moment you arrived at that auction and was completely mesmerized. I watched you from across that blood-soaked room for what felt like hours before I finally worked up the courage to approach you. It was actually my father who noticed my fixation and reminded me that in our world, the deepest regrets come from chances we never take. Everything between us unfolded so naturally, so perfectly. Before I realized what was happening, I was completely under your spell, had lost all control, and was experiencing the most incredible night of my life. I only thought to ask your name afterward, and before you could answer, that damned call came through."

"Who was calling you, Caleb?"

"Rossi. There had been an explosion, a car bomb. The connection was terrible, so I stepped outside hoping for better reception. When I came back inside, you had vanished completely. I searched everywhere, had my men scour every exit, but you were nowhere to be found. I was already devastated by losing my parents to that bombing, and not being able to find you nearly destroyed what was left of me."

"I had never experienced the intensity of what you awakened in me that night. I had never acted so recklessly, so completely without thinking of consequences." I watched his ice-blue eyes darken as he absorbed my words.

"Now I've found you again. And I refuse to lose you a second time. I simply cannot survive it." Caleb's arms tightened possessively around my waist. "From our very first phone conversation, you stirred something powerful within me. When we finally met face to face in my office, I was completely overwhelmed. It was only then that I stopped obsessing over the woman from the auction. And that woman was you all along. It has always been you, my angel. Every moment of love I've felt has belonged to you."

Desire coursed through my veins like molten fire. My pupils dilated with raw need, and my body trembled with urgent longing. Before he could speak another word, my fingers tangled in his thick hair

and I crushed my mouth to his, my tongue demanding entry. Caleb matched my intensity kiss for kiss, both of us consumed by pure, undeniable passion that had been building for years.

Chapter 186 Wedding Night Begins

Ivy’s POV

Caleb’s fingers traced through my hair as he carefully lifted the antique diamond tiara from my head, a Thorne family heirloom that had been worn by every Don’s wife for generations. He set it aside on the velvet armchair with the reverence due to such a precious artifact of our bloodline. His lips left mine, and I watched my husband circle me slowly, his gaze burning with an intensity that made my breath catch. Every step he took was deliberate, predatory, like the apex predator he was in our world of shadows and violence.

His hands found my shoulders from behind, his lips following the curve of my neck as he began working the intricate pearl buttons that secured my wedding gown. The dress had been specially designed by the most exclusive couturier in Europe, one who served only the elite families of our dark world. Each touch sent electricity through my skin. One by one, the buttons gave way under his skilled fingers, the same hands that had pulled triggers and signed death warrants now treating me with infinite care.

When the last pearl was freed, he slid his hands to the silken bow at my nape, the one that held the entire masterpiece together. With one smooth motion that spoke of his absolute control, he pulled the ties, and my dress cascaded down my body like falling snow, pooling around my feet in layers of imported French lace and Italian silk. The cool air of our private wing hit my skin, but Caleb’s warmth pressed against my back immediately, his arousal evident as he pulled me against the solid strength that had conquered half the underground world.

He turned my face to capture my lips again, and without breaking our connection, he lifted me free from the tangle of fabric worth more than most people’s homes. Now I stood before him in nothing but the white lingerie I had chosen specifically for tonight, delicate Chantilly lace that left little to the imagination. His eyes roamed over me with an appreciation that made me feel like the most dangerous woman alive, which in our world, I now was.

A wicked smile played at the corners of his mouth as he leaned close to my ear, his voice carrying that familiar edge of possession that had claimed territories across states. "I think I’ll be keeping these," he murmured, his breath hot against my skin. "Along with the ones from that night at the masquerade ball auction."

The confession about that night when everything began left me speechless, but happiness bloomed in my chest like I was that vulnerable girl again, hearing declarations of love instead of territorial claims and blood oaths. When I smiled at him, he returned it with such tenderness it was almost impossible to reconcile with the man who had ordered executions just hours before our ceremony.

His mouth found my breasts as his hands slipped along the sides of my panties, slowly peeling them down my legs with the same methodical precision he used when planning strategic strikes against rival families. When he reached my feet, he knelt before me like a subject before his queen, and I steadied myself with a hand on his shoulder as he helped me step out of the delicate fabric.

What he did next made my cheeks burn with the same heat I felt when facing down enemy guns. He brought the lace to his face, breathing in deeply while maintaining eye contact, his ice-blue eyes darkening to something almost feral, the same look he wore when eliminating threats to our family.

"Your scent drives me insane," he said, his voice rough with the same need that drove him to expand our empire across the East Coast.

Before I could respond, his mouth was on me, kissing and exploring with a devotion that reminded me why he was called the most dangerous man in North America. He lifted one of my legs over his shoulder, his hands steadying me as his tongue worked magic that had me crying out his name, my fingers tangled in his dark hair. The pleasure built and built until it crashed over me in waves, and he took everything I gave him with the same satisfaction he showed when claiming new territory.

He rose quickly, sweeping me into his arms with the same effortless strength he used to carry out his will across our criminal empire, carrying me to our bed that sat in the center of our heavily fortified penthouse. His lips never left my skin as he laid me down gently on sheets imported from the finest mills in Europe, then moved to my feet, unbuckling my designer sandals with the same care he showed our most valuable assets.

From the bed, I watched my husband put on a show that left me breathless. He moved with deliberate slowness, revealing the sculpted planes of his chest marked with scars from territorial wars, the defined muscles of his abdomen that spoke of countless hours training for the violence our life demanded. Every piece of clothing that hit the floor revealed more of the man who was now mine completely, the same body that had survived assassination attempts and rival family vendettas.

When he finally stood naked before me, I couldn’t help but stare. He was magnificent, a living weapon honed by years of underground warfare, and the evidence of his desire for me made my mouth water.

Without thinking, I reached for him, and he came willingly, letting me taste him the way he had tasted me, submission and dominance blending in the way only we understood.

His hands fisted in my hair as I took him into my mouth, his quiet moans spurring me on like encouragement during our most dangerous operations. I could feel him losing the ironclad control that made him the most feared Don on the Eastern seaboard, the way his breathing changed, the tension in muscles that had strangled enemies with bare hands. When he tried to pull away, I held him firm, wanting to give him the same pleasure he had given me.

His release came with a groan of my name, and I took everything he offered like I had taken my place at the head of his criminal empire. He collapsed beside me for a moment, that satisfied smile still playing on his lips, before rolling over me, supporting his weight on forearms that bore the tattoos of our family crest.

Our naked bodies pressed together, skin to skin, and the desire that had been simmering through the blood and violence of our courtship reached a fever pitch. "I need you," I whispered against his lips, and he needed no further encouragement.

He entered me slowly, both of us gasping at the perfect fit, the way our bodies seemed made for each other like our souls were forged in the same fires of the underworld. For a moment, we simply held still, eyes locked, savoring the incredible feeling of being completely joined as partners in every sense.

"Now I’m going to move," he whispered, and the promise in his voice sent shivers through me like the first time he had claimed me as his own.

He withdrew slowly, then filled me again, establishing a rhythm that had us both moving in perfect synchronization like we did when planning territorial expansions. My hand pressed against his chest, feeling his heartbeat racing to match mine, the same heart that had chosen mercy for me when he could have chosen vengeance.

The sensations built between us, every touch magnified, every kiss deeper than the last. Our bodies moved together on the silk sheets, the moonlight streaming through bulletproof windows casting everything in silver. I felt myself approaching that beautiful edge, felt him pulsing inside me as his own release approached.

When he moaned my name, the sound pushed me over completely. We found our release together, bodies trembling, hearts racing, completely lost in each other like we were the only two people in our dangerous world. As we lay tangled together afterward, catching our breath, I realized this was only the beginning of our reign together.

Our wedding night had many more hours ahead of us, and Caleb's satisfied smile told me he had plans for every single one of them.

Chapter 187 Innocent or Not

Daniel's POV

When Caleb called asking me to be his best man, I figured it was just respect between family associates, showing gratitude for the muscle I'd provided during that bloody warehouse cleanup. But when he mentioned I'd be paired with that petite girl from the syndicate wives, my pulse quickened. I booked the first flight out late in the week, heading straight to Port Serenity. Xavier offered his guest room until I could find my own place. We'd known each other since we were kids, back when his family ran the biggest legitimate cattle operation in Greenleaf, providing cover for my father's illegal arms trafficking business.

The bachelor party was everything I expected from these guys. High-stakes poker, aged bourbon, and Cuban cigars smuggled fresh from our Cancun connections filled the night. I blended in easily with the crew, and Wyatt, another enforcer I'd worked with before, offered to sell me his furnished safe house since he was moving in with his girlfriend. We planned to check it out over the weekend. Everything was falling into place for my permanent position in the Thorne organization. But honestly, all I could think about was seeing her again.

I was adjusting my tie when Xavier knocked and stuck his head through the door.

"Looking sharp, brother," Xavier strolled in with that easy confidence he'd always carried in our world.

"Think I've got a shot with the short one?" I turned toward him, straightening my suit jacket.

"Man, you're like a skyscraper next to her. She might bolt," Xavier grinned knowingly.

"I can handle that," I replied with the certainty that came from years of intimidation work.

"You'll need more than your usual enforcer tactics. Her crew is protective as hell. Lila's the baby of their syndicate wives group, and those women guard her like trained killers. She's still so young, Daniel." His tone carried the weight of family law.

"That's exactly what's got me second-guessing myself. I don't usually mess around with girls that green. But there's something about her..." I secured my Glock in its shoulder holster beneath my jacket.

"You really need that piece?" Xavier watched me check the strap.

"I'm muscle for the Thorne organization. This gun is part of me, like having an extra limb. Only time it comes off is in the shower." I adjusted my jacket. "Besides, there's still some psychopath out there targeting the boss and his lady."

"Fair enough. Ready to head out? The estate is just down the private road. Women are already there setting up."

My stomach tightened with anticipation knowing I'd see her soon.

We collected Thorne from the living room, where he was pacing like a caged predator, and headed to the ceremony location on the family compound. My nerves were buzzing. In my mid-thirties, I considered myself quite the catch in our circles. I kept myself in fighting shape, maintained my black hair in a sharp cut, stayed groomed to perfection, and kept my beard precisely trimmed. My black eyes and six-foot-five frame with broad shoulders and sculpted muscles from daily combat training usually commanded respect. I was an experienced soldier in this family, and she was probably barely five feet of innocence. But something about her had hooked me completely.

The moment we arrived, the women started complaining about us being late. I found it amusing how they had these hardened criminals completely whipped, especially Xavier, who practically submitted to that redhead's every demand. They swarmed me, gushing thanks for the protection I'd provided during recent territory disputes, which embarrassed me slightly but seemed like a good sign. Then they officially introduced me to her.

"Daniel, meet Lila. She’s your partner today," Zoe announced, nudging Lila toward me with a mischievous smile.

"Aren’t you precious," I said instinctively, smiling down at her. "Pleasure to meet you properly, Lila. We didn’t get introduced during that shootout." I took her delicate hand and gave her gentle kisses on her cheek, following old-world tradition.

"Pl-pleased to meet you, Daniel," Lila stammered visibly. Her hands were ice cold and trembling, slightly damp with nervousness. I found it endearing.

"Just Daniel when we’re off duty," I gave her my most charming smile.

Lila was absolutely stunning. Long hair with golden streaks caught the afternoon light, bright brown eyes framed by thick lashes, heart-shaped lips on a doll-like face, delicate frame with a tiny waist, perfect curves, small firm breasts, and golden skin that showed bikini tan lines beneath that strapless yellow dress.

"Okay, Daniel." She flashed a gorgeous smile showing perfect white teeth.

We chatted while Thorne greeted arriving family members and allied organization representatives. When the ceremony began, I offered Lila my arm as Zoe organized the processional. When her delicate hand slipped through my arm, Zoe looked us over and whistled low.

"You’re massive, aren’t you?"

"If you want, Zo, Lila could walk with Dominic and I’ll escort the enforcer," Gemma suggested, making Dominic scowl dangerously.

"Not happening, Gemma. I’m staying with my shorty," I responded quickly, my tone brooking no argument.

"Easy there, enforcer," Zoe looked at Lila with a knowing grin.

That made me laugh deeply while Lila’s cheeks turned pink.

"Don’t worry, Zoe. I know how to handle delicate things." Zoe smiled at my double meaning, making Lila blush deeper.

I stayed glued to Lila’s side throughout the entire wedding, taking full advantage of being her assigned escort. We talked constantly and danced multiple times during the reception. I felt her gradually relaxing around me, giving me room to shower her with attention and old-fashioned courtship. When the celebration ended, I offered to drive her home, saving Finn the trouble.

I took her tiny hand, which looked even smaller engulfed in mine, and led her to the armored sedan I’d acquired through family connections right after arriving in Port Serenity. I opened her door and helped arrange her dress’s long skirt. As I reached across to secure her seatbelt, I positioned myself closer than necessary, bringing us face to face.

"There. Now you’re protected," I said, studying that beautiful face and smiling.

"Th-thank you," Lila replied, clearly rattled by my proximity. I decided to test the waters.

"Are you afraid of me, Lila?" She shook her head. "Then why the nerves?"

"It’s just... it’s just..." I didn’t let her finish. I leaned in and captured those beautiful lips.

I started slowly and softly, just barely touching. Lila gasped in surprise. I deepened the kiss, parting her lips with my tongue and intensifying the connection. She was trembling, seeming completely inexperienced, almost like this was her first kiss. But that seemed impossible.

"Relax, shorty," I murmured against her lips before kissing her even more intensely.

Lila finally began to melt, sliding her small hands up my shoulders and embracing me tentatively. I pulled her closer and kissed her with hungry desire, like I wanted to consume her completely. When we broke apart, we were both breathing hard, her lips swollen and glistening, her eyes brighter than ever.

"You’re incredible," I whispered against her ear, kissing there before trailing down her neck.

I boldly moved my hand to cup one of her breasts, squeezing gently while marking her delicate neck. Lila went rigid under my touch, like she was startled. I immediately moved my hand back to her neck and returned to kissing her lips. She relaxed again and responded to the kiss. We stayed there making out for long minutes, and the more I kissed her, the more she loosened up and matched my rhythm.

"Do I really have to take you home?" I asked, hoping she’d say no.

"Yes, you do," she sighed against my mouth.

"Then let’s go." I reluctantly pulled away and walked around to the driver’s side.

"Put your address in the GPS, beautiful shorty," I requested while fastening my seatbelt.

The entire drive passed in silence. It seemed like this girl had a million thoughts racing through her head. But I was beginning to suspect that my little one wasn’t just young but also completely untouched. This was puzzling, since she was barely an adult, and young girls in our world usually weren’t so pure. But I filed that observation away, knowing I’d need to find out for certain.

"We’re here, shorty," I announced, pulling up to her building in the syndicate’s protected district. "Going to invite me up?" I smiled suggestively.

I was dying to know if she was really as innocent as she seemed. I don’t usually pursue naive young girls, and I don’t find inexperience entertaining. I’m not the type willing to play teacher. I prefer women who know what they want, in life and in bed, who know how to satisfy a soldier. But this shorty had something that turned me on, and I couldn’t even identify what it was. All I knew was that when I walked into that family meeting, our eyes locked, and I couldn’t get her out of my head. But if she was truly innocent, this wouldn’t work. I liked intense, passionate encounters without complications, raw and wild with mutual hunger. Inexperienced girls still wanted romance and gentle treatment, which wasn’t my nature.

"Um... do you want to come up?" She sounded nervous.

"If it’s going to make you uncomfortable, then no." I was being honest.

"You know what, let’s go up." She was breathing heavily, seeming to argue with herself. "Am I nervous? Yes, I’m nervous. But you’re so attractive there’s no reason to be nervous. Yes, let’s go up."

I got out and walked around the car. When she stood up, I pressed her against the vehicle, lowering my head to whisper in her ear.

"Just so you know, I’m not just attractive. But like I promised, I know how to be gentle and careful with precious things."

Lila released a sigh that hit my ear and sent heat straight to my core. I gripped her waist and lifted her up, pressing her against the car so she could feel my arousal. Her eyes went wide and she stared at me in shock.

"Let’s go upstairs. We need to talk," I said, giving her a quick kiss and taking her hand toward the building. I had to know exactly how innocent this girl was.

Chapter 188 Consolidating Power

Ivy’s POV

The euphoria of our blood oath wedding still coursed through my veins as we stepped back into the ruthless world of organized crime. Our extended famiglia had returned to their respective territories across Greenleaf, leaving behind whispered promises of loyalty and vows to answer our call.

Caleb moved swiftly to consolidate our domestic operations. He offered Carmen a permanent position within our household with substantially increased compensation, knowing she would soon care for two children instead of one. The generous terms brought tears to her eyes. More surprisingly, he convinced her to relocate permanently to our fortified compound, allowing her to rent out her modest apartment for additional income.

"You won’t face the dangers of the streets anymore," Caleb explained with surprising gentleness. "And Walter seems to appreciate your presence."

I caught the subtle flush on Carmen’s cheeks. Those two had been finding excuses to linger in conversation whenever their paths crossed within our estate.

For Max’s protection, Caleb arranged a secure convoy system. He practically stole Xavier’s most trusted wheelman, who couldn’t refuse when Caleb mentioned it concerned his heir’s safety.

The security briefing felt like preparing for war. Caleb introduced me to the elite crew who would guard our stronghold around the clock. Justin, the head of our private army, impressed me with his military precision and lethal competence. Walter assured us he would recruit former soldiers who had served under Caleb’s father, and for those unwilling to return to active duty, he would find equally reliable replacements.

"We mobilize only when every man is thoroughly vetted," Walter promised with cold efficiency. "By week’s end, our fortress will be impenetrable."

Walking into Thorne Enterprises felt different now. Employees approached us with respectful congratulations and carefully measured smiles. The legitimate front buzzed with activity as key positions awaited appointments. Caleb, Xavier, Heidi, and Scott would oversee the selection process together, ensuring only the most loyal candidates gained access to our operations.

Lila greeted us at the elevator with her signature warmth. "Good morning, Don Thorne and Eleanor Thorne!"

"Drop the formality, Lila. We’re famiglia," Caleb corrected with amusement.

"Famiglia, yes. But here you’re my capo and she’s my donna," Lila replied with sparkling defiance.

"The only boss I acknowledge is my wife," Caleb declared, making Lila laugh despite herself.

"Fine, but during business hours, you’re Don Thorne to me." Lila’s expression suddenly turned urgent as she focused on me. "Speaking of which, can we arrange a girls’ night immediately?"

"Already trying to steal my queen?" Caleb's eyes narrowed with mock menace.

"It's an emergency, Don! I promise to have her back by midnight," Lila pleaded desperately.

"You better," Caleb warned, then leaned close to whisper in my ear. "Because I plan to claim every inch of your body when you return."

Heat flooded my cheeks. "As if you need an excuse for that."

"What kind of emergency?" I asked Lila, noticing her nervous glance at Caleb.

She clearly wanted privacy for this conversation. I promised to coordinate with our inner circle and followed Caleb to my office.

Fresh blood-red roses waited on my desk, accompanied by a handwritten note that made my heart race:

"My beloved regina,

Every dawn brings deeper devotion to you. You are my anchor, my certainty in this violent world. Thank you for accepting the crown as my queen.

I will earn your loyalty daily, hoping you continue choosing our empire.

Forever yours, Caleb"

I threw my arms around his neck, pouring my emotions into a possessive kiss. "How do you find time for these romantic gestures amid all the bloodshed?"

"I rise before dawn for you, my queen," Caleb murmured against my lips. "With some assistance from our people, naturally."

"I choose our empire every single day because I belong to you completely." I kissed him again, whispering, "And I’m coming home in a very dangerous mood tonight."

"Is that a threat or a promise?" His voice turned predatory as he claimed my throat.

"Both," I breathed, pressing closer.

"Save the honeymoon behavior for after we’ve eliminated our remaining enemies," Heidi interrupted, entering with Scott close behind.

"No amount of time will satisfy my hunger for my wife," Caleb replied shamelessly, still caressing my face with possessive hands.

"We should ask Lila to announce visitors," Scott chuckled.

"We can control ourselves. We’re crime bosses, not street thugs," I protested, trying to sound authoritative.

"Speak for yourself, tesoro," Caleb grinned wickedly. "But since you’re here, let’s discuss territory expansion. Sawyer’s secure call starts soon."

In Caleb’s office, Heidi updated us on her transition to managing our legitimate operations. She was excelling and receiving positive feedback from our cleaned house. However, her expression darkened when discussing Rossi’s toxic legacy.

"Multiple women have approached me about his predatory behavior. Sexual exploitation was apparently standard practice under his regime," Heidi revealed with controlled fury.

My blood chilled. "This organization must be a sanctuary for our people. We need ironclad protection policies and swift retribution mechanisms. It’s not just about honor, it’s about maintaining loyalty."

"Excellent point," Caleb agreed immediately. "We have basic protocols and training, but clearly they're inadequate. Women still fear retaliation for reporting violations. Would you work with Gemma, Ruby, and Lila to restructure our internal justice system?"

"Perfect strategy," Scott supported enthusiastically. "Female leadership on this matter will encourage other women to seek our protection."

"I demand to participate," Heidi added fiercely. "This family has a dark history with abuse. In the past, it was even more blatant. I endured it personally. Your father attempted reforms, but those were different times."

"Then it's decided. We're creating a truly safe empire for our women," I concluded with deadly determination.

Xavier and Jude arrived, immediately endorsing our restructuring plan. Sawyer's encrypted call proceeded smoothly, finalizing details for our Boston territory expansion. By the time we finished, the lunch hour had arrived.

"Family meal?" Caleb suggested.

"Excellent idea. I'll summon Ru and Lila," I agreed.

"Don't forget Gemma," Caleb reminded me.

"Actually, she's dining with Dominic. He finally convinced her to hear his proposal," I reported.

"About time," Jude muttered. "Basil needs to secure his woman quickly."

After lunch, Caleb headed directly to his office for a client negotiation. I stopped by Lila's desk to confirm our evening plans.

"We're meeting at the Social Union front. Everything's arranged with the girls. Ready?"

"Sort of. I desperately need counsel," Lila replied with that vulnerable expression that made you want to protect her.

"Relax, sorella. Every problem has a violent solution," I assured her before returning to my office.

A while later, Lila entered Caleb's office carrying a discrete package, emerging moments later with a mysterious smile. My secure phone rang immediately.

"Come here, regina," Caleb's voice held that familiar predatory edge.

I found him seated behind his desk. As I approached, he pulled me onto his lap with practiced dominance, claiming my lips hungrily.

"I missed you," he growled, hands sliding possessively up my legs. "You wore this tempting dress specifically to torment me, didn't you?"

"Maybe I remembered that day you replaced the lingerie you destroyed," I replied teasingly.

"That was perfection," he said, slipping his hand beneath my dress. "I keep fantasizing about you giving me another private performance like that."

"Which performance?" I feigned innocence. "When I modeled the lingerie or when I pleasured myself while you watched?"

"Both were magnificent, but this morning you dressed for me deliberately, leaving me aching while watching you prepare for battle." His mouth found my throat and chest while his fingers traced dangerous patterns on my thighs. "Maybe I want to watch you bring yourself to climax again."

"Maybe someday I'll recreate that exclusively for you," I whispered seductively.

"Don't tease me, tesoro. Look what I have for you." He handed me the package.

"My favorite indulgence!" I exclaimed, discovering the slice of chocolate silk pie inside.

"You're sharing that with me," Caleb declared, pulling down my neckline to expose my breast, taking it into his mouth eagerly.

I surrendered completely to his worship as he claimed my breast while his fingers found my most sensitive spot. Just as pleasure began building toward dangerous heights, Xavier's voice shattered the moment.

"Hey there, lovebirds!" Xavier entered without warning, then spun around immediately. "Cazzo, not again!"

"Fucking timing, fratello!" Caleb laughed despite his obvious frustration. "Do you have supernatural senses for my arousal, Xavier?"

I quickly pressed the package against my chest while Caleb restored my dress with practiced efficiency.

"Blame yourself for not securing the door, Don!" Xavier replied with wicked amusement. "I'm starting to think you want me to participate."

"Not in your wildest dreams!" Caleb snarled possessively.

"You can turn around now," I called out, composed once again.

"My apologies, Eleanor, but I swear I saw nothing! The package blocked everything," Xavier assured me gallantly.

"I'll take my dessert and leave you soldiers to strategize," I said, claiming the package. "But Xavier, next time call ahead when I'm not at my station." I kissed Caleb goodbye and departed, already formulating a deliciously wicked plan for tonight.

Chapter 189 Hidden Aviation Link

Ivy’s POV

Around late afternoon, Lila knocked on my door to announce that the investigators had arrived to see me. The plural form caught my attention, making me wonder who else Caleb had called in to handle this mess. I told her to show them into the main office just as Caleb appeared in the doorway behind the two men approaching.

"Adler, Martinez, I appreciate you both coming here to take my wife’s statement personally," Caleb said, his tone carrying the authority of a man who commanded respect even from law enforcement. His voice held that familiar warmth he reserved for family allies.

"Our honor, Thorne. And thank you again for including us in the wedding celebration. It was truly a magnificent ceremony," Detective Adler responded with the practiced deference of someone who understood the delicate balance between official duty and family loyalty.

"Having you and your people there meant everything to us. You helped me get back the woman I love, so your presence at our blood oath was essential," Caleb replied, pulling me close against his side with possessive tenderness. "Let’s handle this in the secure room, tesoro."

We settled into Caleb’s reinforced office, where Detective Martinez opened his encrypted laptop and began documenting my personal information. After recording all the essential details, they launched into their questioning. The initial inquiries focused on standard background verification about how long I had known the brothers and Rossi, what my connection was with each of them, and similar foundational intelligence. Then they shifted focus to the kidnapping operation itself. I walked them through how I was taken and described everything I had witnessed during my captivity in the warehouse.

"Is there anything else you remember that might help us track down this Rossi bastard?" Detective Adler pressed, leaning forward with the intensity of a man hunting dangerous prey.

"Unfortunately, no, Detective," I responded carefully. "Though I do recall hearing Caleb mention to his brother that he couldn’t reach Cloud. But I have absolutely no idea who that contact might be," I added, thinking back to the conversation I had overheard between the two brothers before Caleb’s men stormed their operation.

"Cloud? Now who the hell could that be? Maybe Monica had another alias? That's entirely possible," Adler mused aloud, his cop instincts working through the possibilities. "Did they say anything else that might give us a lead on their network?"

"Fisher told Caleb he needed to destroy the burner phone, and then mentioned that he had only used that specific number to contact me directly. They had smashed and disposed of my phone, from what I could tell. He kept insisting there was no way to trace the number back to their operation. I also heard Fisher say that taking Max was just bait to draw me out," I answered, recalling the brothers' conversation with crystal clarity.

"What exactly do you mean by that?" Adler asked, his eyebrows drawing together.

"They had no clue that Max is Caleb's son because we only discovered that truth ourselves just days before the kidnapping went down." I quickly explained how I became pregnant and how Caleb eventually learned the truth about our son's parentage and our shared past.

"I was the private investigator Caleb hired to dig into Ivy's background," Detective Martinez interjected, his voice carrying the weight of someone who had seen the family's darkest secrets. "I'm familiar with the entire situation. Adler, did our people recover any communication devices from the brothers during their arrest?"

"No, we found no electronics whatsoever," Adler confirmed grimly.

"Maybe we should return to the warehouse location where Ivy was held and search for those phones. I confiscated two cell phones during the Greenleaf raids, one belonging to Rossi and another to that piece of shit Brodie, but we never located Monica's device anywhere. Nothing on the phones we did recover led us to Rossi's current location," Martinez recalled thoughtfully.

"Good thinking. Let's revisit Ivy's prison site. Do you think the Greenleaf crew would conduct another sweep of the farm where they held Max?" Adler proposed.

"Absolutely. I'll coordinate with them about organizing that operation," Martinez assured him.

"Ivy's cell phone was recovered intact, wasn't it?" Adler wanted confirmation.

"Yes, one of my tech specialists has it secured," Caleb informed them. "I'll have Felix bring it over immediately."

Within minutes, Felix Hayes entered the room carrying my destroyed phone sealed in a evidence bag. He explained that while he couldn't recover much data due to the damage, he had managed to extract the call logs. On the day of my abduction, I had received only one call from an unknown number. When they attempted to call it back, the line was dead. However, they had successfully tracked my last known location by identifying the cell tower where my phone had last transmitted.

"Yes, I only received Caleb's call that morning," I confirmed.

Felix handed the phone and a card containing the number to Detective Adler, who accepted it with professional gratitude.

"This is extremely valuable intelligence. How did I overlook this connection?" Adler berated himself. "Ivy, I need to ask you something crucial."

"Yes, Detective?"

"Brodie, who was involved in your son's kidnapping. You two had a relationship, correct?" Adler needed verification.

"Yes, Detective, unfortunately. For several years. We ended things some time ago, shortly before the charity gala where I met Caleb without knowing his true identity," I explained.

"That was quite an extended relationship," Adler analyzed before asking his next question. "What was his occupation while you were together?"

"Detective, when we started dating, Brodie was young and I was very young. He had ambition but zero work ethic. He failed his college entrance exams and started working at the municipal airfield. He did general maintenance and helped with aircraft servicing. He hated the job, but since Zoe's father had arranged the position for him, I constantly encouraged him not to disappoint Mr. Miller," I said, remembering that distant period of my life. "But why are you asking, Detective?"

"Because Brodie claims he's known Rossi for quite some time, but refuses to provide details. Do you know anything about this or remember him meeting someone during that time? Or do you recall him ever mentioning Rossi's name before?"

I considered this carefully, but couldn't remember hearing Rossi's name before I started working in Caleb's organization. "Detective, I honestly don't know," I replied.

"You mentioned Brodie worked at the airfield?" Martinez asked, and I nodded confirmation. "The city only has one civilian airfield, besides the commercial airport."

"Yes, why?" I asked.

"Because helicopters cannot land at the commercial airport, only at the private airfield," Caleb said quietly, as if a deadly realization was forming in his mind.

"I don't understand," I said, feeling confused.

"My parents' helicopter, Ivy," Caleb spoke, his eyes filling with the cold fury I recognized. The rage of a son seeking vengeance.

"Oh my God," I pressed my hand to my lips. "You think that..." I couldn't even finish the sentence.

"It's definitely a strong possibility," Martinez said, then explained to Adler about the Thorne parents' assassination. They suspected Brodie might have been involved in sabotaging the aircraft. "Ivy, think very carefully, do you remember anything else about that time?"

"But the night of the gala was also Brodie's wedding night to my cousin. It would have been impossible for him to be at the airfield that evening," I remembered, trying not to accept the possibility that Brodie could have sabotaged Caleb's parents' helicopter.

"Actually, it's not impossible at all," Martinez stated grimly. "Do you remember anything else from that period?"

"Martinez, some time before the gala, I was still with Brodie. One day he came home extremely excited because he had received funding for an aircraft maintenance certification program, which could help him earn a promotion and better salary," I remembered. "He started the program enthusiastically, but I don’t know if he completed it because we broke up before the gala."

"You said Mr. Miller helped him get the job. Why would he do that?" Adler asked.

"Zoe and I have been close friends for years, and her parents think very highly of me. I was frustrated because Brodie couldn’t find steady work and wasn’t pursuing education. Zoe spoke with her father, who had connections at the airfield, and that’s how Brodie got the position," I replied.

"Interesting," Adler responded. "It would be beneficial if we could interview someone who attended the wedding."

"My parents were there," I said.

"Your parents attended the wedding of the ex who betrayed you?" Adler looked confused.

"He cheated on me and married my cousin. Her mother is my mother’s sister," I explained.

"Girl, that’s really something," Adler made an expression mixing surprise, shock, and disgust.

"You want to know the worst part? I caught them having sex in my bed, in my house, on my mother’s birthday," I said, watching Adler’s expressions with dark amusement.

"Honestly, the guy is completely stupid. I met your cousin, an unpleasant woman, and she doesn’t even compare to you," Martinez commented. "With all due respect, Caleb."

"That’s perfectly fine, my wife is indeed exceptional," Caleb said, smiling at me with fierce pride.

"But as you told me, Martinez, sometimes life helps you eliminate the wrong people from your path," I commented with a smile.

"That's absolutely true, and this Brodie has rotten character, Ivy," Adler agreed. "Would you mind telling me how you started dating him?"

"I was too young and naive. A boyfriend of that same cousin introduced us. I wasn't particularly interested, but at my cousin's birthday party, she pushed so persistently that I ended up kissing him. After that, he began pursuing me relentlessly. He was charming, persistent, and seemed genuine. I thought he truly cared for me, so we started dating," I explained. "Later, even though I wasn't satisfied with certain things, I convinced myself I loved him. That's how it lasted as long as it did."

"I understand. Good thing it ended and you found someone worthy of you," Adler commented.

"Absolutely true," I confirmed, smiling at my husband.

"Ivy, would you mind providing us with your parents' and Mr. Miller's contact information?" Adler asked. "We need to speak with them."

"Of course, I'll write it down for you." I took paper and pen from Caleb's desk, wrote down the contacts, and handed them to Adler.

"Just one final question, Ivy. I know Brodie was no longer working at the airfield. Would you know why and when he left that job?" Martinez asked.

"As far as I know, he left shortly after getting married. He was fired. But I don't know the specific reason," I informed them.

"Ivy, thank you very much for your cooperation," Adler said with genuine gratitude.

Xavier entered the room just as the investigators were preparing to leave, with his usual commanding presence and relaxed confidence.

"Well, well, so much law enforcement muscle in here," Xavier joked while greeting the detectives. "Good seeing you here, detectives. My redhead called and said it's girls' night tonight, Caleb. For God's sake, is your wife already tired of looking at your ugly face?"

"No, my friend, I keep my woman completely satisfied in every way. The culprit for this emergency is our esteemed Detective Martinez," Caleb said while everyone laughed.

"What do you mean, me?" Martinez asked as I frowned at Caleb.

"Brenda told Lila, not me. Lila didn't ask for secrecy," Caleb defended himself.

"She also didn't tell you to announce it to everyone," I replied to him.

"Ivy, we'll find out anyway. I just hope I won't be sleeping on the couch because of the detective," Xavier said. "But since we're without our beautiful women tonight, I thought we could organize a poker game at my place. What do you think? Adler, you too."

"Guys, I appreciate the invitation, but today is my mother-in-law's birthday. You know how it is, after thirty years of marriage, the wife makes me sleep in the garage if I don't show up," Adler smiled.

"Now that's a good threat, Adler," I narrowed my eyes at Caleb, making everyone laugh.

They arranged their game while the investigators said goodbye and left with Xavier. I returned to my office and noticed some paperwork still sitting on the table. What would I do with all this? I checked my schedule and reminded Caleb about the video conference with our Hong Kong contacts. Perfect timing.

Chapter 190 - Desktop Distraction and Meeting

Abandonment

Caleb's POV

I had barely initiated the encrypted video conference with our Shanghai money laundering contacts when I noticed Ivy slipping through my private office door, the lock clicking decisively behind her. My attention immediately shifted from the financial reports on screen to the silver tray in her hands, complete with steaming espresso and that rich tiramisu I'd surprised her with this morning. My pulse quickened as understanding dawned. She was orchestrating another one of her calculated distractions, wasn't she?

My mind flashed back to when she'd executed a similar maneuver during a crucial territorial negotiation call with the international mafia families. The memory of watching her pleasure herself while I struggled to maintain my authoritative composure during discussions of protection rackets still made my blood surge with dangerous heat.

She approached with that deceptively innocent smile, the one that invariably spelled catastrophe for my legendary self-control. Setting the tray beside my encrypted laptop, she poured the espresso with deliberate, theatrical precision. When she "accidentally" dropped the cloth napkin, bending to retrieve it with an exaggerated arch that showcased every curve beneath her fitted dress, I recognized exactly what deadly game we were entering.

The sight of her body outlined perfectly against the expensive fabric made my reaction immediate and overwhelming. Heat coiled low in my stomach as my focus completely abandoned the recent laundering reports being discussed through the secure connection.

This time, I refused to let her leave me burning with frustrated desire. While she moved to the opposite side of my mahogany desk, lifting the dessert plate with theatrical innocence, I grabbed my encrypted phone and sent a rapid message to Xavier.

"Technical difficulties on the Don's end. Handle the territorial discussion solo for now."

His response arrived instantly with a simple acknowledgment. I switched off my camera and muted my microphone, leaving only the audio feed active so I could monitor the money laundering negotiations without active participation.

Ivy's first message arrived moments later, accompanied by her taking a deliberately slow bite of the Italian dessert. "This tiramisu is absolutely exquisite."

I typed back swiftly, "Nothing could taste sweeter than you."

Her emerald eyes met mine across the desk, blazing with that familiar mischievous fire. She closed her eyes as she savored another bite, releasing a soft sound of appreciation that made my tailored pants feel uncomfortably restrictive. This woman understood exactly how to unravel the feared Don of the Thorne family, and she was savoring every second of her power over me.

The wicked smile spreading across her lips confirmed my suspicions completely. She set the plate aside and leaned back in the leather chair that had belonged to my murdered father. With agonizing deliberation, she lifted each leg to rest on the chair arms, revealing her complete lack of undergarments beneath the expensive dress.

My fingers moved across the phone screen with practiced efficiency. "When did you decide to go without panties in my father's chair today?"

She read the message, her smile widening as she shook her head and responded with obvious challenge. "Thought I'd save you the trouble of shredding another expensive pair. Getting costly to replace the designer lingerie you keep destroying."

Despite the fire building in my veins, I had to suppress a dark chuckle. I sent back, "But tearing expensive lace off your body is half the pleasure."

Ivy was clearly relishing this power dynamic in my private domain. After reading my response, she typed back with unmistakable defiance in her expression. "I was planning a private show for the Don of this family, but if you prefer, I can return to the family quarters and dress more appropriately."

She wasn't retreating from this confrontation, not after igniting such dangerous hunger in me. My reply was immediate and commanding. "Are you really going to start something in my territory that you can't finish?"

The spark in her green eyes told me I'd struck the perfect note of dominance. She tossed her phone onto the antique desk and wasted no time escalating our private war. Her hands moved to the neckline of her dress, pulling the fabric down to expose her breasts completely. One hand traveled between her legs while the other cupped and massaged her exposed flesh with deliberate provocation.

The sight of her pleasuring herself while I sat trapped in crucial family business negotiations was almost beyond my legendary control. I found myself straining against the confines of my expensive suit, desperate for relief from the building pressure. Her fingers worked in slow, tormenting circles, dipping lower before returning to tease and stroke with maddening precision.

Her face was flushed with mounting arousal, lips parted as she lost herself in the sensations building within her body. When she slipped a finger inside herself with a soft gasp, my iron restraint finally shattered completely. I pushed back from the desk and crossed to her chair, spinning it to face me directly in one swift movement.

The momentary confusion in her eyes as I abandoned the family business call was quickly replaced by complete understanding. I stood before her, her fingers still moving between her legs in slow rhythm, and freed myself from my pants with quick, efficient movements. Leaning down with my hands braced on the chair arms that had once supported my father's authority, I whispered against her ear with deadly softness, "This time the Don isn't just watching his queen."

I gently removed her hand and replaced it with my mouth, tasting her building arousal with hungry intensity. The sweetness was more intoxicating than any fine wine in my private collection. "Definitely sweeter than anything I've ever tasted," I murmured against her heated skin.

I positioned myself at her entrance, sliding along her wetness in the same maddening rhythm her fingers had maintained. She was burning hot and completely ready, her body responding to every touch with soft gasps and tremors of anticipation.

"Tell me what you want, Ivy," I demanded with quiet authority, continuing to tease without giving her what she desperately craved.

"Caleb, your family business," she protested weakly between increasingly desperate moans.

"Forget the business. What does my queen want?" I pulled back slightly, making her chase the contact with obvious need.

"Don't stop," she breathed with surrender. "I want you completely."

"You have me. What else?" I maintained the maddening pace that brought her close but never quite enough.

"I want you inside me, filling me completely."

"Then you'll have exactly that."

I positioned myself at her entrance and pressed forward with deliberate slowness. She was perfection, completely open and willing, her legs draped over the chair arms in total submission to my authority. Her pupils were dilated, the green of her irises dark with desire that matched the intensity burning in my own chest.

Looking into her eyes as I filled her completely, I felt that familiar sense of absolute possession that transcended the physical. This wasn't merely about dominance or release—it was about the complete claiming of two souls who belonged together in this dangerous world. Every time we came together like this, it felt like conquering new territory.

I began moving with the commanding rhythm she'd begged for, deep and unrelenting, never breaking our intense eye contact. The friction built between us like sparks igniting gunpowder. Energy flowed back and forth between our bodies, creating a circuit of sensation that grew more powerful with each driving thrust.

I felt her inner muscles begin to flutter and tighten around me, signaling her approaching climax. The sensation triggered my own inevitable release as I drove into her one final time, spilling myself deep inside her welcoming heat with a growl of complete satisfaction.

We remained connected as our breathing gradually returned to normal, small aftershocks still rippling through her trembling body. Without separating, I gathered her in my arms and lifted her from my father's chair, carrying her to the leather sofa where I could hold her properly and continue demonstrating exactly how much the Don of this family treasured his irreplaceable queen.