

Exposed to the CEO Behind the Mafia Mask

Chapter 2: Chapter 2 A Night of Dangerous Liberation

Ivy's POV

"Absolutely not, Ivy. I didn't spend hours transforming you into a lethal goddess just so you could cower in my apartment." Zoe gripped my shoulders with fierce determination. "Tonight, you're not going to be the careful, rule-following Ivy who always plays it safe. Tonight, you're going to be dangerous."

I stared at my reflection one final time, barely recognizing the woman behind the golden mask. My bright green eyes sparkled with nervousness, but also something else—hunger for rebellion.

"What if someone identifies me?" I whispered.

Finn chuckled from the doorway. "That's the entire purpose of a masquerade, Ivy. Anonymity is the only rule."

"Exactly," Zoe nodded with triumph. "For one night, you can be anyone you choose. No backstabbing ex-boyfriend, no manipulative cousin, no controlling parents. Just you, finally living instead of surviving."

Her words struck something deep inside me. When had I last truly lived? Before discovering Brodie and Tiffany's betrayal, probably.

"Fine," I conceded, drawing a steadying breath. "One night of freedom."

The Thorne Underground Auction was nothing like I'd imagined—and far more dangerous. The opulent ballroom glittered with crystal chandeliers that cast shadows over masked figures in expensive suits and evening gowns, all moving like predators sizing up prey. Classical music drifted from a live orchestra, while champagne flowed like liquid gold through hands that undoubtedly held blood money.

"Jesus," I breathed, clutching my small purse with white knuckles. "This is..."

"Intoxicating?" Zoe supplied, already scanning the room like a huntress surveying her territory. "And full of powerful men with dangerous secrets. Come on."

She pulled me toward the bar, Finn trailing behind with an amused expression. After procuring champagne for us, Zoe fixed me with determined eyes.

"Drink," she commanded. "You need liquid courage."

I sipped the expensive champagne, feeling it burn down my throat like fire. "I don't think I belong here, Zoe."

"Nonsense. You just need to embrace the darkness." She squeezed my hand. "Look around. Everyone here is playing a lethal game tonight. Why shouldn't you?"

As the alcohol warmed my blood, I felt my fear slowly dissolving. Zoe was right. For once in my life, I could be someone else—someone fearless and untouchable.

An hour and several champagne flutes later, I was actually enjoying the dangerous atmosphere. Finn had swept Zoe onto the dance floor, leaving me to observe the deadly theater unfolding around me. The masks transformed everyone into enigmatic players in some elaborate power game.

"You look far too exquisite to be standing alone."

The deep voice made my pulse spike. I turned to find a tall figure beside me, his face partially concealed by a sleek black mask. But what the mask didn't hide stole my breath—full lips curved in a predatory smile, a strong jawline carved from marble, and the most unusual, piercing ice-blue eyes I'd ever encountered. A distinctive scar cut through his left eyebrow like a mark of violence survived.

"I... thank you," I managed, cursing my sudden inability to speak coherently.

"Dance with me." It wasn't a request, but something in his commanding tone made my heart race with dangerous anticipation.

Before I could overthink it, I nodded. His hand found the small of my back, sending electricity through my body as he guided me onto the dance floor. His touch was possessive yet controlled, dangerous without being threatening.

"I haven't seen you at one of these gatherings before," he said, his voice like silk wrapped around steel as he pulled me closer. "I would have remembered."

I smiled behind my mask. "How could you possibly know? Everyone's masked."

"Some people leave impressions that masks can't hide." His eyes—those incredible, cold blue eyes—studied my face with undisguised hunger.

The champagne made me reckless. "Are you always this forward with strangers?"

"Only the exceptionally captivating ones." His hand tightened possessively on my waist. "And only when they look at me the way you're looking at me right now."

Heat flooded my cheeks. Was I that transparent? Something about this man was magnetic, pulling me toward danger despite every survival instinct. Maybe it was the anonymity of the masks, or maybe it was the intoxicating scent of power that clung to him.

"And how exactly am I looking at you?" I challenged.

His lips brushed my ear as he whispered, "Like you're wondering what it would be like to surrender to me."

My breath caught. The music swelled around us, but all I could focus on was the heat of his body against mine, the intoxicating scent of expensive cologne mixed with something darker, and those eyes that seemed to see straight through my mask into my soul.

"Maybe I am," I admitted, shocking myself with my honesty.

His smile widened, revealing perfect white teeth that somehow looked predatory. Without another word, he took my hand and led me away from the dance floor, through the crowd of dangerous strangers, and toward a dimly lit corridor.

My heart hammered against my ribs. This wasn't me—I didn't follow mysterious men into dark corners. Yet I couldn't make myself stop. For once in my life, I wanted to taste danger.

The moment we were alone, he pressed me against the wall with controlled force, one hand cupping my face while the other claimed my hip. "Tell me to stop," he murmured, his face inches from mine.

"Don't you dare stop," I whispered instead.

His lips crashed into mine with a hunger that matched my own desperation. The kiss was unlike anything I'd experienced—demanding yet tender, passionate yet controlled. I melted against him, my hands gripping his shoulders as if he might disappear like smoke.

"Christ, you're intoxicating," he groaned against my mouth, his hands sliding down to grip my thighs through the silky fabric of my dress.

I gasped as he lifted me slightly, pressing his body more firmly against mine. "We shouldn't—" I started, but the protest died as his lips found my neck.

"We absolutely should," he countered, his voice rough with desire. "Unless you want me to stop?"

I knew I should say yes. This was madness—a stranger in a hallway at an underground auction filled with dangerous people. But the fire building between us was undeniable, and for once, I didn't want to be cautious Ivy.

"Don't you dare stop," I breathed.

His hands explored my body with expertise that left me gasping. When he slipped under the hem of my dress, I didn't protest. When he pushed aside the thin fabric of my underwear, I only urged him on with breathless moans.

"I need you," he growled, his fingers working magic that had me clutching desperately at his shoulders. "Right now."

"Yes," was all I could manage.

What followed was a blur of sensations—his hands lifting me higher, my legs wrapping around his waist, the sound of his zipper, and then the exquisite feeling of him pushing inside me. The angle was perfect, the pressure divine. Each thrust sent waves of pleasure through my body until I was biting my lip to keep from crying out.

"Let go," he commanded softly, his rhythm intensifying. "I want to hear you."

I did as he demanded, letting the quiet hallway fill with my breathless moans as he drove me toward a shattering climax. He followed moments later, his face buried in my neck as he shuddered against me.

For several heartbeats, we stayed locked together, our ragged breathing the only sound. Reality slowly began to seep back in, and with it came the first flickers of embarrassment. What had I done?

Before I could spiral into regret, he gently set me down, straightening my dress with surprising tenderness. "That was..." he trailed off, seemingly at a loss for words.

"Unexpected," I supplied, smoothing down my hair with trembling hands.

He laughed—a rich, dangerous sound that eased some of my anxiety. "Extraordinary was the word I was looking for."

Just as he leaned in to kiss me again, his phone buzzed with an urgent tone. He cursed under his breath, pulling a sleek device from his pocket. His expression changed instantly as he read the message, his entire demeanor shifting from sensual to deadly.

"I have to handle this," he said, already stepping back. "Wait here. I'll be right back."

Before I could respond, he was striding away, phone pressed to his ear, speaking in low, urgent tones about something involving "the shipment" and "cleaning up the mess." I leaned against the wall, feeling simultaneously exhilarated and foolish. What had gotten into me? This wasn't who I was.

After fifteen minutes of waiting, it became clear he wasn't returning. Humiliation washed over me. Of course he'd disappeared—he'd gotten what he wanted from the naive girl at the masquerade.

I made my way back to the ballroom, scanning the crowd for any sign of him or Zoe. Finding neither, I texted Zoe that I was ready to leave this dangerous world behind.

"You did WHAT?" Zoe shrieked as we sat in her living room later that night, Finn having tactfully retreated to the bedroom.

"Keep your voice down," I hissed, though we were alone. "It was reckless, I know."

"Reckless? It's perfect!" She clapped her hands together. "My little Ivy, having passionate masked sex at an underground auction. I'm so proud!"

I groaned, burying my face in my hands. "Don't be proud. Be horrified. I don't even know his name."

"That's the best part," Zoe insisted. "It's like something out of a dark romance novel. The mysterious stranger with those unusual scars and eyes who rocks your world and vanishes into the shadows."

Despite my embarrassment, I couldn't help smiling. "His eyes were incredible. This strange ice-blue color I've never seen before. And that scar through his eyebrow..."

"And how was the experience?" Zoe leaned forward eagerly. "Don't spare any details."

My cheeks burned, but I couldn't deny the lingering pleasure. "It was incredible. Like nothing I've ever experienced. He was so... commanding. Like he knew exactly what I needed before I did."

"Well, he clearly knew what he was doing," Zoe giggled. "I knew this auction was exactly what you needed to forget about Brodie."

"I suppose you were right," I admitted. "For the first time in months, I didn't think about Brodie once."

"See? Best therapy ever!" Zoe raised her wine glass. "To mysterious strangers and dangerous new beginnings!"

I clinked my glass against hers, feeling lighter than I had in months. Maybe this reckless night was exactly what I'd needed to finally move forward.

"So," Zoe said casually, "please tell me you guys used protection?"

The glass nearly slipped from my fingers as cold realization crashed over me. In the heat of the moment, protection hadn't crossed either of our minds.

"Oh God," I whispered, panic clawing at my throat. "We didn't."

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