Mafia Mask 22

Chapter 22 Security Measures and Evening Plans

Ivy's POV

Xavier pressed a glass of water into my shaking hands. The cool liquid did nothing to stop the tremors running through my body—aftershocks from Roman's violent assault. I didn't even notice the tears streaming down my cheeks until Caleb's thumb gently brushed them away with surprising tenderness.

"Breathe, Ivy. Roman can't touch you now. I won't let you lose your position because of that pathetic excuse for a man." Caleb's voice carried an edge of lethal steel beneath its gentleness as his hand moved in soothing circles across my back.

"He's absolutely right, Ivy. Roman is nothing but worthless scum. You're stronger than he'll ever be, so don't give him the satisfaction of seeing you broken," Xavier added, his usual playful demeanor replaced by genuine concern and barely contained violence.

"Since when did you decide you could use pet names for my assistant without permission?"

"Since we became allies, you possessive bastard. And quit acting like such a territorial Don!"

Their ridiculous argument actually made me laugh through my tears, which seemed to be exactly what they intended. Caleb rose from his chair and tilted my chin upward with gentle fingers, forcing me to meet his intense gaze.

"Maybe not territorial, but definitely possessive," he murmured with that infuriating smirk that made my pulse race with dangerous anticipation. Why did he have to look like a dark angel while saying things like that?

"Dear God, you two are dancing around each other like idiots in a minefield!" Xavier threw his hands up in exasperation. "But Ivy, I was just explaining to your brooding Don here that I've secured reservations for tonight's dinner. No backing out this time—we're treating two incredible women to an evening at Amber. It's Heidi's absolute favorite spot, and you're going to adore it. Though I have no clue why Ivy thinks you'd object to her joining us, Caleb."

"Object? I’m looking forward to having Ivy there tonight more than you know," Caleb replied, his voice dropping to that husky tone that sent molten heat racing through my veins. The way he said my name felt like a dangerous caress. "Besides, they serve the most decadent chocolate cake in the city, Ivy."

"What is your obsession with chocolate cake today, you pretty boy? I spotted the empty plate on your desk this morning, watched you devour another slice during the video conference, and now you’re already planning dessert for tonight? Keep this up and you’ll lose that perfect physique," Xavier teased mercilessly.

"What can I say? I’ve developed quite the craving for chocolate cake lately," Caleb responded with a wicked grin that made my cheeks flame with embarrassment and dangerous memories.

A sharp knock interrupted our conversation, and Heidi swept in with Monica trailing behind her like reinforcements arriving at a battlefield.

"Ivy, sweetheart, are you holding up okay? Roman has always been revolting, but this crosses every line, Caleb." Heidi’s voice vibrated with barely contained murderous fury.

"I’m managing, Heidi, but thank you for caring. It was disgusting and completely blindsided me, but I’ll survive it," I answered, squeezing her offered hand gratefully.

"Heidi, I guarantee this won’t happen again. But tell me, does Roman treat other staff members with the same disrespect?" Caleb’s question carried a dangerous undertone that promised retribution.

"Disrespect doesn’t begin to cover it! He’s vicious, degrading, abusive, and completely without boundaries. He’s a monster, Caleb. I understand your reasons for keeping him in the family, but everyone forced to deal with him is reaching their breaking point," Heidi shot back, her anger palpable and deadly.

"Monica, effective immediately, I want this entire floor secured like a fortress. I’m finished with people barging into my territory uninvited, and neither you nor Ivy should endure these toxic encounters." Caleb grabbed his phone and activated the speaker function. "Fisher, implement a maximum security protocol for executive floor access. Monica will provide you with authorized personnel names. Create elevator access codes for Xavier, Jude, Ivy, Heidi, Monica, and myself exclusively. All other employees

require Monica’s explicit approval, and anyone else needs direct authorization from a code holder. The elevator should only reach this floor with proper credentials. Lock the emergency stairwell door from our side as well. Schedule a company meeting to announce these new security measures immediately."

"Understood, sir. Implementation begins within the hour," came the crisp response.

Caleb disconnected and surveyed our group with lethal satisfaction.

"Does everyone understand the new system? This should eliminate the more aggressive threats to our operation. Monica, you’re dismissed. Thank you for your swift assistance."

After Monica departed, Xavier enthusiastically described the dinner plans to Heidi. We spent the next several minutes talking and laughing as Xavier dramatically recounted how Caleb had transformed into my dark knight in expensive armor. His storytelling skills were absolutely hilarious, complete with theatrical gestures that had us all in tears—the good kind this time.

But underneath the laughter, I could feel the dangerous undercurrent between Caleb and me, the unfinished business that his earlier ultimatum had promised to resolve. Tonight was going to change everything between us, one way or another.