Mafia Mask 27

Chapter 27 Emergency Revelations

Caleb’s POV

The entire drive to Ivy’s apartment, I watched her hands tremble in her lap like leaves in a storm. Whatever crisis had pulled her away from our heated encounter had shaken my usually composed assistant to her core.

She bolted from the car the moment I parked, her heels clicking frantically against the pavement like gunshots in the night. I caught up to her at the building entrance.

"I’m coming with you," I said, catching her elbow gently. "Whatever’s happening, you shouldn’t face it alone."

Ivy’s eyes were wide with worry, but she nodded gratefully. We took the elevator in tense silence, her fingers twisting the strap of her purse like she was preparing for battle.

A middle-aged woman with graying hair met us at Ivy’s apartment door. Her face was etched with concern and something that looked like relief.

"Ivy, thank God you’re here. I was about to call the hospital," the woman said, wringing her hands. "His temperature spiked to 103 degrees about an hour ago."

"Where is he, Rose?" Ivy’s voice cracked with panic that made my chest tighten.

"In your bedroom. I’ve been trying to bring his fever down with cool cloths, but nothing’s working."

Ivy rushed down the hallway, and I followed instinctively. When we entered the bedroom, I froze in the doorway. Ivy was lifting a small boy from the bed, his dark hair damp with sweat, his small body limp against her chest.

"Shh, baby, Mommy’s here now," she whispered, pressing her lips to his forehead.

The word hit me like a sledgehammer to the chest. Mommy. Ivy had a child. In all our months of working together, through late nights and business dinners, she had never mentioned a son. The revelation sent my mind reeling with questions and something that felt dangerously like jealousy.

Rose appeared beside us, her face grave. "Ivy, I really think we should take him to the emergency room. Fevers this high in toddlers can be dangerous."

"You’re right," Ivy said, her voice steadying with maternal resolve that I’d never seen before. "Can you grab his overnight bag while I get him dressed?"

"Of course, dear."

I stood there like a statue, processing this earth-shattering reality. Ivy had a child. A son who looked to be about three years old, with her same dark hair and delicate features.

"Caleb," Ivy’s voice cut through my stupor. "Thank you for bringing me home, but I need to get Max to the hospital now."

Max. Even his name felt like a punch to my chest, stirring something familiar I couldn’t place.

"I’ll drive you both," I said, my voice coming out rougher than intended.

"You don’t have to do that. I can call a cab."

"Absolutely not, Ivy. Let’s go."

The authority in my voice left no room for argument. I helped them to the car, Ivy sliding into the back seat with Max cradled against her chest. Through the rearview mirror, I watched her stroke his hair, murmuring soft reassurances like a prayer.

I drove faster than I should have, my hands gripping the steering wheel as Ivy's quiet fears filled the car. When we reached the hospital, I dropped them at the emergency entrance and went to park.

Inside, I found Ivy in the waiting area, Max now awake but clinging to her like a lifeline. She looked up when I approached, surprise flickering across her exhausted features.

"What are you doing here?" she asked softly.

I settled into the chair beside her, studying the little boy who was watching me with curious eyes. Eyes that were an unusual shade that made my pulse spike with impossible recognition. "I wasn't going to leave you to handle this alone."

Tears gathered in Ivy's eyes. "Thank you," she whispered.

"So," I said, keeping my voice casual despite the storm of questions in my head, "when exactly were you planning to tell me you have a son?"

Ivy's cheeks flushed. "It's not a secret, Caleb. I would never hide Max from anyone. Heidi knows about him. The subject just never came up between us."

"Heidi knows?"

"Yes, remember that dinner we had to cancel a few weeks ago? We were having dinner at my place with Zoe and Max."

I felt a smile tugging at my lips despite everything. "His name is Max?"

"Yes, Mr. Thorne, this is Max," she said, her voice warming with unmistakable maternal pride. "He's the light of my entire world."

Something twisted dangerously in my chest. "That's quite a coincidence. Max was my father's name."

Ivy’s expression softened. "Really? What made you choose that name?"

"Max means rock, stone," she explained, brushing a strand of hair from her son’s forehead. "This little guy is my rock. He gives me strength every single day."

"That’s beautiful, Ivy." The old nickname slipped out naturally. "After my parents died, I decided that if I ever had a son, I’d name him Max too. My father was my rock."

Ivy reached over and touched my cheek gently. "Your father raised an incredible man. I know he’s proud of you."

Her words sent warmth through me, but they also stirred up a curiosity I rarely allowed myself to feel about other people’s personal lives.

"What about Max’s father?" I asked quietly, dreading the answer.

Ivy’s face went carefully blank. "He doesn’t know Max exists. It’s complicated and honestly pretty embarrassing. Can I tell you about it later?"

"Of course."

A nurse called Max’s name, and we followed her into an examination room. The doctor, a kind-faced man in his fifties, gestured for us to sit.

"So we have a little fever today?" he asked, washing his hands.

Ivy answered his questions with calm efficiency while I held her purse and Max’s diaper bag. When the doctor asked Ivy to place Max on the examination table, he turned to me with a smile.

"Come closer, Dad. You can watch the examination."

Ivy opened her mouth to correct him, but I stepped forward smoothly. "Of course, Doctor. You know how it is with sick kids. We parents tend to panic."

The doctor chuckled knowingly. "I have five children myself, all teenagers now. Even being a pediatrician, I still worry when they get sick."

I could feel Ivy's confused stare burning into the side of my face, but I kept my expression neutral. There was no need to embarrass her by correcting the doctor's assumption.

As the doctor examined Max, I got my first clear look at the child's face. What I saw made my blood freeze in my veins. Those eyes—ice-blue and unmistakable. The same rare shade that stared back at me from every mirror. The same eyes my father had possessed.

The same eyes I'd inherited from generations of Thorne men.

After examining Max thoroughly, the doctor ordered blood work as a precaution, but assured us it was likely just a particularly stubborn virus. He explained that starting daycare often meant exposure to new germs, and Max's immune system was simply adjusting.

"His medical records are excellent," the doctor noted, flipping through Max's file. "Very thorough care from your previous pediatrician. You're clearly a very organized mother."

Ivy beamed at the praise, and I felt a surge of admiration. Even working full-time and managing her demanding position, she had every detail of her son's care perfectly handled.

"I'll call with the blood results, but he should be fine in a few days. Just keep him home from daycare until the fever breaks completely."

We thanked the doctor and headed home. At the pharmacy, I took the prescription from Ivy's hands despite her protests and bought Max's medication. When we reached her apartment, I followed them inside without being invited.

Zoe appeared from the kitchen, her face creased with worry. "How's Max? I got home from work and saw your note. Why didn't you call me?"

"Just a virus, Zoe. Caleb, please make yourself comfortable. I need to give Max his medicine and get him settled for the night. Zoe, can you help me?"

They disappeared down the hallway, leaving me alone in Ivy's living room. The space was warm and inviting, with children's toys neatly arranged in one corner and family photos scattered across the mantle. Through the large windows, the city lights twinkled like stars over my territory.

When Ivy returned twenty minutes later, she had changed into a long navy dress that made her look even more exhausted than before.

"Would you like some coffee?" she offered.

"You're exhausted, Ivy. I should go now that Zoe's here. But if you need anything tonight, call me."

I reached out and brushed my fingers along her cheek, feeling the softness of her skin. "Thank you for everything today, Caleb," she said quietly.

I smiled and headed for the door, but my mind was already racing with impossible possibilities. During the drive home, I couldn't shake what I'd seen in that examination room. Those eyes—my eyes—staring back at me from a three-year-old face.

Why did I feel such a strong compulsion to protect them both? Why was I so curious about this child? And who was the father who didn't even know Max existed?

The questions churned in my head as I drove through the empty streets, but one answer was becoming terrifyingly clear. Those ice-blue eyes were too rare, too distinctive to be a coincidence.

And if what I was beginning to suspect was true, everything was about to change.