Mafia Mask 28

Chapter 28 Sleepless Questions and Unanswered Mysteries

Caleb’s POV

Sleep eluded me completely that night. I found myself prowling through my penthouse like a caged predator, my mind racing with thoughts I couldn’t quite organize. When dawn finally broke at five, I gave up on rest entirely and headed down to the building’s private gym. The punching bag became my outlet, absorbing every ounce of frustration and confusion that had built up inside me. Each strike felt like a small release, though the underlying tension remained coiled in my chest like a loaded weapon.

By seven, I was already at my desk, trying to channel this restless energy into something productive. The early morning quiet of the office felt like exactly what I needed to think clearly. I decided to reach out to Harold Scott, knowing his reputation as an early riser who tackled his most important work before most people even had their first cup of coffee. Our conversation lasted longer than expected, and I found myself explaining the situation with surprising clarity. Ivy’s suggestion to contact him had been brilliant, and Scott’s enthusiasm was infectious when I mentioned her name.

"Ivy has always been exceptional," he said warmly. "Her analytical mind and intuitive understanding of complex criminal operations saved my company more than once. You’re lucky to have her in your organization."

Just as I ended the call, my phone buzzed with a message from my assistant. She was requesting permission to arrive late because her security arrangement was running behind schedule and her son couldn’t attend daycare. Without hesitation, I typed back encouraging her to stay home with him for the day. Her response came immediately, professional as always, insisting that her son’s fever had broken and that she trusted her protection completely.

The dedication in her message made me smile despite everything. She was clearly a devoted mother while maintaining her professional standards, a balance I found myself admiring more each day.

"Starting your day early, kid?" Heidi’s familiar voice broke through my thoughts as she entered my office. Her habit of calling Xavier and me ’kids’ despite our being grown men who commanded a criminal empire never failed to amuse me.

"Couldn’t manage any sleep, so I figured I might as well be productive."

She studied my face with the practiced eye of someone who had known me since I was in diapers. "You look like hell. The organization situation has you worried."

"That’s part of it, but I’m confident we can control the damage. Ivy’s idea about contacting Scott was inspired. We have our meeting scheduled for tomorrow, and he’s genuinely excited to help. He spoke very highly of Ivy, actually."

"Who wouldn’t? That woman has something truly special about her."

"She does. There’s something captivating about her presence." I paused, then asked, "What brings you in so early?"

"I wanted to get ahead on the plans for evacuating the lower floor. But I sense something else is keeping you awake."

Her knowing look told me she wouldn’t let this go. Heidi had an uncanny ability to see through my defenses, and I knew resistance was futile.

"Heidi, why didn’t you mention that Ivy has a son?"

"Because it wasn’t my information to share," she replied without hesitation. "And why would that cost you a night’s sleep?"

"You know me too well to play innocent, Heidi. You’re aware that Ivy has made quite an impact on me."

"I’d say it goes deeper than that, Caleb. But what concerns you about her having a child?"

"It’s not that I have a problem with it," I said, searching for the right words. "But it’s unsettled me in ways I can’t explain."

"Wait until you spend more time with the boy."

"I actually met him yesterday." I recounted the entire hospital experience, including the doctor's assumption about my relationship to them. Heidi's laughter filled the office when I reached that part.

"He's incredibly bright and talkative. Very warm and welcoming. He actually reminded me of you at that age," she said, which made me wonder if that explained the strange sense of familiarity I felt around him.

"He was pretty drowsy when I was there. The doctor said it was from the fever and medication."

"So you didn't really see his eyes clearly?"

"What about his eyes? If they're anything like his mother's, they must be striking." Her question seemed oddly specific, almost loaded with meaning.

"They are beautiful," Heidi replied, but I sensed she was holding something back—something significant.

"Heidi, what do you know about the boy's father?"

"I know everything, but I'm not sharing that information. It's deeply personal, and if Ivy wants you to know, she'll tell you herself."

The mystery was driving me insane. Was the father some kind of dangerous rival? A traitor? I would have to contain my curiosity until Ivy decided to open up. This need to know was consuming me, and I couldn't understand why it mattered so much.

Xavier bounded into the office next, looking refreshed and wearing his trademark dangerous grin.

"Look at this, two of my favorite people starting the day early. How are we doing?" he said, planting a kiss on Heidi's hair.

"Your brother here is running on no sleep," Heidi informed him, immediately capturing his attention.

"Caleb, we're going to handle the organization crisis. Try to relax."

"I know that, Xavier."

"So what kept you up? Miss Ivy?" His teasing tone was unmistakable.

"Bulls-eye!" Heidi chimed in with obvious amusement.

"Both of you, stop," I said, though they continued grinning like conspirators. "She has a son."

Xavier's expression shifted to surprise, and I found myself repeating the entire story again. When I finished, Xavier gave me a serious look.

"What's the issue, Caleb? You're not the type to judge single mothers. Please tell me you're not going to abandon Ivy over this."

"Absolutely not. I don't care that she has a son. If anything, it makes her more remarkable, stronger. Raising a child alone requires incredible strength. Heidi, you showed me how difficult that battle can be when you raised your daughters."

"Then I'm confused about what's bothering you," Xavier said.

"So am I, but something about this situation is eating at me and I can't figure out what."

A knock at the door interrupted our conversation, and Ivy entered like a breath of fresh air.

"Good morning! Caleb, I just arrived. Thank you for being understanding about my delay."

She looked tired, probably hadn’t slept much either. She really should have stayed home and rested.

"Don’t worry about it, Ivy. How’s Max feeling?"

"Much better, thank you. Children bounce back so quickly, thankfully." Her smile was warm despite her obvious exhaustion.

"Ivy, you have a little soldier? You have to introduce me, I’m an incredible uncle!" Xavier announced, making everyone smile.

"I’m sure you are, Xavier. How about this—once he’s feeling completely better, we’ll have lunch at my place so you can all meet him. Just promise me you won’t teach my son any dangerous habits!"

"I can’t make any guarantees!" Xavier winked at her. Absolutely impossible.

"Ivy, you’re not alone in this world. You have family here, so count on us for whatever you need."

Her eyes filled with tears at his words, and she thanked him with genuine emotion that made my chest tighten.

Before everyone dispersed, I updated them on my conversation with Scott, mentioning how fondly he spoke of Ivy, which brought another smile to her face. I confirmed our Saturday strategy session at my compound and told Ivy she didn’t need to attend.

"Absolutely not, Caleb! I’ve never shirked my responsibilities, and that hasn’t interfered with being a good mother. I’ve already arranged everything with security, and Zoe will be home tomorrow as well. My son will be well protected, so I will definitely be working."

Her tone was firm and left no room for argument. My admiration for her grew even stronger, but so did the nagging feeling that there was something important I was missing about Max—something that would change everything once I figured it out.