Mafia Mask 32

Chapter 32 Invisible Allies

Ivy's POV

I stood before Caleb's imposing glass tower, its gleaming facade reflecting the morning sun like polished steel. The building served as the legitimate front for the Thorne crime family's vast underground empire. After passing through multiple security checkpoints and identifying myself to the armed guards, I stepped into the private elevator that led directly to the Don's penthouse.

My mind raced with anticipation as I thought about the ways I planned to unsettle my dangerously attractive boss today. Zoe and I had spent hours the previous night crafting what she dramatically termed my "seduction warfare strategy." She had insisted I wear this burnt orange dress that hugged every curve of my body, claiming the bold color made my pale skin luminous and enhanced the richness of my dark hair. The knee-length fabric clung perfectly, with provocative slits along each side that would reveal tantalizing glimpses when I sat down. The square neckline and structured straps gave it an elegant sophistication that screamed confidence and power.

Beneath the dress, I wore the white lace lingerie set Zoe had selected, complete with delicate ribbon details that made me feel like a gift waiting to be unwrapped. My black strappy heels added dangerous inches to my height, and she had styled my hair in that effortlessly seductive half-up arrangement with face-framing tendrils. The subtle makeup completed the look that Zoe insisted would "bring any man to his knees in submission."

Now here I was, ascending to the penthouse while fantasizing about how I would make the most powerful crime boss in the city squirm, instead of focusing on the serious business of tracking down traitors within his organization.

The elevator opened directly into his luxurious penthouse sanctuary, and I couldn't suppress my admiration. Everything radiated absolute power and refined menace without being ostentatious. The space perfectly captured Caleb's commanding presence and lethal authority.

A distinguished older gentleman approached me with a respectful smile. "Miss Ivy, good morning. I'm Walter, Mr. Thorne's head of security. The others are waiting on the private terrace."

I followed him through the corridor, already hearing Xavier's familiar laughter echoing from outside. Caleb, Heidi, Jude, and Xavier were gathered around a secure conference table when I appeared. The moment I stepped onto the terrace, their conversation immediately ceased.

Xavier released a low appreciative whistle while Jude began humming "Pretty Woman" under his breath. This had become their standard greeting ritual whenever I arrived.

"Good morning, gentlemen. Were you discussing my reputation?" I asked with a playful smile.

"Ivy, that dress is absolutely devastating on you," Xavier said, his eyes filled with genuine admiration.

"If I weren't happily married, Ivy, I would never let you leave my sight," Jude added with a conspiratorial grin.

Caleb's jaw clenched as he rose to his feet with predatory grace. "If you weren't married, Jude, and if I didn't know you're completely devoted to Nora, you'd be swimming with the fishes by now." His smile held no warmth whatsoever. "And you, tesoro, are going to start wearing a nun's habit to all family meetings."

He moved toward me with the fluid menace of a apex predator, pressing a possessive kiss to my cheek before capturing my hand in an iron grip that sent electric currents racing up my arm.

After exchanging greetings with Heidi, I settled into my chair and crossed my legs deliberately. Caleb leaned close, his breath scorching against my ear. "I'm going to have Walter bring a blanket to cover those incredible legs before I lose what's left of my self-control."

Before I could respond with a cutting remark, Mr. Scott's cheerful voice filled the terrace. "Good morning, everyone!"

He approached me with the warmth reserved for family, kissing both my cheeks in the traditional manner. "Ivy, cara mia, how wonderful to see you again. How have you been feeling?"

"Very well, Mr. Scott, thank you for asking. And how are you managing?" The genuine paternal affection in his eyes always made me smile.

"Thanks to your sharp instincts, I'm getting my financial house back in order, my dear girl."

"Please, I barely did anything substantial. But I'm relieved that your situation is improving."

He squeezed my hand affectionately before turning to Caleb. "Take exceptional care of her, Caleb. This young woman is a precious treasure."

"I know exactly how invaluable she is, Scott. I'm keeping her under constant protection," Caleb replied, his intense gaze finding mine with an intensity that made my pulse race dangerously.

Mr. Scott's attention shifted to Heidi, his expression growing wistful. "And you, Heidi, are you truly relocating to Boston?"

"Yes, I am, Harold. I want to be closer to my daughters and grandchildren," she replied with a gentle smile.

The way they regarded each other made me suspect there were unresolved romantic feelings between them. I knew Mr. Scott had been widowed for many years and hadn't pursued anyone since his wife's tragic death.

"This city will feel much emptier without your presence," he said with old-world gallantry.

My romantic speculation was interrupted by Caleb's commanding voice. "So that's our current situation, Scott. Ivy suggested you might have encountered something similar in your operations and recommended we seek your counsel."

Mr. Scott's eyes sparkled with fierce determination. "Caleb, your father was one of my most trusted allies in this business. Helping you eliminate these traitors will be my honor, especially since it was recommended by this remarkable young woman who has become like a daughter to me." He paused, his voice growing deadly serious. "Ivy was the one who discovered my accountant's embezzlement

when we began reviewing the financial records. I had been completely blind to the theft happening under my nose."

"Sometimes you need fresh perspective from outside the family," I said carefully. "When you're too close to an operation, it becomes impossible to see the complete picture."

We spent the morning developing our counter-intelligence strategy. When Walter announced lunch was prepared, Caleb invited everyone to join us at the table. The discussion continued throughout the meal, with Mr. Scott outlining his comprehensive plan.

"After our meeting yesterday, Caleb, I contacted Heidi immediately. We had lunch together, she briefed me thoroughly on the situation, and I've developed a complete strategy for relocating our financial operations," Scott explained with military precision.

"Yes, Harold will be personally supervising that transition," Heidi confirmed.

"How exactly will this operation function?" Xavier asked, leaning forward with keen interest.

"I've already assembled a team of completely loyal operatives. Heidi and I will infiltrate your building this afternoon, and the team will rendezvous with us there. While we're executing the relocation, we'll duplicate every single document. Every piece of evidence in that sector, plus everything from accounting and the commercial front operations. These copies will be transferred directly to our secure facility."

"Impressive work, Scott. You don't waste precious time," Caleb said with genuine respect.

"We can't afford to waste time, son. It will require intensive operations until the start of the business week, but when business hours begin, everything will be fully operational. Another crucial element is the strategic placement of specific personnel. I'm already screening candidates, but the first priority is Felix Hayes. He's a technological genius, essentially a professional hacker. He'll install surveillance software on all organization computers, providing us complete access. But you'll hire him as an awkward tech specialist who supposedly just maintains and updates equipment."

"I could make him department supervisor," Caleb suggested.

"That would be a critical error. If you give him too much authority, it will raise suspicions and nobody will trust him," Scott cautioned wisely. "All the operatives you need will be hired for seemingly insignificant positions. This ensures they remain invisible and unnoticed. You'll also add additional custodial staff and cleaning personnel on each floor."

"What's the strategic reasoning behind that?" Xavier asked, puzzled.

"Let Ivy explain the principle to them. She taught me this concept," Scott said with obvious pride.

"They're invisible people," I explained. "They're everywhere, but nobody truly sees them. People mistakenly assume they lack intelligence, so they don't guard their conversations around them. There's prejudice against people in humble positions. Arrogant people with money think they're incapable of understanding important business matters. In Mr. Scott's case, one of the cleaning women knew exactly where the accountant was funneling the stolen money, but she didn't have sufficient information to be certain he was embezzling."

"And it was precisely this cleaning woman who provided the evidence I needed to eliminate the accountant, thanks to Ivy actually listening to what she had to say. Today, that woman is my personal assistant, she's pursuing her education, and she'll become an exceptional professional. She possesses remarkable intelligence," Scott added with obvious pride.

"That's brilliant strategy," Jude said with genuine admiration. "At our legitimate operations, I observe how some people completely ignore the existence of service workers. It's incredible that you recognized their value, Ivy."

I felt warmth rise to my cheeks at their praise.

"Let's proceed then. Scott, provide Xavier with the complete list of everyone who needs to be recruited and their positions," Caleb commanded, his approving smile making my stomach flutter. "Xavier, I don't care what methods you employ, but these operatives need to be hired without arousing any suspicion whatsoever."

"That's simple enough. I can ensure Miles from personnel recruits exactly who we want," Jude said confidently. "He owes me several significant favors, and our families have history together. He's honest,

so I can manipulate the situation without him realizing he’s being directed. I think we should stagger the hiring though. Too many new employees simultaneously might appear suspicious."

"Perfect, Jude. Miles and the recruitment timeline are your responsibility," Caleb agreed.

After lunch, everyone departed for the organization’s headquarters to handle the relocation and hiring operations. Caleb and I remained at his penthouse to analyze the Syndicate’s extensive financial records.

There was an enormous amount of money laundering data to review.