Mafia Mask 34

Chapter 34 Walls Finally Crumble

Caleb's POV

After hours of scrutinizing the Thorne Syndicate's offshore shell company records, the encrypted account numbers began blurring together on my laptop screen. The afternoon sun had faded behind the bulletproof windows of my penthouse office, casting long shadows across the polished marble floor where we'd spread out dozens of laundered transaction reports and cartel payment ledgers. My shoulders ached from hunching over the evidence of our family's compromised money flow, and Ivy looked equally drained from our marathon session of tracking the missing military-grade weapons payments.

"We should take a break," I announced, pushing back from the mahogany conference table where we'd laid out bank routing slips and cartel wire transfers. "Get some food before we dig deeper into this mess."

Ivy nodded, stretching her arms above her head in a way that made her silk blouse pull taut across her curves. I forced myself to focus on business as Xavier's voice crackled through my encrypted phone, updating me on the additional muscle he'd stationed around the building's perimeter.

While I handled the security briefing, Ivy stepped toward the floor-to-ceiling windows to check on her son. I couldn't help but catch fragments of her conversation with Zoe, her voice softening to that maternal tone that always made something protective stir in my chest whenever she mentioned the boy.

"Ivy, calm down. Max and I are having an absolute blast," Zoe's voice carried clearly through the speaker. "We'll order pizza, binge some superhero movies, and be asleep early. Focus on your work, but please, for the love of God, finally make a move on that gorgeous mob boss of yours."

Ivy's cheeks flushed that delicate pink I'd grown addicted to. "Zoe, I'm trying to be professional here. We have mountains of laundering records to sort through."

"Honey, even crime families need dinner breaks. Besides, don't waste my matchmaking genius. I spent serious money picking out that outfit for you," Zoe laughed. "Trust me, Max and I are living our best life. You know how much that kid adores his Aunt Zoe."

"Fine, you win. Give my baby a kiss from mommy," Ivy said, ending the call with a smile that made my pulse race despite the deadly circumstances surrounding us.

I watched her tuck a strand of dark hair behind her ear, that nervous gesture I'd memorized during our weeks of working together. When she caught me staring, her smile faltered slightly under the weight of my attention.

"Ivy, I know Max's been under the weather lately. If you need to get back to him, I understand completely. This investigation is going to run all night, probably straight through tomorrow. I can handle the cartel payment trail alone."

She shook her head firmly. "Two sets of eyes will cut the time in half. Besides, Max has a godmother who spoils him completely and loves having him all to herself."

"You and Zoe have quite a bond," I observed.

"Similar to you and Xavier, from what I've witnessed," she replied with that perceptiveness that never failed to impress me.

I smiled at her insight and gestured toward the private dining area where I'd had my chef prepare dinner. "Let's eat, tesoro. I need you properly fueled for what lies ahead."

We settled into comfortable conversation over the meal, the formal boundaries of don and employee dissolving with each shared story. She told me about her decision to study international finance, described Max's latest obsession with building elaborate LEGO fortresses. I sensed her tension whenever our conversation approached the topic of Max's father, but I didn't push. Whatever secrets she guarded, she'd reveal them when ready.

"Ivy, can we extend this break a bit longer? My brain feels like it's been through a meat grinder," I admitted, rubbing my temples where a headache was building from staring at encrypted account codes.

"Absolutely, we have the entire night stretching before us," she said with a playful smile, moving toward the leather sectional in my office lounge area. "Come here, this couch looks incredibly inviting."

"You're incredibly beautiful," I murmured, the words escaping before I could stop them.

She settled onto the plush leather, and I couldn't resist moving closer. The intoxicating scent of her perfume filled my senses as I leaned over her, my knee sinking into the cushion beside her hip. My hand found the elegant curve of her neck as I pressed my lips to the sensitive spot just below her earlobe.

"I've been fighting every instinct all day to tear that blouse right off your body," I whispered against her ear, feeling her shiver beneath my touch. "Every time I thought I had my control locked down, Xavier would interrupt us with another security update."

I pulled back to meet her gaze, my thumb tracing along the delicate line of her jaw. "You're driving me completely insane, Ivy."

Before she could respond, I captured her mouth in a kiss that conveyed every ounce of desire I'd been suppressing throughout our investigation. She melted against me immediately, her arms winding around my neck as she pulled me closer. I eased her down onto the couch, our bodies fitting together perfectly as the kiss deepened with desperate hunger.

She responded with equal fire, her fingers tangling in my hair as soft sounds escaped her throat. I could feel her heartbeat racing against my chest, matching the frantic rhythm pounding through my veins. My hands explored every curve of her body through the expensive fabric, and she arched into my touch like she'd been waiting for this moment as long as I had.

When I finally broke the kiss, we were both breathing hard. Her lips were swollen from my attention, her green eyes dark with the same need consuming me.

"I want to carry you to my bedroom and show you exactly how much I've wanted you," I said, my voice rough with barely controlled desire. "I know you feel this fire too, Ivy. Stop overthinking this and stay with me tonight."

She looked up at me with those stunning eyes, and I saw the exact moment her walls completely crumbled.

"When have I ever been able to resist you? One touch from you and I lose all rational thought," she whispered, pulling me down for another searing kiss. "I want you too, Caleb. More than I should, more than makes sense."

I stood and lifted her into my arms, her legs wrapping around my waist as I carried her toward my bedroom, both of us finally ready to surrender to what had been building between us since the day she walked into my world.