Mafia Mask 40

Chapter 40 Shattered Trust

Ivy's POV

The sound of hushed voices pulled me from the darkness of sleep. I had collapsed into bed hours ago, emotionally shattered, and missed Carmen's arrival with Max entirely. When I finally opened my eyes, only one soft lamp illuminated the room, and Zoe sat perched on the edge of my bed like a guardian angel, watching me with concern etched across her features.

I struggled to sit up, my body heavy with exhaustion and heartbreak. The sight of my best friend's worried expression made the crushing weight in my chest even heavier.

"What happened, sweetheart? Carmen told me you were already in bed when she got here with Max. She wanted to check on you, but you were out cold. She could tell you'd been crying though." Zoe's voice carried that soothing quality that always managed to calm my storms. "Did you and the Don have your first real confrontation? These things happen in our world, but they pass."

The gentle hope in her words nearly broke me all over again. I shook my head, fresh tears already threatening to spill.

"It won't pass, Zoe. What happened today was absolutely devastating." My voice cracked on the words.

"Okay, then tell me everything, and we'll figure out together whether it's as bad as you think. And if it really is that terrible, I'll have Finn put a bullet in Thorne's skull myself." Despite her attempt at dark humor, I could see the fierce protectiveness blazing in her eyes.

"I'll tell you everything. But where's Max?" The question hit me suddenly as I realized how late it must be. My son should have been home hours ago.

"Don't even worry about that right now. Carmen's spending the night, and those two are having the time of their lives in the living room watching old mob movies. Let her handle Max tonight. You're falling apart, and I'm here to put you back together." Her fingers gently smoothed my tangled hair.

"You’re right. It’s better if he doesn’t see me like this anyway. The streets are getting more dangerous, and I can’t afford to show weakness. Let me take a quick shower first, then we can talk properly."

"Take all the time you need, honey."

I dragged myself to the bathroom and stepped under the scalding spray, hoping the hot water could wash away the horror of this day. But while it cleansed my body, my soul remained raw and wounded. When I emerged, Zoe had transformed my bedroom into a recovery station complete with a dinner tray and an enormous container of ice cream flanked by a couple of spoons.

"Come here, beautiful. Food first, then we attack this ice cream like the therapy it is." She patted the mattress beside her.

I forced myself to eat, knowing I couldn’t afford to fall apart completely. Max needed me strong, and I had failed him today by letting Caleb past my carefully constructed walls. After choking down enough dinner to satisfy Zoe, she cracked open the ice cream, and I began unraveling the entire nightmare while we alternated spoonfuls.

I laid out every excruciating detail, from Caleb’s cold accusations about the missing arms money to the way he looked at me like I was a traitor who deserved execution. The tears came again, rolling down my cheeks as I relived each moment of being branded a thief in front of the entire syndicate.

"What an absolute bastard! I’m going to destroy that arrogant piece of garbage! He had no right to treat you like that, none at all! You’ve handled more dirty money for that family than anyone!" Zoe’s fury burned bright and protective. She had always absorbed my pain as if it were her own, insisting that sharing the burden made it lighter for both of us.

"Zoe, I think I should call my parents and tell them I’m coming home. Caleb has too much power in this territory, and he’s going to make sure I can’t work anywhere in this city. The other families won’t touch me after word spreads. Do you think your uncle would even consider hiring me after this mess?" I couldn’t meet her eyes as I asked.

"Listen to me carefully. Of course my uncle would hire you, or my father would. They both know exactly who you are and what you’re made of. They would never question your loyalty or your skills with the

books. But you’re not running home with your tail between your legs. You’re staying right here and making the comeback of the century. Caleb Thorne might control half this city, but he’s not untouchable. We’ll find you another position here, and when that monster finally realizes what he’s lost, you’ll crush him like the insect he is."

"Zoe, he’s never going to regret this! He’s already made up his mind that I’m guilty. He won’t bother investigating to find the real culprit. In his world, suspicion is enough for a death sentence." The hopelessness in my voice made even me cringe.

"Oh, Ivy, if there’s one thing my father taught me about the syndicate business, it’s that traitors always get exposed eventually. They get cocky and make mistakes. The money trail will lead somewhere, and when it does, Caleb will figure out it wasn’t you, especially when the audit wraps up and the real truth comes to light."

"Zoe, only Heidi stood by me today. You can’t imagine how cold and distant Xavier was. It was like looking at a complete stranger who wanted to put a bullet in my head." Fresh tears threatened as I remembered the betrayal in his eyes.

"They’re both idiots, Ivy. You know who you are, and your conscience is crystal clear, so forget those cowards." Zoe’s anger blazed even hotter. "But mark my words, they’ll regret treating you this way. I guarantee it."

I managed a weak smile, feeling utterly drained. She handed me a glass of water and a small white pill.

"It’s for the headache. Your head must be pounding after all that crying."

She was right. My skull felt like it might split open. I swallowed the medication gratefully and sank back into my pillows. Zoe kissed my forehead, turned off the lamp, and slipped out quietly.

But sleep brought no peace. The night stretched endlessly, filled with twisted dreams where Caleb’s disappointed face morphed into accusations of betrayal, and I woke repeatedly with tears on my cheeks and his name on my lips.