Mafia Mask 421

Chapter 421: Unleashed Beast

Daniel's POV

I was drowning in a storm of sensations and emotions that threatened to shatter every wall I had built around my heart. Lila, this young angel who had wandered into my dangerous world, had surrendered herself to me with such complete trust that it left me breathless. It wasn't just her body she had given me – it was the absolute faith shining in those caramel eyes as she placed herself in my arms, trusting me with everything she was.

She had exceeded every expectation I could have had. This innocent law student had turned my carefully controlled world upside down, challenging everything I believed about myself and my place in the shadowy hierarchy of our families. Her delicate frame had molded perfectly against my battle-scarred body, and the feeling of claiming her had been both devastating and sacred. She had completely destabilized the foundation of who Inspector Daniel Martinez was supposed to be.

Now she lay draped across my chest, her soft curves pressed against me in peaceful contentment, and I was already burning to possess her again. I needed patience – it had been her first time crossing that threshold, she had to be exhausted, and the last thing I wanted was to frighten away this precious creature who had somehow found her way past all my defenses. But patience had never been a virtue in the Martinez bloodline, and my body was already hardening with renewed hunger for her.

She stirred against me, creating subtle friction between our skin that pulled an involuntary groan from deep in my chest. Her curious hands began mapping the landscape of scars and muscle that told the story of my years navigating between badge and family loyalty. Each gentle touch left trails of fire in its wake. Not satisfied with mere exploration, she began pressing delicate kisses across my chest, tracing invisible patterns that made my blood burn. When she shifted again, I was already fully aroused and desperate. Those luminous eyes looked up at me with such innocent heat that I nearly lost what remained of my legendary self-control.

"Baby, those touches are going to drive this dangerous man completely insane," I murmured roughly, running my hands along the silk of her back as she gifted me with a small smile that could bring down empires.

"Can I confess something to you?" Her voice held that sweet melody that could make me forget every rule I lived by.

"You can tell me anything, little one. Every secret, every thought."

"I want to experience that again." I studied her face, pleased beyond measure that her introduction to passion had been beautiful enough to make her crave more.

"Is that right? I'm glad your first taste was sweet enough to leave you hungry. Next time will be even more incredible," I promised with a smile, feeling something dangerously close to joy bloom in my chest. But disappointment flickered across her features, as if I had completely missed her meaning.

"Big guy, I don't want to wait for next time. I want you now!" She climbed up my body until we were face to face, and I stared at her with wide eyes, stunned by her bold demand. But then uncertainty crept into her expression. "Unless you didn't enjoy it, unless I was terrible at this..."

The idea that she thought I hadn't been consumed by what we shared was absurd. My renewed arousal pressing against her should have been evidence enough. In one fluid motion, I flipped our positions, pinning her beneath me with the controlled strength that made me feared in both my worlds.

"Damn, little one! You're one hell of a woman! Can't you see how beautiful and perfect you are? Don't you realize how completely you wrecked me in this bed?" I held her chin gently but firmly, ensuring she couldn't look away from the truth burning in my eyes. Then I shifted my hips deliberately, letting her feel exactly what she did to me. "Feel that? That's me dying to bury myself inside you again, fighting every instinct I have not to take you the way I really want because you're still new to this and I don't want to scare you. I want to do this with you a thousand more times."

Color bloomed across her cheeks, but she held my gaze steadily. Suddenly, fierce determination replaced her uncertainty, leaving me completely unprepared when she simply said, "Then stop holding back."

I stared at her, completely disarmed. What was this angel saying to me?

"My first time is over, and it was so perfect that I need more. And I don’t want to wait," she said with the kind of directness that would serve her well in the legal world she was studying to enter.

"I think I’ve awakened something wild in my innocent little law student," I said, amazed and aroused by her transformation before my eyes.

"Yes, you definitely have. And this awakened woman wants to know what you plan to do about those shoes you mentioned earlier." That beautiful, curious smile beneath me could have brought the Martinez family to its knees.

"Such curiosity! But we’ll save the shoes for another lesson because right now I want something else entirely."

I parted her legs with deliberate intent and moved my hand to her entrance while capturing her nipple with my mouth, sucking until it hardened against my tongue. She was already slick and ready for me. I began circling her most sensitive spot while she moaned softly. Slipping one finger inside her scorching heat, I felt her body welcome me as her sounds grew louder. Adding another finger, I established a rhythm while my thumb worked her clit and my mouth alternated between her breasts.

Lila writhed beneath me, her body growing wetter with each passing moment. I pulled back, letting her calm while I kissed her neck and jaw. She groaned in frustration at the pause, and I chuckled at her impatience. Positioning myself at her entrance, I kissed her deeply, but she pulled me closer, her hands gripping my shoulders and neck, intensifying our connection.

Something primal awakened in me then, and rational thought abandoned me completely. All I could feel was the need to merge with her, desire flowing like molten steel through my veins, her total surrender calling to something fundamental in my nature. I entered her hard and deep, drawing my name from her lips in a cry of pleasure that surprised even me.

"Damn, little one! I can’t hold back like this."

I lifted her legs and drove into her without restraint, letting desire take complete control as I claimed her with all the intensity that ran in Martinez blood. Her increasingly passionate cries shattered what remained of my control, and the way her body tightened around me with each thrust made me even harder.

"Feel what you do to me, baby. Look what you've made of me," I growled while taking her with abandon. I was lost in pure ecstasy. "This sweetness belongs to me now, little one."

Lila cried out beneath me, her face a mask of pure pleasure. I drove into her relentlessly, and her responses only made me more frenzied. Her inner muscles clenched around me – I knew she was close, and I was desperate to watch her fall apart calling my name. That's exactly what happened as she reached a shattering, violent climax. Her body pulsed around me, and I felt her melting into me as I joined her in another earth-shaking release.

We were both slick with sweat and struggling to breathe. Satisfaction glowed on her face, but it was too late – she had unleashed the beast in me, and I craved more. Staying buried inside her, I leaned down to claim her mouth.

"Don't blame me tomorrow when you can barely walk," I whispered against her ear. "Because I'm nowhere near finished with you."

I pulled her on top of me, knowing this night would be far too short for everything I wanted to do with my beautiful little one who had already wrapped the feared Inspector Martinez completely around her finger.

Chapter 422: All Eyes On Lila

Lila's POV

A tender kiss on my nape pulled me from sleep, followed by several more trailing to my ear. The most captivating voice in the world whispered against my skin.

"Good morning, my beautiful little one! Time to wake up," Daniel murmured, his calloused hand caressing my bare back in slow, deliberate strokes that reminded me of his dual nature - gentle with me, dangerous to others.

I opened my eyes reluctantly, squinting at the morning light streaming through the bulletproof windows of his penthouse. Dawn had arrived too quickly, and the few hours of sleep felt insufficient after our passionate night. Yet being awakened by my powerful detective had instantly become my favorite

morning ritual. Turning around, I smiled at the most handsome detective in the world sitting beside me, gloriously shirtless, his sculpted body bearing faint scars that told stories of his dangerous life - the very body that had claimed me completely through the night.

"Good morning, my detective!" I replied happily, basking in the warmth of his piercing eyes studying me with possessive intensity. He responded with a kiss that left me breathless and reminded me why this man commanded respect in both the underworld and law enforcement.

"Tiny one..." he spoke with such tenderness, brushing his nose against mine. "How are you feeling?"

"Happy!" The simple answer made him smile with genuine satisfaction.

"Oh yeah?"

I nodded, and he rewarded me with a quick kiss.

"And what caused all this happiness?"

"Don’t you know?"

He shook his head playfully, clearly fishing for compliments like the powerful man he was who still craved my validation.

"It was this handsome, tall, dangerous, sexy detective..."

"And how did he manage to make you so happy?" He peppered small kisses across my face and neck, obviously wanting me to voice what would make me blush crimson.

I remembered the advice from him and the girls about speaking up more boldly. But how could I express what I was thinking without dying of embarrassment? Should I tell him I was happy about being thoroughly claimed by a man who could destroy empires with a phone call? Even though it was my first time, I knew from whispered stories in Thorne Corporation’s break room that I had been exceptionally

well cared for by someone experienced in taking what he wanted. Or maybe I should mention the multiple orgasms that had been the most incredible sensation of my life, delivered by hands that had interrogated criminals and negotiated with crime bosses? After a moment's hesitation, I found a safer path.

"He gave me a wonderful night full of new experiences."

Daniel laughed with the confidence of a man accustomed to getting results. "I thought he had driven you wild, made you come screaming his name and left you deliciously sore so you'd remember him all day."

My face burned with embarrassment because that was exactly what this dangerous, protective man had done. My eyes widened in confirmation, and he burst out laughing, pulling me onto his lap with the easy strength of someone trained in combat.

"Yeah, that's about right..." I admitted sheepishly.

"Tell me, little one, no holding back. Let yourself go, just like you did last night while you were riding me so perfectly."

The memory of feeling free, uninhibited, and powerful on top of him returned - as if I had conquered this lethal, experienced man from one of the most feared families in the city, the same man who had chosen me above all others.

"I think you have some magic that makes me feel uninhibited."

He laughed heartily and ran his hand over my intimate area that was pressing against him through his silk boxers. "Mmm, delicious! Ready for the real thing."

I laughed with him as he lowered his boxers and guided my hips, helping me sink down onto him. I rode him once more, reaching a morning climax that made me see stars while I moaned his name and he made me confess how much I was enjoying being taken by the most dangerous man in the city.

Afterward, Daniel placed a breakfast tray on the bed - imported coffee, fresh pastries from the exclusive bakery his family protected, and perfectly prepared eggs. This man was phenomenal - he woke me with kisses, gave me orgasms, and brought me coffee fit for a don’s table. I was completely in love with this complex detective who treated me like a precious treasure!

We ate breakfast together, and he made me take a painkiller, which was necessary given how sore I felt in places I didn’t even know existed.

We showered together in his marble bathroom, and he treated me like something priceless, constantly kissing me and telling me how beautiful I was. Never had I felt so cherished by someone who commanded such respect and fear in the streets.

"Tiny one, I’ll drop you off at Thorne Corporation before heading to the precinct. Unfortunately, I won’t be able to have lunch with you today. I have to testify in court about that racketeering case. But I’ll pick you up at the end of the day."

"Big guy, you don’t need to worry about taking me and picking me up. I can catch a taxi, so you don’t have to go through all this trouble," I said, not wanting to be a burden when he had dangerous work to handle.

"Come here!" He pulled me into his arms after finishing his tie knot - the same hands that could break bones now gentle on my skin. "I’m going to take you and pick you up because I want to spend as much time as possible with you and because I want to protect you. It’s not trouble, it’s necessity in my world."

He tucked a strand of my hair behind my ear and caressed it gently. I closed my eyes, savoring the pleasant sensation and the security of being under his protection.

"You’re getting quite spoiled," he laughed, giving me a quick peck. "I like that!"

Daniel dropped me off at Thorne Corporation, and when I reached our floor in the gleaming high-rise, all the girls were there, including Zoe, though I didn’t recall Dominic having any family business meetings scheduled there this morning.

"Finally!" Gemma complained, and I glanced at my watch.

"But I’m not late. Did something happen?" I asked, suddenly worried about family troubles.

"Of course something happened. That’s why we’re all here, Tiny Cipher!" Zoe spoke as if I should already know what she meant, using the nickname she’d given me when I started working in Thorne’s legal department.

"Guys, what is it? Don’t scare me," I said, growing concerned as I put my designer bag on the desk.

"What, don’t tell me the detective didn’t make his move? After all that planning I coordinated!" Zoe crossed her arms over her chest. The scene would have been unbelievable if it weren’t Zoe standing there - I expected anything from the woman who could organize intelligence operations for Thorne’s business interests.

"I can’t believe you left your position just to come here and find this out?" I said incredulously, already starting to laugh. "Dominic will have your head."

"Of course I came to find out about this. It’s one of the most important developments in our circle! Wouldn’t miss it for the world. And I’m the one who keeps Dominic’s operations running smoothly, so he won’t discipline me." Zoe truly was quite a character in the Thorne organization.

"Come on, Lila, let’s get coffee in the executive break room and you can tell us everything," Ivy started pulling me along, but the elevator opened and Xavier, Caleb, and Jude emerged.

"Hey, the whole inner circle gathered so early?" Xavier looked at us curiously, his sharp lawyer’s eyes taking in the scene.

"Port’t you heard, Xavier?" Caleb asked with the authority of someone who ran Thorne’s operations, and my eyes flew to him. "Daniel promised to make his move on Lila yesterday." He said with a bright smile, and I wished the marble floor would swallow me whole. I was redder than a tomato.

"No way!" Xavier looked at me as if I were a mythical creature. "But I need to hear this firsthand! Where are we getting coffee, ladies? It’s on Thorne’s tab."

I wanted to disappear! Jude and Caleb were laughing like children having fun at my expense.

"Enough, Sweetie!" Ruby finally came to my rescue with a firm tone. "If you want to know, go ask your detective friend. This gossip session is for women only."

"But, Ginger..." Xavier whined with theatrical disappointment, and Ruby just waved him off as he walked away grumbling toward his corner office that overlooked the city his family helped control.

Chapter 423: Heart Over Heritage

Daniel’s POV

Nothing could dampen my spirits today. Last night with my little one had been absolute perfection. What an extraordinary woman! Every curve of her body, every soft moan that escaped her lips, every gentle touch—she astounded me in ways I never thought possible, especially for someone raised in the sterile world of mafia politics.

Despite our intimate connection, she remained endearingly shy about certain aspects of our relationship. This morning, when she spotted the evidence of her virginity on the sheets, her face flushed crimson, as though all her blood had rushed to her cheeks at once. It wasn’t until I pulled her onto my lap, covering her with tender kisses and whispering how honored I felt to be her first, that she finally relaxed. And I meant every word—if I had my way, I would be her only. She was a precious jewel I had no intention of sharing with anyone else, especially not with the vultures circling the Sullivan family fortune.

On my drive to the precinct, I made a detour to an exclusive florist that specialized in discreet deliveries for high-profile clients and arranged for a beautiful bouquet to be sent to her. I needed her to understand how special she was, how extraordinary our night together had been.

I arrived at work with an uncontrollable grin plastered across my face, cheerfully greeting everything in sight, including the bulletproof doors. Adler immediately picked up on my elevated mood and made his way to my office, closing the door behind him—a habit we’d developed for sensitive conversations in our line of work.

"Looks like someone had a restful night," he remarked, settling into the reinforced chair across from my desk.

"If I'm being honest, Chief, rest was the last thing on my mind," I replied, my smile widening impossibly further.

"And that's the reason behind this unusual cheerfulness? Because normally after dealing with organized crime cases, you look like you want to punch someone."

"I'm smiling because of my little one—she's absolutely spectacular! The most beautiful, most incredible, most adorable woman in the entire underworld."

"Well, well, my young colleague has fallen head over heels! And here I thought Martinez family men only married for territorial expansion."

"Chief, I think it goes beyond that. This woman has completely transformed my existence. She makes me want to be better than the legacy I inherited."

"That's fantastic news! Just remember to keep your personal life separate from our operations. The last thing we need is the Martinez name complicating our cases."

"It truly is. But we should focus on work now—I'm hoping to leave early today, plus I have that federal courthouse hearing to attend regarding the Thorne family's recent... complications."

Shortly afterward, my encrypted phone lit up with a message from her, expressing gratitude for the flowers and confirming that our night together had been just as meaningful for her. That validation filled me with joy. I was relieved to know I'd handled her first time with the care and tenderness it deserved, considering the brutal world she'd grown up navigating in the Sullivan household.

The day progressed rapidly; the demanding caseload involving money laundering operations and territorial disputes kept me thoroughly occupied. Still, I couldn't stop thinking about her, eagerly anticipating the moment I could lose myself in her embrace again, away from the cold calculations of family politics.

But as the saying goes, all good things must face interruption—my secure line rang, and my mother's name flashed on the screen. The Martinez family network had already discovered my relocation to the high-security apartment building, so I took a deep breath, preparing myself for Mrs. Martinez's theatrical performance.

"Mom, how are you?" I answered with deliberate calmness, fully aware that my tranquility was about to be shattered.

"Ungrateful son," she sniffled dramatically. "How dare you move away from the family compound without even informing the inner circle?"

"Mom, I left a coded message with our usual intermediary explaining that I didn't have time for proper farewells. Everything happened incredibly fast with the Thorne situation."

"Is that really the case, Daniel? Or were you simply running away from your responsibilities to the Martinez operations?" Her voice quivered with fabricated tears, but I recognized her manipulative tactics, designed to make me crawl back with guilt.

"Mom, it was time for me to establish my own territory. An opportunity arose in law enforcement that I simply couldn't pass up."

"Son, why do you insist on pursuing this profession that keeps me awake with worry? You don't need this badge, Daniel—our family enterprises are thriving. The legitimate businesses need oversight."

"Mom, this is my chosen path. We've discussed this repeatedly, and you promised to respect my decision to work within the system rather than outside it. Besides, I'm a grown man."

"But son, I'm terrified knowing you could be targeted by rival families at any moment."

"Mom, let me point something out—anyone in our circle could be eliminated at any moment. In fact, you're more likely to be targeted attending those charity galas where half the attendees have contracts on each other than I am as a detective."

"Don’t you care about my feelings, Daniel? Don’t you see how this hurts the family’s reputation?"

"Mom, you’re my mother—of course I care about you. But my career choice serves our interests in ways you don’t understand. I’m not a child needing supervision anymore. You raised me well, so well that I can make strategic decisions. Now continue being a good mother and trust those decisions."

"So you won’t return to the compound?" The tearful act vanished, replaced by the firm tone of the proud matriarch I knew her to be.

"Not to live there under family oversight, no."

"Your father won’t be pleased about this. He had plans for you in the legitimate businesses."

"He’ll hear exactly what I’ve told you. It’s my life, my strategic position. Either respect that or step back from my operations."

"He’ll be calling you."

"I expect he will," I sighed, already exhausted by the conversation. "Mom, I need to go. We’ll talk later."

She hung up without a farewell—typical behavior for someone trained in the old-school power dynamics. She and my father were perfectly matched in their proud, calculating, even ruthless demeanor—and their shared passion for controlling their children’s alliances.

Shortly after, my phone rang again. Seeing the caller ID, I smiled genuinely.

"Sybilla, please don’t tell me you’re calling to complain about my strategic withdrawal?" I joked, knowing my sister would never fall for family manipulation.

"Little brother, you should know me better by now. I’m calling to congratulate you and warn you not to fall for Mom’s emotional warfare. You know how she operates in negotiations."

"Were you monitoring the family communications again, Sybilla?"

"Absolutely!" She laughed heartily. "So, when do I get clearance to visit your new fortress?"

"Whenever you want, sis. You're always welcome in my territory."

"I'll come once our parents finish their damage control meetings. Dad's furious and planning to make you return to oversee the port operations."

"I figured as much, but he won't succeed. How are you holding up under the increased scrutiny?"

"Terribly! Now that the problematic heir has established independence, they have all the time in the world to focus on my marriage prospects. Mom has suddenly decided I need a strategic alliance. Can you believe that?"

"I was wondering when that negotiation would begin. Does she have someone in mind?"

"That insufferable Grant Barlow from the shipping consortium."

"But she knows you can't stand his money laundering methods."

"He's the heir to Dad's East Coast partners. You know how they think. Or have you forgotten about the Willow Conrad arrangement they tried to force on you?"

"I'd rather not revisit that political disaster."

"We were both born into the wrong generation of this family, little brother! Only Gregory lucked out—he loves the infrastructure business and fell for the most strategically advantageous woman possible."

"True, Gregory fits perfectly into our parents' expansion plans, making us the independent thinkers. But don't worry, little sis, they can't force you into any alliance without your consent."

"I know, brother, but the pressure from the family council is relentless."

"Let me offer my standard advice: establish your own operations!" Sybilla burst into laughter—I'd been giving her this suggestion since she was a teenager, when she wanted to study international law but our parents forced her to continue the etiquette training she despised.

"I'm seriously considering it. Maybe I'll find my own territory like you did. Gotta go, brother! Talk later. Love you."

My sister was truly remarkable—brilliant, fierce, and strategically minded. She was the best part of our family legacy. Setting aside thoughts of Martinez family politics, I refocused on my cases, counting every second until I could race back into my little one's arms.

Chapter 424: Seductive Surprise

Lila's POV

Coffee with the ladies had been absolutely delightful, despite their relentless interrogation making me blush harder than I ever imagined possible. But I wouldn't have traded those moments with my mafia princess friends for anything in the world.

I was walking on clouds thinking about my inspector. He'd sent me flowers to Thorne Corporation's executive floors! In my eighteen years within the Sullivan family's protective circle, no man had ever dared send me flowers before. Daniel was creating so many beautiful firsts in my life—meaningful firsts that made me feel like more than just another mafia heiress under surveillance. Like bringing me espresso in bed, his smile warming me more than the perfectly brewed Italian coffee. He was spoiling me thoroughly, and I desperately wanted to show my appreciation somehow.

My dangerous inspector consumed my thoughts when my encrypted phone vibrated against my mahogany desk. Not recognizing the secure number, I answered with professional caution. It was the specialized dealership informing me that my armored vehicle would be ready for pickup tomorrow. What fantastic news—I'd finally have my independence back, and Daniel wouldn't need to coordinate with his security detail every time I needed transportation through the city's controlled territories.

Ah, Daniel. Just thinking his name sent electricity through my veins. So devastatingly handsome, protective, and incredibly powerful—he made my knees weak and my pulse race every time those dark eyes assessed a room for threats before finding me. I wanted to surprise him, to show gratitude for his unwavering protection and tender attention. An idea Zoe had planted during our coffee meeting at the private club kept resurfacing in my mind. Was she slightly insane? Absolutely. But her wild schemes often proved brilliant within our dangerous world.

I arranged everything carefully through secure channels, making sure to inform Daniel that Zoe would escort me to his fortified apartment after my shift at Thorne Corporation, so he wouldn't need to dispatch his security team. That morning, he had entrusted me with my own access card and security codes—another monumental first—so entering his sanctuary wouldn't be problematic. After sharing my plan with Ivy at Thorne's executive offices, she graciously allowed me to leave work early to prepare everything before his return from whatever dangerous police business occupied his day.

As planned, I reached his high-security apartment first. I'd organized a fondue evening, purchased all the finest ingredients from the family's exclusive suppliers, prepared the warm, melted cheese, and arranged the imported coffee table in the living room so we could enjoy our intimate meal together on his leather couch. Rather than traditional candles that might interfere with his security systems, I dimmed the apartment's sophisticated lighting to create a romantic atmosphere before heading to his master bathroom.

Post-shower, I slipped into the lingerie I'd purchased during a private shopping session at the exclusive boutique—a daring black lace ensemble with matching panties, garters, and silk stockings, all covered by a sheer black negligee with delicate cap sleeves. I completed the seductive look with the same designer stilettos from the previous evening. I applied subtle makeup and left my golden hair cascading naturally over my bare shoulders. It required every ounce of courage I possessed—bolstered by a shot of premium whiskey from his private collection, as my mentor had suggested—to wear this provocative outfit that would make any mafia princess blush.

Just when I believed I'd orchestrated everything flawlessly, a terrifying thought struck me—what if he returned home with one of his police colleagues or Thorne family associates? Dear God, what would I do?

"There's only one solution—call my mentor," I muttered, grabbing my secure phone. Zoe answered on the first ring.

"Hey, Tiny Cipher. What went wrong with the surprise operation?"

"Zoe, I need assistance, and quickly. Everything's positioned perfectly, but what if Daniel brings someone from the precinct home? Zoe, I'm standing in his living room practically naked!"

"Just underwear, Tiny Cipher? What's this situation about?!"

"No, you crazy woman. Underwear, bra, negligee, stockings, and heels."

"Oh right, the shoes make all the difference in our world," Zoe laughed at my predicament. "Finn, contact Daniel through secure channels and determine his location and company status."

"Zoe, is Finn monitoring our conversation? How mortifying!"

"Relax, Tiny Cipher. Hold the line." Zoe paused to receive Finn's intelligence report before returning. "Tiny Cipher, he's parking in the underground garage right now and he's completely alone."

"Oh, thank you, Zoe! One final question—should I position myself by the entrance or arrange myself on the couch?"

"My God, Tiny Cipher, are you some kind of surveillance equipment to just stand motionless in a corner? No, strike an alluring pose on that expensive couch."

"What kind of pose?"

"I'll transmit you a reference photo to replicate. But move quickly, he must be ascending in the private elevator already."

"Thank you, master!" Zoe's laughter echoed as we disconnected our secure line.

The photo arrived within seconds, and I approved immediately. I positioned myself elegantly on the couch's edge facing the reinforced door, leaning gracefully against the armrest with my hair spread dramatically behind me. I placed my right hand beneath my head and my left on my stomach, allowing

the negligee to fall open slightly in a tantalizing display, and crossed my legs with practiced sophistication. Soon, I detected the sound of his keycard accessing the multiple security locks.

My dangerous inspector entered, and his intense gaze immediately located me on the couch. Those dark eyes sparkled with unmistakable desire, and a satisfied smile spread across his handsome face, confirming I'd made the perfect choice.

"Tiny one, you're a vision of absolute paradise!" Daniel approached me deliberately, taking precious moments to admire me as if I were priceless artwork in his private collection. "What did I do to deserve this incredible gift?"

I boldly grasped his expensive tie, pulling him down for a passionate kiss. He immediately wrapped his powerful hands around my waist and effortlessly lifted me onto his lap, devouring my mouth in an intense kiss filled with unspoken promises and barely contained hunger, until we both needed to pause for oxygen.

"Baby, what an absolutely delightful surprise!" he whispered, tracing my face with his skilled fingertips.

"Did you enjoy it? I wanted to create something special for you today," I said, my confidence growing with each positive reaction from my powerful protector.

"I loved every detail! You're already special, my little one, and all this preparation was completely unexpected. But what I appreciated most was discovering you waiting for me in this lingerie and these heels."

"Ah, the heels. Someone made certain promises yesterday about putting them to excellent use but didn't follow through." Daniel's deep laughter resonated through the secured apartment.

"But tonight they won't escape my attention."

"How was your day in the dangerous world?" I asked.

"Challenging, because I spent every minute desperate to return to your safety. And yours?"

"I spent the day floating on happiness thinking about you."

His smile widened with genuine warmth. "I’m extremely happy to hear that confession."

I smiled and summoned my courage; it was time to implement what I’d been planning throughout the entire day. Zoe had even sent me an instructional tutorial, so I was thoroughly prepared. I began kissing him passionately and removed his silk tie. Then I started unbuttoning his expensive shirt with deliberate slowness. He stood up with me secured in his powerful arms, lifting me with the effortless strength that never ceased to amaze me, and carried me toward his master bedroom.

"What do you desire, little one?"

"I want you to remain perfectly still."

I slipped off his lap and removed his tailored jacket, tossing it onto his king-sized bed. He watched me with a captivating mixture of curiosity and pleasant surprise. I continued unbuttoning his shirt until I reached his leather belt, which I unfastened, finished removing his shirt, then knelt down gracefully and pulled his trousers and underwear down, leaving him completely exposed. He was already impressively hard, which boosted my confidence exponentially. I stood back up and kissed him deeply, guiding him toward the leather armchair positioned in the corner of his bedroom, making him sit down.

I settled on his lap and kissed him with growing intensity. His hands grew increasingly eager, exploring my body with practiced skill. He untied the delicate bow of my negligee and pulled it off my shoulders, letting it fall to the floor like silk water. Then I slid off his lap and knelt before him with anticipation. At this crucial moment, nervousness crept in—I was terrified of disappointing him—but when I gazed at his beautiful, hard length before me, I felt an unexplainable desire to taste him completely.

Chapter 425: Seductive Surprise

Daniel’s POV

Something felt off when my little one insisted I shouldn’t pick her up from Thorne Group today. Finn assured me that Zoe would escort her home since she was handling some legal documentation in the vicinity. Yet, while I was already stationed in the underground garage of our secured building, Finn called

with unusual inquiries—questioning my location and whether I was alone. The entire situation struck me as peculiar, but nothing could have prepared me for what awaited me in our penthouse.

There she was—my beautiful Lila, positioned across our Italian leather sofa wearing nothing but the most provocative lingerie I'd ever witnessed. The vision nearly caused my heart to cease functioning, instantly igniting an overwhelming urge to claim her entirely.

This audacious, unexpected facet of her personality completely blindsided me. She kissed me with an intensity that rivaled my own burning desire. I attempted to guide her toward our master bedroom, fully prepared to assume control, but she reversed our roles entirely. Before I comprehended what was occurring, she was removing my clothes, directing me into the executive chair, and taking command in a manner that rendered me both stunned and euphoric.

When she lowered herself to her knees before me, I thought my eyes might escape their sockets entirely. Could this evening possibly improve further? The way she studied my hardened length—with appetite and intrigue—sent currents of anticipation coursing through my body. Her hand quivered slightly as she encircled the base, bringing those flawless lips to caress the tip. That singular contact was sufficient to elicit a profound groan from my throat.

I refused to close my eyes, determined not to miss a single moment of her actions. The world vanished beyond this room, beyond this woman—my seductive, astonishing little angel. Lila traced her tongue experimentally over the tip before accepting me into the heat of her mouth. The sensation was nearly insufferable. Her mouth was scorching and heavenly—obviously inexperienced but brimming with eagerness. I groaned as her hand began moving in synchronization with her mouth, accepting more of me with each downward motion.

She employed her tongue in slow, calculated movements, coating me with her warmth. She traced from base to tip, alternating between drawing and licking in a way that made my vision blur. When our gazes connected, I observed the unmistakable pleasure in her expression, which only amplified my craving. My vocal appreciation appeared to encourage her, and she approached her mission with increasing confidence and resolve.

Her eyes remained fixed on mine as one hand worked the base while her mouth performed miracles above. Her other hand discovered my testicles, caressing them with surprising expertise. The notion briefly occurred to me that she might have researched techniques somehow—a question for another moment when I wasn't drowning in ecstasy.

The oral attention she delivered was nothing short of extraordinary. Her movements became more accurate, more instinctive, and the expression of satisfaction on her face intensified everything. As my climax approached, she deliberately decelerated her rhythm, displaying a mischievous smile that revealed her intentional provocation. She waited until my urgency diminished before continuing, nearly initiating the delicious torment from the beginning.

With renewed determination, she persisted with her ministrations—licking, drawing, moving that divine mouth along my length while maintaining that wicked expression of someone completely enjoying herself. My desire spiraled beyond control, moans escaping without restraint.

"Tiny one, if you don't cease now I'm going to finish in that delectable little mouth..." I warned, but instead of withdrawing, she simply smiled and intensified her efforts.

My release arrived with explosive force, nearly depriving me of breath. To my astonishment, this gorgeous temptress consumed every drop, her expression one of complete contentment. After ensuring she'd claimed every final trace, she rose and positioned herself on my lap, pressing her lips to mine. The taste of myself on her tongue was unexpectedly arousing.

"My beautiful girl, what was that incredible thing you just performed? Where did you acquire such knowledge?" I asked, gripping her waist appreciatively.

"I studied a video and received some guidance from Zoe," she replied with disarming honesty. "Did I perform adequately?"

"My beautiful little one, you were phenomenal! That was the finest oral I've ever experienced! And did you find pleasure in it?"

"I thought it was delicious, superior to an ice cream treat!" Her comparison made me chuckle, relieved and thrilled that she'd discovered enjoyment in the act. "I want to repeat it."

"Whenever you desire, love," I promised, kissing her neck. "I'm adoring your surprise. And what stunning lingerie!"

"I purchased it specifically for today. Just for you to remove."

"You wicked girl! Are you attempting to give me cardiac arrest?"

Her confident smile was reward enough. We resumed kissing, her occasional movements on my lap rekindling my desire. I traced kisses down her neck and unhooked her bra with practiced skill, revealing those perfect breasts with their enticing tan lines. As I took them in my mouth, I felt myself hardening again, responding to her provocative grinding.

Now it was my opportunity to pleasure her. I slipped her panties aside and discovered her wet and prepared. One finger entered easily, then another, working in and out while my other hand circled her sensitive peak. My mouth never abandoned her breasts as I built her pleasure steadily. I felt her body tense as her climax approached, then release in waves that drew loud, uninhibited moans from her lips.

"Now you seductive little temptress, I'm going to take you wearing those incredibly sexy heels," I growled, leading her to the bed. "Bend over and place your hands on the bed. Hold tight, little one, because I won't be gentle," I whispered against her ear, feeling the tremor that ran through her body in response.

Chapter 426: Liquid Courage Unleashed

Daniel's POV

Lila looked irresistible in the dim lighting of my secure penthouse, her inhibitions completely abandoned. The sight of her uninhibited sensuality captivated me entirely, igniting a fierce hunger that I had no intention of restraining. I wanted her with an intensity that felt almost dangerous, my desire coursing through me like molten steel.

When she positioned herself invitingly on the Italian leather sofa, I knelt behind her, my hands spreading her legs with commanding authority. I moved the delicate lace aside and tasted her sweetness, already glistening with arousal. Her soft moans of pleasure spurred me on as I worshipped her with my tongue, savoring every tremor that ran through her body. Eventually, I rose to my feet, my hands gripping her slender waist with possessive strength, positioning myself at her entrance before claiming her with one powerful thrust. Her sharp gasp made me pause momentarily.

"Are you alright, little one?" I murmured against her ear, relief flooding through me when she nodded eagerly.

I established a steady rhythm, withdrawing almost completely before driving back into her with deliberate force. Starting slow and controlled, I gradually increased the tempo until we found our perfect, intoxicating rhythm. She matched my movements flawlessly, pushing back against me with each thrust, silently demanding more of what only I could give her. Our voices mingled together, filling the soundproofed room with the symphony of our passion. When her body clenched around me, pulsing with overwhelming pleasure, I lost all remaining control. We reached our climax together as she cried out my name like a prayer, her voice echoing off the bulletproof windows. She was absolutely magnificent.

I held her waist firmly while her entire frame shuddered from the aftershocks of her intense release. Both of us breathless and thoroughly satisfied, I lifted her effortlessly and carried her to the massive bed, pulling her against my sweat-dampened chest. She curled into me with a radiant smile as I held her protectively, experiencing emotions I had never allowed myself to feel in my dangerous world. This woman was far more precious than I had ever imagined possible.

"God, my little one, you drive me completely insane," I whispered into her silky hair.

After we recovered from our earth-shattering encounter, I carried her to the marble bathroom where we showered together under the rainfall showerhead. Between tender kisses and gentle caresses, my desire flared again, and I took her against the tiled wall, unable to resist her magnetic pull.

Her eager responsiveness and obvious hunger for me thrilled me beyond measure. She was clearly reveling in our intimacy, seemingly as insatiable as I was becoming.

After our shower, she slipped into a sheer nightgown that concealed absolutely nothing, and we made our way to the living room to eat. After all our physical exertion, I was genuinely famished, and I had learned that keeping Lila well-fed was essential to her happiness.

"Beautiful little one, may I ask you something?" I inquired casually while we shared our meal, curious but careful not to make her retreat behind her usual barriers.

"Anything you want, big guy," she replied with playful confidence that made my chest tighten with affection.

"You’re so uninhibited tonight, so completely free. I’m absolutely loving it, but I’m curious about something. Where is that shy, somewhat uncertain girl I fell for?" She flashed me a mischievous smile that only intensified my curiosity about her transformation.

"The shy and proper girl took a shot of whiskey to let the wild one come out to play!" She laughed with genuine delight, the sound filling my secure fortress with unexpected lightness.

"A shot of whiskey?" I asked, slightly puzzled by her explanation.

"Yes, detective. It was Zoe’s brilliant suggestion." Her eyes sparkled with mischief as she explained, "She told me that in wine there’s truth, but in whiskey there’s absolute freedom."

"And exactly how large was this shot of whiskey?" I asked, laughter building in my chest.

"Why do you need to know that information?"

"So I can utilize it strategically when I want my naughty little one to make her appearance again," I teased as she climbed onto my lap with feline grace. I was thoroughly enjoying this confident, initiative-taking version of Lila.

She reached for the crystal tumbler on the side table and held it up for my inspection. It was a fine crystal tumbler, heavy and substantial.

"A small amount of whiskey was sufficient to get you this beautifully relaxed?" I asked, thinking she must have an extremely low tolerance for alcohol.

"A small amount?" she questioned with obvious confusion.

"Yes, little one. A proper shot of whiskey in this glass would be just a small portion of liquid."

"Oh really? I had absolutely no idea about that," she replied, examining the glass with sudden concern creeping into her expression.

"Exactly how much did you consume?" I asked as she gave me another playful but slightly worried smile.

"The entire glass! And I downed it all in one go like Zoe showed me," she confessed before bursting into delighted laughter.

"Jesus Christ, you got yourself completely drunk on premium whiskey," I said, joining her laughter despite my concern. This woman was absolutely adorable in her chaotic innocence. "I sincerely hope you remember every single detail tomorrow because I would love for you to repeat this entire performance again, preferably without requiring liquid courage."

"Oh, there's absolutely no way I could ever forget what you did to me tonight," she said with dreamy satisfaction. "Or how incredibly good it felt to take you in my mouth." Her boldness continued to surprise and delight me.

"You enjoyed it that much?" I asked as she nodded with enthusiastic confirmation. Since she was being so refreshingly open, I decided to probe a bit deeper. "And did you enjoy being taken in a more aggressive, demanding way?"

"Oh God, I absolutely loved every second of it. I think maybe you should show me more of your rough and commanding side tonight. The evening is still young, and I'm definitely not ready to sleep yet."

"What an absolutely wicked girl!" I exclaimed, yanking off her indecent nightgown and tossing it onto the leather couch, making her laugh with pure joy. "Get on your hands and knees, gorgeous, and I'll show you exactly how demanding I can be."

We spent nearly the entire night surrendering completely to our consuming desire and insatiable passion. Lila seemed utterly tireless, and I found myself completely enchanted with this beautiful, young, passionate woman who had somehow infiltrated my heavily guarded world. Once again, we managed very little sleep, but I found myself caring less and less about rest. My precious time with her was far too valuable to waste on something as mundane as sleep.

The morning sunlight streaming through the reinforced windows woke me, but Lila was mysteriously absent from the bed. Looking around the master suite, I noticed the room had been perfectly organized, with no evidence remaining of our passionate night or our scattered clothing. I rose to search for her,

disliking the unsettling feeling of waking without her warm body beside me. I found her in the gourmet kitchen, putting finishing touches on breakfast preparations, dancing and humming softly as she moved gracefully about my domain.

Chapter 427: Dancing in Sunlight

Daniel’s POV

I lingered at the kitchen doorway of my penthouse, watching my little one completely lost in her own world, dancing and singing without a care. The morning sunlight streaming through the bulletproof windows caught the golden highlights in her hair as she moved to music only she could hear. She was so engrossed she hadn’t noticed my presence. My chest tightened with affection as my heartbeat quickened. After navigating the treacherous waters between the police force and my family’s underground empire, she was the one pure thing that made it all worthwhile.

"Caught you daydreaming, little one?" I teased, causing her to startle.

"Big guy, you scared me!" She pressed her hand to her chest, the Thorne Group administrative badge still clipped to her blouse from yesterday. Her expression melted into a smile that could disarm even the most hardened Martinez family enforcers. "I was daydreaming, but definitely not about what you’re thinking."

"Tiny one, you’re absolutely captivating." I pulled her into an embrace and lifted her up for a kiss, my hands automatically checking the secure locks on the reinforced door behind me. She surprised me by wrapping her legs around my waist with newfound boldness. "Is the whiskey still talking?"

"I can’t lie to a detective who also happens to be one of the most dangerous men in the city. I’d love to claim it’s the alcohol to preserve my good girl image, but the whiskey’s worn off. This is just me embracing confidence and trying to leave behind the insecure, repressed Lila who was terrified of her own shadow." Her words carried a raw honesty that struck deeper than any confession I’d extracted in an interrogation room.

"I’m thoroughly enjoying this transformation," I encouraged, genuinely wanting this confident version of Lila to flourish. She was breathtaking, sensual, and full of delightful surprises that captivated me more than any high-stakes negotiation with rival families. "How are you feeling? Any memory gaps from last night?"

"Why would I have any?" she countered with a smile that held secrets.

"You did have that glass of whiskey."

"Well, I'm slightly sore, but that's certainly not from premium Scottish whiskey. I believe it's from a certain devastatingly handsome inspector who called me his angel and who claimed me with such intensity it felt like he was branding his territory." She covered her mouth with wide eyes, making me laugh before she continued. "But perhaps you could help refresh my memory about last night."

"Tiny one, don't tempt me if you're sore. I might lose control and get possessive with you again, and we both know how that ended last time."

"Don't hold back. I like being reminded that you've marked every inch of me as yours, that only you have explored territories no one else ever will. And I loved how you took me rough and commanding, like you were claiming something that belonged to you from the very beginning." Her words sent heat rushing through me faster than adrenaline during a raid.

"My God, where have you been hiding this insatiable temptress all this time while managing to remain untouched until recently?" I asked, genuinely fascinated by her evolution.

"Oh, she was locked away behind psychological manipulation, waiting for a gorgeous, dangerous, incredibly commanding inspector to appear and free her from that prison of fear and control."

"Are you saying I'm responsible for transforming you into this irresistible little seductress who's suddenly obsessed with exploring every boundary we can cross?"

"Entirely your responsibility," she confirmed with conviction that would hold up in any courtroom.

I kissed her deeply, fascinated by the transformation unfolding before me. She was more relaxed, more daring, and I was thoroughly captivated. But it wasn't just the physical awakening. We connected beautifully in ways that transcended the dangerous world we both inhabited. Lila was easygoing and lighthearted, embracing life's unpredictability while treasuring every small moment of peace we could steal together.

After coffee and checking the morning security reports, we showered and left the fortified apartment wrapped in each other's arms. The armored elevator descended smoothly to the parking garage where my vehicle waited alongside the other luxury cars that served as both transportation and mobile command centers. On our drive through the city's morning traffic, my little one suddenly remembered something.

"Oh, big guy, I almost forgot." Her pet name for me always made me smile, especially coming from someone who could make hardened criminals confess with her gentle persistence.

"When you call me 'big guy,' are you referring to my intimidating reputation in both law enforcement and certain underground circles, or something more personal?" I teased.

"Daniel, you're formidable in every possible way, so it's impossible to pinpoint anything specific. But even though I lack comparison points beyond what Zoe's shown me in those ridiculous magazines, you definitely possess advantages in every department. So yes, occasionally I might be referring to something more intimate, but generally I mean all of you." She spoke so matter-of-factly that I was momentarily rendered speechless.

"Tiny one, you never cease to amaze me!" I smiled and squeezed her knee, careful to keep my attention on potential surveillance vehicles. "But tell me, what did you want to say?"

She looked at me blankly for a moment. "Oh, right! You won't need to coordinate my pickup today."

"And why not? Is Zoe going to keep interfering with my carefully planned security arrangements by chauffeuring you around the city?"

"No, silly! The dealership called. My car is ready for pickup today."

"You purchased a vehicle?" I asked, somewhat surprised she'd made such a decision without mentioning it.

"Recently." Her smile was infectious, but I was already calculating the security implications.

"Alright. We'll retrieve it after my shift ends. I'll escort you, we'll park your car in my building's secured garage, and I'll continue handling your transportation to Thorne Group."

"Daniel, you don't need to complicate your schedule."

"It's no complication at all. I simply want to ensure my beautiful and increasingly bold little one stays protected!" I winked at her, noting how her subtle smile suggested her mind was already wandering toward more intimate activities.

"Okay. Let's handle it after work. Thank you!"

"But understand, tiny one, your vehicle will remain in my building's garage indefinitely. I'll continue managing your daily transportation for the foreseeable future."

"That's perfectly reasonable." I was surprised by her easy acceptance, expecting resistance to my continued insistence on controlling her movements.

"Just like that?" I asked, genuinely incredulous.

"What?" She looked at me with genuine confusion crossing her delicate features.

"You're not going to argue or try to convince me you can navigate the city independently?"

"No, I won't. I understand you're concerned about the ongoing threats that Ivy has been receiving, and I know your work with both the police force and your family obligations already creates enough stress. I refuse to become another source of worry for you. Besides, I genuinely enjoy when you escort me to and from Thorne Group because it guarantees more time together, and I treasure every moment." She explained with such calm practicality, as if it were the most natural arrangement in the world. Her desire to maximize our time together meant everything, and I cherished that dedication. "Plus, I've learned to choose my battles strategically and not waste energy on minor logistics."

"Damn, woman! How did I get so fortunate?" I said, overwhelmed with gratitude because she wasn't the type to create unnecessary drama over practical safety measures.

We parted ways at Thorne Group's impressive entrance with a kiss so sweet I could have abandoned my responsibilities completely. At that moment, all I wanted was to return to our sanctuary and lock ourselves away from the dangerous complexities of our intersecting worlds for an extended period.

Chapter 428: Trust Fund Battle

Lila's POV

I stepped into Thorne Group's executive offices with a lightness in my step, humming softly as I made my way to the break room. The morning coffee tasted better than usual, and I couldn't remember the last time I'd felt this genuinely content with my life. Even the stack of legal documents waiting on my desk seemed less daunting.

"Well, well, someone's practically glowing this morning. Should I assume Inspector Martinez is responsible for putting that radiant smile on our little Lila's face?" Xavier Black approached my desk with his trademark knowing grin. "Is the good Inspector really that impressive, Lila?"

"Still fishing for Thorne Group intelligence, boss?" Jude laughed, clearly entertained by his superior's shameless curiosity about my personal life.

Xavier straightened his expensive tie and attempted to look dignified. "It's not fishing, Jude. We simply need to understand the dynamics of our allies. Martinez family connections are crucial to our operations. That's legitimate business intelligence."

"Just admit you're a hopeless gossip, Xavier," Jude pressed, not allowing his boss any pretense of professionalism.

Xavier adjusted his cufflinks with mock offense. "I prefer to consider myself a curator of interpersonal intelligence within our organization." His ridiculous justification made me laugh despite myself.

"Alright, Xavier. Since you've been so good to me, I'll throw you a small bone." Xavier practically launched himself onto the edge of my desk, eyes bright with anticipation.

"I’m all attention, little Lila! Share your secrets with your favorite consigliere," he pleaded, hands clasped together dramatically.

I leaned forward with conspiratorial delight. "The Inspector is absolutely everything you’d expect from Martinez family lineage—and significantly more." I sat back with satisfaction. "Now shouldn’t you be managing actual Thorne business to justify keeping me on payroll? That’s all the intelligence you’re extracting from me."

Xavier clutched his chest in theatrical anguish. "You wound me, Lila. This betrayal damages our sacred boss-employee bond. I was expecting detailed reconnaissance reports." His exaggerated pout made me roll my eyes. "I’ll forgive this breach only because you’re my favorite legal assistant. But truly, I’m pleased you and Inspector Martinez have found each other. The man’s solid—one of the genuinely honorable ones in this business." He winked before strutting toward his office with Jude trailing behind.

My thoughts drifted back to my Inspector—he truly was extraordinary, and I felt incredibly fortunate. But as if fate couldn’t permit extended happiness, my secure phone buzzed with my mother’s private number. I steeled myself for the inevitable confrontation.

"Hello, Mother. Is there an emergency?" I answered, keeping my voice carefully neutral.

"You better have explanations ready immediately, Lila!" Her voice erupted through the encrypted line. "Why did you access your grandfather’s trust funds? And for something as frivolous as an automobile?"

I drew a steadying breath. "I’m attending evening law classes, Mother. Having secure transportation is safer than navigating downtown streets alone after dark." I paused, genuinely puzzled. "How did you discover my vehicle purchase?"

"Do you even possess proper driving credentials, Lila?" She continued her interrogation, completely dismissing my question.

"Yes, I obtained my license after relocating here. Now would you please answer my question?" My patience was rapidly deteriorating.

"You’re becoming worse than I feared!" she hissed. "Listen very carefully, Lila. Just because you fled with your father’s misguided permission doesn’t mean you can act without family oversight. Once this academic foolishness concludes, you’re returning home where an appropriate alliance—if any respectable family still considers you—will be arranged."

My blood began simmering. "An appropriate alliance or one serving your political ambitions?"

"Show proper respect, Lila! I am your mother! And yes, an alliance I approve, so you don’t end up with some incompetent who can’t maintain family standards."

"Are you really?" The words escaped before I could stop them. "Sometimes your treatment makes me question our actual relationship."

"Return that vehicle immediately! And restore every dollar you withdrew from the trust account!"

I gripped the phone tighter. "That money is MINE, Mother. Grandfather—father’s father—designated those funds for ME, and I’ll utilize them as I determine appropriate. I’m not returning the car, I’m never moving back to the family compound, and I certainly won’t accept your arranged marriages. You may have raised me, but you don’t control my adult decisions. Accept that reality and stop attempting to dictate my choices."

"Watch your tone, young lady!" she seethed. "Imagine my humiliation when Ida and Tess approached me at the family charity function to inform me how ’independent’ you’ve become, flaunting your new automobile around the financial district. Ida even had the audacity to suggest you’re becoming a ’lost cause’ if you aren’t already."

Everything clicked into place. Tess—Ida’s daughter who managed private accounts at our family’s banking institution—had harbored resentment against me for years. I’d once exposed her embezzling from my brother’s accounts and manipulating family investments, resulting in their breakup and my brother’s eventual marriage to Katarina. Ancient history, but apparently not forgiven.

"That explains everything," I said, fighting for composure. "Mother, I’m keeping the vehicle. Ida and Tess can spread whatever gossip they choose."

"Return that automobile today, or I'll have Tess transfer all trust assets to my control! She's already confirmed she can arrange the transfers through family banking channels."

"That constitutes financial fraud, Mother." I couldn't believe what I was hearing.

"And would you prosecute your own mother, ungrateful child? Comply and resume obeying family hierarchy, Lila, or I'll come there personally, terminate this ridiculous charade, and escort you home under family security. Perhaps that's exactly what should happen."

"Try it," I challenged, tears flowing as that familiar crushing pain constricted my chest—that unique agony only she could inflict. "Try it and I'll forget any maternal connection. You barely fulfill that role anyway! I cannot continue this conversation."

I terminated the call and switched off my phone, hot tears streaming freely. Claire had always treated me like the family's greatest disappointment, constantly diminishing and devaluing my existence. No matter how perfectly I followed protocol or achieved objectives, she discovered reasons to criticize and minimize my worth.

"Lila." Jude's gentle hand touched my shoulder. "Come get some coffee. You can explain what happened, and we'll develop a strategy to handle this situation."

Embarrassment heated my face. "Did you overhear everything?"

"Yes, dear," he admitted softly. "And I believe you need to process this and receive proper support managing this family crisis. Come along."

Chapter 429: Refuge at Thorne

Lila's POV

I followed Jude to the executive break room at Thorne Corporation, desperately needing that cup of coffee. My mind was spinning with the chaos my mother had unleashed, and I felt completely isolated. Ivy was confined to the estate due to her pregnancy and the constant security concerns surrounding the Thorne family, while Gemma was already drowning in her own intelligence gathering assignments. I

couldn’t bring myself to burden the girls with my family drama, and calling Daniel was complicated given my mother’s latest power play against the Martinez alliance.

"Alright, sweetheart, talk to me. What’s your mother done now?" Jude placed a steaming mug in front of me as he settled into the leather chair beside me at the mahogany conference table.

For quite some time, I poured out everything. The manipulative way my mother wielded her position in the Sullivan family against me, how I’d been forced to flee the family compound like some kind of fugitive, the car purchase that had triggered her latest attempt to reassert control over my trust fund—everything came spilling out while Jude listened with the focused attention of someone who understood the brutal dynamics of organized crime families.

"Lila, you do realize your mother is using classic family manipulation tactics, right?" Jude said carefully, his tone carrying the weight of someone who had witnessed similar power struggles within the Thorne organization. "This isn’t just toxic parenting—this is about control over your inheritance and your position in the Sullivan hierarchy."

I sighed, feeling the familiar knot of anxiety in my chest. "Yes, I understand that logically, Jude. But she’s still the woman who raised me, who gave birth to me and brought me into this world of ours."

"By doing exactly what you’ve started—moving out of the family compound, establishing your independence through legitimate work, and when necessary, not answering when the family phone rings," he answered with the pragmatic wisdom of someone who had navigated corporate politics in a crime family’s front business.

"I just wish the family dynamics could be different," I admitted, fighting back tears.

"I know, little cipher." Jude used the nickname that had become familiar around the Thorne offices. "But look at what you’ve gained—you’re not alone in this anymore. You’ve got all of us at Thorne who respect you and will always have your back. And from what you’ve told me, you’ve got that inspector who sounds like he stepped out of some impossible fantasy where law enforcement and our world actually work together."

His words managed to pull a genuine smile from me. He was right—since coming to work at Thorne Corporation, I had found a different kind of family.

"You’re absolutely right. It’s time I stopped jumping every time mother decides to flex her authority over me."

"That’s my girl. She can only control you if you give her that power." Jude squeezed my hand reassuringly. "Now, let’s handle the practical matters. First, your financial situation—you need to get your money out of the Sullivan family bank before she freezes your accounts. I can call our business manager at the corporation’s private bank and have him establish a secure account for you. How does that sound?"

"That would be incredible, Jude. But I need to transfer everything before this afternoon, or she’ll drain the accounts using her family authority." I knew my mother wouldn’t hesitate to use every connection the Sullivan family had in the financial sector.

"Hold on." Jude pulled out his encrypted phone and made a call. "Good afternoon, Peyton," he greeted warmly. "I need a priority favor for our new executive secretary. She needs a completely secure account opened today that she can access before late afternoon. Family situation. Is that manageable?" After a brief pause, Jude’s face lit up. "Excellent! You can come here personally? Perfect. We’ll be waiting in the executive suite." He ended the call and turned to me with a triumphant smile. "Perfect timing—he’s already in the building consulting with Heidi about some international transfers. He’s coming up immediately to handle your account. You can access it the moment it’s established. The cards will take a few days to arrive, but you can access your funds through other secure methods, and our branch is right downstairs in the building."

"Jude, this is perfect. I can’t even express how grateful I am."

"No gratitude necessary, sweetheart." Jude gave me a searching look. "Lila, can I be completely direct with you?" I nodded, and he continued, "Your mother is using psychological warfare tactics that would make some of our business rivals proud. For your own survival, you need to maintain distance from her influence. Not every woman who gives birth to a child becomes a true mother, especially in families like ours. It’s tragic but true. It happens more than people realize in our circles."

"It’s just so difficult to accept," I whispered.

"I understand. But it would be much healthier for you to establish boundaries—both physical and emotional. Don’t let her manipulation or her opinions about your choices prevent you from building your own life."

"Thank you for the guidance." Jude gave my hand another reassuring squeeze, offering a gentle smile.

Suddenly, Opal burst through the break room door like a hurricane, her secure phone pressed to her ear, her expression tight with concern as her eyes immediately found me.

"She’s here. She looks shaken up. I’m not sure. I’ll put her on." Opal thrust the device toward me. "It’s Daniel."

With trembling hands, I took the phone, barely managing to get it to my ear before Daniel’s urgent voice came through the encrypted line.

"Little one, what happened?" The protective intensity in his tone was unmistakable.

"Mother called and staged one of her scenes, Daniel."

"Is your personal phone turned off?"

"Yes. I can’t handle her constant attempts to control me right now."

"I understand. I was concerned when I couldn’t reach you directly. Are you holding up okay?"

"Honestly? Not really. She knows exactly which emotional pressure points to target."

"What set her off this time?"

"The car purchase. But don’t worry about it, Daniel. This is just her standard method of operation."

"I am worried. I can hear in your voice that you've been crying, and I won't tolerate anyone hurting you, family connection or not." His protective instincts made me smile despite the emotional turmoil.

"Thank you for caring about me."

"Beautiful little one, I more than care—I'm committed to protecting you. I'm leaving my current assignment to come to you now."

"That's not necessary, Daniel. We both have important work responsibilities. We'll see each other at the end of the day as planned."

"Are you certain? I don't like being away when you're dealing with family pressure."

"I'm sure. Jude and Opal are here looking out for me at Thorne."

"I hate being separated from you when you're not okay," he insisted, his concern warming my heart despite everything.

"We still have our professional obligations."

"Fine. I'll be there the moment my shift ends. Will your phone stay off?"

"Yes."

"Then don't leave the Thorne building. I'll come up to the executive floor to get you personally."

"Agreed."

"Take care of yourself, little one. Contact me through Opal if anything changes."

"You never mentioned why you were trying to reach me originally."

"Nothing urgent—just missed hearing your voice and wanted to check on you." His words filled my heart with warmth.

"That makes me so happy! I miss you too."

"Oh, little one, say that again and I'll abandon my patrol to come claim you right now."

"Behave yourself and go protect the city!" His deep laughter flowed through the encrypted line.

"Until tonight. Kiss."

"Kiss." I ended the call with a contented sigh. Looking up, I found Opal and Jude watching me with knowing expressions.

"Well, this inspector must be something extraordinary!" Opal pointed at the huge smile that had replaced my tears.

"He's much more than that," I admitted. "Thank you, Opal!"

"Anything else you need right now, Lila?" Opal asked with genuine concern.

"Not at the moment, thank you. Jude is already helping me handle the practical matters."

Just then, Roman appeared in the doorway. "Lila, Peyton is here to set up your banking arrangements. Are you ready?"

"Yes, absolutely. Thank you, Roman."

Chapter 430: Financial Freedom

Lila’s POV

We returned to my desk when the private banking consultant emerged from the executive elevator. Jude handled the introductions, and we settled into the conference room for our meeting. Within twenty minutes, my new offshore account was established, and I felt an enormous sense of relief wash over me.

"Lila, you can now transfer your assets," Peyton informed me with the practiced discretion that came from servicing the city’s most powerful families. Without hesitation, I accessed my previous account through the encrypted banking application and initiated the complete transfer of my trust fund.

"Will the transfer process immediately, Peyton?" I asked, unable to hide the anxiety in my voice.

"Absolutely. Since you’re moving funds between accounts under the same beneficial ownership, it processes instantly through our private banking network. Feel free to verify the deposit through your new account portal." His reassuring smile put me at ease. I opened the application and exhaled with relief seeing my inheritance safely secured in the new account, far from my mother’s reach.

"What’s the procedure for closing the previous account?" I inquired.

"It depends on the institution’s protocols. For your former bank, you can handle closure directly through their secure portal. Alternatively, given your family’s long-standing relationship with that institution, you could request your account manager’s personal assistance." Peyton’s explanation was both thorough and tactful.

"I’d prefer to handle it through the portal. Could you guide me through the process?" He nodded warmly and walked me through each step with practiced patience. Within minutes, my old account was officially terminated, and I felt an enormous burden lift from my shoulders.

"I’ll arrange for your new banking cards to be delivered directly to Thorne Group, Lila. It’s more secure that way, and typically faster. The package should arrive within a few days," Peyton continued. "I couldn’t help but notice the substantial value of your portfolio. May I suggest considering some secure

investment vehicles? Here are some prospectuses detailing various opportunities. Rather than having your capital remain dormant, you might consider allocating portions to stable investments where it can appreciate. Jude possesses excellent financial acumen, and I remain entirely at your disposal. Whenever you're prepared to proceed, simply contact me, and I'll handle everything personally."

"That sounds perfect! Thank you so much. I'll definitely study these materials thoroughly. Growing my assets certainly interests me."

"As it should for anyone with your resources!" Peyton, a distinguished gentleman in his fifties with penetrating steel-blue eyes, smiled warmly. "I'm confident you'll be satisfied with our private wealth management services. I must return to other clients now, but it was truly a pleasure serving you."

"The pleasure was mine entirely." Peyton bid farewell to both Jude and myself with the practiced courtesy expected in our circles.

"Well, Lila, that went more smoothly than anticipated, didn't it?" Jude remarked once we were alone at the reception area.

"Jude, it was incredible!" I beamed with genuine gratitude. "I can't express how much your assistance means to me. And I'll definitely want your investment guidance."

"Let's have lunch tomorrow, and I'll walk you through the most secure investment strategies. Your money will grow steadily and safely, I guarantee it." Jude's confidence was reassuring, backed by her reputation for managing accounts for several prominent families.

"It's a date!" I accepted eagerly.

"I need to return to my duties now. Remember, Lila, if you require anything whatsoever, my office door is always open. We're allies—never forget that!" Jude said warmly. I embraced her, overwhelmed with gratitude for having such loyal supporters in my corner.

After Jude returned to her office, I decided it was time to address the security breach involving Tess, the indiscreet bank employee. I possessed a kind heart but maintained sharp instincts, and I wouldn't allow

her carelessness to go unaddressed. I retrieved my phone and contacted my former banking relationship manager.

"Lila! What an unexpected pleasure. How are your legal studies progressing?" Lukas, who had managed the Sullivan family's legitimate banking relationships for decades and remained a trusted associate of my late father, answered with genuine warmth.

"Hello, Lukas. Everything's progressing well, thank you. I'm calling to inform you that I've terminated my account with your institution."

"What transpired, Lila? Did you need immediate access to the funds? There was no need to close the account entirely."

"It's not about liquidity, Lukas. I've transferred my assets to another institution. Your bank has confidentiality issues. Your employee Tess has been discussing details about my financial activities throughout the city, and she even promised to assist my mother in accessing my account."

"Please explain precisely what occurred, Lila." I recounted the entire situation, and Lukas's reaction was one of genuine shock and professional outrage. "I apologize profusely, but I completely agree that relocating your funds was the correct decision. I know your mother's methods all too well—she would absolutely attempt such manipulation. She's becoming increasingly desperate, poor woman. As for Tess, rest assured she'll face immediate consequences. She'll be terminated for cause—client confidentiality breaches are absolutely unacceptable, especially involving families of your stature."

"Thank you for understanding, Lukas. I regret having to close the account, but I trust you comprehend the necessity. I must go now. Please extend my regards to your family. Goodbye."

I ended the call, noticing my mother attempting to reach me again on another line. I powered down my phone once more, contemplating whether I should maintain it at all, given her relentless harassment campaigns.

By the time Daniel arrived to collect me, I had regained my composure, though residual frustration lingered. My mother had effectively tainted what should have been a triumphant day.

"My beautiful little one, I've missed you tremendously." Daniel greeted me with a tender kiss as he approached my desk, his presence immediately soothing my frayed nerves.

"Well, observe who's thoroughly smitten!" Xavier teased as he emerged from his office and witnessed Daniel's affectionate display.

"As if you're unfamiliar with such feelings, Xavier," Daniel replied without breaking eye contact with me, while gently tucking an escaped strand of hair behind my ear.

"Oh, I'm certainly familiar, but you appear to have only recently made this discovery," Xavier laughed knowingly.

"You can be absolutely certain I have. This little one has completely revolutionized my existence!" Daniel continued gazing at me with undisguised adoration.

"I believe I was mistaken. This transcends mere infatuation. Daniel, you've finally discovered authentic love! The enduring variety that renders you completely vulnerable to a woman's influence." Xavier spoke more seriously, though I understood the reality better. My detective was simply captivated, as he had admitted himself—we weren't even officially committed. Eventually, his fascination would diminish, and when that inevitable moment arrived, I would be crushed, having discovered my soulmate.

I contemplated these sobering thoughts while gazing into his eyes as he smiled back at me. When my detective ultimately abandoned me, I would suffer immeasurably—I was certain of that reality—but until then, I would treasure every moment, every tender gesture. When the end came, these precious memories would be my only consolation for a shattered heart.

"Xavier, you can be absolutely confident that this little one has me completely under her spell," Daniel replied to his colleague after a thoughtful pause. "Ready to depart, little one?"

I couldn't tear my gaze from him, as if attempting to permanently memorize every detail of his handsome features. I gathered my purse, we bid farewell to Xavier, and departed hand in hand. Walking beside him, I experienced comfort, security, and overwhelming love for this remarkable detective who had already irrevocably transformed my world.