Mafia Mask 49

Chapter 49 Unexpected Client

Ivy's POV

I was drowning in exhaustion. The past week had been a whirlwind of chaos, and sleep had become my enemy. Every night ended the same way - tears soaking my pillow until I finally collapsed into restless dreams. Yesterday's confrontation with Caleb had only made everything worse, leaving me feeling like I'd been caught in the crossfire of a gang war.

"Good morning, gorgeous. How are we holding up?" Zoe swept into the kitchen and cupped my face in her warm hands, studying me with those concerned eyes that had seen too much violence in our world.

"I'm falling apart, Zoe. This makeup is doing overtime to hide these dark circles. I feel like I've been through a meat grinder."

The secure intercom buzzed, and Zoe hurried to answer it while I focused on feeding Max his breakfast. Watching my little boy was the only thing that kept me grounded these days. He was pure joy, pure innocence in a world stained with blood, and just looking at him reminded me that I could survive anything. Those bright ice-blue eyes sparkled as he looked up at me, and my heart felt like it might burst.

"You're mama's whole world, sweet boy," I whispered to him. He clapped his tiny hands and blew me a kiss that made my first genuine smile of the day spread across my face.

"Ivy, these are for you." Zoe appeared from the hallway carrying the most stunning arrangement of blood-red roses I'd ever seen.

They were absolutely breathtaking, perfectly arranged in an elegant black crystal vase with a rich crimson ribbon wrapped around it. I stood there staring, completely mesmerized. I'd never received anything like this before. In our world, flowers usually meant either a funeral or a very dangerous courtship.

I scooped up Max and walked to the living room, his little hand gripping mine tightly.

"Holy hell, Ivy, these are incredible. I have a pretty good guess who sent them. Please tell me you're not going to toss them in the trash. Can we please keep them right here in the living room?" Zoe gave me that puppy dog look, clasping her hands together and widening her eyes like she always did when she wanted something.

"Of course we're keeping them, Zoe. The flowers didn't do anything wrong. They really are gorgeous. Is there a card?" I already knew who they were from, but I needed to see it for myself.

Zoe handed me the small black card, and I recognized Caleb's distinctive handwriting immediately:

"My beloved Tesoro,

Red roses represent passionate love, and you are my passion, the woman who owns my soul, and there will never be another who could replace you in my heart. I'm a complete bastard. I made an unforgivable mistake, and I will spend every day for the rest of my life earning your forgiveness. Even if it takes forever, I will never stop fighting for you. You and Max are my everything.

Always yours, Caleb"

By the time I reached the end, tears were streaming down my face again. Zoe gently took the card from my trembling hands, read it quickly, and pulled me into a tight hug.

"He's such a dangerous fool, Zoe. He can't just do this to me," I cried into her shoulder, my voice muffled by her shirt.

"Ivy, it's obvious that you're head over heels in love with him, and I don't doubt for a second that psychotic Don is crazy about you too. Maybe you should think about forgiving him instead of torturing yourself like this?"

"Zoe, I can't just pretend he didn't say those horrible things to me. I have some dignity left."

"But he’s not backing down. And honestly, he’s clearly miserable and genuinely sorry. Plus, you know how these mafia bosses operate - when they want something, they don’t give up."

"Good, let him be miserable," I said stubbornly. "I guarantee you he’ll forget I exist soon enough and move on to some other woman."

"I’m not buying that, friend. But what happens if he doesn’t give up?" Zoe asked, searching my eyes with concern.

"He will," I said with more confidence than I felt, wiping away my tears. "Now let’s get Max to daycare and head to the office."

Before we even reached Zenith Systems, my encrypted phone had buzzed with calls repeatedly. Caleb was relentlessly trying to reach me through secure channels, and I rejected every single attempt.

When I settled into my cubicle at the legitimate business front, my supervisor approached with his usual cheerful demeanor.

"Ivy, how are you feeling today?" he asked, looking at me with genuine concern.

"I’m doing well, Mr. Jenkins, thank you."

"Excellent. I need you to join me for a client meeting this afternoon, and I’ll need you to put together the presentation. Here’s all the client information. The meeting will be here at our office. We’re pitching the financial tracking system. This is a new and very important client. The big boss specifically requested that you work with me on this," he said with enthusiasm.

"That sounds wonderful, sir. I’ll get the presentation ready and send it to you. Just let me know what time we need to be there," I responded with a smile.

It felt good to dive into my legitimate work, which was turning out to be more manageable than I’d expected. Several colleagues stopped by to chat, and Ruby dragged me away for a coffee break.

Everyone at Zenith Systems had been incredibly welcoming, though the undercurrent of danger always lingered.

The morning disappeared quickly. I finished the presentation, which impressed my boss so much that he praised my competence and attention to detail. The compliment made me feel genuinely proud.

Soon my boss called me for the meeting. We stepped into the elevator and discussed the money laundering detection software while we rode up. Zenith was a financial technology company that specialized in corporate systems with very discreet clients.

The software we were about to present was revolutionary in the black market and essentially connected every aspect of an organization's operations. If one department experienced any inconsistency, it would immediately reflect in the others, and the administrator would instantly know and resolve the issue before it could escalate. It was more sophisticated than that, but essentially it functioned like a continuous audit system with zero tolerance for security breaches.

My boss held the conference room door open for me to enter, and when I walked through, I came face to face with him. Caleb.