Mafia Mask 61

Chapter 61 Neutral Territory

Caleb's POV

Restlessness consumed me after the family dinner at the estate. Zoe's tactical advice echoed in my mind like a war strategy. She insisted I needed to overwhelm Ivy with my presence, flooding her world with constant reminders of my devotion until she couldn't escape the reality of my obsession.

Her words carried the weight of certainty when she promised to orchestrate our reunion and guide me through reclaiming the woman who had become my entire reason for breathing in this blood-soaked world.

I arranged for another delivery of white tulips to arrive at Ivy's safe house doorstep. Zoe had revealed Ivy's weakness for flowers and their hidden meanings, advising me to make it a regular ritual that would brand my presence into her thoughts like a mafia tattoo.

My new routine became sacred as Sunday Mass. Dawn messages delivered through encrypted channels, midnight communications before sleep, and afternoon packages sent to both women at their neutral territory office. Zoe had mentioned Ivy's growing alliance with this new contact, so I expanded my territorial offerings to include this potential ally who might speak favorably of my case.

I bombarded Ivy's secured line throughout each day, calling repeatedly without fail. Her silence never deterred me from leaving voicemails filled with apologies, pleas for mercy, and declarations of devotion that poured from the depths of my mafia soul.

Soon intelligence arrived that made my blood simmer with territorial jealousy. Zoe had arranged Xavier's diplomatic meeting with Dominic, positioning my lieutenant for reconciliation while I remained banished from her presence. According to Zoe, Ivy was already softening toward Xavier, understanding his protective instincts were misguided loyalty to family honor rather than personal malice.

The injustice burned through my veins like molten lead. Xavier would see her face, hear her voice, while I was forbidden from even approaching her territory. Zoe's stern warning rang clear in my ears - Ivy needed to forgive Xavier first to pave the bloodied path back to my redemption.

Anxiety clawed at my chest as I paced the marble floors of my private study, waiting for Xavier's return from the field. Each minute stretched endlessly while I wore grooves in the expensive flooring, my mind spinning with possibilities and fears that could shatter my carefully constructed world.

Xavier's arrival sent me lunging toward him like a desperate soldier seeking news from the front lines.

"Calm down, boss, everything went according to plan," Xavier announced, his grin infectious despite the gravity of our situation. "Zoe knows exactly how to navigate these treacherous waters. I'm relieved Ivy heard my confession and granted her absolution."

"Thank Christ, Xavier. Now tell me everything. How did she look? What did she say? I'm losing my mind not seeing her in my territory."

Xavier settled into his debriefing, painting every detail of their encounter like a tactical report. Dominic had orchestrated the meeting at the mall restaurant where Zoe and Ivy were conducting business. His casual request to join their table seemed natural, leading to comfortable negotiation between the four parties.

"When we walked back to Dominic's building, I asked Ivy for a private audience," Xavier continued with evident satisfaction. "She agreed, Caleb. We sat in the lobby like civilized people, and I laid my cards on the table. I explained how seeing you destroyed had clouded my judgment, how protecting the family had made me act without honor. I begged for her understanding and alliance."

My heart hammered against my ribs like machine gun fire. "And she granted you forgiveness?"

"Completely. She said she understood protective instincts because she feels the same territorial drive toward Zoe. Ivy has a generous heart beneath that steel exterior, Caleb."

Relief flooded through my system like the finest whiskey. "Zoe was right. If Ivy could forgive you, maybe there's still hope for my soul in this damned world."

"She will forgive you," Xavier said with the solemnity of a blood oath. "But the wound runs deeper with you. She needs time to heal, needs to witness genuine remorse, and needs proof that your feelings transcend mere possession."

My feelings were more real than the bullet scars on my chest. Hope bloomed in my heart like spring flowers pushing through concrete. Ivy wouldn't slip away from my grasp.

An unexpected call from Dominic arrived that set my pulse racing like a high-speed chase. He mentioned weekend plans involving an exclusive Latin dance club with connections to our world. Strangely, Zoe hadn't shared this intelligence with me, which sparked my curiosity and suspicion.

Dominic provided the venue details before delivering his masterstroke. "I've already mentioned inviting Xavier to the ladies, so your appearance with him would seem completely natural within our social circle. You'll finally get to see Ivy on neutral ground."

The thought of sharing the same space as Ivy, breathing the same air, watching her move to music in territory where violence was temporarily suspended, sent electricity through my nervous system. Our worlds were already intertwining beautifully like a perfectly executed mafia alliance.

"This is your opportunity, Caleb," Dominic advised through the encrypted line. "Informal settings work better for peace negotiations. I just hope you remember how to move on the dance floor since Ivy apparently has a passion for dancing."

Confidence surged through my system like liquid fire. "Dancing happens to be one of my many talents acquired in this business, Dominic."

The weekend couldn't arrive fast enough. I would see my woman again, and this time, I wouldn't let her escape without fighting for what belonged to both of us in this dark, beautiful world we inhabited.