Mafia Mask 99

Chapter 99 Fresh Start Renovation

Caleb's POV

After dropping Ivy at Zenith Systems, I drove straight back to Thorne headquarters, my mind still replaying every moment from our incredible weekend. Meeting her parents had exceeded all my expectations. The warmth they showed me, welcoming me into their home like I truly belonged there, meant more than they could ever understand. For someone who lost his parents to a car bomb years ago, that acceptance felt like finding family again.

Sure, we had dealt with that pathetic situation with her ex-boyfriend, and her cousin's jealousy had been painfully obvious and uncomfortable. But none of that mattered now. Ivy was back in my life, and Max had completely stolen my heart.

The kid was exceptional, brilliant and fearless, with ice-blue eyes and fierce spirit. If my parents were still alive, I knew they would have adored both Ivy and Max. They would have spoiled that boy beyond belief and treated Ivy like the daughter they never had.

The familiar rage burned in my chest when I thought about my parents. The pain never really disappeared, but lately it had been more intense, more consuming. Learning that their car explosion might not have been a rival family's retaliation, that someone within our own organization might have deliberately taken them from me, it was like tearing open a wound that had never properly healed. Scott was handling the underground investigation, digging deeper into what really happened that night. Until he found something concrete, all I could do was wait and try not to let the bloodlust consume me completely.

Walking into the Thorne building, an idea started forming in my mind. I needed Ivy back here, working beside me in the family business, but she had made it clear she wanted nothing to do with this place. Too many painful memories, she said. Too many reminders of how everything fell apart between us. Maybe I could change that.

I called Gemma into my office and shut the door behind her. She looked curious, probably wondering why I seemed so energized after spending the weekend away from territory business.

"Gemma, you know Ivy and I worked things out this weekend. We're back together." I started pacing behind my desk, the idea gaining momentum in my head.

"That's wonderful, Caleb. I'm genuinely happy for you both." Her smile was authentic, which I appreciated from someone in her position.

"The problem is, she refuses to come back to work here. She says being in this office would bring back all the painful memories of what happened between us."

Gemma's eyes drifted to the leather couch against the wall, and I saw her expression shift slightly. "Well, I can understand that. Especially with that couch sitting right there like some kind of monument to your past mistakes."

"Do you think if I completely renovated this place, changed everything, she might feel differently about working here again?" The question came out more desperate than I intended.

"Honestly? I think we should burn that couch in the parking lot and stream it live for the entire family to see," Gemma said with complete seriousness.

"Gemma, I'm being serious here. I need your professional opinion on the bigger picture, not just your personal vendetta against my furniture." I tried to look stern, but she was grinning now.

"Look, Caleb, completely transforming the environment is definitely a smart move. It won't erase what happened, but it might help her feel more comfortable being here. New surroundings, fresh start, no constant reminders of the past betrayals."

"Perfect. I want you to handle the entire renovation project. Are you capable of managing something this important?" I watched her face carefully.

"Me? Caleb, shouldn't you hire a professional designer for something this crucial to family operations?" She looked genuinely surprised.

"You have impeccable taste, and more importantly, I trust you completely. The budget is unlimited, spend whatever you need to make this place perfect for her return. I'll need you to arrange a temporary office for me somewhere else on this floor, and I want your desk moved closer to wherever I end up so you can assist me directly while you're managing the renovation. How much time do you need?"

Gemma's eyes lit up with excitement. "Give me some time. I want to repaint everything, maybe change the lighting completely, definitely replace all the furniture. I already have countless ideas running through my head."

"Excellent. Now walk me through today's schedule so I can clear out and let you get started. I'll set up in Xavier's office until you have my temporary space ready." I opened my laptop to check the family's business calendar.

After reviewing my appointments with Gemma, I packed up my laptop and grabbed the files I'd need for the day. Walking back to the reception area, I made a point of handing Gemma my office key in front of Monica.

"Only you have access to my office during this project. You and whatever contractors or designers you bring in. Don't ask Monica for any assistance since she needs to stay focused on reception duties while you're busy with this." I kept my voice professional, but Gemma understood perfectly. The last thing I needed was Monica interfering and potentially sabotaging the renovation.

As I headed toward Xavier's office, I could hear Monica practically vibrating with curiosity, pestering Gemma about what project I had assigned her. Gemma's sharp response of "mind your own damn business" made me smile. That woman could handle herself in any situation.

"Hey brother, mind if I invade your space for a while?" I knocked on Xavier's door frame.

"Caleb, you know you're always welcome here. We could share an office permanently if you wanted." Xavier looked up from his computer with genuine enthusiasm.

"If we shared an office full-time, neither of us would get any work done. We'd spend all day discussing family business and planning operations like we did back in college." The memory of those days made me grin.

"True, but those were some of the best times. So what brings you to my humble corner of the building?" Xavier leaned back in his chair, clearly ready for an explanation.

"I'm having my office completely renovated. Ivy won't come back to work because she says this place reminds her of everything that went wrong between us. I put Gemma in charge of redesigning both my office and Ivy's workspace."

"Man, that's brilliant strategy! Now you're making me want to redecorate my space too." Xavier's excitement was infectious.

Jude looked up from his desk in the corner. "We should throw Monica out and redo the entire reception area while we're at it."

"Actually, that's not a terrible idea, Jude. We need to figure out how to get Ivy back here anyway. How has Gemma been performing in her role?" I was genuinely curious about Gemma's progress within the family.

"She's been incredible. Sharp, efficient, learns quickly, and she's excellent with our clients. Even Mr. Ferreira respects her, and that guy complains about everything. She actually made him smile last week." Jude's praise was significant coming from him.

"I don't think we need Monica anymore," Xavier added. "Gemma could handle twice the workload and still outperform her."

"I agree, but I'll keep Monica on for this week while Gemma focuses on the renovation. After that, I need to figure out how to let her go without making it obvious why." The real reason being that Monica couldn't keep her hands to herself and had made multiple inappropriate advances that could complicate family dynamics.

"Enough about office politics. Tell us about your weekend with Ivy," Xavier said, settling in like he was about to hear his favorite story.

"I'll give you all the details at lunch. Dominic's joining us, so I can brief everyone at once." I couldn't keep the satisfaction off my face thinking about Ivy and Max.

My brothers knew we had reconciled because I'd been sending updates all weekend, but they wanted the complete story. I was happier than I'd been in months. Now I just needed to create the perfect environment to bring my Ivy back where she belonged, working beside me in the family business.