

The Villainess Needs a Hug – Hug 1

Chapter 1

After three years lost in the wild, remote mountains—her body battered and her spirit nearly broken—Ivy Windsor was finally rescued.

The officers drove her home and stopped in front of a grand mansion.

Ivy stepped out of the car, gazing at the sprawling estate with a strange sense of detachment, as if she no longer recognized her own house.

It wasn't really her fault. The Windsor residence was decked out in all its finery today, festive and bustling with celebration.

"Is this the Windsor place?" the police officer behind the wheel asked, curiosity coloring his voice.

His partner nodded. "That's right. I've called them a few times to say we'd found their daughter, but they always thought it was a scam and just hung up!"

A female officer in the back seat couldn't help but grumble, "Their eldest daughter goes missing, and they're still in the mood for a party."

Ivy stood in the blazing heat, listening to the officers talk, her emotions a tangled, complicated

mess.

But she didn't dwell on it; her heart was overwhelmed by the joy and disbelief of finally coming home.

"Ivy, let's go inside," the female officer prompted gently.

"Okay." Ivy managed a faint smile and nodded, then took a deep breath and started up the driveway.

She didn't know if it was her brother's wedding or something else, but the whole place radiated joy and excitement.

And here she was, coming home on such a day—a double blessing, perhaps.

Her parents would be overjoyed to see her again. They would, wouldn't they?

The closer she got, the faster her heart pounded, and she could feel tears stinging her eyes.

Luxury cars lined the front of the mansion. The lawn was decorated with flowers and white ribbons, transforming the space into something warm and romantic.

As Ivy drew nearer, she could finally make out the writing on a life-size poster

by the entrance:* “Micah Shepherd & Emma Windsor–Engagement Party.”
The world seemed to tilt. All the excitement and hope in Ivy’s chest froze solid; her knees nearly buckled beneath her.

Micah. The Shepherd family’s golden boy. Her childhood sweetheart.

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Today, he was getting engaged—to her younger sister, Emma.

The boy who once swore to protect her, who promised he’d love her forever, was marrying someone else.

Ivy stood rooted to the spot, biting her lower lip, unable to believe what she was seeing.

“Ivy, go on, your family is going to be over the moon to see you!” The female officer, thinking Ivy was just nervous to be so close to home, offered patient encouragement.

But Ivy couldn’t move. Her whole body trembled as her eyes locked onto the poster. Her feet felt as if they’d grown roots.

Inside the mansion, laughter and music rang out as guests toasted and cheered. At the center of it all, a striking young couple was being egged on to kiss, when suddenly, someone near the door let out a startled cry-

“Ivy’s back!”

Instantly, the whole room fell silent. Dozens of eyes turned toward the entrance, and jaws dropped in shock.

“Oh my God, it’s really Ivy... What happened to her?”

“She looks like she’s been dragged through hell...”

“Didn’t she get sold off in the mountains? How did she manage to escape?”

“I heard the police brought her here-”

The guests whispered and gawked, each face registering a different kind of disbelief.

Micah and Emma, the dazzling couple in the spotlight, froze as they caught sight of the disheveled woman standing outside.

“Big sister...” Emma murmured, her eyes wide with shock.

Ivy—she actually survived?

Outside, Ivy stood rigid, numb under the weight of so many stares, unable to

react.

Once, she had been the reigning socialite of Neo Haven. No matter the occasion, she was always the one in the spotlight—radiant, confident, untouchable.

Whenever anyone spoke of Miss Ivy, they did so with admiration: the Windsor family's beloved star, the dream of every eligible bachelor in town.

But that all ended three years ago, in a single, shattering night.

She and Emma had gone out together for a party, staying out until it was late. On the way home, their car blew a tire.

While the driver changed the wheel, Ivy and Emma stood nearby, holding flashlights to help.

Out of nowhere, a van screeched to a halt. Men poured out, snatching Emma and trying to drag

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her away.

Ivy fought with everything she had, and with the driver's help, they managed to free Emma.

But while the driver was distracted, one of the men threw a sack over Ivy's head and shoved her into the van, speeding off into the night.

At first, Ivy thought it was an ordinary kidnapping—demand ransom, wait for her family to pay, then go home.

She had no idea that she'd fallen into the hands of a sprawling, professional trafficking ring, one that moved from state to state, never leaving a trace.

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