Mafia Mask 63

Chapter 63 Lightning Before Storm

Ivy's POV

When we reached the entrance of The Darkstone, Ruby was already waiting in the arms of a towering man whose piercing eyes matched her fierce gaze perfectly. The establishment's neon sign cast red shadows across the sidewalk, and two armed doormen nodded respectfully as they recognized our group.

"Holy hell, you three look like goddesses descended from Mount Olympus! I absolutely must know where you found those dresses," Ruby exclaimed, rushing toward us while her escort maintained his protective stance.

"Trust me, girl, you're definitely coming with us next time we hit that boutique. Fair warning though - that place will drain every account we have," Zoe laughed, and I mentally calculated how many months of overtime I'd need to recover financially.

"Ladies, allow me to introduce my older brother Parker. He controls this entire district and secured us the most exclusive table in the house tonight."

"Welcome to The Darkstone, the crown jewel of neutral territory. What a damn shame that business obligations will keep me from enjoying your captivating company all evening," Parker said, lifting my hand to his lips with practiced charm. "Though I sincerely hope this mesmerizing woman will honor me with at least one dance before the night ends."

Parker possessed the same penetrating stare as Ruby, but his radiated the calculated charm of someone accustomed to wielding power. He guided us through the crowd with the confidence of a man who owned not just the building, but everyone in it. Our table commanded a perfect view of the dance floor, where a live jazz ensemble filled the air with sultry, intoxicating melodies.

The venue overwhelmed my senses completely. Deep crimson walls adorned with gold baroque molding stretched toward a ceiling dripping with crystal chandeliers that cast amber light across everything. The expansive dance floor dominated the center, surrounded by intimate booths upholstered in rich leather. A winter garden lounge filled one corner with emerald velvet sofas and wrought iron tables, while an

enormous carved mahogany bar commanded the opposite wall. Behind it, towering shelves displayed premium liquor like treasured artifacts, and skilled bartenders performed mesmerizing tricks with bottles and flames. A mezzanine wrapped around the entire space, accessible by marble stairs behind our seats. The place breathed old-world elegance mixed with dangerous undercurrents.

"Well, well, my most valuable assets all gathered in one place," Dominic announced his arrival with typical arrogance, Gemma glowing beside him in that golden dress he'd supposedly bought for a business associate. The manipulative bastard had been orchestrating this seduction for weeks.

"Gemma! Finally made it!" Zoe launched herself at Gemma, immediately pulling her into our circle and introducing her to Finn and Ruby while Dominic watched with possessive satisfaction.

Jude materialized moments later with his wife Nora, completing our party. After quick introductions involving careful handshakes and knowing glances, Zoe dragged us onto the dance floor as the band launched into an irresistible rhythm, leaving the men to their whiskey and whatever territorial discussions men in their line of work always seemed to have.

We lost ourselves completely in the music for a while before thirst drove us back toward the table. But Parker intercepted my path, his fingers brushing my arm as he leaned close enough for his breath to tickle my ear.

"One dance, beautiful Ivy. I insist."

His smile proved absolutely impossible to resist. The band had shifted into sultry salsa, and couples moved across the floor in passionate embraces that bordered on scandalous. Parker moved like liquid mercury, guiding me through steps I barely knew, even attempting some daring lifts that left me breathless and laughing despite myself. His eyes held mine with dangerous intensity that made me forget we were surrounded by witnesses.

"Such a tragedy that duty calls me away," he murmured against my ear as the song ended, his voice carrying subtle threat beneath the charm. "But allow me to escort you back, beautiful Ivy."

I nodded, still dizzy from the dance and his overwhelming proximity. But when we reached the table, my blood turned to ice in my veins. Xavier sat there smiling like a predator, while Caleb glowered beside him like a thundercloud ready to unleash hell.

Parker bid farewell with a promise to claim another dance later, leaving me frozen in complete shock. I shot Zoe a desperate look that she immediately understood.

She pulled me close, her voice low and urgent. "Breathe, honey. They're part of Dominic's circle, you were bound to cross paths eventually. You've already made peace with Xavier, and facing Caleb head-on was always inevitable."

Logic couldn't calm the storm of emotions raging in my chest. Dominic handled introductions with his usual theatrical flair while I somehow found myself trapped in the seat directly beside Caleb, our knees nearly touching under the table.

"My brother is absolutely smitten with you, Ivy!" Ruby beamed, clearly oblivious to the lethal tension radiating from Caleb like heat from a furnace. "I've never seen him so interested in anyone."

"He's incredibly charming and an exceptional dancer," I replied honestly, feeling Caleb's stare burning into my skin like a brand.

"And completely gorgeous too, am I right girl!" Zoe's tone carried deliberate provocation, and I realized she was intentionally baiting Caleb for reasons I couldn't fathom.

"Isaac, Dominic, when did you recruit this stunning redhead? I might need to submit my application immediately," Xavier turned his attention to Ruby with practiced flirtation, his interest providing a welcome distraction. Ruby responded with obvious reciprocation.

"I'm extremely selective about my personnel, friend. Not just anyone meets my exacting standards," Dominic boasted with typical arrogance that made me roll my eyes.

Waiters appeared with premium tequila shots for everyone, the expensive alcohol burning down my throat. Caleb's gaze never wavered from me, his jaw clenched with barely contained emotion. I ordered a mojito and settled in for what promised to be an endless, torturous evening.

The band transitioned into a slow, sensual ballad that made couples drift toward the dance floor like moths to flame. One by one, our group dispersed until only Caleb and I remained at the table. Tension crackled between us like electricity before a devastating storm.