Mafia Mask 85

Chapter 85 Dangerous Serenade

Ivy's POV

The underground karaoke club pulsed with dangerous energy when we arrived. Bodies pressed together in the smoke-filled space, voices rising above the din of clinking glasses and muted conversations. This wasn't some mainstream entertainment venue - it was the kind of place where made men came to unwind after bloody business, where questions weren't asked and faces weren't remembered.

Parker smoothly handled our reservation through the club's security, and soon we found ourselves in a VIP booth overlooking the main floor. Below us, a couple butchered a classic Italian ballad while the crowd of enforcers and soldiers cheered them on anyway, their expensive suits and visible shoulder holsters a stark reminder of where we were.

The atmosphere was intoxicating in its danger. Red lighting cast shadows across hardened faces, the live band keeping perfect rhythm despite knowing their audience could turn lethal at any moment. Everyone seemed caught up in the rare moment of peace, clapping and singing along as if witnessing something beautiful instead of the usual carnage.

Ruby immediately signed herself up to perform, then turned her commanding gaze on the rest of us. When she reached me, I felt my stomach clench with familiar dread.

"Ivy, don't even think about backing down. You're getting on that stage tonight," she declared, pointing a perfectly manicured finger that had recently handled more than makeup.

"Fine, but let me choose something appropriate," I replied, hoping to buy time in this den of wolves.

The evening flowed surprisingly well. Parker's protection never wavered from me, his dangerous charm growing bolder with each drink. One by one, my friends took the stage, their inhibitions melting away under the hot lights and appreciative calls from the armed crowd. Even Zoe stepped up, earning whistles from men who killed for a living. Parker waited, claiming he wanted to perform with me.

I was lost in the moment, laughing at Ruby's fearless rendition of a provocative song, when a voice cut through the noise like a blade. Women throughout the club began calling out appreciatively, voices rising above the usual careful whispers of mafia establishments. The voice that had captured their attention was rich, commanding, and devastatingly familiar.

"No quiero separarme de ti, Ni siquiera un momento, No quiero perder el tiempo, Tu sabes que te quiero a morir..."

My blood turned to ice as I turned toward the stage. Caleb stood there, commanding attention like the don he was, his voice wrapping around the Spanish lyrics with lethal precision. The question of whether he'd noticed us was answered immediately when he stepped down from the stage mid-song, his predatory gaze locked on mine.

Before I could process what was happening, his arm circled my waist, pulling me against him as he continued singing. The crowd erupted in approval, voices calling out "lucky woman" and "beautiful couple" as he led me in an impromptu dance, his movements carrying the same deadly grace he used when eliminating enemies.

My mind went completely blank. Nothing existed beyond the warmth of his powerful body, the rumble of his voice against my ear, the familiar scent of expensive cologne mixed with gunpowder that always made me feel protected and terrified simultaneously. My arms found their way around his neck without conscious thought, and we moved together as if the months of separation had never happened.

His voice was pure seduction wrapped in velvet menace, each note a promise I desperately wanted to believe despite knowing the violence that followed him everywhere. I closed my eyes, letting myself drift into a dangerous fantasy where we could have everything we'd once dreamed of before the bullets started flying. When the song ended, reality should have crashed back, but Caleb only held me tighter.

"Let's leave this place. Come with me, tesoro," he whispered against my ear, his breath sending shivers down my spine.

For one dangerous moment, I almost said yes. Almost let him lead me away from everything complicated and back into his blood-soaked world. But Parker's face flashed in my mind, along with the memory of why I'd needed to escape in the first place.

"No, I can’t abandon everyone here," I said, pulling back from his embrace with more force than necessary.

My heart hammered against my ribs as I returned to our booth, barely registering that Caleb was following me like a predator stalking wounded prey. When I reached our group, I stopped short. Jude, Dominic, Finn, and Xavier sat around our table as if they’d been there all night, their expensive suits and cold eyes marking them as Caleb’s most dangerous capos. Brenda and Silas were there too, completing the intimidating circle of Caleb’s inner circle.

This couldn’t be coincidence. Not in a city where the Thorne syndicate controlled half the underground establishments.

Parker stood to pull out my chair, his movements carefully controlled despite the obvious tension. "Thorne, are you having me followed now?" he asked with a laugh that didn’t reach his calculating eyes.

"Don’t flatter yourself, Parker. You’re not worth the surveillance resources. But you are trying to take what belongs to my family," Caleb shot back, his arrogance on full display.

"I wouldn’t be so confident about that ownership claim," Parker replied smoothly, his hand resting casually near his concealed weapon.

"Ladies, care to explain why we keep finding you with these particular gentlemen?" Dominic asked, crossing his muscled arms as he stared down Gemma with the intensity of a man used to extracting information through violence.

"Sweetheart, I don’t owe explanations to anyone," Gemma replied with a brilliant smile that didn’t hide the steel in her voice.

"Actually, you have plenty of explaining to do, wife," Jude said, his barely contained anger radiating from his scarred frame as he focused on Nora.

"Honey, I told you I was going out with the girls for entertainment. I didn’t lie," Nora responded, her smile turning mischievous despite the danger crackling in the air.

"You said dinner with female friends. Then I find you here in a mafia establishment with Parker's crew," Jude's frustration was evident, his hand unconsciously moving toward his shoulder holster.

"Zoe, seems like you're in the same situation. Want to share?" Finn jumped in, clearly hoping for support from his usual ally.

"Stop right there, Wyatt. I went out with friends to have a good time in neutral territory. There's absolutely nothing wrong with that," Zoe shut him down immediately. "But I'm very curious how you gentlemen ended up at an underground club. Start talking, because I know none of you would choose this for relaxation."

Finn deflated under her penetrating stare, stammering incoherently. Dominic remained stubbornly silent while Xavier ran his hand through his hair like he was trying to invent a believable cover story.

"Wright, explain this immediately. I hope this doesn't involve surveillance operations, and don't insult my intelligence by claiming coincidence," Nora demanded with the authority of a woman who'd survived in their world.

"Nora, you're my wife. Did you think you could just disappear into mafia territory without me knowing where you went?" Jude deflected, clearly trying to avoid revealing their methods.

"Not talking?" Ruby asked, fixing Xavier with a stare that could cut glass. "Fine then, girls. Maybe we should go somewhere safer. Beckett, is your place available?"

"Absolutely, gorgeous. We could finish the night there under proper protection," Beckett agreed, lifting Ruby's hand to his lips.

"Stop, please. It was Jude's idea. He had tech support track Nora's phone," Xavier blurted out, completely caving under Ruby's intimidating presence.

"Damn it, Xavier," Jude groaned.

"You had me tracked, Wright? Seriously? After everything you promised about respecting my independence?" Nora's voice rose dangerously, drawing glances from nearby tables of armed men.

"It was a security concern, Nora. You know I'm not usually possessive, but you five have been giving these guys access to our territory. I protect what's mine. And Caleb was losing his mind over Ivy's safety. I felt obligated to help," Jude tried to explain.

"So I was the only one going insane with worry? We were all equally desperate for intelligence," Caleb confirmed, crouching beside my chair. "Ivy, I go crazy thinking you might not return to where I can protect you. Please, we need to discuss this."

"You're completely out of line, Caleb. You mess with our heads and then have us surveilled everywhere we go. I hate this paranoid control. We have the right to move freely and associate with whoever we choose," I snapped.

"Here's a suggestion: we've already had the pleasure of an excellent dinner with these lovely ladies, and we're all managing to coexist here. Why don't you join us and try to behave like civilized people? We're all adults who can control ourselves appropriately, right?" Brenda suggested as if there wasn't a territorial war brewing around us.

"I suppose we can tolerate these complications for a while longer," Zoe spoke for all of us. "But Finn, you'll be making serious amends."

"And you, Jude, will be sleeping alone for the foreseeable future," Nora declared, finally breaking the tension as nervous laughter rippled through the group.

The rest of the evening passed surprisingly well once Caleb and his capos joined us. The men spent their time trying to assert dominance over each other while we deliberately gave extra attention to Parker and his associates, which only frustrated them more. I ended up on stage with the girls, singing a provocative song that had all the dangerous men crowding the front of the stage, applauding and calling out appreciatively.

By closing time, we were all exhausted, content, and slightly drunk. The guys had even managed some respectful conversation among themselves. Sensing the fragile peace might not last, Zoe quickly took charge.

"Gentlemen, you've given us an entertaining evening. Thank you. But now we need to leave. I've already arranged our transportation."

"Absolutely not. You're coming back to secured territory with us," Finn protested immediately.

"Not happening. They came out under our protection, so we're ensuring they get home safely," Silas countered.

"Everyone be quiet," Zoe commanded with natural authority. "The night was wonderful. But my friends and I are going home by private car. We're independent, capable women. Neither boyfriends nor husbands will restrict our freedom of movement. And you're all staying over at Ivy's and my place for security reasons."

"Angel, you're even more stunning when you take command," Silas said with obvious admiration, making us all laugh despite the underlying tension.

Our armored car pulled up and we said goodbye to numerous dumbfounded, dangerous men who couldn't believe they were actually being dismissed. We headed home, already planning our sleepover and plotting appropriate retaliation for the tracking incident.