Mafia Mask 93

Chapter 93 Coming Home

Ivy's POV

That afternoon, Zoe, Max, and I boarded our private jet to Greenleaf. The familiar landscape below made my chest tighten with longing as we descended toward the place I still called home. At the small regional airport, one of Zoe's family's security drivers waited by the terminal, just as she had arranged. He drove us through winding country roads to my parents' sprawling farm, where I could see the warm glow of lights cutting through the gathering dusk.

I embraced Zoe goodbye at the wrought iron gates, and we confirmed plans for her to visit tomorrow. Then I walked up the familiar gravel path with Max heavy in my arms, my pulse quickening with anticipation and nervous energy.

"Ivy!" My mother burst through the heavy oak door before I could reach for the bell, tears already streaming down her weathered cheeks as she rushed toward me with open arms.

"Mom!" I breathed, allowing her to envelop me in the embrace I had been desperately craving for months.

"And where is my precious grandson? Come to grandma, sweet boy!" Mom immediately reached for Max, who went eagerly into her welcoming arms. This gave me the perfect opportunity to step into my father's strong, waiting embrace.

"My girl," Dad murmured against my hair, his voice thick with emotion. "Having you both here safely feels like divine intervention."

"I know, Dad. Being here feels like I can finally breathe again."

"Come inside before we attract unwanted attention. Tomorrow when there's proper daylight, you can walk the property lines with me." Dad's protective instincts were evident in his tone as he scanned the treeline.

Inside, the house carried exactly the same comforting scents of childhood - Mom's cooking, Dad's strong coffee, and that indefinable essence of sanctuary. The dining room table was already set with our finest china, laden with all my favorite dishes. We settled in for dinner, and I felt the constant tension in my shoulders finally begin to dissolve. This was what I had been missing in the dangerous world I now inhabited - this sense of unconditional acceptance, of being completely known and cherished.

Max dozed against grandma's shoulder halfway through her homemade apple pie. Mom carried him upstairs to settle him into my childhood bedroom, then returned to join Dad and me in the living room where we had spent countless evenings in deep conversation.

"So tell us honestly, sweetheart, how is life treating you in that complex world you've entered?" Dad settled back in his worn leather armchair, his experienced eyes studying my face with genuine concern.

"It's been transformative, Dad. I've built this incredible network of allies who have become like chosen family. The city operates by different rules than Greenleaf - most people there don't judge you by your background or circumstances. I rarely feel the burden of being a single mother the way I used to here. Yes, there are still dangerous people, but I've found my inner circle. Max has gained so many devoted protectors who would die for him."

"That's wonderful to hear, Ivy," Mom said softly, though worry flickered in her eyes. "We miss you terribly, but we can see that you're thriving in ways we never imagined possible. This quiet farm life isn't your destiny anymore."

"But I do miss this sanctuary. I miss you both more than words can express."

"Of course you do, and that's natural," Dad replied carefully. "But you need to forge your own path, not remain sheltered under our wing forever."

Mom leaned forward with that mischievous expression I remembered from my rebellious teenage years. "Now, among all these loyal allies, surely there's been some romance? You're young and stunning, sweetheart."

I felt heat creep up my throat. "Well, there is someone, but the situation is incredibly dangerous and complicated."

Dad chuckled and shook his head knowingly. "You women always insist it’s complicated, even when the path is clear. You simply overthink everything. Take your mother and me - we were meeting in secret for months, stealing moments together and going to hidden places, but she refused to make anything official. I was completely captivated by her, still am, and I knew I wanted to make her my wife. So a particular afternoon, I showed up at her house when she wasn’t there and had a serious conversation with her father about my honorable intentions."

My jaw dropped in shock. "Dad, you actually did that!" My parents had never shared the origin story of their courtship before.

"I absolutely did. When your mother came home and discovered me sitting in her parlor with your grandfather, she looked ready to commit murder. Your grandfather stood up, straightened his shoulders, and announced in that commanding way of his, ’Diane, this young man wants to court you with respect. But I’m making it clear right now - if you’re going to be together, you’re planning for marriage. I won’t tolerate any of this modern casual nonsense.’" Dad’s impression of grandpa made us all laugh despite the tension.

"I was absolutely furious," Mom jumped in with fire in her eyes. "I didn’t speak a single word to either of them. I marched straight to the kitchen, grabbed my wooden spoon, returned to the living room, and chased your father right out the front door with it."

Dad was laughing so hard he could barely form words. "I was completely bewitched, and after witnessing that fierce spirit, I knew beyond any doubt I was going to marry this magnificent woman. And I succeeded!"

"But Mom, why did you chase him away initially?"

Her expression grew serious and troubled. "Because marriage terrified me completely. Your aunt had just gotten married, and her husband was treating her like his possession. He was controlling and dominating, wouldn’t allow her independence, and everyone whispered about his infidelity. Looking at your father now with his gentle demeanor, you’d never suspect what a dangerous reputation he had back then." She shot him a pointed look.

"I didn’t want that kind of life, so just like you now, I had sworn off men entirely. Then your father appeared and completely shattered my carefully constructed defenses."

"But it worked out perfectly in the end, didn't it Mom?"

"Your father's persistence eventually won me over, and marrying him became the most important decision I ever made."

Dad reached over and squeezed my hand firmly. "Listen carefully, sweetheart, if this man protects you and brings you joy, nothing else should matter. Don't allow fear to steal your happiness. How does he treat Max?"

A smile spread across my face before I could control it. "Max is completely devoted to him. And he spoils that little boy beyond belief."

"Then what exactly is the problem?" Dad pressed with gentle determination.

"It's just incredibly complex and dangerous, Dad. Can we continue this conversation another time? I'm exhausted from all the traveling and tension."

"Of course, honey, whenever you feel ready to share more," Dad said, rising from his chair to kiss the top of my head protectively. "Let's all get some rest. Tomorrow I want to show you and my grandson all the security improvements we've been implementing around the property."