Mafia Mask 96

Chapter 96 Venom and Victory

Ivy’s POV

After Caleb and Finn departed for urgent family business, I tucked Max into bed in my childhood room and returned to the living room where my parents waited. The evening air carried the familiar scent of my hometown, but tonight felt charged with an undercurrent I hadn’t anticipated.

"Why didn’t you tell us about the troubles you faced at your previous job, sweetheart?" Dad’s voice cut straight to the matter, as it always did.

I settled into the worn armchair that had been my sanctuary since childhood. "I didn’t want you both losing sleep over my problems. Besides, I had someone powerful looking out for me who helped me secure a position with an even more influential family."

"Caleb mentioned you’re working for his friend now, but that you might expand your role within the Thorne operations eventually," Dad continued, his weathered hands folded carefully in his lap.

"I haven’t committed to that expansion yet. We’ll have to see how the territorial negotiations develop," I replied, avoiding his penetrating stare.

"Ivy, your safety and happiness are our only concerns," Dad said gently. "I have to say, I’m deeply impressed with this young man. He carries himself with honor, shows genuine accountability and remarkable leadership qualities. When he came here today, he was completely transparent about his past mistakes and took full responsibility for every decision. He strikes me as a man of his word, and the way you look at him tells me everything I need to know about your feelings."

My father had always possessed an uncanny ability to read people like classified documents.

"Yes, Dad. He is extraordinary, and I am completely devoted to him," I admitted, the words feeling both vulnerable and empowering.

"Then don’t let stubborn pride stand in your way," Mom interjected softly. "Forgiveness strengthens the soul, darling. Remember that holding grudges never brought anyone lasting peace."

"I’ll keep that close to my heart, Mom," I smiled warmly at her. "Speaking of the past, we encountered Brodie at the market today. He looked absolutely destroyed."

Mom’s expression shifted, becoming more serious. "Oh sweetheart, some people are blessings when they disappear from our lives. You truly dodged a bullet with that worthless piece of trash."

"What exactly do you mean?" Curiosity sparked in my chest.

"From what I’ve been hearing around the neighborhood, his marriage to your cousin is completely toxic. They fight constantly, and her pregnancy has only intensified their problems," Mom revealed.

"She must be approaching her delivery date by now, right?" I asked.

"Yes, the baby is expected soon. They’re having a boy," Mom confirmed. "Your cousin is absolutely useless around the house, refuses to contribute financially, and spends every waking moment glued to her phone scrolling through social media. Now that they’re living independently from family support, their problems have exploded. The house is always filthy, so your aunt visits daily to clean and prepare meals."

"That would certainly explain his disheveled appearance and wrinkled clothing," I observed.

"But he’s also transformed into a pathetic excuse for a husband," Dad added grimly. "He’s developed a serious drinking problem and started running around with other women. He managed to get hired at my former company, and a reliable source informed me he’s been carrying on an affair with the young receptionist there. She’s apparently very young. Your aunt’s husband confided that Brodie treats Tiffany like garbage. He doesn’t lay hands on her physically, but he calls her disgusting names, accuses her of sleeping around before their marriage, even suggests the baby might belong to someone else. Just vicious, cruel behavior."

"Well, they’re perfectly matched then. I don’t feel a single ounce of sympathy for either of them," I stated honestly.

Dad’s expression grew more intense. "Did he ever treat you poorly when you were together, Ivy?"

"Nothing I couldn’t handle on my own, Dad. He’s just a worthless waste of space. Like Mom said, some people are blessings when they exit our lives permanently."

I wished them goodnight and headed to my room. The day had been emotionally exhausting, but being surrounded by my parents’ unconditional love filled me with deep contentment.

The following morning brought our usual routine. We rose early, and Max accompanied Grandpa to tend the animals before helping Grandma collect fresh eggs. After breakfast, we gathered around the kitchen table for more conversation.

Finn’s scheduled return was approaching when my aunt suddenly burst through the kitchen door without knocking, immediately launching into a vicious verbal assault.

"You’re absolutely shameless, Ivy. You barely returned to town and you’re already throwing yourself at Brodie. He’s a married man who’s perfectly content with your cousin."

"Lower your voice in my home immediately, Gladys," Dad commanded with unmistakable authority. "And don’t you dare address my daughter with that disrespectful tone."

"You’re completely delusional when it comes to your precious daughter, Thomas. She’s nothing but street trash who got herself knocked up and doesn’t even know who fathered her bastard child, yet you still defend her disgusting behavior."

"That’s enough, Gladys," Dad warned again, his anger building visibly.

"I will not be silenced. This worthless slut went running after my son-in-law, throwing herself at him shamelessly, offering to become his side piece. What absolute garbage. Brodie told Tiffany everything that happened," my aunt continued spewing venomous accusations.

"Listen very carefully, Gladys. Actually, don't bother calling me your niece, because you're not my aunt. You're simply my mother's unfortunate sister. But pay close attention to what I'm about to say. I never pursued that worthless piece of human waste you call a son-in-law. The truth is, your daughter was spreading her legs for him while he was still my boyfriend. But I'm eternally grateful she opened my eyes and helped me escape that pathetic excuse for a man," I spoke with complete composure, though my voice carried lethal ice. "As for my son's father, whether I know his identity or not is absolutely none of your business or anyone else's concern. I'm a grown woman, completely independent, and I support myself financially through legitimate business connections. I don't depend on anyone for survival, which means I live my life exactly as I choose."

I lifted Max into my arms and started toward the door, then turned back to face her one final time.

"I don't owe you so much as acknowledgment, Gladys, let alone explanations about my personal choices."

I embraced my parents goodbye, and Max playfully stuck his tongue out at my mother's sister, causing me to exit the house with genuine laughter bubbling up from my chest.