

## Chapter 253

*Book 2: Ella grew up and tried to earn an independent life in this dangerous city without her wealthy Alpha family's help. However, as a rookie lawyer, she was treated as no more than an errand runner. She wanted to meet her mate one day, but she didn't expect her mate would be someone who came from the biggest mafia family in the city...*

Ella

It was well past midnight, and I was still stuck in the office. The glare of my laptop screen was almost a comfort, a sign that I was working hard, that I was progressing.

“Almost done,” I murmured to myself with a sigh as I rubbed my tired eyes. Such was life for me, though. At this point, I was getting used to spending all of my time here at the law firm.

As a rookie lawyer, I never expected to be treated like a queen, but surely they could see me for more than their errand runner?

“Could you get these photocopied for me, Ella?” James had asked earlier that day, handing over a stack of case files as if it was just assumed that I would be the one to do it.

And so I did, along with a dozen other tasks that didn't particularly scream lawyer. But I believed, perhaps foolishly, that perseverance would earn me respect and better opportunities.

It was my first year out of law school, after all. What did I expect?

The soft hum of the janitor's vacuum cleaner interrupted my thoughts. It was already almost one o'clock, and my body was reminding me of its need for sleep with every aching muscle.

I stretched and started packing up when my phone buzzed with an incoming call. The screen read Mom & Dad. Sighing, I picked up.

"Hey, you two."

"Ella? Are you at home now?" my father Edrick's voice came through, a mix of concern and mild frustration.

"I'm still at work, Dad," I replied, my voice laced with exhaustion. "Ella! It's way past midnight!" my stepmother Moana chimed in, her voice a rich, melodic alto.

"I know, Mom, but I've got a ton to do."

Moana. She was my stepmother. She used to be my nanny for a short time, but in a whirlwind romance, she and my dad got married and had my little sister. Moana was more of a real mother to me than my own biological mother could ever be.

Hearing her voice on a night like tonight was a comfort, but I couldn't deny the fact that I was a little annoyed at my parents' overbearing tendencies. They meant well, but sometimes they forgot that I was an adult who was capable of taking care of myself.

"Such a dangerous city to be out in so late," my father murmured. "You remember the news from last week?" I sighed. "Yes, dad. I remember. That was all the way on the other side of town."

"It doesn't matter, Ella," my dad said, sounding exasperated. "That supermarket owner was held up at gunpoint. Gunpoint! I don't need my little girl being in danger-"

"Dad, I love you, but I'm not defenseless," I protested.

“I know.” My dad paused with a chuckle. I could imagine Moana standing beside him, her freckled hand touching his shoulder as she shot him a look as if to say ‘Enough, Edrick.’”

“But you’re still my little girl,” he continued. “I know, dad,” I replied, smiling slightly as I slipped my laptop into my bag. “You always make sure I don’t forget.”

Moana’s voice chimed in then. “Just get an Uber, Ella. Don’t walk or take the subway. Okay?”

“Alright, alright,” I relented, smiling. “I love you both.”

“We love you too. Stay safe.” My stepmother’s voice held a warmth that always managed to seep into my heart. They hung up, and I shook my head. They would never change.

I could have the life of luxury, protected and pampered in my dad’s penthouse. He was one of the most affluent Alphas in the world: the CEO of WereCorp, and the heir to the Morgan family fortune.

I was his heir, and I had just as much claim to that company and fortune as he did. The offer was always there, on the table. At any moment, I was more than welcome to go home, walk in my father’s footsteps, and work toward being the next CEO while living a life of boundless luxury.

But I chose this. I chose to stand on my own feet and make my mark. I chose to go to law school, move to this new city that desperately needed lawyers, and work my way up.

I didn’t heed my father’s advice that night. After spending the past twelve hours sitting in a basement office with no window, the night air was refreshing. As I stepped out into the chilly night air, a gentle mist of rain dotted my skin.

I opted to walk. The shadows and sounds of the city didn’t scare me. They were simply part of the pulse, the heartbeat of a world alive even in darkness.

“You should listen to your parents, Ella,” my wolf, Ema, said, her voice echoing in my mind. She had been there ever since I could remember, a constant companion, a friend, a voice of reason.

“It’s fine, Ema,” I replied. Talking to her in my mind was innate, just as it was for most werewolves. My lips never even twitched. Sometimes, when I was little, I accidentally talked to her out loud, but that was normal.

Ema responded in a low growl. At first, I thought that she was growling at me, and I rolled my eyes and kept walking. But that shifted when I heard whispers, shadows converging around me.

“Look what we’ve got here. A lone wolf out in the night,” a gritty voice mocked. The Rogues. I could sense their intentions, the greed in their eyes. I tightened my grip on my bag.

“Stay back,” I warned, baring my fangs. A grin spread across the leader’s face. He was an ugly sort, with a big scar running across the diagonal of his face.

“Make us, little girl.” They closed in on me. With lightning reflexes, I aimed a punch at the nearest one, who crumpled.

“Shit!” one guy said, his eyes widening. “Looks like we’ve got an Alpha here, boys? Who would have thought? Today’s our lucky day!”

My punch only spurred on the rest. They came at me from all sides, even more fervently now that they knew my status. The realization hit me. They didn’t just see a girl. They saw a potential bounty. An Alpha beneath the guise of plain attire.

Rogues in my home city were often confined to one district, which was typically guarded heavily by the police. Many of them were drug addicts and petty criminals.

Here, they were still drug addicts and petty criminals-but there was no ‘district’ to keep them in. They roamed freely, and the local law

enforcement had their plates too full to keep watch over every Rogue for thievery and muggings.

More Rogues came out of the shadows. A whole gang of them. They were all sneering, chuckling, flashing their menacing teeth and scarred faces.

“Back off!” I growled, feeling myself begin to shift as my instincts from years of Alpha training began to kick in. “I’ll take every last one of you down!”

As my warning echoed throughout the dimly lit alley, a palpable tension settled. The leader just smirked.

“Little girl thinks she can fight, huh?”

He lunged for me. I dodged in a swift motion, using my elbow to strike him squarely in the jaw. He staggered back, pain flashing momentarily across his face. But I had no time to relish in the small victory, as another Rogue lunged at me from behind.

Twisting around with grace and speed, I caught him by the wrist, flipping him over my shoulder. His body crashed into a nearby pile of cardboard boxes.

But I was heavily outnumbered. My Alpha skills only drew more of them out of the shadows, intrigued by my prowess. To them, a long Alpha female was a walking goldmine. They thought I had money.

I could feel them closing in from all sides, their sneers and mocking laughter fueling my anger. I launched a series of kicks and punches. Each movement was precise and targeted. I managed to land blows on two more Rogues, but fatigue was setting in, and there were just too many.

One Rogue managed to grab my arm, pulling me off balance. I could feel the tide turning against me. I wrenched my arm free, but I was pressed up against the wall now with nowhere to go.

“She put up a good fight,” the leader said, wiping a bit of blood away from his lip. “But not good enough.”

Suddenly, the roar of engines pierced the night. Three black Bentleys emerged, surrounding us, throwing light over the alley. I raised my arm to shield my eyes, blinded by the light.

And then from the light came a scent. It was so intoxicating that I felt my knees go weak. Strong arms wrapped themselves around me while I was still reeling.

“Touch her, and it’ll be the last thing you do,” a deep voice growled. The Rogues dispersed like rats, disappearing into the shadows. I turned, meeting the gaze of my savior. Tall, with deep-set eyes and an air of command. There was no mistaking it.

A force deep within me stirred. My wolf acknowledged the bond even before my brain could process it.

“Mate,” Ema hissed.

“You,” I whispered, lost for words. The stranger’s lips quirked into a smile.

“Me.”

Fate, it seemed, had a funny way of making introductions. And just like that, in the heart of the dangerous city, beneath the cloak of night, my journey as a lawyer intersected with the path of destiny itself.

## Chapter 254 Bold Offer

Ella

“It’s him,” my wolf, Ema, hissed inside my head. “Our mate.” “It can’t be,” I responded. “This stranger? You must be wrong.”

And yet, as I stared up at the man, his piercing eyes bore into mine with an intensity I had never experienced. He was breathtakingly handsome.

“My wolf senses you must be my mate,” he murmured, voice a husky whisper. So my wolf was right. His wolf sensed it, too. For a moment, everything around us faded. Our lips met, and the world seemed to catch fire.

This wasn’t any ordinary kiss—it was fueled by the blessing of the mate bond, a once-in-a-lifetime connection in today’s overpopulated werewolf world.

My parents, being fated mates themselves, had always told me about the overwhelming pull of the bond. I had never truly believed it until now. As our lips locked, electricity surged between us. Each touch sparked a fire that threatened to consume us both.

It wasn’t just a melding of mouths. It was a collision of two souls recognizing each other across lifetimes.

The sensation was overwhelming, intoxicating. The warmth of his lips, the slight catch of breath, and the gentle tug of desire left me reeling.

Every fiber of my being focused on that one connection, the bond sealing with a fervor that whispered promises of forever.

At the same time, I felt a sudden connection between us. It was his voice, his emotions, flooding into me. “My mate,” I heard his velvety voice echo in my ears. “How nice to finally meet you.”

I had heard before that a first kiss with a fated mate established a Mindlink, a way for the mates to communicate and sense each other without uttering a single word. It was a strange feeling, to be suddenly connected like this. But at the same time, it felt euphoric.

Breaking away, breathless, I took a moment to really look at him. He gazed down at me with a pair of cool blue eyes, like the ocean on a clear day. He sported a head of jet black hair, which stood in stark contrast to that blue.

But the way he was dressed was equally intriguing. His sharp suit screamed luxury, distinct from the others around him dressed in black. The glint of an expensive watch caught my attention, something that my eye had been trained well to recognize having grown up with generational wealth. But what puzzled me more were the men surrounding us, dressed uniformly..

Each of them pretended not to see us, but their very presence raised so many questions. Who was this man, and why did he have so many bodyguards?

“Why are you out alone this late?” His low, almost husky voice pulled me back from my thoughts.

“Overtime,” I responded, my voice a little shaky from the aftermath of our kiss. “New to the city?” he inquired, raising an eyebrow. “How’d you guess?” I smirked, but there was genuine curiosity in my tone.



“No resident in their right mind would be out alone at this time,” he said, a shadow crossing his face. “Let me drive you home. We can get to know each other a bit more on the way.”

Despite the strangeness of hopping into a car with a man I had only just met, something told me to trust him, even if only for the drive home.

He was my fated mate, after all. As we settled into the plush leather seats, he glanced over. “Are you an Omega or a Beta?” he asked abruptly. I frowned, taken aback. “Why isn’t Alpha an option?”

He pointed to the tear in my sleeve, to the plainness of my clothing. “Even if you were, I could tell what you truly are.”

“And what would that be?” I asked, cocking my head to the side.

He scoffed. “A peasant, clearly.”

His presumptuousness irked me. “Who are you to judge?” I retorted. Suddenly, he leaned toward me. He took hold of my chin, not roughly, but still forcing me to look at him.

“Apart from my parents, no one speaks to me this way,” he said coldly. “Now answer. Omega or Beta?”

I swatted his hand away, the heat of anger replacing the earlier warmth. “Why does it matter?”

His eyes darkened. “If you’re an Omega, it’s worse than I thought.”

“Worse?” My voice trembled with indignation. “Everyone, regardless of their rank, has value. Are you suggesting otherwise?”

He leaned in. “You must know I’m an Alpha. If you were a Beta, it would be one thing, but not the end of the world. But an Alpha like me, if he chooses an Omega as a mate, it’s... complicated.”

“But why?” My mind raced. “Everyone dreams of finding their fated mate regardless of rank unless they’ve already mated with someone else. Are you already engaged?”

He laughed bitterly. “No,” he said, his voice dripping with condescension, “but I know who I’ll marry. She’s an Alpha, new here, like you.”

I gaped at him. “And she’s just going to fall into your arms?”

He shot me a confident smirk. “I always get what I want.” The audacity! My initial attraction to this man quickly turned to disgust. I averted my gaze, staring blankly out the window, the neon lights of the city blurring past.

The silence in the car was palpable, a dense fog of tension that seemed to thicken as we passed by streetlamps and neon signs. The soft hum of the engine and the occasional distant honk outside were the only things to fill the silence.

I could feel this man’s heavy gaze on me occasionally, but I kept my eyes fixed on the window. I only just met him, and he was my fated mate, but I already disliked him.

It was possible to reject a fated mate. I could reject him, and it would break our bond so I would be free to find someone else. Whoever else I found wouldn’t be fated to me, but it would be better than... whatever this was. Hell, I would rather be alone than be with some arrogant jerk.

“By the way,” he said, breaking both the silence and my train of thought. “What’s your name?”

I huffed and folded my arms across my chest. “I’m not telling you. Since it’s apparently so important and crushing that I’m just an Omega, then my name shouldn’t matter, should it?”

“Come on now...” He leaned closer to me, his scent filling my mind once more. It was intoxicating, dizzying. “Don’t be like that.”

I huffed again and leaned away, keeping my gaze fixed on the window. “Fine.” The man let out a low growl and leaned back in his seat. “Have it your way.”

The rest of the ride was silent. When the car halted, I was in front of my apartment building. It was a small building within walking distance of the law firm, and I had chosen it precisely for that reason.

There was nothing special about it, it was just a brick building, a few storeys tall, with an iron gate across the front door. When my parents saw it for the first time, I thought that my dad would have a heart attack.

Moana, however, just laughed and took me out shopping for protective supplies: a big bat flashlight that could easily bash someone’s skull in (as well as provide light), a can of pepper spray, and a special mechanism that could go inside my door between the wall and the lock so that someone couldn’t open it from the outside, even if they had a key.

I always appreciated her openness to my freedom to experience the city on my own, and I cherished those items that she bought for me in case they really would come in handy someday.

“Well... Here you are, I guess.” The man leaned forward, peering out the window with an obvious look of disgust on his face. “This is the right place, right?”

I nodded, swinging the door open. “Yep. Thanks.”

Without another word, I got out, desperate to put distance between us. But a hand on my arm stopped me.

“Wait.” His voice caught my attention. I froze, not turning just yet, but curious nonetheless to hear what he had to say.

“I recognize that you’re my fated mate, and there’s no denying that. I can’t just let you walk away, so let me make you an offer that you can’t refuse.”

I turned, ready to snap, but his next words caught me off guard. “I’ll give you a million dollars a year. To be with me. In private.”

I stared at him in shock. The audacity! Did he just propose...? “Are you offering to make me your mistress?”

He hesitated, then nodded. His cool blue eyes slowly looked up at my apartment building, which he viewed with an obvious look of disgust on his face. “With that kind of money, you could change your peasant life.”

My blood instantly began to boil.

## Chapter 255 A Bad Match Logan

Two days before that life-altering encounter with the peasant girl on the street, my assistant had dropped a file on my desk.

“Sir,” she started, clearing her throat. “I thought you might want to know that Edrick Morgan’s daughter, Ella, has relocated to the city. She’s working at a local law firm.”

A smirk tugged at my lips. “Thanks, Susan,” I said, taking the file with excitement burning in my fingers. Susan, my ever-loyal secretary—a young, pretty woman with a roundness to her body in all the right places, more eye candy for myself than anything, if I was being honest—smiled and walked out of the room.

I flipped open the file and grinned with satisfaction. If there was one thing that would put me ahead of my brother in the never-ending game of power and influence, it was Ella. My brother was always better than me, always quicker to accomplish major goals in life.

But he hadn’t married anyone of any importance yet, despite the fact that he had already been married and divorced three times. All of those women were good-for-nothing harlots, Betas and Omegas, dark marks on our family’s pride.

Ella Morgan, on the other hand, was an Alpha from one of the most affluent families in the country. Her father, Edrick, was the CEO of

WereCorp. Marrying her would not only be at leg-up over my brother just because of the fact that she was an Alpha, but it would also give me an enormous socioeconomic advantage.

Marrying the next heir to WereCorp and the Morgan family fortune? Marrying the beloved adopted daughter of Moana, the Golden Wolf? It was a goldmine waiting to be struck.

I had instantly devised a plan. It was simple: I would hire her as my lawyer, provide her with some easy wins for her career, boost her status, and eventually, I would win her over.

But now, as the car sped away from the fated apartment building on the dark street, I felt my control slipping. The unexpected meeting with that captivating woman had thrown all my plans into disarray.

“You imbecile,” my wolf’s voice echoed within, filled with a mix of anger and longing. “A date, Logan. A simple date. But instead, you demean our mate with an offer to be our mistress?”

“She’s not our mate yet,” I responded in my mind, but growled under my breath as I tried to calm the agitation bubbling inside me. “And we don’t even know her name.”

“That’s on you,” my wolf retorted. “Did you even see the fire in her eyes? The pride? The strength? That’s what a mate should be.”

My wolf was right. This strange girl, this peasant who I happened to stumble upon in the middle of the night, was an enigma. She was drop-dead gorgeous, with icy gray eyes and a head of golden hair. A sharp jawline, slender shoulders, and long limbs.

If I ignored her cheap clothes for a moment, she had a great body, too: athletic and toned. She had been holding her own, somewhat, when I found her fighting those Rogues. I would have been curious to sit there and see what would happen, but there were too many Rogues.

She would have been killed. And because her scent made its way through my open car window, I shouted for my men to stop. I was acting out of character. Normally, I couldn't give two shits about what happened to people in this city.

I saw muggings all of the time. Hell, I even instigated some of them. If it weren't for her scent, I might have driven past or, at the most, settled somewhere nearby to watch the spectacle like it was a good TV show.

And our kiss was electric, too. Her round lips tasted like cherries, and her fingers tangled themselves in my hair, tugging gently, her body begging me for more. Fuck, I thought to myself, leaning my head back against the car seat. I could have at least slept with her before I made her hate me. But no. I couldn't.

"We have a plan," I hissed back at my wolf, feeling the weight of responsibility bear down on me. "Ella Morgan. Influence. Power. Remember?"

"Since when did you put power over our heart's desire, Logan? Over our mate?" My wolf's words were tinged with sadness, and for a moment, I felt vulnerable.

My wolf knew me better than anyone. He knew how, when I was a kid, I used to imagine what it would be like to meet my mate and have a whole litter of Alpha pups. But I wasn't a kid anymore, and I was smarter now. Reality wasn't a fairytale.

The scent of her lingered in my mind- intoxicating, heady, and maddening. "She's just a peasant," I mumbled out loud, trying to convince myself more than my wolf.

"And yet, she refused a million dollars a year without blinking an eye," my wolf snapped. "Did you see how she sneered at you and stormed away? How many so-called 'nobles' in our circle would have done that?"

I had no answer. The woman's rejection stung more than I was willing to admit. Country girls like her typically jumped at such opportunities, but she had been different.

"Did you hear her, Logan?" my wolf continued, pressing his point. "She said if she cared about money, she wouldn't be here. She's genuine, authentic. Not like the rest. Not like the good- for-nothing gold diggers who your brother marries time and time again."

"Enough!" I roared, the car's interior muffling my outburst. Up ahead, my driver jumped slightly in his seat, but said nothing. I reverted to speaking in my mind, somewhat embarrassed by my sudden shout.

"I can't... I won't. She's a nothing. A nobody. An Omega. We have bigger responsibilities. Our family's legacy, our lineage-it's more than just a fleeting attraction."

My wolf sighed deeply. "Attraction? Logan, that's our mate out there."

Silence settled in both the car and my mind, punctuated only by the hum of the engine. My mind replayed our encounter-the fire in her eyes, her defiant words, and that electrifying kiss. A battle raged inside me, a battle between duty and desire.

I rolled up the window, catching a last glimpse of her silhouette as she entered the building. As the end of her golden curls disappeared behind the iron gate, a sense of loss gnawed at me, mixed with regret and a yearning I hadn't felt in ages. My resolve to pursue Ella Morgan wavered for the first time.

"See?" my wolf whispered, almost gently. "You feel it too."

"I have my duties," I replied, rolling up the window, but I couldn't deny that I sounded defeated even to myself. "There's always a way, Logan. Always a way to balance duty and heart. You just have to be brave enough to find it."



As the car turned a corner, the weight of my wolf's words settled heavily upon me.

Would I let duty dictate my life, or would I chase: after what my heart- and my wolf-truly desired? The road ahead seemed uncertain, but one thing was clear: I couldn't ignore the pull I felt towards her, no matter how hard I tried.

The night stretched on, the city lights a blur, but in the depths of my thoughts, her image remained sharp and clear.

## Chapter 256 On The Bright Side

Ella

The memories of the previous night crept in as. I stirred awake, the rays of morning light filtering through the heavy curtains of my apartment.

I groaned, burying my face into the soft pillow. I had finally met him-my fated mate. The universe's way of telling me that I had found 'the one'. Every werewolf's dream, and a real blessing now in this overpopulated world. It was becoming more and more rare to find one's fated mate, and I had just stumbled across mine in the dead of night.

Yet, the universe sure had a sick sense of humor. My first reaction had been elation. That deep, primal joy from finding one's other half. But then he opened his mouth and ruined everything.

To think that he had the audacity to not only assume that I was lesser-than for being a 'peasant, but also that I was only worthy of being his mistress....

My fingers curled into fists at the memory. "Take your million dollars a year and shove it where the sun don't shine!" I shouted at him, raising my hand in a single-fingered salute.

"Don't be so brash," he had answered, shoving his hands in his pockets. I still remembered how he had brazenly pulled out his wallet and flashed a wad of cash at me. "Come on. Look at yourself, at your living situation. It's not safe or healthy for a girl like you. You're really turning down a million dollars a year?"

“I’d rather die than be your mistress,” I had hissed back at him. “And if I cared about money, then I wouldn’t be here.”

Before he could respond, I had stormed off, leaving him standing there looking confused. Sure, I could have revealed my identity and it would have likely changed everything, but I didn’t feel the need. I saw his true colors, and they were pitch black.

I shook my head, pushing the anger away. This might be a blessing in disguise. At least now I wouldn’t be distracted. I could focus solely on my budding career. And the bonus? I was now free to choose my mate, no longer bound by fate.

Silver linings, Ella. Always look for silver linings. My wolf, on the other hand, was furious. She wouldn’t speak to me, no matter how much I tried. She would get over it, though.

My phone buzzed on the bedside table, bringing me back to reality. The day had begun, and there was work to do.

When I entered the firm, it was the usual- colleagues swarming around, some with genuine greetings and others dumping their tasks onto me without a second thought. The law firm was already a whirlwind of activity, and I had only just started.

“Ella, can you photocopy all the meeting materials for tomorrow? There’s a ton, so you’ll probably be at it all day,” Sarah, one of my colleagues, said, shoving a massive pile into my arms.

I glanced at the old photocopier in the corner, which seemed to jam more often than it worked. “Of course,” I sighed with a stiff smile, trying to maintain my composure. It was going to be a long day.

I began the morning photocopying Sarah’s papers. Once that was done, I was tasked with bringing everyone coffee, since the intern was out sick with the flu... Great.

After running halfway across the city to make sure that everyone got the drinks that they wanted-caramel macchiato for Patricia, black coffee with Splenda for Brenda (of course I remembered that one with a mnemonic), a cappuccino with extra foam for Robert-I finally returned to the firm with an even higher stack of papers on my desk than had been there when I left.

As I was navigating through the sea of papers, my boss, Mr. Henderson, called me into his plush corner office. He was normally fairly jovial with me, and kinder than my colleagues. I always had a suspicion that he was just nice to me because he already knew who my father was, but I never cared to ask.

Now, however, he looked serious.

“Ella, we just got a call,” he started, adjusting his tie. “A big client. They specifically asked for you.” I raised an eyebrow, curious. “Me?” I asked, partially wondering if this was some sort of prank. “Who is it?”

He shrugged. “Didn’t say. But it’s a local land dispute case involving some major companies. A big fish, Ella. And, it’s very winnable. It would be good for you and the firm. Just... Don’t fuck up and you’ll be fine.”

The excitement bubbled up inside me. My very first case, and it sounded promising.

“Pass me their details. I’ll give them a call,” I said, my determination renewed. The voice on the other end of the line was familiar yet distorted, making it hard to place. “Ms. Morgan,” he began, “I think it would be best if we discuss this matter over dinner. How about tonight?”

Tonight? My mind raced. I thought about the mountain of work awaiting me and the hours I’d need to put in.

“I usually work overtime,” I hesitated. “Could we maybe meet tomorrow afternoon for lunch instead?”

There was a pause. “Wait a moment,” he said before hanging up abruptly. I blinked at my phone, a tad confused but more worried than anything. Did I just blow it with my first big client over... dinner versus lunch plans?

But within minutes, Mr. Henderson was at my desk. “Ella, what tasks are you working on that need overtime?”

I gestured to the huge pile next to me. “Sarah asked me to photocopy all these meeting files. And then there are other tasks from various colleagues.”

His face turned a shade darker. “Sarah!” he shouted, his voice echoing through the office. She rushed over, eyes wide.

“From now on, do your own tasks. You don’t even have seniority over Ella. Did you forget that or are you just lazy and incompetent?”

Sarah’s face went red. She stammered for a response, but Mr. Henderson wasn’t looking at her anymore. He was looking at me.

“Ella, you’re excused from all the chores. You need to attend this dinner meeting. The client will pick you up at six o’clock tonight. Sharp. And... Here.” Mr. Henderson pulled his wallet out of his pocket and rifled through it.

A moment later, he produced his company credit card, which he threw down on my desk. “Use this to get yourself a new suit. No offense, Ella, I really do think you look fine most days, but you need to look a little more put-together for this dinner.”

I blinked, taken aback. “Wait, the client is picking me up?”

He nodded. “Apparently, they’re very keen on having you on this case. Now go and get that suit.”

I had no choice but to obey. With Sarah's disdainful eyes burning into the back of my skull, I took Mr. Henderson's company credit card and walked to the nearest shopping center I could find, where I picked up a new pair of pants, a crisp button-down, and a blazer.

As the day wore on, my curiosity only grew. What kind of client would personally come to pick up a lawyer? Why did my appearance matter so much?

My mind wandered to the voice on the phone. So familiar, yet so distant. It nagged at the back of my mind, like a song you just can't remember the lyrics to.

## Chapter 257 Unlikely Encounters

Ella

With my boss's directive, the rest of the day was uncharacteristically light for me. There was an odd sense of liberation, knowing that the usual tasks weren't waiting for me. I ventured into the heart of the city, selecting a sophisticated yet sharp charcoal-gray suit. As I felt the smooth fabric against my skin, I thought that I definitely needed this upgrade.

Returning to the firm, I noticed my colleagues glancing curiously at me. Their confusion was understandable; they weren't used to seeing me so relaxed and unburdened.

Sarah, on the other hand, sulked by her desk without a word. She was surrounded by a sea of papers, and looked utterly overwhelmed. I felt a little bad for her.

"Hey," I said quietly as I made my way up to her. "Want some help?"

Sarah's face turned red. "Not from you," she hissed. "Why did you have to go and tattle? It's not like I ask for help from you because I look down on you or anything. It's just... Well, I normally have better clients than you do."

I took in a sharp breath, choosing not to let her snide comment get the best of me.

“I know,” I said, forcing a stiff smile. “But I didn’t tattle’. If I’m being honest, i’m not entirely sure what happened...”

Sarah’s eyes narrowed. “And a high profile client, too? What’s the big deal?” I shrugged, pulling up a chair to the side of her desk. “I don’t know, Sarah. But, hey... Let me help you. I’ve got free time.”

For a couple of hours, I assisted Sarah despite her obvious disdain for me. We spent the next two hours reviewing briefs and cross- referencing case laws. It felt good to lend a hand without the pressure of pending tasks hanging over my head.

Finishing up, I checked my wristwatch. It read 5:30 pm. A full thirty minutes of free time before my meeting, I mused. This was truly an anomaly in my rigorous routine. Typically, I would be hunched over case files until the wee hours of the morning.

I spent the last thirty minutes looking at the meager file that Mr. Henderson gave me. It offered little information, other than my client’s last name: Barrett.

Whoever this ‘Mr. Barrett’ was certainly seemed like a bit of an enigma, or someone who at the very least valued his privacy. Other than that, all I could gather was that this mysterious ‘Mr. Barrett’ owned several businesses throughout the city, each one more different than the last.

A chain of supermarkets, a mattress store, a.... car wash? Was he really as well-known as Mr. Henderson made him out to be? Surely there had to be more than this. Exiting the law firm’s imposing steel-and-glass building, I was greeted by the sight of a sleek. black Bentley.

Really? Another one? I chuckled inwardly, pondering the curious penchant for Bentleys amongst this city’s elite. It brought me back to my ill-fated encounter with my fated mate last night, but I quickly pushed that sour memory out of my mind and plastered a smile on my face instead.



The door opened smoothly, and I was met by the face of a professional-looking driver. I was half-expecting my client, considering the dramatics from earlier. He gave a polite nod.

“Miss Morgan?”

I nodded in response, settling comfortably in the back seat. “To Mr. Barrett’s, then?”

“Yes, ma’am,” he replied, starting the car.

The leather interior exuded opulence. I fished out the case files I had carefully curated throughout the day. L. Barrett: owner of a strange array of businesses and now in the midst of a significant land dispute.

As the Bentley smoothly navigated the city streets, I was treated to an evolving canvas of urban wonders. The city, bathed in the soft amber glow of the setting sun, showcased a unique blend of architectural marvels and bustling life.

This city was so much different from the one I had grown up in, so much more culture. People of all walks of life, backgrounds, and ethnicities walked the streets. Colorful murals lined the walls of buildings. Street performers did tricks and played instruments on the sidewalks, amassing groups of curious tourists and onlookers.

Yes, this city was more dangerous than the one I had grown up in. It was overpopulated, with a thick current of crime running along its dark underbelly.

But it had character beneath it all. Potential. I imagined a world in which the crime of this city was eventually dredged out, allowing the city’s true colors to finally shine.

That was why I came here, to make a positive mark here. As a lawyer, I had the ability to choose between running along the dark side or the light side. I could defend criminals, I could help them stay out of prison so they

could continue to commit crimes, or... I could defend good people. I could put the bad guys away behind bars.

That was what I wanted. My dad didn't fully understand it, but Moana, the Golden Wolf, understood fully how much that meant to me. She knew better than anybody how much good was in the world, and how those good people just needed a few extra rungs placed on their ladder sometimes to climb to the top.

The Bentley pulled up to a towering building, its facade gleaming with the golden hues of the setting sun. The magnitude of its luxury struck me immediately.

While I hadn't been in the city for long, it was undeniable that this was one of its crown jewels. It reminded me of my dad's penthouse back in my home city, which he owned the entirety of. My dad rented out the lower apartments to other wealthy people, but it was mostly reserved for our sprawling penthouse.

This building, however, was a little different. I could tell from the sign and the red carpet running up to the door, along with the sight of the elegantly-dressed people coming in and out, that this place practically dripped with cash.

The doorman's crisp uniform and white gloves alone were a testament to the building's prestige. No wonder Mr. Henderson insisted that I buy a nice suit.

"Miss Morgan, I presume?" he said, smiling courteously. "Mr. Barrett is expecting you. Top floor."

As I stepped into the elevator, I took a moment to breathe. This entire setup felt lavish. Too lavish. My father, a seasoned businessman, would never entertain his legal counsel in such an opulent manner. It was too showy, too brazen.

The elevator doors slid open, revealing a dimly lit, expansive space. The entire floor seemed to be reserved for this single event. A large table was set, pristine white tablecloth shimmering under the chandeliers.

But the real showstopper was the panoramic view of the city. Its lights danced like stars against the canvas of the night. Against this backdrop stood a silhouette.

The man's posture was commanding, yet there was an unmistakable familiarity about him. The intoxicating scent that drifted towards me made my heart skip a beat. It was a fragrance I knew... I knew it all too well, in fact.

Instantly, I went to turn around and leave-but the elevator doors were shut, and a man in a black suit with dark sunglasses on was blocking the way.

It can't be, I thought to myself, swallowing as I slowly turned back to face the figure standing by the window.

"Miss..." He turned, and the light from the room illuminated his features. As soon as he saw me, his eyes widened in recognition, his posture straightened, and his voice trembled just slightly as he continued...

"Miss Morgan. Good evening."