

Chapter 268 Acting Lessons

Ella

The soft hum of my ceiling fan was the only sound accompanying my thoughts. As I lay in bed, the silky sheets enveloping me, a sense of strange relaxation washed over me. I should have felt agitated, furious even. But there was a tranquility I couldn't understand.

I let that jerk into my life, I chided myself. But even as I mentally berated myself, I couldn't help the smile that crept onto my face. My phone vibrated on my nightstand, breaking my introspection. A glance revealed Moana's name on the screen..

"I heard you got your first case!" Moana's chirpy voice rang through the phone. We might have been mother and daughter, but in moments like these, she was just like a giddy school friend.

"Yeah," I hesitated. The truth would be too much for her to handle. "It's just a problem with a bad tenant. The client wanted to keep things confidential." A laugh. "Always the mysterious ones, huh? Well, as long as you're safe and doing what you love"

I swallowed hard, guilt gnawing at me. If only you knew, mom. "Thanks, Moana," I murmured, hoping she wouldn't notice my reluctance. "I'll let you know how it goes."

After hanging up, the room's silence seemed more profound. I laid there for a long time, lost in my thoughts.

What had I gotten myself into? I was trapped in a delicate dance with the son of a Mafia boss, a criminal. I was putting on an act, getting cozy in

bed with the very thing I hated all for the sake of... taking down the very thing that I hated. It was all too confusing.

The rhythmic thud of my heartbeat was all I could hear in the dimly lit room, punctuated only by the distant hum of city life outside. I continued to lay there, eyes glued to the ceiling, mentally replaying the phone call I had with my boss a few days ago.

Mr. Henderson's voice had quivered on the line, fear evident even through the cold digital medium. "Ella, come back to work. We miss you here. P-Please."

Of course they 'missed me'. Or at least, he had been persuaded to miss me. The silhouette of Logan, with his dark aura and domineering presence, loomed in my mind's eye. I could only imagine what he said to Mr. Henderson to convince him to let me come back....

What sort of horrors did he threaten? Torture? Robbery? Death? All of the above?

He was the puppet master pulling the strings, ensuring that I got my job back. Part of me resented him for it, for the threat that lingered behind every 'favor' he did for me. Not only that, but I could only imagine how my coworkers would look at me from now on.

The 'girlfriend' of a mobster, who also happened to be that mobster's lawyer. It was dirty through and through. I hated the fact that I so willingly allowed myself to fall into this web. I knew that I would have to talk to him about it, and lay down some boundaries. The man was unpredictable, to say the least..

"I understand its's hard for you," my wolf's voice echoed inside of me, reading my thoughts. "The mate bond... It can't be ignored. This is fate. If you have already made your decision, then. maybe you should just accept it and move forward. I will try to keep up safe."

“Fate, shmate,” I replied out loud, grimacing. “It’s all bullshit. And it’s unfair.”

My wolf said nothing. I sighed inside..

Ever since I met Logan, my wolf was probably the one affected by him the most. She already did her best to have a cool head. I shouldn’t blame her. I made my own choice. Just as I was gearing up mentally for the day ahead, the buzz of the intercom at my front door jolted me out of my reverie.

I hesitantly made my way over to the door and pressed the button. “Who is it?” I called out, expecting a delivery or a neighbor with a misplaced package.

“It’s me.” Logan’s unmistakable voice crackled through the speaker. I frowned.

“What on earth are you doing here so early?”

“I thought I’d say hi. Brought breakfast.” I sighed, a mix of frustration and a grudging smile playing on my lips as I buzzed him in. “Fine, come up.”

Moments later, there he stood in the doorway, a bag of donuts in one hand and two cups of coffee in the other. Before he could utter a word, I launched into him.

“Did you threaten my boss?” His hands shot up, the coffee wobbling dangerously. “Hey, don’t shoot,” he teased. “All I mentioned was taking back that Rolex I gifted him. And, well, there was the tiny detail about you being my girlfriend.”

I blinked, stunned. “Already?”

He shrugged nonchalantly, that rogue smirk playing on his lips. “Better sooner than later, don’t you think?”

I took a deep breath, trying to collect my thoughts. Accepting the coffee he handed over, I took a cautious sip, expecting the bitterness | usually got from most takeaway coffees. But to my surprise, it was smooth, rich, and perfectly brewed. “This is actually good,” I admitted begrudgingly.

A glint appeared in his eyes, playful and proud. “I know all the best spots in the city. I’ll take you on a tour. A coffee date, so to speak. You can taste test them all.” I raised an eyebrow. “Not necessary. Remember, we’re not a real couple.”

He leaned in closer, his scent, a mix of musk and something uniquely Logan, filling the space between us. “You do have to play the part, you know,” he whispered. “It was part of our deal. We have to make it believable.”

Rolling my eyes, I tried to maintain the distance, emotionally and physically. “I have to get to work,” I said. “But thanks for the coffee.” But he wasn’t ready to let me off the hook that easily. “I’ll drive you.”

It was a statement, not a question. Logan wasn’t asking for my permission. He was telling me his plans. And as I looked into those deep, captivating eyes, I realized that for all his flaws, all the chaos he brought into my life, there was also a strange sense of security. Taking a deep breath, I relented. “Fine. But just this once.”

His smile was all the answer I needed, and together we stepped into the day, a pair entwined by fate and a decently brewed cup of coffee.

As we made our way out, Logan, ever the gentleman, held open the car door for me. The city sped past us, its early morning hustle echoing my nervousness. The closer we got to the law firm, the more my anxiety grew.

“Drop me off here,” I murmured as we neared the entrance. The last thing I wanted was to be the center of gossip, especially with Logan as my new... what? Boyfriend? Client? Fated mate?

Logan raised an eyebrow, slowing the car but not stopping. “Why? Scared your old pals might see you with a ‘bad boy’?”

I glared at him, but my voice betrayed my anxiety. “I don’t want them to think differently of me because of...” I trailed off, unwilling to voice the truth.

His grip on the steering wheel tightened, but his voice remained gentle. “Ella, if we’re going to pretend to be a couple, then we have to act the part. Geez... Maybe you need acting lessons.”

Before I could protest any further, Logan jumped out of the car and came around, swinging my door open for me. I had no choice but to walk with him, feeling his hand slip into mine as we ascended the stairs to the firm.

Chapter 269 Return

Ella

The imposing structure of the law firm stood tall against the city skyline, its grandeur echoing the prestige and authority it held in the legal world. Its broad stone steps, worn by the footfalls of countless attorneys and clients, led up to tall, ornate double doors.

Taking a deep breath, I hesitated at the foot of the stairs. The chatter of the city faded as dread pooled in my gut. Logan's confident stride next to me seemed out of place at this moment, and the realization of what I was about to do hit me full force.

Here I was, waltzing up to my old place of work after letting a mobster threaten my old boss. Not only that, but I was walking up to my old place of work with that very mobster. It was absurd! Brazen!

Without warning, I yanked my hand away and spun around, my heels clicking against the pavement as I made a break for it.

"I can't, Logan," I called out, my voice tinged with panic. "I can't go back in there, not like this. I'll find another city, another job. This... this isn't worth it!"

A rich, hearty laugh echoed from behind me. Before I could get too far, a strong hand wrapped around my wrist, gently but firmly pulling me to a halt.

“Running away already, Miss Morgan?” Logan: teased, his cerulean eyes sparkling with amusement. “We’re not even a week into the year that we talked about.”

“I’m serious,” I shot back, yanking my hand from his grip, my eyes shimmering with unshed tears. “Look at us, Logan. How do you expect them to take me seriously, walking in arm-in- arm with the son of one of the city’s most notorious mobsters?”

He tilted his head slightly, considering my words. Then, with a smirk, he said, “So what? Let them judge. They’ll judge you no matter what. At least this way, you’re walking in on your own terms.”

I stared up at the building, the windows reflecting the morning sun in a dazzling display. Behind those panes were colleagues, mentors, some of them even something like friends – and they would all be whispering about my dramatic return.

But looking at Logan, with his unwavering confidence and devil-may-care attitude, I felt a rush of something unexpected. Courage. Letting out a long sigh, I squared my shoulders. “Okay, let’s get this over with.”

Logan’s smile widened as he offered his arm. This time, I took it without hesitation. Arm in arm, we ascended the steps, ready to face whatever awaited us inside.

The heavy oak doors of the firm swung open before we even reached them. Mr. Henderson, looking more flustered than I had ever seen him, stood there, his pale eyes darting between Logan and me.

“Ah, Ella, Logan,” he greeted, though his voice had a tremble I had never detected before. “It’s wonderful to see you both.”

Around us, the soft murmur of voices dwindled..

My colleagues tried to mask their curiosity with busy facades, but their furtive glances spoke louder than words. And in the midst of those

surreptitious stares was Logan, his arm draped casually over my shoulder, a proud smirk playing on his lips.

“Mr. Henderson,” Logan responded smoothly, pulling me a little closer, playing the part of the doting boyfriend perfectly. I could feel the weight of everyone’s attention, and it felt like a heavy cloak, dampening my spirit.

“Ella,” his voice dipped into a softer note, for my ears only, “relax.”

With every step we took, there was an electric charge in the air, amplified by the unexpected and conspicuous entourage of men in dark suits. They were shifting boxes, placing my old belongings onto my once familiar desk, effectively signaling my reentry into the company.

Without so much as a glance from me, Logan led the way into the large meeting room, Mr. Henderson in tow. As the door swung closed behind us, the hushed conversations of the open floor began anew. I was acutely aware that my every move, our every interaction, was under the microscope.

The thick, heavy drapes in the meeting room muted the city’s early morning sounds, casting a serene, almost somber atmosphere. The room itself was opulent in its simplicity.

High, vaulted ceilings with deep mahogany beams crisscrossing overhead, complemented by a massive table that dominated the room, its polished surface reflecting the soft, yellow glow of the overhead chandeliers.

Mr. Henderson cleared his throat as he smoothed out the papers before him, each movement precise and calculated. His customary confidence seemed to waver as he looked between Logan and me.

“Ella, this is your new contract. We’re.... delighted to have you back.”

I hesitated, my fingers just above the papers. They detailed my reinstatement, my new position, and all the legalities that accompanied a

high-stakes return. But it was more than just words on a paper. This contract symbolized my twisted entanglement with Logan's world.

"Must be nice," Mr. Henderson started, a snide edge to his voice, "to have friends in high places, ensuring your return. It's quite the... luxury."

Before I could respond, the temperature in the room seemed to drop several degrees. Logan's demeanor shifted from casual indifference to menacing in a split second. His piercing eyes locked onto Mr. Henderson's, a silent warning in their depths.

The older man paled, his words sticking in his throat. The weight of that gaze, that silent promise of retribution, held him captive. After what felt like an eternity, Logan simply raised an eyebrow, and it was enough to ensure Mr. Henderson wouldn't broach the subject again.

Swallowing hard, the older man continued, trying to regain his composure, "All you need to do is sign at the bottom, Ella."

Nodding, I took the pen, its cold metallic weight seeming almost too heavy in my grasp. As I scribbled my name, I could feel Logan's watchful eyes on me, like a guardian ensuring nothing would harm his charge. With the ink drying, I leaned back, the signed contract now binding me back to a world I had temporarily left.

Mr. Henderson, gathering the papers, forced a smile, though his eyes betrayed him and revealed a mix of relief and a hint of trepidation..

"Welcome back, Ella." But in that room, with the dense air, the glow from the chandeliers, and the silent power plays at hand, it felt less like a welcome and more like a descent into an intricate dance with destiny. With the ink barely dry, Mr. Henderson cleared his throat awkwardly. "Well, I'll leave you two to... discuss matters."

And with that, he was gone.

"You really have a flair for the dramatic, don't you?" I started, shaking my head. "Did you have to make such a grand entrance?" Logan leaned

against the table, his fingers idly tracing the edge of the freshly signed contract.

“In this city, I always have eyes on me,” he replied with a shrug. “It’s best if they see me as the infatuated boyfriend, rather than the puppet master pulling strings. Besides, if you wanna talk about dramatic, let’s not forget your little performance there on the steps.”

I felt my ears getting hot, but at the same time !

let out a sigh of exasperation. “All I wanted was to come back, discuss this case, and get it over with. It would have been better if I had just come on my own earlier this morning, then you could come later. No spectacles, no performances. But you, you turn everything into a spectacle.”

He smirked, that signature playful glint in his eyes. “All the world’s a stage, Ella. We’re just playing our parts.”

Rolling my eyes, I turned to gather my thoughts, trying to steer the conversation back to business. “So, about the case-”

But he interrupted before I could get any further.

“What are you doing this weekend?” I blinked in confusion, thrown off by his abrupt shift. “What does that have to do with anything? Look, we’re just pretending, Logan. No need to start planning romantic getaways.”

He raised a brow, challenging me. “You’ll need to attend a family gathering with me on Saturday.”

Chapter 270 Rule Number One

Ella

The sunlight filtering through my office window bathed the mahogany desk in a soft golden hue. As I perused the documents in front of me, the weight of my current circumstances pressed on me like an unwelcome shroud. I could feel my wolf also getting alert to the situation.

How did I get embroiled with the mafia, and more importantly, how could I extricate myself without causing further complications? “No way,” I said, shaking my head. “I won’t be going to a family event with you. Not so... soon.”

Logan’s blue eyes narrowed. “It’s not really up for debate, unfortunately,” he said, folding his arms across his chest. “Did you think that only you would benefit from the deal?”

“Well, no, but-”

“But nothing,” Logan interrupted. His voice was firm, but not angry. “Sorry, Ella, but you need to come. I’m not asking. I’m telling you that we have to go. Besides, I already agreed on your behalf.”

I couldn’t help but frown. Attending a family dinner with Logan’s clan made me nervous, not only for my physical safety, but for the implications. If my parents found out, they would never forgive me.

“Fine,” I finally said, letting out a deep sigh as I lowered my gaze down to the documents spread out before me. “Let’s just... get to work.”

Over the next two hours, we delved deep into the intricacies of the case. To my surprise, Logan came prepared. He handed over evidence after evidence, making it easier to build a formidable defense.

“You’ve been busy,” I remarked, impressed despite my reservations. “I always make sure to be prepared, especially when dealing with people like Mr. Henderson.”

I looked over the documents one last time and realized that the case was much simpler than I had anticipated.

“Alright, Logan,” I said after some contemplation, standing and shuffling the papers together into a neat pile. “Come back next week. We’ll finalize everything, and after that, we can meet with the opposing counsel to negotiate. This should be wrapped up rather quickly.”

He blinked in surprise. “So fast?”

I smirked, tucking a stray strand of hair behind my ear. “It’s a straightforward case, believe it or not. I know you probably thought you could get away with keeping me on the hook with legal matters for a while, but it looks like you’ll need to find me more cases if that was your goal.”

A smile curved his lips, his gaze softening. “You’re quite the professional, Ella. Charming too, in your own legalistic way.”

Chuckling, I collected the paperwork, carefully placing them into a folder. “Well, our meeting is done. You can leave now.” He frowned slightly. “I was going to pick you up later.”

I raised an eyebrow, curious. “Why’s that?” I asked. “You know we don’t need to see each other during our free time, right?”

Logan smirked, his gaze traveling over my attire, a hint of mischief in his eyes. “I was thinking of taking you shopping for something more... suitable for the family gathering. You look nice in what you’re wearing now, but it’s not exactly...”

He paused. I couldn’t help but laugh, the sound echoing in the spacious room. “Logan, are you implying I dress like an Omega?”

He shifted uncomfortably, a hint of pink tinting his cheeks. “It’s just a suggestion. Maybe.”

The rest of the day flew by in a flurry of activity. By the time I had settled back in and made my rounds around the office, the sun in the sky had shifted from a bright white to a soft golden hue. There was nothing else for me to do, no busywork, no extra errands.

It seemed as though my colleagues had long forgotten their penchant for dumping their extra work on me. I hated to admit it, but it felt... nice..

By the time the end of the work day came, however, I was debating canceling on Logan and telling him that we would shop another day. But Ema wouldn’t hear it. “He’s just trying to be nice,” she said, although I could sense the edge to her voice. “Maybe he feels bad for the way he was on the night you met.”

“Or, he wants a trophy wife on his arm at the party,” I replied. However, I wound up not canceling. I told myself that my wolf just convinced me to go through with it, but I couldn’t deny the fact that there was a nagging urge at the back of my mind to spend more time with Logan. And I hated it.

Exiting the firm, I blinked in surprise at the sight before me-three black cars idling outside, attracting curious glances from passersby.

“Really, Logan?” I muttered, noticing him leaning against the door of one of the cars. “Isn’t this a bit too... much?”

He grinned, walking up to me. “You know how it is. Crowded places, dangerous times. I can never be too careful.” The mall was buzzing with activity when we arrived.

The glaring truth hit me as I perused the high- end stores. I had come from an affluent background, but due to my desire to break free and the fact that I had been without a job for weeks, I didn’t have the money to splurge on luxury items. My financial predicament made me pause, hesitating before a beautiful cocktail dress that caught my eye.

The cocktail dress beckoned from its perch, a stunning piece that seemed to dance with light even in the dim ambiance of the boutique. It was an alluring shade of emerald, made of the softest silk that shimmered under the store lights. The dress boasted intricate beadwork around the waist that sparkled enticingly.

It was neither too short nor too long, just hitting the knees, with a playful slit on one side. A subtle sweetheart neckline promised to flatter any silhouette, while the thin straps added a touch of elegance.

Curiosity and desire getting the better of me, I picked it up, feeling the cool silk slide through my fingers. The dress whispered promises of evenings filled with candlelight and dance, of turning heads and capturing hearts.

“I think you should try it on,” Logan suggested, his voice as smooth as the silk in my hands.

“Why not?” I agreed, more to indulge in a fleeting fantasy than with any real intention of purchase.

In the dressing room, as I slipped the dress over my head, it felt like liquid luxury cascading down my body. It hugged my figure in all the right places, accentuating the curves of my waist and hips.

The sweetheart neckline, as predicted, flattered my collarbones and neck, making me stand taller and prouder. The dress made me feel transformed—no longer just Ella the attorney but Ella the enchantress.

Stepping out to look in the mirror, I could see the transformation was not just in my head. The emerald hue made my hazel eyes pop, and the beadwork sparkled in a way that drew attention to my narrow waist.

Even my posture had changed, the dress demanding an elegance that I wasn't aware I possessed. It felt perfect. That is, until my eyes landed on the price tag discreetly attached to the dress's side. The number was staggering. My heart sank, and a lump formed in my throat.

I couldn't afford this, not now, and I wouldn't lower myself to asking my dad to send me some money so I could buy a pretty dress, even though I knew he would do it in a heartbeat. I gently touched the silk one last time, trying to commit the feeling to memory, before reluctantly making my way back into the dressing room.

Once out of the dress and back in my own clothes, I approached the rack to return the masterpiece. The silk felt cold in my hands, almost as if it was lamenting being returned. Just as I was about to hang it back up, Logan reached out, swiftly taking the dress from my grasp.

"Ella," he began, holding the dress up to the light and admiring its beauty, "you're not leaving without this."

I frowned, opening my mouth to protest, but the resolute look in his eyes silenced me. The man was accustomed to getting his way, and at that moment, it was evident he'd set his sights on the emerald dress that had briefly transformed my world.

As the cashier took Logan's card and gently folded up my dress, placing it in a tissue-paper-filled box, Logan's voice, low and sultry, whispered in my ear.

"Mafia rule one: we never let our girl pay for her bills."

Chapter 271 White Knight

Ella

We didn't just stop at one store. No, Logan wouldn't have it. The shopping center was enormous, and Logan clearly had a penchant for spending money. We spent hours in there, perusing each store.

Normally, I didn't enjoy shopping trips. My dad never really took me on them, maybe once or twice a year we would go out on a shopping day, but Moana was the type to instill in me that money wasn't everything, and so we didn't splurge too much. I didn't mind, though. Her precautions made sure that I never got spoiled, despite the fact that my dad was one of the richest men in the world.

However, I couldn't deny the enjoyment of shopping with Logan. I hated to say it, but he was... fun. Maybe it was the mate bond surreptitiously slipping rose-colored glasses onto my face, but I liked seeing him smile as we perused the stores. I liked hearing his jokes about silly outfits, ridiculously high heels, and hats with all sorts of bizarre decorations on them. He made me laugh.

At one point, we found ourselves in an even fancier store than the others. The golden gleam of the chandeliers reflected off the cream marble floors, giving the luxury boutique an air of opulence. Logan and I wandered from aisle to aisle, picking out pieces and discussing our preferences. I couldn't help but notice that our tastes were eerily similar.

“I’ve always thought garish colors were overrated,” Logan mused, holding up a classic navy tie. “It’s much more about the quality and cut of the fabric for me.”

“I couldn’t agree more,” I responded, genuinely surprised. “Bright colors might be eye-catching, but there’s something so refined about muted tones.”

Before Logan could respond, a saleswoman approached us, her eyes immediately sizing me up.

“Miss,” she started, her voice dripping with enthusiasm, “I think this would look absolutely ravishing on you.”

She held out a fiery red dress, the fabric shimmering under the store lights. The cut was low, the slit up the side particularly high, and the entire ensemble screamed ‘look at me.’

“I don’t know...” I hesitated, unsure.

“Please, do try it on!” she implored, her eyes alight with excitement. “With your fair complexion, you’d be the talk of any event.”

Logan’s eyes met mine. “Try it,” he said, smirking. “Please?”

Not wanting to disappoint their fervor, I took the dress into the changing room. As I pulled it over my head and adjusted the straps, a sense of unease washed over me. It was undeniably sexy, but it felt too ostentatious, too exposed.

Yet, I decided to step out and show Logan, if only for a second opinion.

The moment I emerged from behind the curtain, Logan’s eyes widened, and an amused chuckle escaped him. He gave a playful whistle, clearly enjoying the moment.

“Logan!” I exclaimed, my face heating up as I covered my chest with my hands.

“Sorry, couldn’t help myself,” he teased, his eyes dancing with mischief. “But honestly, it’s not you. Too much... red.”

I crossed my arms defensively. “Well, I didn’t pick it out!”

Logan approached a nearby rack, selecting a moonlight white dress that cascaded gracefully to the floor. He paired it with a sparkling diamond necklace, its beauty in its simplicity..

“This,” he declared, “is you.”

My eyes widened at the sight of the dress. It was indeed beautiful, but...

“But I already have a dress,” I said, pointing to the bag from the first store in Logan’s hands. There were several other bags in his grasp, too. He was a bit of a shopaholic, particularly for watches and Italian leather loafers.

Logan simply shrugged. “You could use more than one,” he said, lowering his voice. “This is gonna be a year, after all. There will be plenty of events. And who knows, maybe you’ll like this one... better.”

I sighed, but obliged. After a quick change, I had to admit Logan was right. The dress accentuated my features without making me feel overly exposed. And the necklace, it was a masterpiece in its own right.

The moonlight white dress was, in every sense, magical. It draped over my figure like a second skin, hugging me in all the right places and flaring out gracefully at the hips. Made of a luxurious silk, the fabric had a softness that was almost ethereal, making me feel as though I was enveloped in a cloud.

I admired myself in the full-length mirror, noting how the dress perfectly complemented my fair complexion. The subtle, intricate patterns embroidered near the waist added just the right touch of elegance without being over the top. It was a stark contrast to the emerald dress that I had tried on earlier which, while captivating in its own right, suddenly paled in comparison to this one.

Lost in my thoughts, I instinctively twirled, watching the fabric flare out and then settle around my legs in a soft cascade. The movement was mesmerizing. It was only then that I caught Logan's blue eyes watching me in the mirror, and I felt a heat creep into my cheeks.

"Beautiful," he murmured. I turned to face Logan, his attire complimenting mine perfectly. The thought crossed my mind: We looked like the perfect couple. A dangerous thought given his... affiliations.

It's a pity he's one of the Mafia, I thought, pushing away the budding warmth in my chest.

Eventually, I returned to the fitting room to remove the dress. Logan had already paid for it before I could have the chance to protest, and the saleswoman now waited patiently to wrap it up and receive her commission.

However, as I tried to immerse myself back into the world of shopping, I couldn't shake off the feeling of being watched. My eyes flitted around the store, searching for any sign of a threat.

Just then, I caught sight of him. A man skulking around in the background, partially hidden by some shelves. He wore all black, and had a gruff look about him. Upon realizing that I had noticed him, he quickly picked up an item off of a shelf and turned his back to me, pretending to be just another shopper. But I knew better.

"Logan," I whispered, leaning closer. "I think we're being followed." His eyes darkened as he took a quick survey of our surroundings. "Stay close," he murmured, reaching for his phone.

We continued shopping, albeit with heightened alertness. When Logan went to the counter to pay for some things that he was buying for himself, my eyes landed on a quaint cake shop next door. I quickly realized that I was hungry.

“I’ll be right back,” I called over to him. He didn’t react, maybe he didn’t notice. I thought nothing of it, and walked out of the store.

The sweet aroma of baked goods enveloped me as I stepped out of the clothing store, momentarily distracting me from the unease I felt earlier. Just as I was deciding whether I felt in the mood for a raspberry tart or a chocolate éclair, a loud shout pierced the air..

“ELLA!”

I spun around, just in time to see a billboard detaching from its fixture high above, plummeting straight towards me. Panic surged through me, and everything moved in slow motion.

Chapter 272 A New Perspective

Ella

The weight of the billboard bore down, threatening to crash onto me. Just as I braced myself for impact and felt Ema's strength surge through me, preparing to lunge out of the way or stiffen my body to repel the impact, Logan surged forward, knocking it away with his superhuman strength.

It was an impressive feat, but as the dust settled, I noticed blood beginning to seep from a wound on his arm. I heard screams and panicked voices around me. Innocent shoppers who were just as shocked as I was. But I didn't care about them. "Logan!" I shouted, rushing to his side.

He brushed me off with a smirk. "I've had worse." But his eyes betrayed the concern he was trying to hide. "His wound," Ema said, drawing my attention back to his arm. "It's... bad. It hurts me, too."

I had heard the stories before, about ghost pain, caused by a mate getting hurt. It was faint, but it was there. And I was worried, too.

The dust still hung in the air, a misty remnant of the fallen billboard. Logan stood, his arm dripping blood, while I tried to absorb the shock of what had just occurred. The sound of hurried footsteps echoed, bringing with them two men. I started to back away, frightened, but Logan put his good arm around me and gave me a squeeze.

"They're our men," he murmured. "Not enemies."

The men approached, glancing at the wreckage, then at Logan's bleeding arm, their expressions morphing from concern to sheer panic.

"Boss," the taller one began, the strain evident in his voice. His dark hair was stuck to his forehead with sweat. "We arrived too late. We tracked him down, but we couldn't intercept him before he triggered the trap."

The other, a stockier man with a scar over his left eyebrow, added, "It was cleverly set up, but that's no excuse. We should have been ahead of him."

Logan, his face unreadable, responded with a voice colder than ice. "And the man?"

The taller man gulped, hesitation painting his features. "We...we found him. But when we approached, he..." He trailed off, exchanging a quick glance with the shorter man, who picked up where the first left off.

"He shot himself. He's dead."

Silence hung heavy in the aftermath of this revelation. Logan's sharp gaze moved from one man to the other, weighing them, judging their worthiness. "I entrusted you both with not just my safety, but hers as well." His eyes briefly flicked to me. "This isn't just a failure. It's a betrayal."

The shorter man, desperation creeping into his voice, stepped forward. "Logan, we've been with you for years. We've faced countless threats together. Please, consider this a single mistake."

The taller man, a hint of anger in his voice, added, "We want revenge as much as you do. Let us make this right." But Logan wasn't swayed. "One lapse can cost lives in our world. You know that. I can't afford such risks."

The two bodyguards looked devastated. The taller man's eyes held a plea, while the shorter man's shimmered with unshed tears, perhaps from shame or the weight of the failed responsibility. But Logan remained unmoved. He turned away, leaving the men to grapple with the weight of their mistakes.

“Leave. Now.”

I watched as the two men left, their shoulders drooping in defeat. Logan didn't spare them. another glance. Instead, he turned to me, his face inscrutable. “Let's go.”

The drive back to Logan's house was tense. The silence was only broken by the occasional sigh from Logan or the quiet hum of the car engine. The sprawling mansion came into view, its large iron gates swinging open as we approached.

The opulence of the place was always something that caught my attention, but today, my focus was solely on the man beside me, pain evident in his every movement.

We were barely out of the car when the side door to the mansion opened, revealing a middle-aged man with silver hair, glasses perched on his nose, and a medical bag in hand. This was Dr. Mitchell, a trusted ally of Logan's and, as Logan explained on our way inside, a man who had patched up more mafia wounds than anyone in the city.

Without wasting a moment, he gestured towards one of the plush sofas in the expansive living room. “Sit,” he ordered Logan, who complied without protest, clearly used to the doctor's no-nonsense demeanor.

I hovered nearby, watching closely, a gnawing sense of guilt eating at me. If not for our outing today, none of this would have happened. As I watched, Dr. Mitchell expertly cleaned the wound, his hands moving with precision and confidence. There was a practiced grace in his movements, a testament to his years of experience.

Logan winced slightly as the doctor dabbed at his arm, but other than that, he remained stoic, his face giving away no sign of the pain he must have been in. Their eyes met briefly, a silent communication that seemed to say more than words ever could. “Deep gash,” Dr. Mitchell murmured, “but thankfully, no major arteries were hit. You were lucky.”

Logan chuckled dryly. “A falling billboard, and you call that lucky?” The doctor glanced up, his eyes holding a spark of humor. “You’re still sitting here, aren’t you?”

As Dr. Mitchell began to stitch the wound, I found my voice. “Is he going to be okay?”

The doctor didn’t look up from his work but responded, “He’ll be fine, Miss. A few stitches, some rest, and he’ll be back to his old self.” “So, annoying and brash, right?” I teased, although more to calm my own frayed nerves than anything else.

Logan shot me a reassuring glance, trying to offer a comforting smile, though it didn’t quite reach his eyes. “See? Just a scratch.”

All the while, I felt Ema inside of me, aching for the pain that our mate was in. It felt almost aggravating, for her to be so attached to Logan, but I couldn’t deny it. I was attached to him, too.

Damn this mate bond, I thought to myself, looking away while the doctor stitched up Logan’s wound. It’s not fair. I felt helpless in my feelings for this man.

The process took a while, but when the last stitch was secured and the wound bandaged, Dr. Mitchell packed up his equipment. Before he left, he pulled me aside. “Keep an eye on him, okay? He puts on a brave face, but that was quite a shock for him.”

I nodded, a silent promise to do just that. The door clicked shut behind Dr. Mitchell, leaving only Logan and me in the room. The weight of the day’s events hung heavily between us.

Once the doctor left, silence enveloped the room. I broke it. “Who was it? Why would someone try to kill me?” Logan looked away, clearly avoiding the topic.. “It was an accident.”

“Logan,” I retorted, “that wasn’t an accident, and you know it. If we’re to stand together, I deserve to know.”

He sighed, rubbing his temples. “Fine.”

With a resigned expression, he leaned back and let out a deep breath. “It was a warning,” he finally spoke. “He never intended to actually kill you. It should have been avoided, but my men...they messed up.”

His evasiveness was grating. “Who is ‘he’, Logan?”

He hesitated for a heartbeat too long before confessing. “My brother.”

I turned sharply to look at him, shock written all over my face. “Your brother? Why would he want to kill me?”

Logan’s expression turned bitter. “It’s our family dynamics. My father always pitted us against each other. So, we grew up more like adversaries than siblings.” He paused, taking a deep breath. “Yesterday, he wanted to know about my new ‘interest’. I withheld your identity, just to keep him guessing.”

“And he found out anyway,” I whispered, the weight of the situation pressing down on me. “Yes, and he sent this as a message.” Logan held up his phone, displaying a simple text: “Your men suck.”

“I can’t believe it,” I murmured. “Your own flesh and blood acting like this. I can’t imagine what.

it’s like. My sister and I have always been close. And she’s my half-sister.”

Logan’s gaze turned distant, a flicker of pain crossing his features. “It’s how we were raised, always competing, always on edge.”

Without thinking, I reached out, placing a gentle hand on his shoulder, offering a semblance of comfort. To my surprise, he laid his hand over mine, the warmth seeping through.

“I’ve long been accustomed to it,” he whispered.