

## Chapter 273 Family Ties

Ella

The grandeur of Logan's family estate was unmatched, the chandeliers glistening with thousands of crystals, reflecting the light in the room. I hesitated for a moment on the threshold, taking in the lavish spread of food and guests buzzing with conversation.

My previous assumption had been sorely inaccurate. This was not a mere family dinner. It was a statement, a spectacle. And I was the trophy on his arm, the daughter of the CEO of WereCorp. An accessory.

I put on a smile, though, if only to play my part- just as Logan had requested. It was part of our plan, after all. And after what happened with the billboard, Logan's motives behind wanting to take down the Mafia were becoming more clear to me.

Logan was ever the commanding presence. Every move he made, every word he uttered, seemed to draw attention. Tonight was no exception. His sharp gaze traveled the room, making sure to make contact with every important person in attendance. It was difficult to find any hint of the melancholy I had glimpsed earlier, maybe I had been mistaken.

But when he was with his father and brother, there was an unmistakable tension. Their discussions, filled with veiled jabs and curt nods, were strictly about business, the sort of gritty dealings that made up the underworld.

"Leonard," Logan's brother, Harry, his voice dripping with honeyed venom, said, "how do you feel about this new alliance with the Morgans?"

Their father, Leonard, turned to me with a measured smile. “I am delighted to connect with the Morgan family. The union of our families will strengthen us, wouldn’t you say, Ella?” Before I could respond, Logan jumped in. “Father is right. This partnership is crucial.”

I recalled my own family gatherings. They were always filled with warmth, laughter, and genuine connection.

Tonight, though, there was an undercurrent of something more sinister. I shifted my attention from Logan and his father, searching for a maternal figure that might bring some semblance of warmth to this icy affair.

But as the night wore on, I couldn’t spot her. The question of her whereabouts burned in my mind, but I hesitated to ask Logan directly. Then, a voice, sugary with a hint of mockery, cut through my thoughts as I perused the hors d’oeuvres on my own.

“Oh, Ella, it’s so nice to meet you. I’ve heard so much. I’m Marina.” Logan’s brother’s fiancée stepped forward, her extravagant red dress shimmering with every move.

“I don’t like her already.” Ema’s voice dripped with disdain inside my head, nearly causing me to choke on the martini that I was sipping on.

“Give her a chance, Ema,” I replied. And yet, this woman’s demeanor was nothing like mine. She was proud, poised, and, in a word, regal. But Ema was right, there was something off about her... The way that her eyes shifted around when she stepped up to me.

On the outside, she was a pretty princess. On the inside, there was something smarter, more calculating. She was out of Harry’s league by leaps and bounds, and she was an Alpha, too. I doubted that money was at the forefront of her needs.

“It’s nice to meet you,” I said, taking her delicate, outstretched hand. Almost immediately, Marina jumped into the typical conversation of a snarky woman at a fancy ball.

“You certainly have made an entrance tonight,” she said, gesturing to my dress with the hand. that I just shook while her other hand gently held a martini glass. “Though, I must say, I’m rather surprised you wore that dress. Surely someone of your stature could afford something more... fitting.”

I looked down at my dress, a simple yet elegant piece that I had felt proud to wear. It was the white dress from the shop, right before the billboard...

I took a deep breath, reminding myself to remain composed. “I believe in wearing what I feel represents me, not just what’s in fashion or expected.”

She smirked, circling me like a shark with its prey. “Hmm, how quaint. And here I was thinking Logan would want someone a bit more refined. But I’ve heard he’s always had a penchant for... unique choices.”

“Well, you look stunning,” I said, forcing a tense smile. “That color looks nice on you.” Marina’s lips twitched, a clear sign that my kindness took her off guard. Just then, a familiar voice cleared the fog.

“Is everything alright here?” Logan appeared beside me, his presence immediately commanding Marina’s attention.

She straightened up, her demeanor changing in a heartbeat. “Just getting to know your lovely partner, Logan. It’s been enlightening.”

He slid an arm around my waist, pulling me closer, his protective stance unmistakable. He said nothing. Marina, not one to be easily subdued, lifted her chin defiantly. “Anyway... Enjoy the evening.”

With a final, lingering look at me, she walked away, leaving a trail of whispered conversations in her wake. I let out a breath I hadn’t realized I was holding.

“Thank you,” I whispered to Logan. He pressed a soft kiss on my temple. An act for the onlookers, really, but intimate enough to cause a heat to climb into my cheeks. I quickly leaned away once there weren’t so many

eyes on us, and shot Logan a look. He didn't seem to notice, too distracted by the stiff atmosphere of the party.

The dinner bell rang shortly after that, and the guests made their way to the long banquet table laden with a fabulous array of different dishes. Glistening oysters, juicy cuts of steak, handmade pastas, fresh bread, and more were laid out across the table. I slid into a seat next to Logan, taking note of the fact that Marina didn't seem to be eating. I immediately dug into my steak, relishing in the rich flavors and buttery texture.

Leonard, keen on directing the conversation, mentioned my father. "Edrick is a good man," he said, leaning toward me from the head of the table. "It would be an honor if you and Logan were to get married."

I stiffened. Our relationship was a facade. Logan and I both knew it. And now, it was being thrown into the spotlight.

Before I could utter a word, Logan's brother stepped in. "Logan has had his fair share of relationships, hasn't he? Who's to say this one will last?"

I felt a sting at his words. Even if our relationship was built on lies, the bond we shared felt genuine. We were fated mates, after all. I had no intention of staying with him beyond this year, but... still.

The look Logan gave me was filled with understanding and defiance. Logan squared his shoulders, looking his brother directly in the eye. "Ella is different."

"Oh? How so?" His brother's tone dripped with skepticism. "Because we are Fated mates," Logan responded, his voice firm. There was an audible gasp in the room. Fated mates were a rarity, an extraordinary bond that was said to last an eternity. To declare such a thing, especially in this setting, was a bold move. But it was true, even though I had previously decided that I would deny our bond.

Logan's brother looked momentarily taken aback. His surprise, however, morphed into a sinister smirk. "Interesting, considering Ella isn't even the

biological daughter of the Golden Wolf Moana, isn't that right? She's the bastard child of her father and... Who is your mother, Ella?"

I could feel the rage bubbling up inside me. The implication behind his words was clear: that my lineage somehow made me less deserving.

It took everything in me to maintain my composure.

## Chapter 274 Intrigue & Devastation

Ella

When Logan's brother questioned me about my mother, I felt a sudden heat rising in my cheeks. The audacity of the question, the way he said it, filled with a disdain I couldn't understand, ignited my temper.

"Teach this one a lesson," Ema hissed. "Oh, how I'd love to gnash my teeth on his skull..."

"Enough," I said. "Not now."

"Interesting, considering Ella isn't even the biological daughter of the Golden Wolf Moana, isn't that right?" Logan's brother taunted. "She's the bastard child of her father and... Who is your mother, Ella?"

I gritted my teeth, struggling to keep my anger at bay. My biological mother's identity was none of his business, and the way he had thrown the question at me was downright offensive.

As far as anyone was concerned, Moana was my real mother. It didn't matter whether she was my biological mother or not. Before I could answer, Marina, dressed in her oh-so-extravagant red dress, chimed in, her voice dripping with condescension.

"Oh, Ella, it must have been so difficult growing up with such a confusing family. I remember reading that Moana actually started off as your nanny,

didn't she? And weren't there rumors that your little sister was conceived during a one-night stand?"

I clenched my fists under the table, every word from Marina like a stab in my chest. My family was being dissected and judged by people who knew nothing about us. And to think I was trying to remain civil.

I took a deep breath, working to control my anger.

"My family is just fine, thank you," I responded, my voice steady but icy. "I'm very happy with the way things are, and people should really stop gossiping about things they know nothing about."

"Oh, we're just curious, Logan's brother, Harry, chimed in once more. "Forgive me for being concerned about my baby brother's future. We wouldn't want... bad genes tarnishing our family line."

"Oh, please, Harry," Logan said with a wry laugh. "Don't get me started. How many prostitutes have you knocked up? Six? Seven? Probably more, at this point."

My eyes widened. I looked to Marina, whose cool face betrayed no emotion. Her eyes met mine, and flashed with something that I couldn't quite read.

The two brothers continued to bicker. Meanwhile, Logan's father, Leonard, was sitting at the head of the table, watching the entire spectacle unfold. I looked over at him, hoping that he would step in and stop this nonsense.

But to my surprise, he said nothing, his face wearing a look of amusement. Was this how he watched his sons argue, never intervening, always enjoying the show?

I couldn't help but wonder if his silence was his way of adding fuel to the fire. Marina was about to continue her tirade when her father stepped in.

“That’s enough, Marina,” he said, his voice firm but not unkind. He paused for a moment, then looked over at me from across the table. “You know, I once met Edrick and Moana at a ball, and I know how much they value Ella. They were both very lovely, too. Let’s not tarnish this evening with idle gossip.”

Marina huffed, clearly unhappy with the interruption but compliant. The room seemed to breathe again as the tension eased slightly.

Under the table, I felt Logan squeeze my hand, an unexpected but reassuring gesture that warmed me for a moment before I gently pulled my hand away. Dinner continued, and despite the undercurrent of hostility, I managed to regain my composure.

After dinner, there was more drinking and mingling, and the atmosphere lightened somewhat. People moved around, engaging in various conversations, and at one point, I found myself alone.

Sinking down onto one of the stools at the small bar with a sigh, I ordered a drink and let my eyes wander across the room.

It was strange to watch the fake smiles, the forced laughter, the way people mingled and preened. It all felt so familiar, yet so foreign. This facade wasn’t all that different from the boring networking events my family had dragged me to when I was growing up.

Boring conversations, idle chit-chat, and lots of backhanded compliments. It all had a wearying sameness to it. I took a sip of my drink, the bitterness a perfect match for my mood.

“Isn’t it ironic how they all have to take part in most of the same things as my dad and his business partners?” I asked my wolf, my lips not moving and my face not betraying a hint of my conversation as my eyes wandered the room.

“I was just thinking the same thing,” Ema replied. “Flip sides of the same coin.”



“I couldn’t have put it better myself.”

Ema was right: despite the similarities between powerful business people and the Mafia, the worlds were so different. There was an undercurrent of danger here, a tension that was absent from the staid world of business networking.

I looked around, seeing people wrapped in their own world, their own agendas. The glances, the whispers, the subtle negotiations – it was all a game, a dance of power and ambition.

This whole dinner party was supposed to be an ‘engagement party’ for Marina and Harry, but their union was entirely political. I could tell from the way that they didn’t touch, didn’t even look at each other. That was why Marina didn’t seem to care when she heard that Harry had multiple children with prostitutes.

For all I knew, maybe she had her own real boyfriend or partner in private. And I felt strangely detached from it, an outsider looking in.

My thoughts were interrupted when I saw Marina’s father walking over. His approach was unhurried, his face wearing a benign smile, but his eyes were sharp, taking in everything around him.

There was something about him that demanded respect, an air of authority that was hard to ignore. As he approached me, his expression turned thoughtful.

“Miss Morgan,” he said, his voice gentle, “I just wanted to say that it’s a pleasure to see you here tonight. The last time I saw you, you were no more than this big.”

He held his hand up to the side of his hip, indicating my height. I was a child when he last saw me. I didn’t remember him in the slightest.

I cleared my throat with a smile, then lowered my voice. There was a pressing question on my mind. “I have to ask you something, because you seem...”

“Unlike the rest of them?” he asked, finishing my sentence for me. I nodded, and he sighed. “Yes. Well, you’re new here, but you’ll eventually understand how this whole world works. Not everyone willingly or purposefully joined the ‘dark side’. Sometimes, it just... happens.”

“And Marina and Harry?” I murmured, nodding my head toward them. They were standing over by the fireplace. Harry was having an animated conversation with Leonard and Logan.

Meanwhile, Marina stood nearby. Her posture gave an air of idleness and boredom, but her eyes... they were fixed on all three of them with so much focus. She was absorbing every word they spoke, and they weren’t even seemingly aware of it.

Marina’s father chuckled slightly. “Some things are best left unexplained,” he replied, his face clouding over with a mask of coldness. “They are prepared for their union. That’s all I’ll say tonight.”

I nodded slowly, realizing that it wouldn’t be so easy to get information out of these people. I hated to admit it, but it was incredibly intriguing.

Marina’s father, picking up his drink from the bar, shot me a warm smile and turned to join the others. But before he left, he stopped, and turned back to face me once more.

“Be careful, Ella,” he said. “Your mother and father adore you. If anything were to happen to you, they would be utterly devastated.”

## Chapter 275 Unlikely Attraction

Ella

Marina's father's words made me feel unexpectedly unsettled. I cocked my head, looking at him for a moment. Was that a threat, because I asked too many questions? Or a friendly warning out of concern?

"Pardon?" I asked, clenching my drink a little tighter in my hand. "Miss Morgan, I'm sure you understand what I mean," Marina's father said, his eyes fixed on mine. His voice was kind, but there was a knowing look in his eyes that unsettled me.

I gave him a reassuring smile, though I felt anything but reassured. "I appreciate your concern, but I assure you, I have things under control. There's no need for you to worry about me."

He continued to look at me for a moment longer, his eyes narrowing slightly. It was as though he could see right through me, understanding that I was lying.

Through my carefully constructed facade of a perfectly cool and calm young woman, there was a little girl screaming on the inside, begging to leave. And at that moment, I felt certain that he saw her. But all he did was nod slowly, a small smile playing on his lips.

"Very well, Ella," he said, his voice gentle, "Take care of yourself."

With that, he turned and walked away, leaving me alone at the bar. I felt a sudden urge to escape the room, to find a place where I could breathe and gather my thoughts.

Slipping into a private hallway, I leaned against the wall, letting out a deep breath. My heart was racing, and my mind was a whirl of conflicting emotions.

“I think you handled that quite well,” Ema said, her voice soothing. “You’re stronger than you think, Ella. You’re handling everything well.”

I closed my eyes, leaning into the support and strength Ema lent me. “I don’t know, Ema. This world... it’s so different from anything I’ve known. I feel like I’m out of my depth.”

“You’re doing just fine,” she reassured me, her presence comforting. “You’re strong, Ella, and you have what it takes to get through this night. Like we said, it’s not all that different from your dad’s awful business parties.”

I let out an involuntary, wry chuckle. “Yeah,” I replied. “Except people don’t typically have the threat of being murdered on their minds when they’re at my dad’s business parties.”

Despite my worries, though, Ema was right. I was strong, and I could handle this. I took another deep breath, feeling a little stronger, a little more in control.

“I need some fresh air,” I whispered to myself, making my way towards the balcony. As I stood on the balcony, the cool air enveloped me, feeling like a soothing balm against my heated skin. It was a gentle caress, filled with the fragrance of night-blooming flowers and a hint of the distant sea.

The crisp breeze rustled through the nearby trees, whispering secrets and creating a melody that seemed to harmonize with my restless soul. It had a purity to it, untouched by the chaos and pretense of the evening, and I took a deep breath, letting it fill my lungs and calm my anxious heart.

Below me, the city lights stretched out like a glittering sea, a myriad of colors dancing and reflecting off the buildings' glass facades. Skyscrapers reached for the heavens, their peaks lost in the soft embrace of low-hanging clouds, while streetlights created glowing veins that pulsed with life through the city's arteries.

The distant hum of traffic melded with the occasional laughter and music drifting from nearby homes, creating a symphony of urban life that was both exhilarating and soothing.

I leaned against the railing, my eyes wandering over the breathtaking view. The lights shimmered and shifted, creating patterns that told a story of life, love, ambition, and dreams. Each flicker seemed to represent a heartbeat, a moment captured in time, a connection to something greater. I felt a sense of unity with the city, a feeling that I was part of something vast and complex, yet intimately personal.

The horizon held a soft glow, where the city's illumination met the dark embrace of the night. Stars peeked through the veil of lights, twinkling like distant dreams, and the moon hung low, casting a silvery reflection that seemed to dance on the rooftops.

I closed my eyes for a moment, feeling the cool air on my face, listening to the sounds of the city, and allowing the sensations to wash over me. For a moment, if I really focused, I could imagine that I was back home in our penthouse. But only for a moment.

Because just then, I heard footsteps, and my reverie was broken. I turned to see Logan approaching. "Are you okay?" he asked, his voice filled with concern. I looked over at him, my eyes meeting his.

"My parents are bound to find out about our 'relationship' eventually," I admitted, my voice tinged with worry. "I wonder if they'll disown me for being with a Mafia guy. Even if it is all fake."

Logan sighed. "I know you're worried," he said. "But I promise I'll try not to let your parents know about the Mafia ties, at least until our cooperation ends. Or until you fall in love with me."

I frowned, punching Logan in the shoulder. He chuckled and leaned on the railing next to me.

"Besides," he continued, "if they do find out someday for whatever reason, I'll make them like me so much they'll hardly even notice the Mafia part."

I had to laugh. "You're full of yourself, Logan Barrett."

Logan grinned. "I know. It's one of my better traits." Logan's words offered me a semblance of reassurance. But I still wasn't so sure, and I let my doubts show.

"My father hates illegal dealings, Logan," I let out along with a sigh. "He has built his reputation on integrity and honesty. I can't help but wonder if this is even all worth it. He probably won't want to work with you if he finds out."

"Well, if that happens, I'll just have to deal with it, won't I?" Logan asked, looking out over the city. "And, no, before you ask: not in a 'sleeping with the fishes' sort of way. I'm aware of the consequences of my upbringing and business dealings. I'll be willing to face those consequences."

Logan's response took me by surprise. It was shockingly cool and mature, much unlike some of the other things that I had heard him utter before.

I looked over at Logan, and found that my eyes were drawn to the outline of his stitches through his shirt. He was leaning on the railing, looking out over the city, his sharp jawline reflecting the city lights. He had left his jacket somewhere inside, and now wore only his white button-down shirt, his sleeves rolled up slightly.

I hated to admit it, but... He was handsome. Incredibly handsome. Despite my concerns, I couldn't help but feel attracted to him in that moment. There was something about his strength, his confidence, his scars that drew me to him.

He looked up at me, and there was a slight smile playing on his lips. "What is it, princess?" he asked, studying my face. "Cat got your tongue?"

## Chapter 276 Midnight Kiss

Ella

Logan and I stood side by side on the balcony, the night air wrapping around us like a refreshing embrace. The cool breeze felt like a welcome reprieve after the stuffiness of the party, and the city lights sparkled below us like a bed of jewels.

“God, I hate these fancy dinners,” Logan groaned, loosening his tie. “I hate having to dress up in these tight suits, pretending to be someone I’m not.”

I looked over at him, a smile tugging at the corner of my mouth. “Well, I hate to break it to you, Logan, but you do look quite handsome in that suit.”

He turned to me, his eyes wide. “Handsome, eh?” I rolled my eyes, trying to suppress a grin.

“Don’t let it get to your head.”

“Too late.” He chuckled, his eyes twinkling with mischief. We fell into a comfortable silence, the sounds of the party fading into the background as we enjoyed the serenity of the night. The gentle rustle of leaves and distant hum of traffic created a soothing melody that allowed me to forget, if only for a moment, the chaos and tension of the evening.



“I’ve never been good at pretending,” Logan admitted, breaking the silence. His voice was soft, thoughtful. “I always hated putting on airs, trying to fit into a world that never felt like it was mine.”

I glanced at him, surprised by his candor, “You could have fooled me. You seem to fit in just fine.”

He shook his head. “It’s all an act, Ella. A game of masks and pretenses. You know what I mean, don’t you?” I looked away, a pang of understanding hitting me. “Yes,” I whispered. “I know exactly what you mean.”

The words hung in the air, heavy with truth and shared experience. Logan and I were both players in a game neither of us wanted to be a part of, bound by circumstances and choices that had brought us together.

Suddenly, Logan turned to me, his eyes intense, and before I could comprehend what was happening, he kissed me.

I froze, my mind reeling as his lips met mine. The world seemed to stop, and for a heartbeat, everything else ceased to exist. I could only feel the warmth of his lips, the taste of his kiss.

Then, reality crashed back, and I pulled away, my hand flying to my face to slap him. But he was quicker, catching my wrist with a firm grip, his eyes wide with shock. “Ella, I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have done that. But please, don’t pretend that you hate me so much.”

I yanked my hand away, my heart pounding, anger and confusion swirling inside me. “What was that, Logan? What are you playing at?”

He looked at me, his eyes filled with regret. “I don’t know,” he whispered. “I just... I felt something, and I acted on it. I’m sorry, Ella.”

I grimaced, turning away from him. His words echoed in my head, but all I could think about was the taste of his kiss, the way it had felt, the way it had stirred something inside me..

The night's tranquility was shattered by Logan's impulsive act. Without a word, I slipped away and found the restroom. At least in there, amongst the marble sinks and cool atmosphere, I could be alone with my tangle of thoughts and emotions.

As I entered the restroom, the cool elegance of the room stood in sharp contrast to the whirlwind of emotions roiling inside me. How had things come to this? Wrapped up in a fated mate romance with a Mafia member, I felt like I had stumbled into a story I never wanted to be a part of.

The gilded mirrors and sparkling chandeliers seemed to mock the turmoil I felt, reflecting a composed exterior that belied the chaos within.

I stepped up to the mirror, my eyes wide as took in my reflection. Was this really me? Ella, the sensible one, caught in a web of intrigue and passion with a man whose lifestyle went completely against my morals?

And yet, as much as I wanted to deny it, I couldn't ignore the pull I felt towards Logan. He was undeniably handsome, and there was a sweetness to him, a genuineness that I'd come to enjoy. Our conversations on the balcony had felt real and intimate, a connection that went beyond mere physical attraction.

But that kiss... that kiss had changed everything. It had awakened something inside me, a longing that I didn't know how to reconcile with the reality of our situation.

I leaned against the cool marble countertop, my mind spinning as I tried to make sense of it all. How had I ended up here, in this gilded cage, playing a role in a world that was so far removed from everything I believed in?

"You want to kiss him again," Ema's voice echoed in my mind. "I can tell."

Suddenly, I became aggravated-aggravated by the truth. "Shut up!" I growled, slapping my hand on the tiled counter in front of me.

My eyes widened as I felt Ema's presence fade.

"Ema, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to But she was gone. I was alone, all because of my temper, fueled by Logan and his unwarranted kiss. "Damn him," I murmured to myself, leaning on the sink. "Damn him to Hell."

I splashed some water on my face, the cool droplets serving as a momentary reprieve from the confusion that threatened to consume me. I had to be strong, to stay focused. I had to remember who I was and what I stood for. But was this what I really wanted? To push away my fated mate and my wolf, all at the same time?

With a deep breath, I straightened my shoulders and headed for the door, determined to face the remainder of the night with grace and poise- with or without my wolf.

But as I stepped into the corridor, I couldn't help but overhear the conversation taking place in the adjoining room. The voices were hushed, conspiratorial, and I froze, recognizing Marina's sneering tone.

"It just seems like such an unlikely pairing," she was saying, her voice dripping with disdain. "I mean, really, this new girl doesn't have the guts for illegal business. She's too soft, too weak."

My heart clenched, anger and humiliation. washing over me. How dare she judge me like that? How dare she reduce me to a stereotype, dismissing me without even knowing who I was?

I strained to hear more, my body tense as I listened to the voices weave a narrative that seemed to have a life of its own.

"I say we get rid of her," Harry chimed in, lowering his voice a little more. "She's going to be a problem. She's a lawyer, for goddess' sake, and she's too hoity-toity with her 'morals' and 'values'. If we're not careful, she'll try to expose all of us."

My eyes widened. Get rid of me...?

How much danger was I really in here?

Logan's father's voice cut through the noise, calm and authoritative. "Logan's father's voice. cut through the noise, calm and authoritative. "I'll decide that for myself when I eventually meet her parents," he said. "After all, she came from the Morgan family and connection with the Morgan is more profitable than you can ever imagine. For now, she's under Logan's protection. Besides, her boss is wrapped around my little finger. The little minx won't have a chance to 'expose' anything, so just hold your horses."

I stood there, frozen, the words echoing in my head as the reality of the situation sank in. I was in over my head, caught in a game I didn't understand, with rules that seemed to shift and change with every passing moment.

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## Chapter 277 The Bright Side

Logan

I couldn't shake the feeling of her lips against mine as I stood there on the balcony, the night air cool against my skin. The city lights twinkled below, but their beauty was lost on me. All I could think about was the kiss, the way Ella had reacted, the look of shock and confusion in her eyes.

It had happened so quickly, a moment of weakness, a lapse in judgment. One minute we were talking, laughing, enjoying the serenity of the night, and the next, I was kissing her, my wolf driving me forward, excitement and desire clouding my judgment.

But she hadn't wanted it. She had pulled away, her face pale, her eyes wide. "What was that, Logan? What are you playing at?" she had asked, her voice trembling.

"I don't know," I whispered, my heart pounding. "I just... I felt something, and I acted on it. I'm sorry, Ella."

I replayed the moment in my mind, trying to make sense of it, trying to understand what had driven me to act so impulsively. I knew she had been regretting our fake relationship, I had seen it in her eyes, in the way she had carried herself throughout the evening. But the kiss, that had been real, at least for me. And now, I had ruined everything.

“Logan,” my wolf spoke, interrupting my brooding. “You know she liked the kiss.” “I know,” I muttered, leaning against the railing. “But she’s hiding her true feelings. Why?”

“Isn’t it obvious?” My wolf’s voice was soft, almost sympathetic. “She’s afraid. Afraid of you, of your family, of your life.”

I closed my eyes, a bitter taste in my mouth. “And she despises me. She despises everything I stand for.” My wolf didn’t reply, and I felt a strange sense of loneliness, as if even he had abandoned me.

“When I first planned on meeting her, I thought it would be easy,” I said, my voice breaking. “An easy way to upstage Harry, to get good business connections. But now... now that I know she’s my fated mate, everything’s so much more complicated.”

“She’s more than just a spoiled princess, isn’t she?” my wolf said, his voice filled with understanding.

I nodded, feeling a strange mix of emotions. “She’s so much more. She has a strong heart, stout morals. I can’t help but feel both attracted to and repelled by her. I want her, but I know I can’t have her. Not really. Not when she looks at me the way she does, with fear and disgust.”

“But she’s also curious,” my wolf said, his voice gentle. “She’s drawn to you, just as you’re drawn to her. You have to give her a chance to see the real you, the man behind the mask.”

I looked out over the city, my heart aching with longing. “I want to,” I said softly. “I want to show her that I’m not just a monster, that I’m capable of love and kindness. But I’m afraid. Afraid that she’ll never be able to see past my family, past my life, past the darkness that surrounds me.”

“Then you’ll have to prove her wrong,” my wolf said, his voice filled with conviction. “You’ll have to show her that you’re more than your past,

more than your family. You'll have to show her that you're worthy of her love."

I nodded, a new sense of determination filling me. "I will," I said, my voice strong. "I'll do whatever it takes."

But as I walked away from the balcony, one thing lingered on my mind. Did I really want the heir to the Morgan family to love me, or did I just want to use her for my own gain?

The evening had drawn to a close, the final round of drinks signaling the end of yet another tedious and exhausting social affair. I was preparing to leave, my mind still reeling from the events of the night, when Harry approached me, a sly smile playing on his lips.

"Logan," he said, his voice dripping with insincerity, "I must say, your little girlfriend seems a bit out of her depth tonight. You think she's going to be a problem?"

I looked at him with confusion, my heart skipping a beat. "What the hell do you mean, Harry?" I snapped, my voice sharp. He snickered, his eyes glinting with amusement.

"Come on, Logan, you can't be that naive. I can tell she's not comfortable with the 'dark side' of our family business. You had better be careful, little brother. Otherwise, your pretty lawyer might only cause trouble for our entire family instead of bringing in any benefits. And we don't want that, do we?"

I felt a surge of anger, my fists clenching at my sides. He should know the strength of the Morgan family. Ella came to help me instead of causing any trouble. How dare he talk about Ella like that?

He would definitely say the same thing to our father to make him doubt Ella and her family.

“It’s none of your business, Harry,” I growled, my voice low and dangerous. “I have everything under control, so you can screw off. And I swear, if you try to pull anything, you’ll live to regret it.”

Harry simply shrugged, his expression one of mock concern. He was completely unperturbed by my threat.

“If you say so, Logan. But remember, it’s your funeral.” He patted my shoulder, his touch making my skin crawl, and then he sauntered off, leaving me standing there, my mind reeling.

I watched him go, my heart pounding in my chest, my thoughts a jumbled mess of anger and confusion. Did he really think Ella was a threat? Did he really believe that she could bring down our family?

I turned to look at Ella, my eyes finding hers across the room. She looked drawn and weary, the sparkle in her eyes dimmed by the events of the night.

I felt a pang of guilt for a moment as I began to realize that I had dragged her along to something like this when she already worked so hard, when she was already carrying the weight of her own responsibilities.

I made my way over to her, my mind still spinning, my heart heavy with the weight of the night’s revelations.

“Are you ready to go?” I asked, my voice as gentle as I could make it. She looked up at me, her eyes filled with a mixture of relief and exhaustion. “Yes, Logan. I think I’ve had enough excitement for one night.”

I smiled, trying to lighten the mood. “I don’t blame you. These parties can be a bit much.” She smiled back, but her smile didn’t reach her eyes. “You can say that again.”

We made our way to the door, the sounds of the party fading behind us, but the echoes of Harry’s words lingered in my mind. They were a nagging reminder of the delicate and dangerous game we were playing.



The drive back to the city was tense and awkward, the silence between us heavy with unspoken words. I glanced over at her, her face still pale, her eyes distant.

“I know you’re regretting this, Ella,” I said, breaking the silence. “But you have to look at the bright side. By doing this, you’re free to achieve your goals.”

She looked at me, her eyes searching mine. “It’s fine,” she said softly, “so long as no one gets hurt.”

I frowned, not entirely sure what she meant. “I’ll make sure of that,” I promised, my voice filled with determination.

She nodded, but she was quiet for the rest of the way home. As we pulled up to her apartment, I watched her walk inside, her graceful figure disappearing into the shadows.

I couldn’t help but check her out, my wolf appreciating the way she moved, the way she carried herself. She looked stunning in that white dress, and I wanted to kiss her again.

But even as I drove away, I couldn’t shake the feeling that I had made a grave mistake, that our fake relationship had become something more, something dangerous and unpredictable.

And as the city lights faded into the distance, I was left with the sinking feeling that I had set something in motion, something that could not be undone.