

## Chapter 298 Ella's Got A Gun

Ella

The bar was dimly lit, its ambiance intensified by the low hum of conversations, clinking glasses, and the soft strains of ambient music. Golden chandeliers, casting sporadic glows, adorned the room, contrasting the otherwise dark woodwork.

I felt the cool leather of the bar stool beneath me as I observed the people around, each of them engrossed in their own narratives, oblivious to mine.

It's amazing how, even in a room full of people, you can feel alone, disconnected. My fingers absentmindedly played with the stem of my wine glass as I lost myself in my thoughts, waiting for Logan to return.

"Is this seat taken?" The voice was suave, a touch too smooth. Turning slightly, I found myself looking up at a tall man, his finely tailored suit hinting at wealth and power. I gave a noncommittal shrug. "It's free."

He grinned, revealing perfectly aligned teeth. "You're Logan Barrett's, aren't you?" There was a knowing glint in his eyes, as though he believed he had already figured me out. I arched an eyebrow, choosing my words carefully. "I'm with Logan tonight."

The man chuckled. "With Logan'? So diplomatic of you." He leaned in closer, the scent of his expensive cologne mingling with the aroma of alcohol. "I've got more to offer than Barrett does. What do you say? Spend the night with me instead."

It was not the first time I had encountered such brazenness, and I doubted it would be the last. Maintaining my composure, I offered him a polite but detached smile. “Thank you, but I’m good here.”

He studied me for a moment, seemingly trying to find some sign of faltering in my stance. Eventually, he let out a breathy laugh and leaned back, defeat evident in his eyes.

“Escorts these days,” he mumbled under his breath, just loud enough for me to hear, “too loyal, even when there’s a hefty wad of cash on the line. Wasn’t like this in the old days.”

A fiery surge of indignation bubbled within me. Ema howled in my mind, urging me to snap back, to correct his misconception and assert my dignity. “Tell him! Tell him you’re not some paid companion!”

But I quelled the urge, calming the restless spirit within me..

“It’s safer this way,” I whispered back to her internally. “If he thinks I’m just an escort, he won’t dig deeper. If he knew I was Ella Morgan, daughter of Edrick Morgan, and the adopted kin of the Golden Wolf...”

I shuddered to think of the potential consequences. It was paramount that my real identity remained cloaked. The world I had walked into was fraught with dangers far worse than this man’s misplaced assumptions.

Ema seemed unsatisfied with my decision. “Seems a bit cowardly,” she remarked, a hint of disappointment tingeing her voice.

“Look, you know as well as I do that sometimes, it’s the small sacrifices that keep us safe,” I replied gently, not letting the sting of her words affect me.

The man, with a final, disdainful look, departed, leaving me once again alone with my thoughts. I took a sip of my drink, allowing the cool liquid to soothe my frayed nerves. Tonight had already proven to be more eventful than I’d expected, and the night was far from over.

The hum of conversation and the fading music formed a gentle symphony around me, but I felt like an outsider, an observer of a scene that was just out of my reach. The bar was bustling with activity, the lights glinting off crystal glasses and silver trays. Yet, as much as I wanted to drown myself in the distractions, my eyes kept drifting back to Logan.

He was speaking with two figures, one clearly older, the towering oak that was his father, and the other a younger man with the same dark hair and slightly less sharp jawline-Harry, Logan's brother.

Harry's smile, as he spoke to Logan, was eerily enigmatic, a facade of cheer that didn't quite reach his eyes. That smile sent chills down my spine.

And then there was Logan, standing tall and firm, though there was a tension in his jaw and a distant look in his eyes as if he were a world away. I could tell he was in his element, playing the part of the loyal Barrett son, but there was an undercurrent of unrest, a shadow that reminded me of our dance moments ago. A dance so charged, I still felt its electricity. tingling on my skin.

But it wasn't Harry, Logan, or even their father who held my gaze. It was Marina. She was wearing a tight red dress, much like the one she wore at the family dinner. Red certainly was her color-the color of blood.

I couldn't quite put my finger on why she made me so uneasy. Maybe it was the cloying sound of her voice. Maybe it was the way she sauntered wherever she walked, like a marionette that had been freed of its strings and was now free to roam on its own, having gained its own life.

Or maybe it was her eyes. Her narrow, knowing eyes. The way that her body and her voice created the impression of a dimwitted heiress, but her eyes knew everything. Saw everything. Saw straight through not only me, but everyone else around her.

And she was looking right at me with those eyes, and a smirk on her face. I quickly looked away, feeling my cheeks flush red. As I tried to busy myself with a fresh drink, Logan finally approached, his face more serious than I had seen all evening.

“Logan?” I asked, my voice laced with concern.

“You look like you just saw a ghost.” He took a deep breath. “My brother’s throwing an after-party on his yacht tonight. He wants us to join.”

I blinked in surprise. “Are you serious? After that... that display on the dance floor? I’m exhausted, Logan. I just want to go home.”

Logan’s gaze was steady, unwavering. “There are cabins on the yacht. We could spend the night.”

My eyebrows shot up. “Spend the night? On a boat? With him?” I gestured vaguely in Harry’s direction. “Do you really trust him enough for that after he tried to kill you?”

Logan hesitated for a split second before subtly lifting the hem of his pant leg, revealing the gleam of a pistol.

“I’ve got protection,” he whispered, lowering the fabric again. “And I’ll be bringing bodyguards.”

His determination was evident, but his reasoning still eluded me. “Why is this so important?” I asked.

He sighed. “It’s about perception, Ella. Refusing an invitation-especially one from Harry-would be seen as a slight, after our little... performance earlier. And with you by my side, from the light side no less, I’d be pegged as a traitor almost immediately.”

I made a face, annoyance flaring. “This is ridiculous, Logan.”

He chuckled, though there was little mirth in the sound. “Yes, it is ridiculous. But sometimes, with the Mafia’s games, ridiculous things are necessary.” He paused, running a hand through his hair. “Besides, the

yacht is luxurious. There's a pool, and it's expected to be crowded. It's unlikely things would go south."

My heart raced as I weighed the decision. The stakes were high, and while the idea of attending a party on a lavish yacht was tempting, the company was not.

Logan seemed to sense my apprehension. "We don't have to," he murmured, his gaze searching mine. "I just think it could be beneficial for us."

Biting my lip, I finally nodded. "Alright, we'll go. But..."

"But?" he prompted. I looked him straight in the eyes. "Give me a gun." Logan's eyes widened in surprise, momentarily taken aback. "You want a... gun?"

## Chapter 299 Target Price

Ella

The laughter from Logan was unexpected-a short burst, barely audible over the ambient hum of the bar's patrons. "You're very funny, Ella," he said, shaking his head. I sat up straighter, leveling Logan with an icy stare. "I'm dead serious, Logan."

His blue eyes bore into mine, trying to gauge if I was joking. "You? A gun?" "Yes," I replied, unwavering. "Growing up, my father made sure I took shooting lessons. For self-defense. Your bodyguard has an extra pistol, doesn't he?"

Logan's expression shifted from amusement to contemplation. "You truly think you can handle it?"

"I wouldn't be asking if I couldn't."

He sighed and ran a hand through his dark hair. "Alright. But you'll have to prove yourself first."

"Prove myself how?" I laughed, looking around. "Don't tell me your next big reveal of the night is for me to shoot the pimp that's been standing in the corner and giving you dirty glares since you beat up one of his customers."

Logan's face turned a slight shade of red, but only momentarily.

"No," he said. "Come on. I'll show you."

As the music and laughter reverberated through the bar, Logan took my hand and guided me away from the throng of people, making sure we went unnoticed.

On our way to the elevator, he made a quick detour to the bar, grabbing empty beer bottles that had been discarded by the party-goers. Their green glass glinted with remnants of liquid under the dim chandeliers.

“Are you planning to recycle those or something?” I asked.

He smirked. “You’ll see.”

We stepped into the elevator, where Logan pressed the round button that said “B”. As we took it down, the air was silent, save for the rhythmic dings of the elevator as we gradually descended each floor.

“So, Alpha Princess Ella took shooting lessons, huh?” Logan asked, glancing over at me. “Color me surprised.”

“Why so surprised?” I asked, “It was important for my safety. My father wouldn’t have it any other way.”

He scratched his chin thoughtfully. “Just didn’t think he’d be the type. He must be an interesting person.”

I smirked. “You have no idea.”

There was a slight pause before Logan, with a side glance, added, “Clearly, the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.”

I tilted my head, the hint of a smile forming. “What do you mean?” I asked. He hesitated, then finally said, “I find you... very interesting, Ella.”

Surprised by his candidness, I tried to keep my face neutral. “Do you?”

He looked a tad embarrassed. “I’m sorry, but when I first met you, I had some preconceived notions. Thought you’d be just another wealthy heiress, more interested in designer shoes than real-world skills.”

I frowned slightly, taken aback by his frankness.

“And now?” He smiled, genuine and warm. “Now, I’m glad to admit I was wrong. I’m pleased to get to know the real Ella, and not just the tabloid version.”

I found myself taken aback, not expecting such raw honesty. A thousand retorts rushed to my mind, but instead of voicing any, I chose silence. Ema whispered, “He’s being sweet.”

But getting close was not on my agenda. “You shouldn’t believe everything you read,” I finally said, my voice cool. Logan chuckled. “I’ve learnt that now.”

The elevator continued its descent, the seconds ticking away, making the atmosphere grow thicker. “I look forward to meeting your father one day,” Logan remarked, breaking the silence.

Inside, I recoiled. I knew that Logan meeting my father was one of the stipulations of our arrangement, but thinking about it still made me uncomfortable. The thought of my straight-laced father meeting Logan filled me with a sense of apprehension.

My wolf growled softly, echoing my sentiments. “We’ll see,” I replied noncommittally, leaving unsaid the words that swirled in my mind: I’m not sure if I ever want that to happen.

The elevator dinged, signaling our arrival to the basement. As the doors slid open, revealing the rustic confines beyond, I felt a mix of relief and uncertainty.

Upon reaching the basement, the scent of old cement and moist dirt surrounded us, offering a stark contrast to the contemporary atmosphere above.

Logan began arranging the bottles on an old wooden table. The room was spacious, the brick walls damp, revealing its age and history. From somewhere high up, an old rusty sign hung, swaying ever so slightly,



bearing the emblem of what might've once been the name of a shop. Picking up the pistol, Logan winked.

“Watch and learn.” With a swift move, he aimed and fired. Two bottles shattered instantly, their fragments scattering across the table. He grinned triumphantly, expecting applause or at least some semblance of admiration.

“Good shot,” I remarked, clapping sarcastically, “but now it’s my turn.” He handed over the gun, an amused expression on his face, no doubt expecting me to fumble. Little did he know.

I steadied my breath, recalling all the sessions, all the instructions, all the relentless drills I had undergone. Holding the pistol firmly, I took aim.

Within moments, I’d cleared the table of the bottles, each shot echoing in the vast space of the cellar. Logan’s amused expression shifted to one of mild surprise.

Without waiting for his response, I looked up, fixing my gaze on the old sign hanging from the ceiling. It seemed almost a world away, swaying in its lofty domain. But challenges had never deterred me. I aimed, accounting for the sway, the distance, and the angle..

With a deep breath, I squeezed the trigger..

The report of the gunshot was immediately followed by a loud clang as the bullet hit the sign dead center. The impact caused it to swing violently from its perch, catching the dim light in a flashing dance of rusty metal.

The room fell silent, save for the ringing in my ears, as I lowered the pistol. I glanced sideways at Logan, a smug smile playing on my lips.

“Too bad you don’t have a moving target. I’d have liked to prove myself further.”

Logan’s jaw dropped. “That was... impeccable.”

I handed the pistol back, smirking. “Told you, I had lessons.” He blinked a few times, still processing the scene. “Your father really didn’t leave any stone unturned in prepping you, did he?”

I shrugged. “In our world, you never know when you might need an edge. Not that I’ve ever needed to use it before... now.”

For a moment, we just stood there, amidst the remnants of shattered bottles and the reverberating silence that followed the gunshots. Then Logan chuckled, breaking the quiet. “I’ve never been shown up like that, especially not by a woman in heels.”

I glanced down at my stilettos. “Shoes shouldn’t be an excuse,” I winked. He grinned, a genuine, boyish grin. “You’re full of surprises, Ella Morgan.”

“And I hope to keep it that way,” I replied with a playful smirk. He approached one of his bodyguards, murmuring something in his ear. The man nodded, removing a sleek, black pistol from his side holster and handing it to Logan. “This is for you,” Logan said, offering it to me, “but only use it if it’s absolutely necessary.”

Taking the pistol, I tucked it discreetly into my purse. “Of course,” I responded. “I hope I won’t need to.”

Logan’s gaze lingered on me for a moment longer, something unreadable in his eyes. Then, he seemed to shake himself out of his thoughts.

“Let’s get back upstairs. We’ve got a yacht to catch.”

## Chapter 300 A Dance With Fate

Ella

The transition from the basement's cool, rustic ambiance to the vibrancy of the party was almost jarring. As Logan and I re-entered the ballroom, I was immediately struck by the whirl of colors, the soft strains of music, and the kaleidoscope of voices melding together in a symphony of laughter and chatter.

From the throng emerged a familiar face. Leonard Barrett, Logan's father, with his steel- gray hair slicked back, and a tall, commanding presence. His piercing blue eyes, which Logan. had apparently inherited, immediately locked onto mine.

I had met the man once before, and our encounter hadn't been the warmest. His reputation in the business world as a ruthless. mogul was well-earned, but in person, it was his charisma that was truly overpowering.

"Ah, Ella," Leonard greeted, the corner of his lips turning up slightly. "You look even more radiant than when I last saw you."

I offered a polite smile, trying to keep my composure in front of the daunting Mafia boss. "Thank you, Mr. Barrett. It's good to see you again."

“Please, call me Leonard,” he corrected with a slight twinkle in his eye. “May I have this dance?”

It wasn’t so much a question as it was a declaration. I shot Logan a brief, anxious glance, but he just raised an eyebrow, seemingly as curious as I was about his father’s intentions.

The orchestra transitioned into a slow, haunting waltz. Leonard held out his hand, and after a slight hesitation, I placed mine in it. He led me onto the dance floor, and soon we were twirling amidst a sea of dancing couples.

As the dance progressed, Leonard’s movements seemed to become even more calculated and precise. He led with an authority) that was hard to resist, highly reminiscent of Logan’s own capacity for leadership.

But more daunting than his steps was the weight of his gaze, constantly fixed on me, assessing and evaluating.

The music flowed around us and our feet moved in synchrony on the dance floor, but there was a palpable tension between Leonard and me. It was not just a dance-it was a power play, a game of wits. But it was clear Leonard had more cards up his sleeve.

“You surprised quite a few people tonight,” Leonard remarked, his gaze sharp, appraising. I met his eyes. “Oh?” I asked. “What do you mean, Leonard?”

“I’m referring to your... little escapade with the escort,” he continued, a hint of amusement coloring his voice. “Bravo, really. It was quite the show.”

I swallowed, recalling the earlier incident. The bruised face of the escort, the silent plea in her eyes, tears in the restroom. The way the man’s cruel grip on her arm released as soon as he saw Logan’s men advancing on him..

I had whispered the incident I had found in the bathroom to Logan, never expecting it to result in a violent confrontation.

“I just pointed out something concerning I saw to Logan,” I said. “I never expected anyone to get hurt.”

Leonard’s laugh was soft, but there was no warmth in it.”My dear Ella, in this dark world of ours, one should never act without assuming the worst consequences. Actions, however small, ripple farther than you think.”

“But that man...”

“Don’t get me wrong,” Leonard said, his cold smile widening. “He deserved every bit of what he got. He’s been a thorn in our side for a while. Thanks to your keen eyes, a valuable lesson was imparted on him tonight.”

His words were cold, almost indifferent to the fact that the man had been removed from the party on a stretcher.

I felt a twinge of regret, but I pushed it down. “I just did what I felt was right,” I said quietly. “No

one should treat another human that way.”

“Ah, the idealism of youth.” Leonard sighed, almost theatrically. “But be careful. Cross the wrong person with such righteousness, and the results...” He let the words hang in the air, his grip on my hand tightening ever so slightly, “...could be detrimental.”

The implied threat made my heart race, but I refused to let him see me falter. “What do you mean?”

Leonard looked deep into my eyes, his icy blue gaze almost hypnotic. “How is your little sister, Daisy? She must be, what, sixteen now?”

My blood ran cold. How did he know about Daisy? I had kept her as far away from this world as possible. The hint of a threat in his words was unmistakable.

“What a bastard,” Ema growled, perturbed by Leonard’s thinly veiled implication. “How dare he bring up Daisy.” “Easy, Ema,” I cooed, calming her. “I’m angry, too. But let’s think rationally about this. For now, at least.”

“Fine,” Ema seemed to bristle inside of me. “But if he ever touches a hair on her head, I’ll rip him to shreds.”

“And I’ll allow you.”

Leonard’s mentioning of my sister made my blood boil. But I wouldn’t give him the satisfaction of a response. Instead of answering, I held his gaze defiantly. I felt a low growl resonate deep within me, my wolf stirring.

“Daisy has no part in any of this,” I finally said, my voice so low it was almost a growl. He chuckled, twirling me around the dance floor gracefully, yet with a hint of possession. “Everything’s connected in our world, Ella. The sooner you understand that, the better off you will be.”

There was a pause. I felt my heart pounding like a war drum inside my chest, but somehow, I managed to stay calm.

“Speaking of your family,” Leonard said, “how are they? How’s your father? I’m hoping to meet him soon.”

My heart rate quickened. This was precisely what I had feared. “They’re well, thank you for asking. Currently, they’re overseas and won’t be back until next year.” It was a lie, of course. A lie, but a necessary one.

Leonard’s eyebrow quirked. “Funny, I could’ve sworn Edrick Morgan recently held a press conference in your home city.” Internally cursing, I quickly said, “Yes, they left shortly after that. A much-needed vacation.”

His eyes narrowed just slightly, but his grip remained firm as he spun me around. “I had hoped to approach them with certain business opportunities. Thought it might be beneficial for both our families.”

“I’m sure they’d be interested,” I replied cautiously, my mind racing. “I’ll let them know as soon as I speak with them.”

Leonard smirked, his eyes never leaving mine. “Do that. And perhaps, next year, we can all sit down and discuss things properly.”

The weight of the implications wasn’t lost on me. He was effectively putting both me and my family on notice. Unbeknownst to him, though, my contract with Logan would be up in one year. Our arrangement would be over before Leonard would ever have the chance to meet my father.

As the song neared its end, Leonard drew me closer, his voice dropping to a conspiratorial whisper. “I like you, Ella. You have fire. But remember, in this dance of ours, one misstep can be...costly.”

The music stopped, and as he released me, the warmth of his hands seemed to linger on my skin. “Thank you for the dance,” I managed to say, my voice betraying the slightest tremor. He gave me a curt nod. “Until next time, Ms. Morgan.”

I retreated, finding Logan who had been keenly watching from the sidelines. His expression was unreadable. “Quite the dance partner you found there,” I remarked, attempting to lighten the mood.

Logan grinned, though it didn’t quite reach his eyes. “Trust my father to never miss an opportunity.”

“Well,” I said, “if that was his version of a welcome dance, I’d hate to see a farewell.”

Logan laughed, wrapping an arm around my shoulders. “Let’s not find out. Come on, it’s time for the afterparty.”

## Chapter 301 Offshore Account

Ella

The cold, salty breeze that brushed against my face as we arrived at the docks was a stark, but welcoming, contrast to the stifling warmth of the party. The night was dark, the water shimmering faintly under the moonlight.

Moored ahead of us was an enormous yacht, its sprawling length dotted with sparkling lights, making it look like a floating palace.

“God, how big is this thing?” I whispered, taking in the sheer size of the vessel. “That’s my brother’s taste for you,” Logan murmured, his voice a mix of amusement and exasperation.

The yacht, named The Serpent’s Charm, was truly an epitome of luxury and excess. After a tour of the sprawling main deck, Logan led me towards the interior, with a promise of showing the opulence that lay within..

Opening a double door adorned with intricate golden patterns, we entered the grand lounge. It was vast, stretching wide with plush velvet couches and a massive crystal chandelier hanging above. On the far end was a bar, its shelves stocked with rows of the finest spirits and champagnes.

“And here, Ms. Morgan,” a voice interrupted, making us turn. It was a man in a crisp uniform, likely the captain. “Is where many of our esteemed



guests like to unwind. The lounge boasts a collection of spirits from over fifty countries.”

“Seems like your brother has quite the taste,” I remarked, taking in the grandeur of not only the yacht itself, but the staff. It was like being in an extremely expensive hotel. Logan shrugged. “Or perhaps too much money to burn.”

The captain, perhaps sensing the underlying tension, quickly changed the topic. “Shall we proceed to the dining area?”

We nodded, following him through a series of corridors, each adorned with paintings and sculptures from what looked like different eras. The dining room was another spectacle. A long table made of what looked like mahogany, surrounded by chairs upholstered in deep purple velvet, dominated the center. Above, another chandelier, this one even larger, glittered.

“Dinner parties here are quite the affair,” Logan mentioned, almost absent-mindedly.

“Or orgies of excess,” I retorted, only half-joking. Logan smirked. “You certainly have a way with words, Ella,” he said. Then, lowering his voice: “And you’re not wrong.”

As we moved on, we came across a state-of-the-art kitchen, larger than most restaurants, and then a cinema room with plush recliners and a screen that took up an entire wall.

“Wow, a private theater?” I exclaimed, genuinely impressed.

Logan’s brother, having caught up with us, chimed in with a sly grin. “Care for a private screening later? I’ve got all sorts of foreign films, if you catch my drift.”

“Let’s stick to the tour for now,” I replied, resisting the urge to roll my eyes. We continued our journey through the yacht, stopping briefly at a spa area complete with a sauna and a jacuzzi. Every step I took felt like

sinking further into a world of extravagance I'd only ever read about in novels.

"You seem surprised," Logan said quietly as we followed behind the tour group. "Not used to this sort of extravagance?"

"Not at all," I replied, shaking my head. "My father never cared for stuff like this. None of us did. We had a nice penthouse and a mountain estate, and sure, there were plenty of parties. and galas. But a yacht like this? He'd never dream of it."

As we rounded the tour, approaching what looked like private quarters, Marina joined us.

"This is where the magic happens," she said with a wink, gesturing to a grand bedroom with an adjoining balcony that offered a breathtaking view of the sea.

It was then that the weight of the yacht's luxury hit me. It wasn't just about flaunting wealth; it was a statement. A declaration of power and dominance. And Marina and Harry, by taking us on this tour, were showing us just how much better they were.

"Enjoying the tour?" Marina asked, her voice dripping with faux sweetness.

"Every bit of it," I replied, maintaining a polite facade. "Though, I have to ask: how does one even keep track of everything here?"

Marina laughed. "You get used to it. And with enough staff, everything runs like clockwork."

"I can only imagine," I murmured.

As we returned to the pool area, I couldn't shake off the overwhelming sensation of having glimpsed another world-a world of unchecked extravagance, where every desire was just an arm's length away.

I couldn't help but wonder how much blood money was behind every polished surface and every glinting trinket. But, holding onto my discretion, I kept my thoughts to myself..

Logan must have sensed my discomfort because he tightened his grip around my arm.

“Stick close,” he warned, guiding me to wrap my arm around his. I felt a surge of warmth run up my arm, and there was a flutter in my stomach that I couldn't entirely blame on the dizzying opulence around me.

Ema was practically purring inside my head. “I like this,” she hummed, enjoying our proximity to Logan.

“I noticed,” I quipped back mentally. Logan's brother, a tall figure with dark hair and a smirk to rival Loga's, led the guests toward the pool area. The pool, lit from below, cast a serene glow on the guests as they began shedding layers and diving in.

Glancing down at my elegant but non-aquatic outfit, I sighed.

“I didn't bring a swimsuit.”

Logan's brother turned to face me, his smirk widening. “You can always skinny dip,” he suggested, his tone dripping with mischief. Heat rushed to my face. “I think I'll pass on swimming tonight,” I replied, giving him a pointed look.

Before the awkwardness could stretch further, Marina, with her cascade of golden hair and striking green eyes, approached us.

“Ella,” she cooed, “I have a spare bikini you can borrow. Come with me.”

I hesitated, looking over at Logan, uncertain. Using our Mindlink, a soft, reassuring voice echoed in my head. “It'll be okay. Just keep your gun close.”

Trusting him, I nodded and followed Marina through a maze of corridors, each more opulent than the last. She led me to her private quarters. The

room was nothing short of a royal suite, decked in satin and silks with gold accents.

She handed me a piece of fabric that she referred to as a bikini. Skimpy was an understatement; it barely qualified as cloth. Holding it in my hand, I felt like a prude, but there was no way I was parading around in this.

“I’ll give you some privacy,” Marina said with a wink, closing the door behind her.

Grumbling to myself, I reluctantly changed into the scanty swimsuit. It barely covered... well, anything, with the top leaving almost everything on display and the bottom being hardly more than a thong.

But, as Logan said, this was about appearances. We had to play this game for a year, and his family clearly already had their reservations about me.

“You can just wear it and keep a towel on,” Ema said, equally as perturbed by the bundle of strings that Marina called a ‘swimsuit’.

“Good idea,” I said. Grabbing an embroidered towel off the rack, I tightly wrapped it around my body, hoping it would provide some semblance of decency.

Taking a deep breath, I stepped out. To my surprise, Marina was there, waiting. And in her hand, she held my gun, a wicked smirk playing on her lips.

“I believe this is yours,” she purred, twirling it around her finger.

## Chapter 302 Baring it All

Ella

The luxuriousness of the suite was quickly overshadowed by the cold weight of Marina's smirk, the shine of my pistol in her hands contrasting sharply with the opulent interior.

My heart leaped into my throat. In my haste, I had left my purse on the bed, so consumed by the idea of wearing the ridiculous bikini.

"Give that back, Marina," I hissed, too tense to even move. Marina smirked. "Well, well," she said, letting the pistol dangle dangerously with her finger in the trigger guard. "Color me surprised. Ella Morgan keeps a gun in her purse. It's like.... finding a snake in a flower patch."

I felt my throat constrict. Ema urged me to lunge for the gun, but I knew that it was dangerous.

"Just... Put it back," I said. "Please."

"I have to know, though," she said. "Why do you have a pistol in your purse, Ella?" Marina asked, her voice dripping with faux sweetness, as she fingered the gun. Drawing on every ounce of calm I could muster, I replied, "It's just for safety. I always keep one on me."

Her smirk widened. "Is that so? What does the billionaire's spoiled daughter have to fear? Made some enemies in this city, did you?"

“It’s... just a precaution,” I answered curtly. “This city isn’t exactly known for being safe. You know that as well as I do.”

She raised an eyebrow, contemplating whether to push further or drop the subject. “Should I tell Harry about this little secret of yours, I wonder?”

Every fiber of my being went on high alert. “There’s no need,” I began, drawing on my experience as a lawyer to help me argue my way out of this. “In fact, it might be more beneficial to keep this between us. My father always taught me to be prepared, and considering the city’s crime rates, a little precaution doesn’t hurt.”

She seemed to ponder over my words for a moment, mulling them over in her mind. “And who would trust a guest with a concealed weapon at such an event?” she countered, smirking once again.

“Who would trust the city’s underbelly, even aboard such a yacht? Besides...” I paused, putting forward my ace. “...It might also make one wonder why a guest felt the need for such precautions, especially with security here supposedly being so tight.”

A flicker of uncertainty crossed Marina’s eyes, but it was quickly replaced by that familiar smirk of hers.

“Very well,” she conceded, placing the gun back into my purse. “But know this, Ella. You’re not the only one with a weapon here.”

“I never assumed I was,” I replied, trying to keep my voice steady. She handed me my purse with a final warning look. “Just remember, I’m watching. Always.”

There was something in the heiress’ voice then, as though it had taken on a different tone. When it was just the two of us, the cloying and ladylike tone in her voice was much different... darker. Deeper.

“You know,” she said, brushing her hands together as though wiping dust away from her palms after touching my purse, “you and Logan don’t make the worst couple ever. I’m actually somewhat surprised.”

“Are you?” I cocked my head, genuinely surprised by this revelation. Marina nodded. “If I didn’t know better, I’d say you’re actually kind of sweet together.”

With that, before I could answer, Marina flicked a lock of golden hair over her shoulder and sauntered out of the room. I stood there for a few moments, taken aback.

“Was she... complimenting you?” Ema asked, sounding just as shocked as I felt. “I don’t know what that was,” I replied, resisting the urge to laugh out loud. “But whatever it was, I’m glad it’s over.”

As I stood there, I couldn’t help but think about Marina’s words.

‘If I didn’t know better,’ she had said. What did that mean, exactly? That she was onto us? It came as no surprise that the heiress watched everything like a hawk behind the facade of airheadedness, but it still left me feeling unsettled.

And even as I stood in the middle of her large and opulent bedroom, completely alone, I swore I felt those green eyes on me.

I took a moment to compose myself before deciding to rejoin the party. After a painstaking journey through the maze of the enormous yacht, and eventually needing to ask one of the staff to guide me back to the pool, I finally made it outside.

The cool night air hit my face as I stepped out onto the deck. The sounds of laughter, loud music, and splashing filled the air, admittedly helping to quiet the turmoil in my head.

Logan approached, his brow furrowed with concern as he handed me a champagne glass. I took it gratefully, drinking half of it in one gulp. All of the alcohol from that night was beginning to make me feel tipsy, but I needed it to stand being around these people.

“Everything go alright with Marina?” he asked. I hesitated for a moment, then gave him a small smile. “It was fine,” I lied.

He seemed not to believe me, but he said nothing. Instead, his gaze dropped to the towel I had wrapped tightly around myself. “Why are you covering up?” he questioned, a teasing glint in his eyes. I pulled the towel a bit tighter around me. “No reason,” I murmured. “Just more comfortable like this.”

Logan chuckled, his fingers reaching for the towel. “Come on,” he said. “I have yet to see you in a bikini. Show me.”

I jerked away, shooting him a glare. At the same time, I felt my fangs begin to show. “Don’t touch me,” I growled. “Geez,” Logan said, holding his hands up in surrender. “I was just curious to see the bathing suit.”

Blushing, I took another swig of champagne and retracted my fangs. “Sorry,” I murmured. “It’s just... I feel naked in this thing. Of course Marina picked out the skimpiest bikini known to man.”

Logan laughed softly, gesturing around at the party-goers. “Half of the people here are either half-naked or skinny dipping. And most are too intoxicated to care about much else. Trust me, no one is gonna be gawking at you. And if they do, I’ll handle it.”

As Logan spoke, I followed his gestures. He was right; there were already a myriad of naked people in the pool, mostly women with their breasts out, hooting and hollering over the music. One woman was brazenly giving a strip tease on the edge of the pool, grinning as others crowded around her and goaded her on.

On the other side of the pool, by the lounge chairs, a group of people were passing around a rolled up dollar bill and a plate with white powder on it, and the scent of smoke-both cigarettes and something else-filled the air.

And not a single person was looking at me. Not even Marina, who was too busy leaning on the railing and looking out over the ocean with a champagne flute in her slender hand to care.



I took a deep breath, clutching the fabric of the towel. “Alright,” I murmured, hesitantly letting it drop to the floor.

As the material pooled at my feet, I felt more exposed than ever, the soft lights of the yacht illuminating the barely-there bikini. I heard Logan’s sharp intake of breath, his eyes widening as they swept over me.