

The Alpha CEO's Unloved Wife Chapter 21

The Pack Run

Baron and Angelique were late returning, and there was barely time between their arrival and leaving for them to change into sweats before the limousine was out front waiting to take them to the Corbyn pack land.

Angelique was almost frenetic with energy, her eyes flashing with her wolf. "A run is exactly what I need tonight," she wrapped her fingers into the sweat-shirt that Baron wore, and rubbed her cheek against him, as if seeking to scent mark him before the run. "A run and a hard, fast, dirty f-k," she purred.

Jane pressed her side against the door and wondered if there would ever be a point where she would wish often enough and fervently enough for invisibility that the universe would grant it to her.

"Angelique," Baron jerked his head away from her. "Enough."

Angelique threw herself back against the seat, crossing her arms over her chest, petulant. "After today, Baron," she said through her teeth. "I would think you would be a little more appreciative."

"I am appreciative," he said. "But you are pushing boundaries that I am unwilling to cross."

"I am the wounded party here," she hissed. "I am the one who..."

"Enough" his voice was curt. "Enough. Let's just enjoy the run."

The interior of the limousine settled into silence and Jane watched their reflections in the tinted window. Angelique was brightest, her shining golden hair and pink velour tracksuit showing clearly in the glass. The lights picked across the planes of Baron's face dramatically, highlighting the

perfection

of his bone structure, his high cheek bones hollowing his cheeks, and his strong jaw just beginning to show stubble. The first time she had seen Baron had been at a run just two months before. As an omega and younger daughter, she had not been included in the social functions of the pack, and the elite of the city, and so she had never encountered him, her only knowledge of him from snippets of conversation

overheard between her father and sister, and the gossip that circulated through the packs during the runs.

Baron's grandmother had taken her young family to her parent's pack after the loss of her mate, and Baron's father and Baron had been raised on the other side of the country as a result. When Baron had returned, he had already been a successful businessman with considerable wealth behind him, and in the two years since he had been back, he had continued to build that wealth and through it obtain a social position in the city's elite and the various packs.

That first run, she had seen him the moment he had stepped out of his car, and every instinct within her had lit up: mate. He had met her eyes several times during the mingling before the run, and she had thought that he had felt it too, that immediate connection, that fated pairing between mates.

After the run, he had somehow been at her side as they had waited for the cars to return, and he had asked her name, quietly, with the conversations of those around them hiding that they spoke together at all. The next day, her father had told her that she would be marrying Baron at the next full moon, as was traditional, and she had been thrilled, believing that she had somehow managed to find her true mate, and would leave her unhappy family home for a happy marriage.

She had not seen him again until the wedding – he had not called, made no effort to meet her, and small doubts had begun to edge in. However, it wasn't until the moment that she had been waiting for her cue to enter the ceremony and she had heard Alice remark to one of the other bridesmaids that it could have been her wedding as Baron had asked for her first, and that Jane had been offered instead, like a consolation prize, that the doubts had begun to really take hold.

The weight of that comment had sat heavily on Jane's heart, but she had told herself that she had felt that connection and that Baron had shared it too, and that had kept her going throughout the day, until he had come drunk to her bed, and, in the morning, Angelique had been at the breakfast table. Now, she thought watching him in the reflection, here they were at their first run as husband and wife, with his mistress openly included and accepted, and she knew that Alice had been right. Jane had been a fool to think that someone like Baron would see and want someone like Jane, that fate would bring two such opposites together. Baron had wanted into the Corbyn pack, and Jane had simply been the means by which to do so. They were admitted through the

gates and the limousine joined the slow crawl of cars up to the meeting ground before the chauffeurs circled away again. Jane wondered what the human chauffeurs thought of this large gathering of people in the center of a private nature reserve at night.

Baron kept Jane's hand on his arm, as if it were a formal gathering rather than just a run, preventing her from slipping to edges as she normally would. "I have not forgotten that you owe me an explanation, Jane," he said under his breath as he made his way to where her family were gathered. Jane flicked her eyes up to him and away, pain and anger clawing its way through her chest. "Why does it even matter?"

"What do you mean by that?" He frowned.

"Baron," Matthew Corbyn greeted him.

"We will talk soon," Baron muttered under his breath to Jane before smiling widely and stepping towards Matthew, releasing Jane in order to shake hands. Jane took the opportunity to let the pack swallow her, easing her way back to the edges where she could slip into the shadows of the trees.

She slipped off her shoes and tucked them into the roots of the tree. There had been many pack runs during her life when she had shifted back after to find that her clothing and shoes had gone missing, and so she had learned to undress in secret, hiding her clothing.

"Have you got the picture?" A beta only a year or two her senior asked his friend as they stopped on the opposite side of her tree. "I didn't get it during the first round. I'm told it's really something."

"Here," his friend pulled his phone out of his shoe. They were both barefoot, beginning to strip ready for the shift to wolf, and phones and wallets were being stuffed into the toes of shoes for safe keeping. He flicked through, and Jane saw herself on the screen, bare, the flash of the camera picking up every detail.

"Oh god," the first guy moaned. "Send it to me. F-K, that's f-king hot."

"Isn't it just. You know what they say about omegas though" the second replied.

"Do you think it's true?"

"From that photo, yeah, don't you? Western would never say though, lucky bastard," the second turned off his phone and returned it to his shoe.

“And there’s not exactly a lot of them around, so we’re not likely to ever know.”

“They say she almost caused a mob when she went on heat. How come we didn’t know about omegas until she’s already f—king married to Western? I always thought they were, you know, like cubs, mentally deficit or something.”

“I didn’t even know she was an omega, I just thought she was being ostracized for some reason,” the other shrugged as he stripped to his skin. The rest of their conversation was carried on in wolf-form as they shifted, sitting next to the neat piles of their clothing, waiting for the signal that the pack was moving into the forest.

Jane pressed her back up against the tree, her heart racing in her chest. The signal was given, and there were barks and howls, the ground shaking under the mass of foot falls as the pack raced across the clearing and into the trees on the opposite side to Jane’s position.

She stripped off her clothing, pushing them into a knot in the tree, and shifted into her wolf, stretching and shaking out her silvery–brown coat. The air was heavy with the scent of other wolves, too thick for her to be able to tell if any came to close, and so, as she always did, she picked her way carefully through the forest, following the shadows, until she was sure that she had put enough distance between her and them in order to run.

She flew through the undergrowth, lost in the wildness of her own nature, the sound of her own footfalls, the pull of her breath, the feel of the air passing through her coat, the scents of the forest, and the secrets of the night.

It was this feeling that she tried to capture in her human form when she ran, the feeling of oneness with the world around her, the sense of place and belonging, of being complete and whole in herself.

She slowed as she reached her special place, going down on her belly to wriggle through the blackberries that guarded it, before shifting back to human form. She carefully picked her way through the rocks until she could wade into the water, the chill of it against her skin stealing her breath as she acclimated and the bank sucking at her toes. She dove under striking out into the center of the pond, turning over under the water in order to see the perfect, bright circle of the moon pulled into distortion by the ripples. She surfaced, and felt hands catch her, pulling her up against a hard body, skin warm against hers.

“Did you think I wouldn’t notice you sneak away?” Baron wondered.