

The Alpha CEO's Unloved Wife Chapter 8

The Ring

The morning sun woke her, her eyelashes sticking together and resisting her eyes opening. Her vision was initially blurry, catching the sunlight at points until she blinked, and moisture freed her vision.

Baron lay over her, his breath steady and regular over her skin, his hand resting on one breast, his head on her shoulder. His dark curls brushed against her jaw, and his big body sprawled, his tanned skin stark against her white.

He was still within her, even in his sleep, and that, alone, she thought, had given her rest, as if her body's slumber relied on that tie between them, that joining, that link.

For how little that meant, she thought, her heart a raw pain in her chest.

His phone ringing was what had woken her, and he grunted, his features scowling in reaction to its jangle. The insistence of its tones had him groaning and lifting from her, sitting up with the heavy posture of one exhausted, and pulling the phone off the dresser with clumsy fingertips.

"Yes?" He growled into it as he sagged to lie at her side. "Mmm," he reached up and released the knot that bound her wrists. "No that is not acceptable. Tell him half that, or I will take it from him, and he will be pleading for me to pay one fourth. Yes. I am not joking. Okay. Bye." He released the phone so that it fell heavily onto the pillows between him and leaned across her to release her other wrist.

As she sat up to untie her ankles, he lay on his back, his hands cushioning his head, folded behind his skull. "I shall have to leave you for a while," he said. "This deal is... Slippery. I don't trust that things will go the way I want without me there to supervise. I will be back as quickly as I can."

She paused in the bathroom door. "Will you be..." She rested her forehead against the door frame. "Be calling in someone else to take care of things in your absence."

Would he be calling in an alpha or beta who specialised in satisfying an omega during heat, she was asking. They were the reason that she'd had a contraceptive implant put in. The runt, the washed out, pathetic, weak reject of the litter as she was, she had not expected that she would have a mate for her first estrus, and as such, had the implant put in, and a standing request with a well-known agency, so that an alpha, or, if they were all booked, at least a beta, would be available to her should she need him.

"I have," she swallowed hard, for it rankled. "A booking."

"You do?" His surprise was evident. "Isn't that interesting?" He murmured. "No," he decided. "An hour, two at most, which I can do from my office here."

She nodded, not sure if she was relieved or disappointed. To continue this estrus with him, would cross a boundary into intimacy, she knew. Already they toed that line, nuzzled over its line every time that they f-ked. If he handed her off to a professional, they would do what was needed, and no more, no emotional attachment, no complications.

It would be better, in a way, she thought, as tears spilled again, their taste bitter on her lips. It would be better to have someone paid to pleasure her finish the estrus, than this man, who hated her for all that she could not be, and yet treated her body so perfectly that his touch had her purring for more. He was an addiction, she thought, that she knew was bad for her, but that felt so good, that she was utterly unable to stop inhaling it, despite knowing that it would destroy her.

Baron Western would destroy her.

He was the end of the line for a railway carriage, and she was a passenger upon it, helpless to stop the collision, no matter how clearly that she saw its inevitability.

"Two hours," he repeated, and she was not sure if he said it for her or him. "In this house, Jane."

She wasn't sure what he wanted her to say and stepped into the bathroom, closing the door between them.

She showered, taking her time knowing that he would not be there when she opened the door. Did he really have a meeting, she wondered, or did he go to spend the time with Angelique?

She collapsed to her knees in the shower, her arms wrapped around her middle, and sobbed out her misery. As she lay on the tiles, her head cushioned on her crossed arms, watching the water gather and pool beneath her breasts, she wondered what the heroine in a book or movie would do in her position.

Nothing realistic, she thought.

Her misery might feel grand and world changing to herself, but it was unlikely to have made any difference to Baron's world, to his life. It wasn't even a blip, not even a moment worth pausing over. She could lay on the tiles until he returned from his business meeting, and he would think nothing of it.

And so, she stood and turned off the water, and wrapped the towel around herself.

He was not in the bedroom when she left the bathroom, and his absence felt significant. She sat on the end of the bed and stared at her own toes, wondering what she intended to do. Just under a month ago, she had been an eager bride, excited to start her new life, certain that the sadness and unworthiness of her past was just that... the past.

She had thought that she had found her true mate, the one person who would see value in her even if no one else ever did. The one person who would see her for who she was. The fantasies, she thought, of someone who had always held no value and no power.

She was not sure what it was between her and Baron, but she would not tell herself that she held value to him beyond the fact that she was a Corbyn.

At least she was no longer tied to the bed, she told herself, as she dressed. The heat had eased, a subtle warmth rather than a scalding demand. She checked her phone. There were twelve missed calls from Alice and her father. She began to playback the messages and groaned as they started from when she went on heat, asking for confirmation, through to more harshly worded demands for updates.

She recorded a voice message. "Yes, I entered estrus on Saturday. Almost recovered now, thank you. All is well. Thanks." And sent that in reply with a grimace

She pulled on the robe and opened the door into the hall, tiptoeing down the stairs and across the grand hall to the front parlour which opened onto the gardens. She followed the walkway around the house, admiring the roses that were blooming.

"Were you successful?" Baron asked and Jane jumped, looking around. She realised that her walk had brought her under his office window, which was open to catch the breeze.

"Of course, I was successful," Angelique purred. "I am not incompetent."

"Good, then get to work on the code. We have a function there at the end of the week which will give you the opportunity to see if you can unlock -" He was uninterrupted by a phone call. "I have to take this," he said to her.

*Alright, darling," there was a moment. "I look forward to when you come to my bed again. When will that be?"

"Hmm. Jane's heat should finish tonight, so tomorrow," he said. "Hello?" Jane pressed the heel of her hand against her chest, seeking to restrain the pain. Straight from her bed and into Angelique's she thought woefully. "Ah, Matthew, it's good to hear from you," Baron's voice was warm.

Her father, Jane noted, and lingered, plucking the petals off a rose that was past its peak bloom idly.

“Yes, Saturday night’s event went well, the club is a success... Well, yes,” Baron’s voice was rueful. “Though I don’t see Jane’s going on heat as a downturn of events,” he chuckled. “The timing, admittedly, could have been better.”

There was a pause and Baron laughed, openly and warmly. “Yes, I hope so too,” he said. “No... It is easing however, and business is business, so I had to leave her in order to close a deal... Yes, we will be there. I am sure that she will enjoy seeing you and her sister... Great. See you then.”

Almost immediately after his disconnected, the phone rang again, and he sighed heavily. “Hello? Ah, great. Did you find it?... I will look at them... No... No... No... These are not my ring. But thank you... Yes, maybe next time.”

Jane walked on before she was caught eavesdropping, but she wondered as she did so what Angelique was successful in getting, what they planned to unlock, and what ring Baron was searching for...