

# Lita's Love For The Alpha Chapter 1

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By / September 16, 2024

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### This is a Terrible Idea

“What the hell am I doing?”

Lita whispered those words to the otherwise empty car, “This is crazy.” Shaking her head, Lita dragged her hands down over her mouth, speaking through her fingers. “I’m going to get myself killed.”

Lita found herself in the middle of an industrial park, long since abandoned, or at least left to exist in its miserable state. From her car windshield she could see ruined buildings and crumbled foundations littering the back lots. Her skin grew tight as she stared at the nearest dilapidated building and considered going inside. As if there weren’t enough horror movies written with this kind of opening. And better still, this place was at least thirty minutes off the main road and Lita had less than an hour before sunset.

Taking a deep breath, she glanced down at the photo in her hand: a group of people happily posing in front of the same building she was looking at now. Only in the picture, Lita couldn’t see the larger backdrop of empty office buildings and stripped asphalt. She couldn’t even see the front door behind the bodies or the boarded windows. Seeing that might have convinced her to abandon this stupid idea, and now it was too late. She’d already come too far, risked too much. Lita stared at the picture, running her fingers over the crease lines as if it would repair the fraying image.

She sighed, folding the picture once more and tucking it away in her car visor for safekeeping. Lita ran her thumb up her inner wrist, resting on the tattoo that said you think you have forever, but you don’t. She could still hear his voice saying those words to her. And she really needed that courage now.

Pulling her sleeve back down, Lita checked herself in the mirror and got out of the car. She’d pulled her black hair up into a messy bun, tired of fiddling with the waist-length style, and her oversized outfit—sweatpants and a long-sleeved band shirt—had to be three sizes too big on her now. They hadn’t been grossly oversized when she bought them a few years earlier, but even her bulky clothes did nothing to hide her thinness. One look at her neck, or even her wrists, and anyone could see it.

There was nothing to do about the dark circles under her eyes or her pale skin, either. Sure, some concealer would have helped, but there hadn’t been time and Lita didn’t

think anyone inside would appreciate her in makeup. Lita looked as bad as she felt, but she had also looked worse before, so this would have to be good enough. She wasn't likely to impress anyone inside, makeup or not, so authentic would have to suffice.

Trucking across the parking lot, Lita eyed the vehicles—a mix of decent cars and beaters plus a handful of motorcycles that had seen better days. Certainly not the type of luxury her parents would expect for her. Good, she thought. She would like the place one smidge more because of it. Tugging the lightly rusted metal door open with a loud creak, Lita made peace with the fact that money might be her only bargaining chip here and she would use it.

Once inside, she looked around the gym's open floor plan in anticipation. She didn't know what she had imagined, but it wasn't this. From the moment she walked into the gym, she should have felt better, or at least felt like her life was changing for the better. But the gym was simply a gym and nothing about it magically fixed her. Sure, it was a nicer place than she thought it would be, but that wasn't saying much.

Still, there was something to be said for the aesthetic. It was the size of a warehouse, more than large enough to hold several training areas that were spaced evenly. What looked to be a standard boxing ring and a ring with a metal cage around it were against the back wall. She'd never seen boxing equipment up close, but she supposed that's how it looked. Then there was an area with nothing but thick mats alongside another section with hanging bags and bags with floor bases. She'd seen training bags like that from her online research. Closest to the front door, Lita eyed the double section of cardio machines and weights. Despite the rough exterior, everything seemed on the newer side and well taken care of. The room smelled like bleach and lemons, with bright fluorescent lights that revealed how clean everything looked. Even the concrete floor looked spotless aside from scratched grooves that looked like someone had dragged furniture across it.

Looking up, she could see some rust spots and drip lines on the exposed pipes. Really, it seemed like the building itself was the issue. If she had to wager a guess, Lita figured the gym's owner must have been renovating little by little. Even though there were imperfections, Lita felt like the gym had a communal atmosphere she appreciated.

The people were a different story. Heavily muscled men walked back and forth between the sections, looking every ounce as imposing as she thought they'd be. Furrow brows and pinched lips followed her gaze, and stiff but curious expressions were all that greeted her. None of it made her feel exactly welcome. Could she blame them? She silently compared herself to all the fit men around the gym and immediately understood why they eyed her suspiciously. It wasn't the fact that she was a woman, because she could see a few female outlines near the back of the room. No, it was because she didn't look like she'd ever seen the inside of a gym. Truthfully, she hadn't, and it made her feel sorely out of place.

This was a terrible idea, she thought again, silently kicking herself. How was she supposed to get them to agree to let her train here when she looked like the human equivalent of a newborn kitten?

“You lost girl?” A burly man with a close crew cut suddenly asked, coming out of nowhere. He was wearing a cut-off sweatshirt that stopped at the bottom of his pecs and a pair of nylon training pants. Both items had the name of the gym on them—which was honestly beside the point. There was entirely too much male abdomen visible, and the muscles weren’t hiding. Lita swallowed, trying to keep her eyes on his face. Maybe he was an employee, but he could have been the owner, too. The man walked toward her from a back room, patting his tanned forehead with a towel. The action only raised his half-shirt higher, and Lita bit her tongue.

She studied his washed-out blue eyes, dark brows that hooded his wider nose and tapered nostrils. She couldn’t figure out if the subtle tan was a natural complexion or a courtesy of the sun. Either way, Lita made a mental note of his features, planning to compare him to the photo in the car once she got back. She didn’t think she’d ever seen someone with so much muscle. Broad and bulky, he certainly stood out in a room.

He wasn’t unattractive, anyone could see that, but as he strode toward her, she found she didn’t like the aura he put off. Something oppressive hung in the air between them. It was like he wanted to dominate her through physical menace, and her body rebelled. When he came within a few steps, Lita realized he was probably four or five inches taller than her, and the way he pressed his shoulders slightly apart made him seem even larger. A wall of a man. She couldn’t help but take an automatic step back as he snatched those last few inches of space between them.

“I said... are you lost, girl?” he asked again, with a hint of something happening to his mouth. Not exactly a smile, but not a grimace, either. That cocky face and the way he wiped at the back of his neck with the towel had her muscles twitching unexpectedly. Was he teasing her or dismissing her? First, her name wasn’t girl, but it didn’t seem like he cared, and second, how was she supposed to answer his question? Why did he assume she was lost? There was no way in hell anyone would accidentally end up at a gym buried in the back of a heavily forested area. She had to know exactly what was back here before she even tried. So, it wasn’t so much a question, as an observation of how much she didn’t belong here.

How Lita responded to the dismissal would probably dictate how far this interaction got her and she needed this to go well. She didn’t like being talked down to, but she was used to swallowing her pride in favor of peace, especially with men like this. So, she did just that, and flashed a gentle smile.

“Is this Alpha’s?” Lita asked, her voice coming out smaller than she’d intended, and she immediately cleared her throat. Appearing too mentally weak wouldn’t help her here when her body already broadcast how physically weak she was.

“Obviously,” he pointed to the logo on his shirt, “What’s it to you? Your boyfriend here?”

“What? No? No. I just want to speak to the owner,” Lita snapped back, grateful her voice had gained some bite.

“You sound unsure about the whereabouts of your boyfriend, girl. What’d Alpha do this time? Forget to call you back? It’s like that sometimes. Doesn’t mean you should show up at his gym. You’re supposed to take that loss in private, sweetheart,” the man sneered, crossing his arms over his chest. “Although, you’re a little pale and skinny for his usual taste... You got some special skill?”

“You mean kicking assholes in the balls?” Lita asked, giving him an awful smile. He was seriously getting under Lita’s skin, but she tried not to focus on it. She didn’t know these people, and they didn’t know her. His assumptions didn’t matter, she reasoned, gritting her teeth.

He made a humorous sound in the back of his throat.

“Look,” Lita sighed, “I want to talk to the owner because I want to join the gym—”

The boisterous howl of the man cut Lita off. He laughed as if she’d just told the joke of the century. And it burned, sent fire flushing through her in a sudden wash of anger. He drew the curious eyes of some of the other men as he clutched at his sides in a fit. Lita was about a second away from ruining her chances here with her smart mouth.

“You? Join the gym?” He belted out another series of laughs, “You couldn’t even—I mean, have you ever lifted? Anything?” He gasped, “I won’t even bother asking if you’ve ever thrown a punch, but babe, you probably haven’t even run a circuit before.”

Lita tensed, forcing a smile she didn’t feel at all. He was laughing at her. Hot, prickling sweat beaded on the back of her neck as she thought of all the ways she’d shred him down to nothing with her words. But she couldn’t. Not yet. Not until she talked to the owner. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Lita counted in her head, trying to calm herself. It was a trick her brother swore by, and it was one of the few things she’d found helpful over the years.

“Can you just take me to the owner, please?” Lita raised her voice a little so he could hear her over his heavy snickers. She had to check herself. Her mother had worked desperately to curb her aggression because it wasn’t becoming of a lady. She had medicine prescribed for when Lita’s urges were too strong. Recently, it felt like all she did was pop pills.

“Well, I ain’t going to take you to the owner, miss-I-wanna-join-the-gym,” the guy managed between sighs after laughing so hard. “He doesn’t like to be interrupted. And anyway, this isn’t the gym for Insta-selfies or whatever the hell it is you’re here to do.

This ain't that kind of gym. It's a fight club. So why don't you take that bony ass back to wherever you came from." He started turning away.

Lita saw red. For a split second, she felt like she saw red, and it drove her to growl, "I'm not leaving until I see the owner." Her voice had dropped dangerously low, even as her vision cleared.

The man paused, turned back to her with a tick in his jaw, "How did you find us, anyway? We don't advertise."

"A friend told me about it. Gave me the address."

He quirked a brow, "And who is this friend?" The way he straightened his shoulders made Lita's face hot. He didn't trust her story. She could hardly contain the way her blood pulsed with aggression. It was getting worse, not better. This was a gym, not a secret society. What did it matter who she got the address from? She pulled a pill from her pocket and swallowed it with a swig from her water bottle to dampen her anger.

"And a pill popper? No way, honey, you can take a hike. Don't care who gave you the address or why you're here."

"It's a prescription for my nerves... and I'm sure it's no different from whatever you inject to make you look like that," she said icily, making a sweeping motion over his figure with her hand. She didn't miss his shocked expression or the curl of humor that chased the surprise.

"Oh no, little lady, this is all-natural," he winked, and Lita involuntarily gulped. Flirting made her skin crawl because it always meant she had to walk on eggshells. "Anyway," he interrupted her thoughts, "thanks for stopping by to give me a laugh, get lost."

She inhaled harshly, set her spine and blurted, "How much?" He studied her face for a moment, unsure of how serious she was.

"What do you mean, how much, sweetness?" It was better than being called girl, but pet names weren't Lita's favorite thing and he'd called her several already.

"How much for a year's membership?"