

Lita's Love for the Alpha

Can't Live With Them, Can't Live Without Them

"Well, that was probably the worst, most entertaining dinner we've ever had," Alex sighed angrily, leaning against the outer wall of the packhouse. "I've never been a fan of Erica and it damn sure ain't a secret. No love lost between me and her. But *that* was hard to sit through. Somehow I don't remember her being so—"

Erica had taken off in her luxury car thirty minutes earlier, ears probably still ringing after Cole told her off. And Lita was still upstairs with Dr. Morgan. Alex saw an opportunity to set Cole straight, so he seized it.

"Yea," Cole admitted, blowing a tense breath into the night. "I should've told Brody to take Lita out to eat instead. Or maybe—" Cole ruffled his hair, shaking it out as his words trailed off.

Alex crossed his arms and watched Cole pace the gravel pathway that led from the packhouse to the gym.

"That's not what I meant," he snapped. "Lita wasn't the fucking problem, Alpha. And you know it. *Everyone* knows it. That shit Erica said to Stace doesn't get to happen again, Cole. You hear me? I stop holding my tongue if she takes another dig at Stace."

Cole growled, throwing his hands in the air, "Erica's just on edge. I think she's having problems with her father. The Stace thing was too far, but I think the talk of mates must have her on edge." Alex rolled his eyes. Cole making excuses for Erica was as predictable as Cole claiming he would reject Lita.

"There were a lot of things that went too far and it wasn't just the comment about mates. You need to set her straight. Lunas don't treat their future packs like that."

"I'm not going to be able to do this much longer," Cole admitted quietly. "This back and forth is too much. When it comes to Erica and this pack, I need to make a decision and stick with it."

Alex grunted his agreement, swiveling his attention to Brody and Mark as they headed for the gym.

"Lita probably hates me now," Cole said, like he didn't know how to feel about it.

"It's fine, that'll smooth over. Just tell her the truth, Erica has a key, and she just popped up. It's not like you purposefully invited her here just to fuck with Lita," Alex said, offering it as a simple solution.

Cole glared at the ground and continued to pace.

"Right?" Alex stood back up, suspecting he wouldn't like whatever he heard. "You didn't purposely invite her here to fuck with Lita, right? Tell me you're not that much of an asshole, Cole."

The growl of a response told him everything he needed to know, but Cole admitted, "I thought it would help put some distance between us. You saw what I was like earlier. I nearly mauled her in the hallway all because she wanted to check on me."

"You're a real piece of shit right now, Alpha, and I say that as someone who loves you like family. I say that as someone who respects you to lead this pack. I knew that you were an asshole, but tonight was fucked up on a different level. You need to—shit, I don't even know. It was foul, man. Just fucking reject her, I don't get it. Stop dragging this out."

"Yea, I know! I hated every fucking second, don't you get it? I feel more of her feelings as time goes on. Fuck, last night I might as well have *been* Lita for how much her confusion and pain ran around in my own head. That's why I slept in the damn room with her while she was out. Midnight wouldn't let it go. And tonight? I felt like absolute shit, but what the hell else am I supposed to do?"

"What do you mean, *what else are you supposed to do*? Anything! Do anything other than the shit you pulled tonight! Did Erica know about you two being mates or was she just extra bitchy in a coincidence?"

"I didn't tell her yet. I don't know what the hell was wrong with her tonight. She said she was fine when I pulled her aside, and then said she just gets bad vibes from Lita, whatever that means." Cole brushed it off like he did every single red flag that Erica waved.

"Means she's fucking jealous, obviously. When are you gonna learn to read women man? That one in particular is an open book. Selfish. Manipulative. Bitter."

Cole pulled at his hair, "It wasn't supposed to be that bad. It was supposed to be like a cold shower, not a knife-fight, man. It was supposed to cool things off between us, not hurt her."

"So why didn't you say anything? Make Erica leave? Defend Lita? Hell, I feel bad for that shot she took at Stace and Jaz, but anyone could see her real beef was with Lita. If you're gonna reject her, then you gotta do it already. I never thought you were a chickenshit but, something's going on with you lately."

"It's complicated—"

"Just tell me what's really up because the Alpha I know, the one who was just stressed over hurting the girl earlier today and damn near rabid over her getting beat up—that Alpha wouldn't have brought in a lion to fight a kitten so what gives?" Alex studied the distant stars, "She's already been through so much. We don't do shit like this to people. To women."

"Look, it was low, I know that, but me and my wolf are not on the best terms right now and he's CONVINCED that we have to mark her. And she's fucking ovulating, so I'm crazed out of my fucking mind right now." Cole had a point. He was a little on edge, wild-eyed and fidgety. Alex could see his wolf fighting for control throughout the day.

"Okay yea, I can see that, so what? It's still not an excuse to kick a person while they're down. You ought to be ashamed."

"I can't reject her but I also can't have her so at this point, making her hate me is all I've got. I told Stace and Jaz to set her up in the dorms tonight. I thought I could make it a few more days like this, but I can't."

"Why can't you just reject her, Cole, damn? She's not going to die, the infatuation hasn't settled in for her yet. Just do it already! Nobody takes this long to reject someone. I mean, you should've done it that first day. I told you to do it the second I found out! Told you not to sleep in the bed last night too," Alex said under his breath, annoyed as hell that his Alpha was playing stupid high school games. He was putting himself and everything he'd built at risk. "You're playing a dangerous game with your wolf. You have been all the way back when you let her join the gym."

Cole didn't answer.

"And again, when you said you were going to train her? And when you let Stace introduce her as a fucking bunny. I mean, come on Alpha, how much control do you really think you have over your wolf? There's a fine line between confidence and stupidity. He's still an animal at heart."

"I can't* reject her," Cole sighed in resignation, like there was no longer anything to hide behind. He slid to his butt against the building, putting his head in his hands, "I fucking *can't*. I've tried."

"Of course you—"

"My wolf said no. That first day he said no. He's been saying no every fucking day for a month. I thought if I could just give him a little of her, he would be satisfied, you know? But he's unreasonable. He's convinced himself she's perfect and won't fucking reject her. He doesn't care that she's human."

"Why didn't you say anything sooner, Cole?" Alex slid down the wall to sit beside his best friend. This went beyond Alpha duties, this was down to a hard line between a man and his wolf. It was rare for the two to split so hard on anything. The wolf was just as much a part of the rejection process as the human. It was two souls meant for each other, splitting. That had to occur on all levels, man and beast alike. If his wolf wouldn't agree, there was nothing he could do.

There was no rule book on how to do it. It was spiritual and wolves just instinctually knew how to put themselves in that headspace. It wasn't something they could teach Lita to replicate. And because she had no wolf, Cole was fucked. Truly.

"I've been fucking begging. But he's not budging. At first I thought I could make him, you know, deny him runs. Lock him away until he relented, but he hasn't changed his mind. And at this point we're playing chicken to see who breaks first. And Alex, I'm really fucking worried it's going to be me," Cole looked over with red-rimmed eyes, "I crave her so badly I feel like it's ripping me in half."

Alex took a shaky breath, "Fuck."

"Ugh, don't say fuck. It's hard enough to get her out of my head as it is," Cole laughed hoarsely, his wolf finally retreating back inside.

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"Why can't you just be with her?" Alex said suddenly, "I get your reservations, but if it's this hard, why not just give in? I never liked Erica anyway. I know you two met through your parents when you were young and I know you both have baggage, but... this kind of thing could kill you, Cole. Or make you a terrible Alpha."

"I know it's not going to make any sense to you. It's just not that simple. You weren't there, okay? And thank god you weren't. Count yourself lucky."

"What the shit from your upbringing? Your dad's not fucking here. And even if he was, you'd be able to kick his ass across the park," they laughed. Alex put his hand on Cole's shoulder reassuringly, "It was fucked up, for sure, but you're not a kid anymore Cole, you have to let that shit go, okay?"

"I'm fine," he smiled, though it didn't reach his eyes, "I'll figure it out, one way or another. Her hating me is all I could think of to put space between us for the time being. I'm not strong enough to stay away on my own." Alex flinched, looking at the ground. He knew how hard it had to be for an Alpha to admit weakness.

Alex shifted, slightly uncomfortable, "Listen, I get what you're going through, but you're going to have to make a decision soon because you've basically told the whole pack you're rejecting her and now you're pushing her away. You're going to push her right into someone else's arms, Cole, and honestly, you've given the pack every right."

Cole's look darkened tenfold, and he scowled, "She's off limits—"

"She's not. And you know it. Either claim her or she's not yours. That's how this works. Do you really want that? To watch her with someone else? Someone from your own pack? Don't think I missed the look you gave Brody today, and all they were doing was talking..."

"He was too friendly," Cole grumbled, knowing full well he had no room to be jealous. But he was anyway.

Alex sighed, "It hurt, didn't it? Seeing her liking someone else's company?"

"Like hell. That's the whole point of the mate bond, the *bonding*. But it's done now. She's going to keep her distance. Anyway, I need a favor," Cole stood, dusting himself off.

"Yea, anything, what's up?"

"I need a fight," he laughed, jogging off towards the gym, "You coming?"

"Hell no," Alex laughed, following his Alpha, "Fight Andres. Fuck, fight Mark, I don't care. I like my head where it is at, thank you."

"Please stop saying that word!" Cole yelled from over his shoulder.

Alex shook his head, "Which word? Fight or *fuck*?"

Cole groaned loud enough to wake the dead and Alex chuckled at his Alpha's misery.

Lita held her arms up so Dr. Morgan could get a better look at her ribs, happy to be as far away from that dinner table as she could get. Even if it meant she had to stand shirtless as a stranger inspected her wounds.

"This is looking much better already. Does this hurt?" He prodded her gently with his finger, kneading the bruised flesh. She hissed and lowered her arm.

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"Yea."

"Pain level?"

"About a seven for tenderness," she admitted. "And like a three for genuine pain." There was no point in pretending she was stronger than she was. The shit hurt every time she bumped into a bruise.

"Okay well," he reached into his medical bag. "Take two of these every six hours for pain. The itching that's going to come as you heal, I can't help with that, unfortunately. Drink plenty of water and eat three meals a day please, you're underweight."

Lita took the container of pills and nodded, "Oh, can you see if it will interfere with the medicine I'm taking now? I know we're supposed to tell you guys that kind of stuff."

"What's the medicine called?"

"Opprimio I think? Hold on, let me get the bottle," Lita pulled her shirt back on as she shifted into her bag for the bottle. It occurred to her, she would run out eventually. This was the only bottle she had left and she couldn't get it from her therapist or mother anymore. She'd have to cross that bridge when she got there.

Handing it back to the doctor, Lita sat down, "I've never heard of this drug before. It doesn't even have dosage on it, Lita. Who prescribed you this?"

"I don't think I have a prescription actually, it comes from my mom's pharmaceutical company. She said it's still in testing, but it works for me, so I can't complain."

"Works to do what exactly?" Dr. Morgan studied the bottle carefully.

"It helps with my anxiety and anger issues. My mom said it's a suppressant."

"A suppressant?" he looked up. "There's no such thing. You're sure that's what she called it?"

Lita nodded, "Well, can I take this with me? I need to research it to see if it will interfere with anything I've already given you. Plus, you should be on bed rest for a while anyway, nothing should be getting you worked up, anyway."

"Yea, it's fine, I'm bound to run out soon, anyway." The bridge crossing was happening sooner than expected.

"Alright, I'll get it back to you as soon as I can, okay?"

"Sure thing, thanks..."

Just outside the door, Dr. Morgan stuffed her pills into his bag and pulled out his phone. Scrolling through for a moment, he clicked a name and dialed.

"Hey. Yea, it's urgent... no, it really is this time. I found another one..."

Dr. Morgan listened as he descended the stairs. "Really? So that makes how many?" Outside the air was rapidly cooling, the sound of music blasting through the open gym door. "Mhmm," Dr. Morgan agreed. "With Lita, that makes five. Only this time, I have a lead on where the medicine is coming from."