

Lita's Love for the Alpha

Road Wolves

Lita awoke in a panic, panting and sweating. For a moment, she was still in that car, screaming as her brother died. The nightmares hadn't eased up one bit. If anything they seemed at an all time high. It took everything in her to remain still, to let the moment pass until she could think straight again. Her heart beat nearly out of her chest and she couldn't catch her breath. Nausea ripped through her, pushing her up and out of the bed towards the bathroom in her room. Lita vomited, not once but three times, pushing up everything in her stomach including the bile.

She coughed and spit a few times before brushing her teeth and laying back down in bed. Pulling the covers up to her neck, Lita tried to soothe her shivers. Those memories literally gutted her every single time. She didn't even realize she was crying until the hot tears splashed against her collar bone and shoulders. She didn't bother wiping them. A moment later the sound of her phone buzzing on the table, changed her focus. It was nearly three in the morning so it wouldn't be Brian. Who else could it be?

She dragged the device back down into her hand and opened the waiting message:

Are you okay?- C

She didn't normally reply. Not to Brian, not to her mother, not to telemarketers, not to anyone. But C, only one person would sign their text that way. Cole.

Who is this?

You know who. Are you okay? It feels like something's wrong.

Like you fucking care.

She didn't have to jump straight down his throat. He hadn't needed to put himself out there by texting her but it was something about him being able to share her feelings that upset her. Especially because she couldn't share his. It was one thing to have someone peer inside you as long as it was reciprocated. In this one-sided way, Lita felt open and spied on. She didn't like it.

And furthermore, most of the time she felt like shit. He could feel that. He knew it. And it never bothered him. Cole didn't care about what she was going through. Hell, she had a nightmare damn near every night but this is the one when he finally gets the nerve to reach out? She shook her head. She didn't need to jump down his throat but, he fucking deserved it.

I do. Goodnight.

Goodnight was where it ended. Lita didn't reply and he didn't say anything else. But somehow, even in that small interaction, she'd been distracted long enough to forget her panic. In that sense, she begrudgingly had to admit that he had helped her.

'I do' kept repeating in her head. He didn't. Why would he say he did? Rolling over onto her pillow, she punched into it until it made the shape she was comfortable with. Then she blew out a deep, annoyed breath and tried to go back to sleep.

"You think she's up for this?" Brody asked, leaning against the kitchen counter as the others filled the room. They were all supposed to be headed to a major fighting tournament in San Francisco, Lita included. This would be her first outing since everything that happened and everyone was a little on edge about it. She hadn't left the pack grounds in a month except to tag along to the grocery store and everyone could see she'd crawled deeper into herself. It was hard to watch, but they all knew it was part of the healing process. They had to give her time.

"Where is she anyway?" Andres asked, "Stace and Jaz showed up twenty minutes ago."

"She had a late night," Cole said under his breath and all of them looked over with expectant expressions. He sighed and looked away, "Not like that. She was just up late. Another nightmare."

The other men seemed to relax a little and resume their coffee.

"Still happening every night?" Andres asked, as if he needed to keep tabs on the loose canon. He was so community-oriented that he understood very plainly that one weak link could send the whole thing falling down. And Lita was that link. So much rested on her because Cole rested on her. Whether she knew it or not, she had a lot of influence over Cole's actions and as the Alpha, that was dangerous. Andres was worried about him.

"Yea. It was worse last night. Maybe the anxiety of leaving here? I don't know."

"We still don't know what she dreams about? Has anyone asked?" Mark cut in, lazily eating a few strawberries out of a bowl. The silence was answer enough for everyone.

"Well someone needs to," Andres admitted, "We should know what we're dealing with. It's obviously some form of PTSD but is it the abuse or something else?"

Cole turned away from them. Though Lita was pretty much fair game, none of them could bring themselves to pursue it. Not that they didn't want to. Sure, Lita looked a little rough around the edges at the moment but they'd seen her beauty and it had only been in gym clothes. They couldn't even imagine what she would look like when she actually tried.

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Brody had certainly thought about it, more than he wanted to admit, but he knew he would become too invested. He wasn't really a serial dater. He settled down, that's just how he was and there hadn't been anyone since his high school sweetheart. He knew that he and Lita were the closest in age to one another, and maybe that was where the easy conversations came from. But he didn't want to cross any lines unless he was sure about where they stood.

Andres and Mark were men just like everyone else. They wouldn't have been opposed to a little fun. But not at the expense of their Alpha. They just didn't want to do that to him. It was unspoken barrier than no one wanted to break.

"I just don't know if being surrounded by a bunch of wolves she doesn't know, is what's best for her, you know, 'mental state'," Brody shrugged, placing his empty coffee mug in the dishwasher.

"I think you're too invested in what's best for her," Cole growled lowly, rolling his eyes. He couldn't help the current of jealousy that it caused in him when any of the other male wolves brought her up, especially Brody. Claimed or not, Lita was off limits. Logically, he knew they respected that or the last month would have gone very differently. But emotions weren't logical.

The front door swung open to reveal a very tired, very irritated Lita with bags under her eyes and at her feet, "Coffee." Her voice sounded like a dying man asking for one more sip of water.

Cole instinctually reached for the Keurig and changed the cup. She slumped against the doorframe as the others left to begin packing up the van. He poured it into a disposable cup, bringing it to the doorway, "It's that caramel Starbuck's shit you like." He looked over her head, avoiding eye contact as if he was supervising the others. But he took a quiet breath of her scent and closed his eyes.

Lita raked her eyes across him once, grabbed the cup and turned around, "Thanks," she called over her shoulder, trying to ignore the tingling where their fingers touched. Neither of them mentioned the texts.

"Are all my road dogs ready to head out?" Mark yelled, pumping his fist in the air.

"Road Wolves, aho," Andres howled, climbing in the passenger seat. Surprisingly, Cole took the driver's seat. Stace, Jaz and Mark occupied the next two rows, joking about a threesome later, and Lita ended up in the back with Brody. She couldn't even manage a smile when he waved. Instead she nodded and continued downing her coffee.

After a whole night of restless sleep, Lita found herself not only scrolling through Brian's messages but now Cole's too. It was such a small exchange but it had been sitting in the back of her mind nonstop. Her phone buzzed. Fishing it out of her pocket she saw it was Cole again.

Finish your coffee, you look like shit. Don't flirt with Brody.

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The smile was involuntary. She couldn't stop herself and she found she didn't want to. Lita looked up at the rear view mirror but he was looking straight ahead, his phone haphazardly thrown on the front dashboard. It was such a simple text and yet, it had done so much inside of her. She wanted them to keep coming.

Cole didn't want her to flirt with Brody. Had she been? She couldn't remember a time she was anything other than friendly with him but the more she considered it, the more she had to admit he sometimes had this twinkle in his eye for her. She always liked that about him and how excited he would get whenever they talked.

She turned to face Brody, studying his profile as he watched the cars passing.

"What are these tournaments like?" Lita gulped down the rest of her coffee and sat the empty cup in a holder.

He turned to her with that same twinkle he always had, flashing a dimpled grin "Finally got some caffeine in your system? You were a zombie."

"Yea. Bad night," she shrugged, feeling her phone vibrate again.

Are you trying to piss me off?

Yes. That was the truth she wouldn't admit to anyone but herself. She wanted Cole's attention, craved it like oxygen and now that she had it again, she wasn't planning to let it go. She put her phone in the cup holder.

"Well, the tournaments are a really good time. Sometimes we go to the human ones and sometimes we go to the wolfier ones," he wagged his brow, "This one is going to be full of wolves from all over the west coast, maybe some Midwest. I love these things: the food, the fun, the parties, the women..."

Lita's face flushed as he cut a glance at her and looked back away. What was she actually doing? This was wrong but somehow right. She shouldn't be leading Brody on. She shouldn't be fucking with Cole's feelings. Logically Lita knew that, understood that this was playing with fire. But when was the last time she had control over anything? When was the last time a man was doing as *she* said?

It wasn't about the men. It was about her. She needed control. She needed to be able to say when and where and how high. She needed to be the one to say *who*. Not her mother, not some wolf mate bond. Not Brian or her fears. She needed to bring the old Lita back. The one who had a big brother and who had a good time when they hung out. The one who could light up a party and get everyone taking shots. The one who felt at least comfortable in her own skin, which she hadn't in a long, long time. That Lita wasn't gone, she was just missing and it was time to find her.

"Anyway, I think you'll have a lot of fun."