

Lita's Love for the Alpha

Routines, Running, and Realizations

One week later

Lita could barely get out of bed, her muscles barking a protest that was impossible to ignore. Snatching the bottle of water off the nightstand, Lita chugged some with two pain killers and the dull hopes that the pain would become more manageable soon. Training with Ace was agony, brutal and unforgiving, so vastly different from the techniques Stace had taught her or the drills Alex had given her. It was like his sole mission was to make her hurt. She'd spend the first half of the session beating her in human form and then he'd make her shift and let his wolf, Phoenix, kick Nyx's ass too.

And when he was finished shredding her body inside and out, Mark took over to teach her boxing technique. Followed by Brody who finished her with submission technique and cardio. She'd never have thought a body could endure that kind of beating every day but it could. Much to her displeasure, it could. Today, she was due to fight Stace in an assessment. They would be fighting for real, no kid gloves or pulled punches, especially now that she had a wolf. This was all inevitably because she said she would attend the showcase. Cole was taking precautions about her safety and most of that centered around her never being allowed to leave his side once they got to New York but on the off chance she did, he'd do his damndest to ensure she could hold her own. It was hard to begrudge the harder training when she looked at it from his perspective.

What her training lacked in painlessness, it made up for tenfold in effectiveness. She'd never felt stronger, never slept better and never eaten quite so much as she had over this last week. All thanks to Cole. Lita reached a hand backwards to Cole's side of the bed, sighing when her hand hit the cooled empty space as she reminded herself that he was out for training by sunrise. That was certainly an adjustment she hadn't expected after what happened last week. Cole had kissed every place she described her pain and massaged her, soothed her in places she hadn't known she needed to be soothed. And when she was finished telling him all of her pain, she'd asked him to take her to bed and help her remember that she wasn't ever going to go through that again. He'd worshipped every inch of her and they hadn't stopped until the sun slipped out of the clouds.

But it was his motivations for that little getaway must have bordered between opening her up, solidifying their bond, and apologizing in advance because the second they'd returned to the complex, Cole had been thrown into a training schedule she could only describe as torturous. They maybe had an hour together each day, if they were lucky. He spent the first half of the day supervising the training of new pack members who had begun to flock after the last tournament. Lita could always hear the reprimands from across the gym as he schooled them into suitable fighting condition.

Apparently he'd shown some serious skill in defeating Bedlam because it had become the talk of all the fighting circles. She'd catch whispered side talk at the dinner table or as she passed from one area of the gym to another. Some part of Lita glowed, knowing he hadn't spared a second to beat bedlam and follow her into the hall. Whether it was fear or love, or some combination of both, she was grateful. Always grateful. It was such a novel feeling, knowing she never had to worry about him. He was always going to be in her corner.

Cole often spent the second half of the day doing one on one sessions with the more advanced fighters and he always finished with his own training followed by a pack work out. He fit food in there somewhere even though she didn't know how he found the time. She guessed he found it the same way he found time for her. In stolen touches under the table, on the way to the locker room, quickies in the shower before bed. It was all so fleeting and she tried not to let it chafe but she missed him.

Lita glanced at the clock again and groaned her body into moving. Every day she pushed her body, it was supposed to get better, easier, at least that's what Cole promised. In some things it held true. Like when she easily threw Brody out of his submission move yesterday or when she nearly took Mark's head off with a punch earlier that week. But in others, like the maddening stiffness she felt everywhere and the constant ache of her worn muscles, it wasn't. And while she did feel stronger, she also felt worried about what she could do with that strength. What kind of closure would she get in the next few weeks?

She wished she could say the same for Nyx but the wolf was positively jumping for joy every day. Not a shadow of worry to be found anywhere. Nyx loved the fighting, loved to bite and scratch at Ace all for the chance to make things more even between them. Her pride wasn't delicate but it was still wounded each day he bested them. Especially on the days he beat them badly.

Nyx favored the runs with Brody the most, bursting as hard and as fast as she could through the surrounding woods and the complex. She wasn't feral, at least not in the way she was supposed to be, but she certainly favored violence to mercy, inflicting pain to discussing compromise, and killing first, asking questions later. That was what Lita could glean from behind the scenes at least. Nyx's mind was so clear and focused when she trained and there was never a flicker of doubt which was as impressive as it was alarming.

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After wrangling herself out of the bed and into her clothes, Lita tied her shoes, grabbed her headphones and headed downstairs for a warm up jog. If she didn't do it now, she would probably pull something later. The charley horse she got two days ago still haunted her. Passing through the main dining area, Lita waved at the handful of people who weren't yet off to their assigned duties or training. She snagged another water bottle and headed out into the crisp morning. The first few minutes of stretching were pure hell. She was sure each of her muscles would snap as she pulled and twisted at them. Fifteen minutes later, they were at least pliable enough for her to move freely and without immediate agony. So she started to jog.

The first lap around the complex was the hardest. Her body was exhausted like every ounce of energy had drained from her. Her mind was a fuzzy, half sleep half dazed thing that could barely remind her of the proper form when she ran. Her muscle mass was up a hundred percent from where it was when she first joined the gym and that at least helped her along. After her coma, all the definition she'd worked hard to gain, had reduced to skin and bones once more. But finally her body had bounced back, probably quicker than it would have if she were human. Hell, with how little she once weighed, it would have most likely caused a human lasting damage.

Human. When had she come to consider herself as not human? When had she finally accepted that her human life had never really been human at all and that everything she thought she understood was lie? It had been a gradual change she realized, pushing controlled breaths in and out as she rounded her third lap. After talking with Nyx, seeing her train, feeling her personality. Yes, Lita agreed with herself, the change in her psyche had finally happened. She wasn't human. And that was okay.

Several pack members waved at her, smiling in a cautious way. She hadn't seen Cole yet but that wasn't abnormal, he usually had training in the gym by now. They did their warm ups at sunrise. Lita shivered then quickened her pace. Being cold only told her that she wasn't working hard enough.

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By the fifth lap, she was running fast, nearly sprinting, her head so full of the outside air she didn't see anything but ground and sky. Her heartrate evened out, her breathing became a beat she could measure in time with her feet. She was so caught up in the momentum of her run, she almost didn't notice Dr. Morgan waving at her from the gym's back door until she'd almost ran smack into the back of a parked car. She'd already skittered to a stop by the time he caught up to her, his smile neutral but wary.

"Hey Luna," he scratched his head, "Alpha said he wanted me to talk to you about the medicine, but, please promise you'll handle it better than he did."

Lita coughed a laugh, uncapping her water and stealing a few gulps before she continued, "And how did he react exactly?"

Dr. Morgan leveled a stare, "Badly. I think he was hoping I could be a substitute for your mother... but I'm *not*."

His words were pointed enough to make Lita stand up straight. Whatever he was about to tell her was going to make her upset and that's why Cole had avoided explaining it himself. It wasn't because it was hard to repeat, it was because she was liable to blow up at whoever did the explaining...

"Well alright, then," she waved her hand as if offering him room on an imaginary podium, "Let's hear it."