

Lita's Love for the Alpha

From Bad to Worse

Chris left her down here to fight like a dog. And she was going to kill him for it. Lita could feel her blood boiling, could feel that rage keeping her warm in the freezing water while sheets of rain splashed her from the sky. Men kept trying to make a victim out of her.

Was it because she hadn't been ready when he reached his hand up? Had it been his goal from the start?

She was starting to get a sense for men like that. Men that wanted to hurt women. Men that maybe had a broken part of themselves that *needed* to hurt women. Men like that were cowards. Weak bastards. And she was sure once she actually challenged that strong façade, there was nothing underneath. The bravado was false.

It was why he tried to make her uncomfortable with sexual innuendos. Why he'd tried to degrade her by popping in on her in the shower. Why he'd been so mad when it hadn't worked. And when she'd been too distracted to pull him out? He'd forced her in. Where he hoped the other fighters would do his dirty work for him. *I'll make your death look like an accident.*

And she was determined to tell that spineless man to fuck right off right before she ripped out his throat.

Lita rolled her neck and stretched her arms, ignoring all the pain in her head and the bleeding on her temple. She was done with men that wanted to be gods. Werewolves or not, there was something disgusting about wanting to ruin a group through fear. As if to prove her point, she heard a scream as another woman was pushed in from the rim. She watched her fall, thumping her head on the side of the concrete before hitting the water. She didn't come up.

Lita scanned the upper rim, looking for the man who pushed her, but he was gone.

Some of the women were watching her, carefully composed looks of indifference plastered on their faces but she could see the shock in their eyes. Not at her appearance in the pit most likely, as she was sure this happened regularly. Hell, not ten minutes after she'd been pulled in, that woman had died. No one shouted or screamed as she'd been dragged down and the fighting hadn't stopped. No one gave a shit. If it wasn't common practice, it was at the very least, unsurprising. No, Lita was sure their expressions were directed at the fact that she wasn't trying to get out. Maybe at the fact that she wasn't dead yet.

Meeting their stares with an equally fierce one of her own, Lita wondered what made them all so passive. They were strong, obviously enough to pull large, muscular werewolf men out of the pit so she doubted they were human. More likely they were werewolves as well. Maybe suppressed like her? With no wolf, they were bound to be more disadvantaged, bound to submit to those who were stronger. Maybe they'd never even been taught how to fight. It twisted something in her gut. She'd been that way before and here she was, being put at a man's mercy again.

From down in the pits, though, she could see that she had got it all wrong. There were actually two groups of women manning the edge, the foreign exotic-looking ones, like Lita herself, and the ones that looked like Maxim. The exotic ones seemed to be the lowest tier on the totem pole. Acting as slaves who held towels and provided aid or food. They didn't speak and they didn't help pull the men out. Those women were clearly human and every bit worse for wear like she was. They were bruised and malnourished. Probably a day or two away from keeling over. And some asshole had just pushed one to her death for no reason that would ever make sense to Lita.

Then there were the women that looked just like the men. The same genetic markers shared between them as if they could have all been Cole's sister. Or mother. Those women were the strongest and dressed in those warmer clothes. But still subservient, still *beneath* the men. She supposed that was the hierarchy of this new world. Those were the mates. The sisters. The women who reared their children. And they were still no better than dogs to a master.

Lita spat. She wasn't weak anymore. Her body, starved as it was, held more muscle than fat. She had been training for months with the toughest men she'd ever met. She knew what she was doing in the ring and how to protect herself outside of it. And if these men thought she'd break and beg them, she'd prove the exact opposite. And she'd prove it in blood.

It was brutally cold in the pits, so cold that her anger was only helping keep her above freezing. She needed to get moving, get her blood pumping harder because she couldn't feel her feet or her calves. She backed up until she hit the hard concrete.

It was so cold that Lita couldn't stop shaking. Especially now that the water was almost thigh-deep. Even if she had been wearing the better clothes, which she wasn't, they would be useless now. Everything on her was soaked down to the bone. Probably just as Chris had intended. He'd known she wouldn't change in front of him. Not with what happened in the showers. She remembered how delighted he had been to see she was going to stay in the thin cotton.

Looking down, she could see exactly why. Everything was translucent. She might as well have been standing in her bra and underwear. He probably would enjoy seeing everything she kept to herself in the shower. Then he would enjoy seeing her die.

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The wind picked up and her skin was all but numb from the sharp bite of it. There was a sudden battle yell as a boot came down near her leg, the man's back almost colliding with her shoulder. She skimmed further against the wall, hoping that the rain obscured her enough to go unnoticed.

When he hopped up to pummel his attacker, she would have breathed a sigh of relief if her lungs weren't so frozen, but there was only so long she was going to go unnoticed in the swell of fighters. She knew that. The numbers were whittling down little by little, leaving more and more space between them all. Space for her to be seen.

Now down in the thick of the fighting, she could see just how savage and raw it really was. She watched a man break someone's nose and hold his head under the freezing water. Despite the man's wild punching and kicking from below the surface, the fighter held firm. It only ended because broken-nose tapped out and that was one of the better endings. His sputtering, bloodied body was pulled up by the women on the edge and the winner grabbed another man.

Other fights ended when one person went unconscious and in those instances, the men had to be pulled up with rope. Others ended when someone went under water and didn't come up for air. Knockouts clearly relied on the mercy of their opponent to drag them out of the water and get them to the ropes. Most of the time, they didn't help. Most of the time, they drowned. Those last ones made her gut wrench. She was crouching in that same water where they drowned. Were their bodies near her feet? Men she could have saved? Was she doomed to be killed herself?

Some part of her knew Chris wouldn't let her off that easy. She recognized that glint in his eyes when he pulled her down. A look she recognized in Brian. One that said *pain*.

Some part of her knew she wouldn't really want to be above ground either, with those cruel men. Up there, she was a captive who was at their mercy. Up there she didn't know the rules.

At least down here she had some power. She could fight. The rules were simple, win the fight, pick another opponent. She wasn't sure how well she would hold up half-frozen but at least she had a chance. A shot. And maybe if she could slip away... if she could get to the border... if she could get to a phone or a car...

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No, she wouldn't worry about escape now. This was the time for survival. A low whine sounded deep in her mind, faint, but growing closer.

Nyx?

I'm here, Lita, she replied.

But her voice was soft, far away, but getting stronger. Even as weak as she sounded, Lita could have cried from relief. Her wolf wasn't gone, she was just suppressed. Likely the same way her mother used to do it. Someone must have slipped something in her drink at the bar. The bartender? That creepy guy that was hitting on her?

And this time, she surmised, it had been given at a dose high enough to make the suppression permanent. Maxim was likely counting on it, likely built her captivity around her not having full strength. He obviously doubted how strong Nyx was. And knowing she would be whole again soon gave Lita a burst of energy. She could do this. She could survive and get back to her new pack, get back to Cole.

A hand gripped her arm roughly, pulling her out of her thoughts as she splashed into the water. She only went down for a second before she popped back up for air, arms already pulled into a fighting stance.

He sneered, "I thought I saw fresh meat get tossed in. Lucky me..."