

Lita's Love for the Alpha

Leave Him to Rot

Cole had his father cornered, his hind leg leaking, his chest slashed open from collarbone to stomach. His father's wolf had been a machine at the start of their fight but Midnight was better. In every way. Better trained. Better motivated. Better at killing. Turned out, Maxim wasn't nearly as strong as he pretended to be.

Lita suspected it had been quite some time since Maxim had been forced to fight his own battles. It made for a pretty weak Alpha. And that wasn't surprising in the least for the kind of man he was. A man who ruled with pain and violence and fear. A man who kept slaves and saw no woman as an equal. A man who tortured and did god knows what else to women he sold to his business partners. A man who endeavored to ruin his only child. The man wasn't a man at all. Weak at heart. Cold and empty. And without anything to love or anything that loved him, he had nothing. Lita suspected even now, his men had likely turned on him the second they were overrun. She'd seen those men, the ones like Chris. Seen the women too, the ones reduced to being wolf-less and afraid.

They had no loyalty to Maxim. They were loyal to themselves and their vices. They were afraid. They were like Ren, tied to a man they didn't much like and never respected.

Midnight prowled forward, growling low, rumbling the floor. There was no mercy in that growl. Midnight's eyes flashed once as he lunged for Maxim's wolf again. Bone cracked, echoing off the chamber walls. Lita thought of Maxim's grand plan of bringing his son home and breaking him until he caved to his father's will. Further proof that Maxim never really knew Cole. Because if he did, he would know it was an impossible task. Things were always going to end like this. A father dying at the hands of his son. Lita thought she would feel something about it when the time finally came. But she didn't. Not a single thing.

Nyx stood, inching herself forward along with the others. All of them had worked together to shred the wolves that hadn't run from the room. Body parts and blood were everywhere. And Lita thanked the lord again, that Nyx hadn't eaten anyone.

Will you let that go already?! Nyx barked, *it was my first shift. I had an urge. Sue me.*

I'm the one that had to digest that so NO I don't plan to let that go any time soon. Nasty as hell.

You eat pickles and chocolate together and I'M the nasty one? No way.

Is this really the appropriate time to compare our eating habits?! Lita decided to be the bigger person. Nyx huffed.

Despite Cole begging her to stay back, Nyx had been right in the thick of it, slashing and biting and roaring her rage into the face of every one she could get her paws on. Because, fuck those men, those animals, and every empire they held. Lita had already made a mental note of all the ones who had run away before Cole arrived. She'd make sure they paid as heavy a price as they were due. It was cathartic, she realized, to maim and kill bad people. Bad men. She felt some measure of goodness when bad people died and it made her think of Brian.

Was he truly a bad person? Was he this bad? Did he deserve whatever pain she rained down on his life when she got home? Because as she'd sat in that cell she'd itemized her list of loose ends to deal with. And his name was at the top. Did she truly intend to kill him for all he had done? For the ways he'd knowingly driven her so deep into depression she thought she would never crawl out? *Yes.* Nyx growled. *We will take what we are owed.* Lita nodded. They would. And the blood on her paws didn't make her feel bad at all.

The sound of something severing snapped Lita's attention back to Midnight, who forced his full bodyweight onto Maxim's wolf, pressing and rumbling in his face. He dug his claws slowly into Maxim's throat, leaving a necklace of holes that made a wet sucking sound as Maxim tried and failed to breathe. A year ago, Lita might have thrown up. Might have cowered in the corner. Might have cried and screamed to have mercy. But she didn't move now. Didn't blink as Maxim's wolf shivered and shifted. A very naked, very injured Maxim remained behind, chest rattling as he opened and closed his mouth like a fish. Nyx gave a toothy grin and Lita smiled inside. She supposed he'd never envisioned his plan turning out like this if his surprised face was any measure. All he did was underestimate people and hurt them. Even his son. Shit, especially his son.

This was a slow death, a painful one. Fitting for such a terrible person. Starving for air but unable to get any. Body broken and bleeding from a million different places. Pain upon pain upon pain. Midnight bent low, huffing into his father's ear as Cole shifted too. He kneeled, his mouth moving quickly. Lita couldn't catch all that he said, even with her heightened hearing because the security alarms still blared. But before he lifted his head she caught the last sentence and stilled.

"You should have known better, father, than to take what was mine." And Maxim's chest stopped moving in a final sigh.

She almost cried. This entire clusterfuck of a week had been because he called her his. And she'd taken it to mean property. Ownership. Like she was nothing more than a thing. That's what she had always been before. An item to be owned, whether by her parents or her boyfriend. Hearing him say it had terrified her, tugged on a raw thread that hadn't fully healed. And it drove her to the club that night. Drove her right into Maxim's cell, drove her here.

But hearing him say it now on the cusp of his father's last breath she didn't hear any of that noise or fear. She heard protection. And loyalty. Trust and love and the million things in between that he'd given her in their short time together. Nothing had been easy up to now and she had a suspicion things might not be easy in the future but he'd never tried to possess her. He let her have her own life. Let her bond with Nyx while protecting her from herself. Let her have fear and grief and anger. Let her have her own friends which Brian never had.

He hadn't forced her into taking on the Luna position as if she were a thing who had no say. Hadn't tried to bully her into doing things his way. He was waiting until she was ready. He hadn't made her talk for that week she wallowed in pity after her first kill. He'd been building them a house. A place of her own to be free and happy. To raise pups one day, if she wanted to. He hadn't ever tried to take anything from her. Not her body. Not her feelings. Not her love. He'd only ever given. And at the root, the very first day he'd let her train at the gym, he'd given her more than she'd had for years: he'd given her hope. And here it was, that hope, blossoming fully when he called her his.

She *was* his. By slow, hard fought measures, she was his. And that fact didn't bother her any longer because he was *hers* too from now until the end. And she could finally understand what he meant that day in front of the house.

Ace came waltzing in the room like he owned the place. All swagger and zero fucks, "Well shit, did I miss the finale? Goddammit Lita, if you didn't need clothes I would have been here sooner!" He whined, tossing a few bookbags of clothes at her feet, and the feet of the other wolves. They all shifted and Lita realized she recognized them all. One or two she'd seen in passing and the others she'd only seen from afar. But that would change the minute they all got home. She'd endeavor to be the type of Luna they all needed. One who knew the whole pack and helped them feel at home. They deserved that. Especially now. Ace whistled in her direction and before Lita had even reached for her clothes she gave Ace the finger, "Cut it out or you'll be lying over there next to Maxim, clown." She couldn't help but smile. It was like waking up from a dream. The banter with Ace was instinctual, familiar, like wearing her favorite sweater. Somehow it helped wash a little of the grime from the last week away.

Cole walked over then, snatching up Lita's bag and scooping her body up over his shoulder like she wasn't completely naked, before heading off through a random door.

"Cole! Where the hell are you going? What are we supposed to do with the other men?" Ace yelled, "What do you want us to do with... him?" Ace pointed at Maxim's dead body with fire in his eyes. For a moment Lita wondered what it was like for him to come back here too.

"Leave him to rot. Hold the others. Raid the house, I want every soul rounded up and held outside," Cole called over his shoulder, halfway through the doorway, "No more killing unless necessary. Tell the others. And Ace... I want the house stripped of everything we can use. Have Rafi call in as many transportation trucks as he can."

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Ace nodded and Cole let the door close. It opened into a hallway, gilded and beautiful just like every other fine room she'd seen here. Lita wanted to do a million different things as they headed towards the door at the end of the hall but her mind was half frozen on what Cole had said. *Rafi.*

"What the fuck is my father doing here Cole?"

"It's a long story, baby, and I'll tell you I promise. But I really don't want to spend the first few minutes of getting you back, making you mad at me... okay?"

Lita began to squirm and Cole hissed. She stopped immediately, looking down to see the blood trailing down his arm, "Shit are you hurt? Put me down Cole we have to stop the bleeding."

"You're mood swings give me whiplash, mate," he chuckled, "But I missed them all the same. We're almost to the guest room."

"You know where the guest room is?"

Cole nodded, "These aren't the same pack grounds but the house is constructed exactly the same as it was when I was a child. Though, the décor is a bit more... grand."

"Gaudy more like," Lita rolled her eyes, "I've never seen such an unnecessary amount of gold in my life. And the paintings? The whole house is over-fucking-done. Like he was a king or some shit."

"Some shit... for sure," Cole murmured.

"Cole," she sighed, letting him put her down at the entrance to the room, "Do you want to talk about what you just did? You know, he was still your--"

"No." His reply left no room for argument, "I never want to talk about my father again. From this moment forward, he's gone and that's all."

He pushed open the doors and headed for the bathroom, "Should be a medical kit in here or at least some soap and towels for you."

"For me?" Lita asked, incredulously, following him, "I don't nee-" Then she felt it, the hot pain, the wet slippery trickle moving down her leg. She gasped, "Shit, that hurts. Who the hell took a chunk out of my thigh? I want to go back and kill him again." She hadn't even noticed the wound with her adrenaline running so high.

"Thought you said you already took care of him," Cole called from the bathroom, the sound of cabinets opening and closing following his words.

"Yea but that was for the gash on my other leg. I don't know when this bite happened," she groaned, inspecting the mottled flesh before moving into the bathroom to lean over the toilet, "What an asshole."

"Fuck, baby," Cole looked over, pressing the towel to the back of her leg, "It's going to need stitches."

"There's a doctor here, Maxim had her heal me once. See if Ace can bring her, she's willing to help. Her and Ren were already going to help me escape tonight if you hadn't shown up," Lita looked at his arm, "You'll need stitches too. He got a good swipe in. I can see the bone."

"Lita," his voice wavered as he went to his knees beside her, bringing his head to hers, "Why did you need to see the doctor? What did he do to you, that he needed you healed? Lita--"

She looked at the wall. Then the ceiling. Anywhere but him. She didn't feel like having this conversation yet.

"When you were taken, I-" His eyes pleaded as he gave her a miserable face, "Were you hurt? Did any of them hurt you? Did *he* do something to you?"

He was so lost. Her mate had been so lost without her, just as she had been without him. And he had probably hated every minute she was gone. Not knowing what had happened to her. Not knowing if she was okay. Assuming the worst because of what he knew about his father. If she hadn't had her anger, what state would he have found her in? If she hadn't had Nyx...

"Later," she breathed in his scent, "We'll deal with what happened later. For now, can you just tell me why my father of all people is here? And why in god's name you're *working* with him?"