

## Lita's Love for the Alpha

### Bonus Chapter- All the things She Smelled

“Don’t give me that ‘did you miss me’ crap, Cole! Where the hell have you been?” Lita snapped, crossing her arms over her chest so she didn’t ball her fists. Elise told Lita that even when she was angry with Cole, she still needed to remember that he wasn’t the enemy. She’d been accustomed to those who were supposed to love her being against her. But he wasn’t like those people and Lita tried not to forget that he was her partner, and she shouldn’t ever want to hurt him.

She searched their bond for his emotions, finding only the warmth of his love. It cocooned her, soothing some of her irritation. Underneath all that love, though, Lita could sense a small remnant of guilt, but it was impossible to know the cause. She was still so new to this wolf life; it was sometimes hard for her to tell if what she sensed was triggered by a present event or a memory. Technically, Lita experienced those results differently, memory-induced emotions feeling fuzzier and flatter than fresh emotions. But figuring it out was so nuanced, she couldn’t always be sure. And after embarrassing herself a few times when trying to read Cole’s emotions, Lita preferred to be sure.

“Welp, that’s my cue to be literally anywhere but here—” Ace blurted suddenly into the heated air between them all. He swiftly tucked tail and practically ran back in the direction of the fajita stand.

“Traitor!” Lita and Cole both hissed at the same time. Cole narrowed his eyes, tracking Ace’s back as he fled, while Lita fixed her gaze back on her mate. “He’s not getting out my line of fire that easily for leaving you alone,” Cole said under his breath.

Cole sighed, sucking his teeth, as he met Lita’s stare, “What the hell are you doing to my friends, hmm? I haven’t seen Ace run from a fight in years. And Alex always goes through me if he wants you to know something. Apparently, you threatened to let Nyx say ‘hello’. Is that code for something I should know about?”

Lita shrugged, “That’s for me to know and all your ‘bro-coders’ to guess. Plus, I haven’t really done anything to anybody. I can’t help it that Nyx gives off ‘don’t fuck with me’ energy. What can I say? Eat one she-wolf and stage a coup against Maxim and suddenly everyone looks at you differently.”

“Bro-coders? Do you mean men who are loyal to their Alpha? This isn’t a fraternity, Lita. It’s a pack,” Cole murmured, stepping into Lita’s personal space. “Of course, they all answer to me. It’s not only the natural order of things, but it’s crucial to how our lives run so smoothly. Can’t have too many captains on the deck, love. You know you’re the only one that gets a free pass to be a pain in my ass, right?”

“You meant you’re the one that’s a pain in ‘my’ ass, right?” Lita gave him a feral grin, toothy and dark, as Nyx bled through.

Cole chuckled. “That means I should try to stay off your bad side, huh, Luna?” Cole whispered, dragging a calloused thumb down her cheek. Their bond lit up, flushing heat through her like it did every time they touched. And when he called her Luna, Lita’s body vibrated as if he’d called her a queen. His queen. Cole leaned forward as if to kiss her, and Lita palmed his chest to hold him back.

“Don’t try to change the subject!” Lita barked, “No pulling on that bond until I get some answers. You’re deflecting. Did you ask him to babysit me so you could go do whatever it is you did? And I swear to god if you lie, I will let Nyx say hello to your—”

Cole laughed. ‘Laughed’ like she was adorable and nowhere near ready to sink her claws into his ass. The husky sound made her knees weak and still, she forced herself to ignore it. The bond was new to her, but she had figured out how to supersede it, leaving most of her higher thinking intact. He clicked his tongue as if he read her mind. The mate bond let enough emotions flow between them that even when he couldn’t hear her private thoughts, he could sense her private feelings.

Cole looked around as if to check for anyone nearby and nodded. He fixed her with a gaze, “Stop looking at me like that, Lita. I’m not laughing at you. I’m laughing because I missed you. Because it’s still so strange to feel someone else here—” he tapped the center of his chest—“I don’t know how anyone wouldn’t want this for themselves. It’s a great feeling. No, that doesn’t do it justice. You’re like… Like coming home.” Sliding a palm around her waist and up the lower half of her spine, Cole pulled her into him. “And yes, I asked him to keep an eye on you. I never said the word babysit, though, so…”

“Why?” Lita snapped, even as Nyx leaned forward to nuzzle their bond. The traitor couldn’t stay mad at Midnight if their life depended on it.

“Bite me”, she snarled, nuzzling the bond even harder. “This is between you two humans. Me and my mate are perfectly fine”.

Lita rolled her eyes at her snarky inner wolf, secretly happy with how far they’d come from the early days. Nyx was loads happier and more social, even if she did bust every other male wolf’s balls.

Cole blinked lazily, leaning down to run his nose along her jaw. Once again, Lita got a whiff of his doused scent and stiffened. Some distant memory of Brian reacting when he inhaled her, sprang to the surface. She could understand now that he’d smelled other wolves on her even before she knew anything about wolves. Hell, he might have even smelled human males on her. It would explain the sudden fits of anger.

And here Cole was, blocking his smell too. It went against the grain on an instinctual level. Their scents were always mixed, mingled so closely through their bond that it would be impossible not to know he was mated. And yet, she couldn’t scent the bond at all. Instead, she smelled perfumes and something familiar that she couldn’t remember.

“For one,” Cole said, pulling her out of her thoughts, “this is your first showcase and your first outing since becoming Luna. It makes sense that I would have a pack member with you at all times. Alphas don’t leave their Lunas unattended. Second, I didn’t want you to be blindsided by Asher or anyone else in his circle. You used to live here and there’s bound to be mutts like Tom that want to take a dig. There’s no way I’d leave you to face that all on your own. Though obviously pretty she-wolves working the fajita stand were enough to leave you vulnerable, anyway.” Cole’s voice deepened into a growl that rumbled through her chest. Lita didn’t have to look up to know he was glaring at the back of Ace’s head again. She leaned closer, trying to sift out the scent that was bothering her. Smoke and Teakwood? Where did she know that scent? There was a note of something else too, but she couldn’t sort it out.

“That doesn’t explain anything. ‘You’ were supposed to be my protection, Cole. Then you disappeared. Where’d you go?” What if he was hiding someone? Old insecurities flared up. Things that Brian had done and said to make her wonder about who he spent his time with when he wasn’t with her. Lita didn’t think Cole was like that. But her emotions weren’t always rational. She’d done a great job holding everything together so far, but it would only take another strong trigger to push her over the edge. What if there was another woman? A hot bolt of jealousy sliced her mood, exploding across the bond before she could reel it in.

He sucked in a sharp breath. “Lita—” Embarrassment was hot on jealousy’s heels, making Lita’s face and neck hot, sweat breaking out under her clothes. It was ridiculous. Cole would ‘never’—and still her heart didn’t care about what made sense. Lita tried to turn away, to give herself a moment to calm down, but Cole’s grip was unyielding. “Hey, stop. What’s going on? Why are you—” Lita jerked her arms harder, pushing away from his chest in an attempt to breathe.

She prayed to the moon that she wasn’t making a scene.

“I just need a minute,” Lita insisted, her chest heaving. The problem with triggers, Elise always said, was that a person couldn’t control when or why they happened. Lita couldn’t stop her body from reacting to him blocking their scent. She couldn’t pull herself out of the knee-jerk reactions that memories of Brian caused. It was still too new, too fresh.

Much like the searing wound James’ memory evoked. She couldn’t breathe, couldn’t stop herself from trembling. Nyx whined, pawing Lita and nosing those inner walls. Cole cursed somewhere overhead, and suddenly her body was moving. Cole had a hand wrapped around her arm. They went through a set of swinging metals doors and Lita’s mind flashed to Maxim’s basement, hairs raising over her arms. Lita wasn’t sure where they were heading, but after a moment, a door was opened, and she was herded inside.

She looked up through bleary eyes enough to see Cole close the door behind them. He flicked the light switch, illuminating a storage closet full of cleaning supplies.

“I j-just n-needed a m-minute. I’m okay—”

“You’re not,” Cole shook his head, “And I’m not leaving you out there for others to see you breakdown. What’s going on? Your emotions are all over the place.” He inhaled and speared her with a look. “Fear and anger. Jealousy. Confusion. Lita, tell me what you’re thinking.”

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She shrank away, embarrassed and annoyed at how different their power dynamic was. He was always more in tune with his wolf. He could read her far easier than she could read him. It was irrational to let it make her angry, on top of all the other things that were gnawing at her, and yet, it did.

Her jaw ground together before she spat, “You’re suppressing our scent.”

Cole’s mouth dropped, “I’m not! I would never, oh fu—” He sighed, rubbing his palms into his eyes. He looked at Lita and dragged those hands down over his jaw. “I fucked up.”

“What did you do?” Lita’s stomach dropped, every ugly thought rearing up at once.

“Not like that, Lita, damn,” he stepped forward, holding onto her shoulders. Cole sighed so hard she started tearing up, dreading whatever it was he would say. After working his jaw a few times, Cole seemed to come to a decision and said, “I went somewhere today. Somewhere I needed to go because I couldn’t let it go. I ‘couldn’t’. I hope you can understand that, baby.”

His voice dropped, taking Lita’s heart with it as she swallowed the knot in her throat.

“I didn’t suppress our scent. At least, not intentionally,” he admitted. “I fucked up. I didn’t think about our scent at all when I was showering. I was trying to bury another scent. At least until enough time had passed that you wouldn’t care anymore.” He was rambling, which was completely unlike Cole. It only made Lita more nervous.

“What the hell is that supp—”

Cole cut her off immediately, tightening his hold on her shoulders. “I went to Brian’s place.”

Silence blanketed the room, every thought in Lita’s head going quiet at once.

“And I had a conversation with him,” Cole continued, dragging it out. “I may have used force when having said conversation.”

Cinnamon. That was the final scent she hadn’t placed. Brian’s body wash was a custom mix of teakwood and cinnamon. And he smoked.

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“You bastard,” Lita said without an ounce of bite. If anything, the shock had stolen all her fire.

Cole winced, “I know. You said you wanted to be the bigger person, but I couldn’t, baby. You understand, don’t you? I’ve been waiting for months. ‘Months’. Andres couldn’t track him down at first and when we finally did, Maxim had taken you. There was no way I could come to this city and not hunt down the wolf that made my mate bleed. That made you hurt so badly that you’d even ‘consider’ me being with someone else. Your scars run so fucking deep—” He choked off the last words.

Lita snapped her mouth closed, at a loss for words under the soft anger in his tone.

“I would do anything for you. But I couldn’t do that. I couldn’t ignore what I knew and look the other way. I don’t care how miserable he is. I don’t care what he’s lost. It wasn’t ‘enough,’” Cole snapped, eyes flashing red. “Everything short of death isn’t enough for what he’s done to you.”

“And did you?” Lita asked, angry and heart warmed at the same time. It was going to be a surprise which one emotion would win out. Her heart made a complete mess. Cole raised a brow.

“Did you kill him?”

He shook his head and then added. “In case you changed your mind and decided to do it yourself. I’d never take that from you.” Cole lowered his head, pulling her face by the cheeks. “Please tell me you understand that neither Midnight, nor I, could build any kind of life with you without balancing that wrong. It would be the same as leaving Maxim alive knowing what he did to you. I couldn’t. I can’t.”

Lita could hear the desperation in his voice, could feel the anxiety and love threading through the bond. She thought about how she’d felt in Maxim’s compound. And how, if Cole hadn’t dealt with him, she would have. Lita knew it. Nyx knew it. He’d done too much to Cole. And those innocent women. He couldn’t be left to spread that rot into the world. She’d never considered that Cole might feel exactly the same way about Brian.

“Please say something,” Cole begged, placing his forehead against hers. He didn’t beg. He didn’t mince words or placate people. He was firm and unyielding and, as an Alpha, he hardly ever felt bad about a decision he made. But in this instance, he was shaken up. Unsure. Because for her, he would do things he never did. Make allowances he never made. He wasn’t her enemy. He wasn’t trying to hurt her.

So Lita leaned up and kissed him. Gently. Just for a second.

“I understand, and I’m a little honored,” she said, pulling back. “But I’m also ready to wring your neck.”

Cole exhaled. “I know. I’m not sorry for doing it—” he gently kissed her back, then pulled away as if he knew she wouldn’t want too much contact at that moment—“But I am sorry it upset you. I fixed one thing and fucked up another. So what can I do to make it right?”

Lita shrugged, pulling away. “I don’t know yet, but I can promise you, you’re not going to like it.”