

## Lita's Love for the Alpha

### Bonus Chapter- The Apple and the Tree

“Ladies and gentlemen—” a female voice sliced through the basement air, cutting through the chatter immediately. “Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for joining us during our semi-annual showcase. Let’s give a big round of applause to my pack and Alpha Asher for hosting the showcase this weekend.” She clapped her manicured hands in a gentle rhythm, directing her applause toward the side where some of those pack members stood nearby. Most were smiling at the woman’s praise, but a few, namely the men who stood shirtless in strange ceremonial pants, looked upset. Maybe upset wasn’t the right description. They were rigid and emotionless, stoically staring at the crowd through unseeing eyes. Their dark gazes swept the room as if they were looking for something to sink their teeth into.

“And of course, let’s encourage tonight’s tributes from Alpha Asher’s pack. He’s guaranteed us quite the show!” The applause grew. Lita considered the men more fully. These were tonight’s fighters? It made little sense to her. They weren’t small men, clearly Deltas or Betas, but they weren’t as fit as fighters normally were. If anything, they reminded Lita of Brian in build and stature. They were all naturally blessed with uncultivated strength, but that meant absolutely nothing in the ring. She fought the edge of a smirk, remembering how the others had dismissed these showcases as frivolous, and now she knew why. These men were here to put on a show, but certainly not to win against any real fighters.

Despite the strange men, thunderous claps and howls broke out around the room, startling Lita from her thoughts. Was this for the competitors, or was Asher this well-liked? If she let Cole tell it, Asher was a sad excuse for an Alpha. A man who was a means to an end and nothing more. She looked around once more, noting how much he favored archaic imagery. Did he rule his pack in the same manner?

Ace had made it clear the Alpha was a no-nonsense wolf who appreciated luxury and obedience above all else. But did that ensure he’d be cruel or demand praise? Lita didn’t think so, but she didn’t think all her enemies would be as easy to identify as Maxim. She’d known from one look in his eyes that the man would be a monster. Brian had been more insidious with his evil, and something in Lita’s gut told her that if Asher meant her harm, he would be the same. His poison would probably taste sweet.

Alpha Asher’s name inspired a vehement reaction, whether good or bad, and Lita could tell that the rumors of his far reach were not an exaggeration. Nearly every wolf, male and female alike, howled deeply as if the very air was electrified with promise. A wolf who inspired this kind of fealty had more power than Lita knew what to do with.

And he was her \*father\*. Lita inhaled a steady breath. Did he even know? She laughed at herself, drawing Cole’s steely eyes. He gave her a cautious glance, well aware of how thin his ice was at the moment.

\*Of course\*, Asher knew. How could the leader of the entire east coast not know he’d fathered a child with a she-wolf that wasn’t his Luna? Lita’s stomach turned to lead, sinking to her feet as she considered how long he might have known. Rafi made it clear he hadn’t been aware. But Diane knew. Did she tell Asher? Had he known about her from the moment of her birth? Had he felt that familial tether tying him to another life? Or had he known since her mother and father had to declare their child to be a \*victim\* of a dormant wolf gene? Had he been aware of what Diane had done to suppress her wolf? Had he approved of it, sanctioning her wolf’s misery and Lita’s own? Nyx growled low, crouching into an offensive position, ready to pounce at any moment.

Had he known when he saw her at community events? Just because Lita didn’t remember meeting him and Rafi hadn’t noticed, didn’t mean he wouldn’t remember meeting her. As if conjured by the thought, the Alpha in question stepped into the center circle and Lita nearly dropped her glass.

She knew him by sight alone.

Lita had recently begun to wonder if there would be some small similarities between them, something to mark her as his. But the musings hadn’t prepared her for the reality. He looked just like her. Or rather, Lita supposed she looked just like him, merely a copy looking at an original. It was so apparent now that she didn’t understand how no one else knew.

How did no one suspect it every time she went to community events? The icy dread of realization spread over her shoulders. Maybe everyone did know. Had the community chosen to let Rafi live in blissful ignorance? Had it been kept under wraps so Diane wouldn’t be punished? It would explain the looks she’d been getting and why she’d always been shunned by her peers. The great loneliness that left her vulnerable prey for Brian to claim was because of her \*appearance\*. She always suspected it might have been racial but now she knew it was familial.

Something miserable rose in Lita’s chest, prompting Cole to place a heavy hand at her waist.

## Chapter 1

She and Rafi had never been close, but how could they? All these years later and there wasn’t a single similarity between Rafi’s face and her own. At least when she believed he was her father, Lita had seen some tint of his complexion in herself. Looking at Asher now, in the center of this crowd, told Lita the truth. Everything came from him.

Asher flashed a dazzling smile, waving to the crowd.

Lita’s mind stalled for a beat, her heart skipping and stumbling over those almost black, oval eyes and thick, tapered brows. The same brows she never had to arch. And they sat on a tanned face—the kind that wasn’t faked with products or sunlight. That brown, so natural and rich, that Lita knew it made up the warm undertone of her own complexion.

With thick wavy hair curling around his face and down to the tip of his shoulder, Lita touched her own loose waves. He’d drawn the bulk of those curls over to one side, casting a shadow down his perfect nose. In a neat-fitting suit, Asher dominated the room. He held the flat of his palm up in practiced humility before offering the crowd a small nod. He smiled wider as the applause continued, his thick cupid’s bow stretching out over perfectly symmetrical teeth.

Lita’s mouth twitched. She might as well have been looking at her own lips. Her own teeth. Clean-shaven and neat, Asher’s bone structure wasn’t as severe as some of the other men she’d seen around the room, but it was striking all the same. There were parts of her face that she knew came from her mother. But there were parts she hadn’t easily identified before seeing her father. Parts that hadn’t looked like Rafi or Diane.

Slightly sharp, high cheeks. Rounded small ears. Brilliantly dark eyes with thick lashes.

Her father’s voice boomed across the room, “Thank you, thank you everyone! Please, enjoy yourselves!” Then he gave a slight bow and disappeared back into the crowd.

“Can everyone find their way to the center ring? We’ll be starting in the next few minutes!” the woman resumed, a proud smile on her face. The room’s quiet murmuring picked up again as she stepped away from the crowd.

Blonde and thin, the woman could have been Lita’s mother in another life. Her lips, however, weren’t pinched into a frown or curled in judgement like her mother’s lips often were. Even in pleasant interactions, Diane wore the beginnings of a scowl and the makings of a snide comment. Lita knew better than to believe the elitism wasn’t there, under the surface of this new woman. For a moment, Lita thought about how many things ran under the surface here. Maxim’s compound was terrible, but at least the dangers were obvious. They didn’t lurk or hide. Somehow, in this stuffy room, Lita felt more on edge than in Maxim’s pits. Especially with how much she didn’t know.

As Lita looked around the underground room, she noted blank, neutrally pleasant faces. It unsettled her that she couldn’t predict what anyone was thinking. At least here, there didn’t appear to be any racial motivations. Asher was clearly \*something\* and as she looked around, Lita noticed much of the room was something other than white too. She wouldn’t make assumptions about what races comprised the mix of people, but the smattering of different complexions and facial features showed a healthy diversity.

“That was Luna Asher,” Stace whispered to Lita, having finally appeared from wherever the hell everyone went while Cole was with Brian. It was a quiet reminder that she didn’t even know her father’s first name. She referred to him the way strangers referred to Cole—as his last name. A sign of not only respect but also of distance. The thought stung for reasons Lita was too emotionally exhausted to examine.

“Mmm,” Lita nodded, finishing the last of her champagne in a rush, and Cole was there instantly. His warm fingers brushed her own as he slipped the empty flute from her fingers. She ignored the comfort, choosing to fixate on the novelty of drinking instead. None of the wolves had ever cared that she wasn’t twenty-one yet and outside of that disastrous club trip, Lita hadn’t felt pressured to drink past her comfort zone again.

“Want another?” Cole asked, already holding another glass toward her. His careful expression was calm, but inside, his nerves were off the charts. She could feel the buzz of his anxiety over the bond, and she fought the urge to tease him. She was still angry at him, after all. And what he’d done—going to Brian without telling her—was not something she planned to forgive in an hour. No, it would take at least two, Lita decided, maybe three, if he kept this behavior up.

Had she ever seen Cole truly grovel? If she had, Lita couldn’t remember it and found this version of Cole was definitely her favorite. As it turned out, when Cole felt guilty, he became extremely attentive.

When her cup was empty, he always had another ready. Just when the thought of her empty stomach grew urgent, he was already holding a plate of snacks and fajitas out to her. He kept weeding out nosey wolves, steering them away from her in the form of clipped conversations. He moved in between her and the changing lights, blocking her from any errant beams that might have stung her eyes. It was endearing and exactly what she \*deserved\*.

Cole knew he had broken her trust, and even from the doghouse, he was ensuring Lita knew just how much she meant to him. It wasn’t like she really cared about what happened to Brian. She wasn’t a fool, but it was the principle. Yet another instance of a man stepping in to do her dirty work. It was the principle of Cole deciding he knew the right thing to do and then keeping her in the dark as he did it. What if she’d been taking a bath while something awful happened to her mate? Lita hated the secrecy of it all, hated the unknown, and the way it reminded her of her mother.

“Should I just assume you’re busting Cole’s balls for disappearing?” Stace snickered before sobering. “and that you know exactly where he went?”

“You can definitely assume that, and then you can go right ahead and put yourself in that same doghouse as him, because why the hell didn’t you tell me?”

Stace cringed, knocking back her whiskey with a quick cough before she said something Lita hadn’t expected.

“I could say he gave me an order, and that I was bound to listen to my Alpha, but that’s not why. I could also tell you that I didn’t want to upset you when you were already so tense about coming back to your home city, but that wouldn’t be the real reason. No, babe, I didn’t tell you because I knew you would try to stop Cole, and I didn’t want you to.”

Lita blinked as Stace gave her a hard look. “Brian deserved worse. I wish—” Stace shook her head, biting off whatever she’d been about to say.

“You wish what?” Lita asked, surprisingly calm.

“I wish I could have been there,” Stace sighed, “I’d have neutered that fucking dog.” She looked back at Lita, completely serious as she said, “You know I love you like the sister I never had. I would have ripped off his balls and stuffed them down his throat and I wouldn’t have felt bad about it at all. You want to be the bigger person here? I’m all for that, babe. I love that look for you. Cheers to the emotional maturity and all that jazz. But you \*can’t\* ask us to feel the same. You can’t ask people who love and respect you to let this go. He was always going to be dealt with. It was only a matter of when.”

Lost in the world of this story? Make sure you’re on [Novel5s.com](#) to catch every twist and turn. The next chapter awaits, exclusively on our site. Dive in now!

Lita swallowed, looking back at her champagne glass. She pretended she didn’t feel Cole’s agreement through the bond. His \*I told you so\* was enough to get his punishment extended. Now, she’d bust his balls for the rest of the day. She bit her tongue as she heard Alex and the other pack members grow quiet, waiting to see what Lita would say. They were the least discreet men she’d ever seen.

“I agreed with Alpha’s decision to rip Brian a new one. So no, I didn’t tell you. And yea, that makes you a bad friend, I guess,” Stace shrugged her shoulders. “But I also helped make sure the piece of shit that raped you and beat you—” she whispered those words into Lita’s ear, conscious of a room full of nosey wolves—“got exactly what he deserved, so I don’t know, I feel like that makes me a good friend. Correct me if I’m wrong, but that should tip the scales back in my favor, right? Because fuck him.”

After a beat of studying Lita’s expression, Stace smiled carefully and said, “You can have another of my dresses if it helps sway you. As long as you don’t tell me what you Cole do with it...”

Lita laughed in a harsh, slightly annoyed way because, once again, Stace had broken through her terrible mood. She helped soothe some of the betrayal Lita had originally felt. Lita looked over to Cole, giving him a look that said, \*don’t fucking say I told you so\*. His twinkling dark eyes were playful at first, but then he was standing stiffly, flexing his fingers into fists. His body moved before she could ask him what was wrong, moving to her side with an animal grace.

Two slender fingers tapped the top of Lita’s right shoulder. They were gentle but forceful, and Lita turned to find Luna Asher at her back. Cole made a low sound in his chest but didn’t growl, probably trying to keep his demeanor respectful. Did he think the Luna would try to attack her out here in the open?

“Lita, is it?” Luna Asher asked, smiling as her musical voice covered any underlying feelings.

“You can refer to her as Luna Tollison, actually,” Cole said, his voice a rasping bark as he slid his arm around Lita’s back. He curled those warm fingers over her hip in a possessive touch she felt through the bond.

Cole’s clear displeasure and offense through the bond suggested it was disrespectful for her to drop Lita’s title.

Luna Asher’s face pinched slightly, just between her brow and nose, her smile tightening the skin under her ears. “Apologies,” she hummed, “Alpha Asher has asked you to join him in his private viewing room for the ceremonial fights. He’s eager to meet the she-wolf that inspired such an \*expenditure\* of his men.” The end was nearly hissed and Lita wondered how many fights her bloodline had caused the Alpha and Luna. She smiled in response, a dazzling middle finger to the Luna who clearly hoped to unsettle Lita.

“Thanks—?” Lita paused, raising her brows as if to ask what the woman’s name was. As this was their first introduction, Lita knew she could get away with a subtle snub. The same kind the Luna had just tried to pull on Lita herself. She enjoyed the tension under Luna Asher’s chin as she cleared her throat.

“Asher. Luna Asher.”

“Right,” Lita nodded, “Lead the way, I suppose now is as good a time as any to meet my dad.”