

Lita's Love for the Alpha

Couldn't Leave Well Enough Alone

Cole watched the small abrasions from his first two fights disappear from his hands as he wrapped them again. All the nerves from the day before had disappeared with the first fight. He'd done well against his first opponent, Ironjaw, landing a definitive knockout in the first round and earning a wild cheer from the crowd. He hadn't lost his touch at all but he'd put that man's name to the test. Turns out his jaw wasn't quite as strong as he'd promised.

The second opponent, Mayhem, had proved to be more of a challenge, maneuvering himself out of position for every hard strike. Cole's punches seemed to all fall as glancing blows while Mayhem's were direct hits. He'd found himself losing in points after the first round. In the end he'd won through sheer willpower and technique, submitting him near the end of the second round. That had felt rewarding. He'd missed this. The adrenaline, the challenge, the chaos, the support of the crowd, the people wanting to train with him.

It was a great way to start the day, aside from waking up in bed alongside his mate, exhausted but very satisfied. That had been very close to the best thing that he'd ever experienced. Lita made the cutest face while she slept and he had almost forfeited his match and stayed in bed with her. If so much hadn't been riding on this tournament, he probably would have.

His wolf was even quiet, which was a big difference from the loud mouth he'd been dealing with lately. If he had a dime for every time his wolf got pissy over Lita. Telling him to bite her at breakfast or fuck her senseless at dinner. It was a genuine fight against all his baser instincts. But all that infighting was done now. He'd submitted to its will, to Lita's pull. And nothing bad had happened. The world hadn't ended. In fact it felt like the world was just beginning. Cole found himself filled with hope he scarcely felt possible. He'd once wondered how bad it might be to take a human mate and the answer was clear: it was amazing.

That's how strong the bond felt all of a sudden. It wasn't just attraction anymore. It was fuller, more dense and intoxicating. He felt filled to the brim with energy and joy. Fucking genuine joy. When was the last time he'd felt that? He couldn't get her off his mind. Somehow, mating had made his obsession even worse, not better. He pushed his hair back out of his face, trying not to think too much about last night before he got himself worked up. He had to keep his head in the game because he was due to fight soon.

Already the interest in his gym had been spiking. He'd given two new fighters his card when they came asking where he trained. With just two fights and he'd already become a buzz topic like he once was. It was odd at first, hearing his ring name chanted around the room but then it felt natural all over again. *Midnight's still got it* was whispered around the room. When he walked to the back room fighters nodded and praised him. It was like deja vu minus James. Of course he missed him, but he would've been proud and that was enough of a balm for the pain.

Cole smiled, clenching and unclenching his hands to check his tape. He considered the implications of winning this tournament. If he did well here, the gym and dorms could be at full capacity once again. The dream he and James shared could be realized at last. They'd been so close before everything fell apart. Wolves from all over the country would want to join.

And it had never been about the money to them. Hell, they would let people train for free if money was an issue. It was about the pack, the family and growing it to be as full of life and happiness as they could. They desperately wanted something they'd never had, stability and community. People who supported each other, fought for each other, cared about what the others were going through. He smiled again.

And of course, that wasn't the only thing on his mind bringing a smile to his face. Lita. Once he really opened himself up to her, it had felt like blocks sliding into place. Everything just seemed to fit. His heart slammed open and filled with her. She was it. Everything. He couldn't for the life of him, understand why he'd fought it so hard. She was more than he could put into words.

For the millionth moment that day, his mind lingered on last night. Everything they'd done, everything he'd felt. The second he sank his teeth into her skin, he felt different, like he was finally content. And damn if he couldn't wait to do it again.

Cole stole a glance at the clock, maybe she was already waiting for him. He should hurry up and get back out there. He might get to steal a few minutes with her before he had to fight Bedlam.

Snagging his gloves and Gatorade off the bench, Cole turned hard bumping straight into another body. The person staggered into view.

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"Erica?" She startled him. He hadn't seen nor heard from her since the night of the dinner when he told her the truth. Why was she there? She didn't like to watch the fights and she sure as hell didn't like the dirty back room.

"Cole," Erica's eyes were hard set, her blond hair brushed straight down her back. She wore a tight collared shirt tied over her midsection and low rise jeans.

"What the hell, Erica? Why are you here?" She hesitated for a split second before straightening her back.

"Listen, try not to get upset, I did this for your own good. I don't what that human did to make you push me away but... you need an intervention. Mate or not, you're an Alpha. You need to act accordingly. Someone needs to get you back in line," Erica crossed her arms as if showing how serious she was.

"And you're the one who's going to whip me back into shape huh?" Cole tried not to laugh but that was the most ridiculous thing he'd ever heard. Erica didn't hold some great power over him. She never did. There just didn't seem to be a good reason not to be with her. Alpha blood, good physique. But underneath all that, there wasn't much more to like. And with his father's words constantly battling against his own judgement, it was just easier to subscribe to the 'ideal mate' image he was always taught.

"No you ass, I'm not the one who's going to do it..." her tone was smug.

"Who then? Who are you here with, Erica?" Cole had a bad feeling, almost like a sixth sense. Erica wasn't this bold. Her bark was always worse than her bite. For her to show up here, confident and unafraid, something wasn't right.

"She's here with me," a familiar voice growled from the doorway, pushing in while Cole was busy looking at Erica, "And thank god she did. I've heard some disturbing fucking news..." Cole spun around so fast he almost fell. That voice was so laced with contempt it sent anger coursing through Cole's veins. Only one person had the power to make him feel like that without even saying anything directly offensive. Just the presence alone was enough to drive his blood pressure high and make him want to rip out someone's throat.

He locked eyes with the man, whose beard had grown gray, eyes pinched into an angry stare. He wore his usual high-powered business suit in dark grey which was so out of place in a setting like this Cole almost laughed. Perfectly groomed, perfectly dressed, perfectly furious, all things he remembered so well they were almost seared into his brain. The man tucked his hand into his suit pants, shifting his stare from Cole to Erica.

"Leave us, little dove," his tone was firm, but softer. Cole always hated that. The man could talk to him in a way that sliced into his very heart with ease and turn it off immediately as soon as someone else was in the room. The venom was a choice. One he always chose to use on Cole.

"Dad? What the fuck are you doing here?"