I Was A Teenage Werewolf

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Summary

Stiles just knows he's going to get lost in the woods. There must be a Laura Palmer reference in there somewhere.

A fork in the road retelling of Teen Wolf where Stiles is the one to get bitten.

Notes

This is a repost of Even Bad Wolves Can Be Good with a tense shift and a change to the
beginning :) I started the original story as a one shot and then it mutated but I was not happy with the beginning in that context. I'll be posting that as a separate smutty one shot (which is what it was intended to be lol) and so it will be separate from this. I hope y'all like the changes!!! I know I'm much happier with them (also writing in present tense is a bitch).
The morning started like any other with an alarm snoozed too many times followed by Stiles stumbling out of bed and into the bathroom.

By the time he was dressed and got downstairs, he was more or less conscious. His dad was in the kitchen, drinking black coffee and going over what looked like a police report. Stiles tried to glance over his shoulder and got a not so subtle shove.

‘You’re up early.’ he said and Noah made a face.

‘The joys of being Sheriff.’ he replied and Stiles snorted a laugh, pouring his own cup of coffee.

‘This animal attack stuff is kicking my ass.’

‘Yeah?’ Stiles was sympathetic. In a small town like Beacon Hills Ca, a story like this grew legs and ran like fuck all the way down Main Street. It started with reports of cats and dogs going missing. Then it graduated to rumours of people seeing an animal that was too large to be a coyote. Finally it turned into wild rumours of Satanic cults and/or alligators (wtf?).

Noah’s phone rang and he sighed heavily and picked it up from the table, gettin up and Stiles sitting at the table before school, eavesdropping on his dad as he took a call on his cell. He craned his neck, watching as Noah frowned, the lines around his mouth deepening in displeasure.

He hung up and Stiles put on his best innocent face.

‘Problem?’ he asked and Noah gave him a look that told Stiles he was not going to get any answers.

‘I got to go.’ He drained his coffee mug and put it in the sink. ‘I’m probably going to be out all night, so get your ass home and make sure it stays home.’ He raised his eyebrows meaningfully and Stiles gave him a jaunty salute. He watched Noah leave the kitchen and turned to get the cereal out the cupboard. He heard his dad’s phone ring again and tuned in as he normally did, hearing Noah stop at the front door.

What he heard made him choke on his coffee and then a terrible glee overtook him. He waited until the front door closed and then dug out his own phone and dialled. He waited with bated breath, nearly beside himself with excitement as the phone rang and rang and then pouted when it went to voicemail.

It looked like he’d have to deliver the news in person.

He decided to forgo breakfast, grabbing a banana from the fridge instead before he bolted out the front door after downing his Adderall with his coffee (never his smartest move, but his dad had long since given up trying to talk him out of it). Roscoe was in a bad mood, the engine not quite turning over as Stiles huffed and swore in frustration. He fist pumped when it finally roared to life, the Jeep sounding a lot rougher than was probably advisable and then reversing out and putting his foot down.

The parking lot at Beacon Hills High School was a seething mass of students and cars trying to get through, teachers yelling and buses almost taking people out. Stiles found a space and pulled in, ignoring the dirty look he got from Jackson Whittimore when he got out.

‘You better not touch my car with that piece of shit, Stiles.’ His lip was curled.
Stiles ignored him, jogging across the lawn to wait at the front steps. Sure enough, it was only a few minutes later that Scott came in on his bike, skidding to a stop and chaining it up before he jogged up the stairs to where Stiles was now bouncing on the balls of his feet.

‘Dude.’ He grinned, watching how Scott got that look of trepidation that he often got when Stiles turned up bouncing off the walls like he was.

‘What?’ His dark eyes were wary.

‘You’re never going to believe what I heard this morning.’ Stiles grabbed him by the arm and hauled him out of the way of the stream of students. ‘My dad got a call from the station.’

‘Nothing new there, dude.’ Scott raised an eyebrow at him and Stiles backhanded him in the arm.

‘A couple of joggers found something this morning in the preserve.’ he hissed. ‘A body.’ Now Scott’s other eyebrow went up and Stiles crowed internally.

‘A dead body?’ Scott looked around to check nobody else was listening.

‘No, a body of water. Yes dumbass, a dead body.’ Stiles shook his head at him. ‘That’s not the worst thing though.’

‘So like another animal attack?’ Scott looked mildly horrified and Stiles rolled his eyes at him, lamenting his best friend’s ability to keep up.

‘Yup.’ He shoved his hands in his pockets. ‘But get this - they only found half.’

‘Fuck.’ Now Scott’s brown eyes were wide. ‘Dude.’

‘I know.’ Stiles bumped his shoulder with his. ‘So I have an idea…’ He trailed off, looking over his shoulder as Lydia Martin got out her dad’s car and started walking up the stairs. Like always, his heart did a little skip when he saw her and drowned in her perfect beauty.

Next to him, Scott snorted and Stiles manfully ignored him.

‘Hi Lydia.; He gave her his brightest smile. ‘May I say that you are looking lovely this morning.’ He turned with her as she brushed past him without even a glance in his direction and then wheeled back around. ‘Did you see that? She totally didn’t tell me to fuck off…’ He trailed off because now it was Scott who was staring back at the parking lot. Stiles followed his gaze and saw a dark SUV that was currently parked to let out a tall brunette girl, curls descending around her face as she hitched her backpack onto her shoulder.

‘Whoa.’ Scott breathed. ‘Look at her.’

‘Yeah, but what about the body.’ Stiles gave the newcomer a quick once over. She was pretty, no doubt about that, but she wasn’t anywhere near Lydia’s league. ‘I thought we could go out there this afternoon, you know have a look around?’ He waited, watching as Scott’s head swivelled as if on a turntable as the girl passed them in a wave of sweet floral perfume.

‘Huh?’ Scott might as well have been floating three feet above the ground. ‘What did you say?’

‘Nothing.’ Stiles sighed and followed him into the school.

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The day dragged on for far too long. To Stiles surprise, Scott was actually making headway with the
new girl. Her name was Allison and she’d moved with her family to Beacon Hills a couple of days before. Scott had managed to score points by lending her a pen and they were now chatting over the lunch table while Stiles scowled, realising that he now had as much chance of getting Scott to skip the last class of the day with him as the last donut at the station.

His expectations were met when Scott skipped out on him in favour of showing Allison around. Stiles had had to make his escape himself and was now in the Jeep and driving out to the preserve. He had an idea of where to start looking based on some of the little details he’d gleaned from Noah’s earlier conversation and he pulled off onto a maintenance road once he was safely within the preserve.

The trees were mostly bare, the winter not quite done, and it was eerily quiet when he got out of the car. The road he was on terminated at a chained gate that lead down through the trees in the direction of the old Hale house and he knew this place a lot better than he would ever let his dad know. Noah did not approve of him running around by himself in the woods.

Dead leaves squelched underfoot as he made his way up the slight incline and turned towards where the remains of the house stood. It was pretty much a wreck after the fire that had killed almost the entire Hale family, but Stiles had always felt drawn to it. He was able to now catch a glimpse of what used to be the roof of the house through the trees to the right and changed direction until he finally stepped out into the clearing where the house stood.

It was a gloomy sight, the facade still smoke stained and weather worn. There was the remains of a porch at the front and sash windows that had once looked out over the front garden. Stiles could still vaguely recollect the night of the fire, one of many that blended into the year his mom had been so sick she’d been hospitalised and then finally breathed her last breath. He’d been with Noah when the call came in and his father had taken him to the station to wait while he attended to what was one of the worst accidents in the county’s history.

He had other memories as well. He remembered two dark haired teenagers, a boy and a girl who’d been silent and shaken. They’d sat next to each other outside his dad’s office with blankets around their shoulders while the reports came in that there had been only one survivor taken to the hospital. Stiles could still recall sneaking out to stand and look at the boy. His sister had been called aside and he was sitting alone, his pale face soot streaked and his odd coloured eyes filled with tears that fell and streaked clean lines down his face.

He was lost in thought and completely missed the cracking twig behind him until a voice startled him into flailing hard enough to fall over backwards, his ass hitting the ground hard enough to make him let out an ‘oof’ sound.

‘What are you doing here?’ The voice was snarky as hell. ‘This is private property.’

Stiles looked up and it felt like all the air had been sucked out of his lungs. The young man standing over him was gorgeous, his face all sharp lines and dark stubble above a black t-shirt and leather jacket over dark blue jeans. He had an impressive eyebrow game, thick dark lines to match his black hair and eerily light eyes that made Stiles gasp.

‘You’re Derek Hale.’ It came out before he could stop himself.

‘And you’re trespassing.’ Derek snapped back. ‘What the hell are you doing here?’ He looked pretty damn close to murderous and Stiles’ stomach knotted as he tried to scramble to his feet, slipping a couple of times before he was actually upright.

‘My bad, dude.’ he held out his hands in apology. ‘I was just looking around. And just so you know,
this place has been the property of the county for like the past couple of years.’

‘Well, stop looking and get the hell out.’ Derek’s eyes were hard as he took a threatening step forward, managing to scare the shit out of Stiles despite the hands shoved in his pockets. ‘This isn’t a goddamn tourist attraction and country property or not, this is my family’s house so have some fucking respect.’

‘Yeah, absolutely.’ Stiles could feel his face heating up. It was obvious that Derek had no idea who he was. ‘I’ll just…’ He made a vague gesture and then almost ran past him to get away. He could feel Derek’s piercing eyes on him the whole time but when he finally got up the courage to glance back, he was gone.

‘Damn.’ He blew out a deep breath and then dug out his phone. He had no signal and grumbled as he made his way back to his car.

As expected, the house was empty when he got back. Stiles had been a latchkey kid for so long it didn’t really bother him though and he made himself dinner and ate it while he watched TV. Scott hadn’t answered his phone when he’d called earlier and Stiles looked at the screen, noting that he hadn’t read his massages either.

The little scene at the Hale house had him more intrigued than anything and he sat and thought about what it meant that Derek Hale was back in town. That in turn led to wondering if it had anything to do with the animal attacks and then he was merrily falling down a rabbit hole of conspiracies that turned more and more lurid and ended up with Derek Hale being cast as a serial killer come home to terrorise his hometown. Never let it be said that Stiles didn’t have an active imagination.

By the time it was dark, he was completely wound up and knee deep in google, which was oddly thin on the ground in terms of the Hale family and Derek Hale in particular. He didn’t have any of the usual social media accounts and the only reference to him and his family were a bunch of old articles about the fire that listed ten members of the family that were dead, including Derek’s mother, father and baby sister. It made Stiles feel more than a little ashamed of himself for his gleeful reaction to the news that a dead body had been found, thinking about whether that person might have a family that was looking for them. There hadn’t been anything on the news, but that didn’t mean they didn’t have anyone.

He glanced over at his clock, crinkling his nose in thought as he contemplated his next move. He doubted whether Derek would be hanging around the Hale house after dark. It wasn’t like the place was habitable at all, so if he really wanted to snoop around it would be best when there was nobody to interrupt him. Still, it wouldn’t be a great idea to go alone. His dad would skin him alive if he got caught sticking his nose into official police business, but Stiles was of the opinion that the payoff in this instance would be worth the risk. After all, if he did find the other half of the body it would be like doing a public service.

That’s how he ended up at the McCall’s house. He went to the porch, looking up to see that the light was on in Scott’s window. He tried calling again but there was still no answer so he huffed and started the climb up to the second floor. It wasn’t that hard to get up the latticework at the side of the front porch, balancing a little precariously as he attempted to peer into Scott’s bedroom.

A noise came from below him and he grinned and braced himself before swinging down so he was suspended from the roof. Unfortunately that coincided with Scott bursting out of his front door brandishing a baseball bat and they both yelled in alarm at each other.

‘Dude!’ Stiles put his hand over his wildly beating heart. ‘What the fuck?’
‘I thought you were a predator!’ Scoot looked like he’d just had ten years taken off his life. ‘What the hell are you doing on my roof?’

‘You weren’t answering your phone! What the hell are you doing with a baseball bat?’ Stiles waved a frantic hand at the offending object. ‘You don’t even fucking play!’ He flexed, getting up high enough to flip himself and land on his feet, a nifty little move he was particularly proud of. He vaulted over the porch railing and put his hands on his hips. ‘So I thought that we could go out and look for the dead body tonight.’

‘You’re kidding right?’ Scott took a step back, looking suspiciously like he was about to flee into the safety of his house. ‘You know how much trouble we’ll get into?’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles brushed that off. ‘It’ll be fine.’

‘I can’t.’ Scott protested. ‘Allison’s calling me after dinner.’ He smile that goofy smile of his and Stiles had to roll his eyes again.

‘Dude.’ He raised an eyebrow at him. ‘This is a dead body. You can speak to new girl anytime.’

‘Her name is Allison.’ Scott sniffed. ‘And if I’m out in the preserve I’ll miss it when she calls me. There’s like no signal out there at all.’ He shook his head, one foot back inside the house already. ‘I’m not going.’

‘But…’ Stiles protested only to be faced with the front door slamming in his face. Bemused and more than a little pissed off, he retreated until he could yell up at Scott’s window. ‘Bros before hos, dude. It’s like the guy code!’ He waited for an answer and got nothing except Mrs Andrews next door peering through her drapes at him.

Disconsolate, he trudged back to the Jeep and got in. On one hand, he could go to the preserve by himself. On the other hand, he could well get eaten for his trouble. He doubted internally for about five minutes and then glared back at Scott’s window.

‘Fuck that.’ he declared. He didn’t need a babysitter or a traitorous best friend. He was perfectly capable of crashing an ongoing search and investigation all by himself.

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Twenty minutes later saw him parking in the exact same spot he had hours before. It was raining lightly and he momentarily considered just calling everything off, but then his curiosity got the better of him.

This time the preserve was a lot more intimidating and Stiles scratched around in his glove box for a flashlight before he got out the car. The air was a little chillier than earlier as well, but the shiver going down his spine wasn’t entirely down to the temperature. He turned on the flashlight and decided to head in a slightly different direction to what he had that afternoon. The Hale house was creepy enough in the daytime.

Unfortunately his plans were pretty much scuppered when he got to the top of the incline and saw lights in the distance, along with the sound of people and dogs.

‘Crap.’ he muttered, realising that his father would definitely be in the vicinity. He crouched down behind a tree and watched as the line of the search team passed below him, heading towards the public part of the preserve and then decided to go back the way he’d come. He slid down the incline behind him before he slipped and ended up on his ass again, muttering obscenities as he got up and rubbed his now muddy hands on his jeans. His flashlight was lying a couple of feet from him in the
clearing at the bottom and Stiles made a face and went to go retrieve it.

Just as he knelt down though, he heard a sound that chilled him to the bone. It sounded like a very large dog growling and when he looked up he could just make out a dark shadow lurking in the bushes at the side of the clearing. As of to ramp up the tension, thunder sounded over head and Stiles flinched. He was frozen to the spot, but then the shadow started to move from where it was hidden and his breathing caught, his heart starting to thump a panicky beat against his ribs.

The thing that crept out of the bushes was like something from his worst nightmares. It wasn’t a mountain lion, that much was clear. The hind legs were too long, the front paws more like hands and it had eyes that glowed red as the growling picked up in volume. It paused, tensing as if to spring and then it threw back it’s head and howled.

Stiles was completely and utterly terrified. He shrieked and fell over, barely managing to get his feet back under him before he started running, not caring which direction he was going so long as it was away from the monster behind him.

It was too late though and he was barely back up the incline before he was bowled over a by a solid heavy mass, hitting the ground hard enough to wind himself and then the thing was on him. The pain was unimaginable. Stiles had never experienced anything like it. He was slammed into the ground with the thing on his back, razor sharp claws raking his sides and fangs sinking into his shoulder and then he was screaming and screaming and he was going to fucking die a virgin and this was the shittiest thing that has happened to him all day.

Actually make that all year. It was even worse than when Jackson hit him in the balls accidentally on purpose during practice.

Then it stopped.

Stiles’ ears were ringing and he was shaking violently. He could feel the fucking holes in his shoulder, his blood warm on his own skin, and he retched hard with bile rising in his throat and burning. The pain was like fire snaking over his shoulder and ribs and he just managed to get onto his back and then he saw the two shapes wrestling in the clearing he’d fallen in. The snarling was getting louder and he could only lie there and pant in terror until he was sure he was going to pass out.

He had no idea what happened but then he could hear the thing that attacked him yelping like a kicked dog and then it was silent. Footsteps started towards him and then he flinched as someone fell to their knees next to him.

“You asshole.’ he grumbled and it struck Stiles as wildly funny that even though he was bleeding and pretty much ripped to pieces, he could still recognise Derek’s voice. It was light enough as well that he could see Derek’s face enough to tell that he looked like he had a stick up his ass. ‘I thought I told you to stay the fuck out of the preserve.’

“You’re not the boss of me.’ he protested. ‘I could have made it, I just wasn’t not fast enough.’ He coughed and there was blood in his mouth. ‘Can you take me back to my dad. I’m sure he’ll appreciate you returning my body.’

“You’re not going to die, dummy.’ Derek huffed and then he was reaching down and gathering Stiles into his arms and fuck that hurt like a motherfucker, even though he did take a moment to appreciate that an insanely hot man was carrying him bridal style though the woods.

‘Pretty sure I am.’ he corrected, coughing feebly. ‘I’ve got big fucking holes in me.’ He wanted to
look at how bad his injuries are but everything hurts and he was just so done.

‘Christ.’ Derek muttered. ‘Don’t you ever fucking shut up?’

‘Dude, I’m dying.’ Stiles protested, although weirdly he didn’t feel as bad as he did a few moments ago. ‘These are literally my last words.’ He winced when Derek stumbled and jolted him. ‘Watch it!’

‘I already told you’re not dying, you idiot.’ Derek snorted, but it was pained and Stiles realised with no small amount of horror that the shirt he was clinging to was wet and smelled coppery. ‘Unless I kill you, which is quite possible unless you shut your fucking mouth.’

‘You’re hurt.’ He looked up at Derek’s perfect profile. ‘Maybe you shouldn’t be carrying me. Maybe you should just save yourself.’

‘Fuck this shit.’ Derek sounded annoyed. ‘Maybe I should just let him eat your ass.’

Stiles was not so far gone that he didn’t laugh a little at the sexual innuendo. All it got him was a disgusted look, but then there was another blinding wave of pain and thankfully it was the last thing Stiles saw. He slipped into blackness, regretting that he never even got to get off once with somebody. Life really sucked balls sometimes even if he never got to.

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The first thing Stiles noticed was that he was not as dead as he thought he would be.

The second was that he was also no longer full of holes. He gingerly prodded at his bare shoulder and side but found only smooth skin underneath the rips in his clothing.

The third was that he was lying on a mattress on the floor of a room that looked like it took some pretty intense fire damage. It was morning and he can make out a duffle bag lying on the floor and saw that he was covered with a sleeping bag that had been unzipped. It was red plaid and that made him grin and then pull it to his face because, damn it smelled delicious and soothed him for some reason.

He took a chance and sat up, realising that there was no pain at all and taking a good look at himself, stripping off his flannel to stick his fingers through the rips left by the creature’s claws and reassure himself that it was not a dream. He could see and smell the dried blood that made the fabric stiff and stuck his nose into it on instinct. It didn’t smell as repellant as it should have and before he knew what he was doing, Stiles was tentatively licking at the fabric. The coppery taste was much stronger than he’d ever remembered it being and it was even bordering on delicious, which blew his mind a little bit.

‘Stiles.’ He jumped when he heard Derek speak. It sounded like he was right in the room with him when he clearly not wasn’t, but at least Stiles now knew exactly where he was and that his assumption that Derek couldn’t be crashing in the Hale house was clearly wrong. ‘I can hear you’re awake. Get your ass down here. We need to talk.’

He got up, stretching and feeling oddly energised. Maybe it was having a near death experience, but Stiles felt...great.

How was that even possible?

He started to walk, wincing at the incredibly loud noises coming from the floorboards as they squeaked underfoot. It had a particularly sharp tone that made his ears physically hurt and Stiles shook his head to try and alleviate it. There was a sigh from Derek’s disembodied voice.
‘You’ll get used to that.’ He sounded weary. ‘Your body’s still adjusting to what happened to it, so you’re going to be hypersensitive for a couple of days. I’d suggest pretending you’re sick for a little while, get out of school if you can. This is not going to be a pleasant experience and being around other people is going to be difficult.’

‘Where the fuck are you, dude?’ Stiles was now getting more than a little irritated himself.

‘Downstairs, asshole.’ Derek muttered. ‘I got coffee.’

That got Stiles moving and he simply followed his nose once it caught a hint of java. He made his way down a dilapidated staircase and into a room to the left. Derek was there, kneeling at the fireplace. Stiles noticed a scarred table in the corner and a white paper bag and two take out cups of coffee in a cardboard holder sitting on the dusty top. His nose twitched when he identified danishes and he started drooling, too hungry to care what he looked like as he made a beeline for the food.

Derek glanced back over his shoulder at him, now dressed in black jeans and a grey henley that made him look a little like a brooding supermodel. Nobody’s ass should have looked that good at this time of the morning Stiles thought in a fit of pique, ripping into a danish.

‘Great.’ Derek stood up and glared at him, his own nose twitching as he sniffed the air. ‘Drooly. Terrific.’ He made it sound like maybe he’d rather Stiles had been eaten, so Stiles retaliated the only way he knows how.

‘Hey.’ he retorted. ‘Technically, this is your fault.’

Derek’s dark eyebrows did a thing where they meet in the middle and then rose up and then went back down again. The sheer number of emotions they conveyed on this particular journey was actually very impressive.

‘My fault?’ He sounded pissed. Come to think of it, he also smelled pissed and how the fuck could Stiles even know that? ‘I’m not the one who decided running around in the middle of the night in a forest that currently contains a dead body was a good idea.’

‘I had my reasons.’ Stiles lifted his head, still distracted by the whole food thing that was going on, cheeks bulging with partially masticated danish. ‘And how come I can smell you’re annoyed?’

That shut Derek up immediately and Stiles grinned.

Lions - one, Christians - nothing. Except he was getting the glare again.

‘How much do you remember?’ Derek growled, managing to make a simple question sound like a death threat.

‘Most of it?’ Stiles hedged. ‘I remember the getting gnawed on like I was a human dog toy.’

‘Great.’ Now Derek’s face changed to almost pure homicidal intent and it actually managed to freak Stiles out completely. ‘What about the thing that bit you?’

‘Dude.’ He did a full body shiver. ‘Cut it out. You look like a serial killer.’

‘Answer the question Stiles.’ Derek folded his arms and Stiles was momentarily distracted by the flex of his biceps and how the henley barely contained them.

Well, that was new.
‘I remember it wasn’t a mountain lion.’ He fixed Derek with a look. ‘In fact, I’d hazard a guess that it wasn’t anything like a normal kind of animal?’

‘It’s an Alpha.’ Derek replied with a huff. ‘A werewolf. Extremely dangerous and very clever and you’re lucky I was there to make sure your skinny ass didn’t get eaten.’

‘My ass is not skinny, it’s lean.’ Stiles snapped back. ‘And werewolf? What the hell are you even talking about? There hasn’t been a wolf in California for sixty years.’

‘Not a wolf, dumbass. You got bitten by an Alpha werewolf.’ Derek spoke deliberately like Stiles was being particularly dense. When Stiles blinked at him in incomprehension he snorted in derision. ‘You got turned.’

‘Holy shit’ Stiles felt it slowly sink in. ‘Fuck. Like I’m now a…’ He trailed off.

Derek gave him a mass murdering smirk and nodded.

‘Yeah.’ He didn’t sound the slightest bit sympathetic. ‘Congratulations, you’re now a werewolf.’

Stiles let the news wash over him. Then a slow smile started forming on his face and by the time he was done processing he was grinning like a lunatic. Which, he supposed, he now actually was.

‘Sweet.’ He looked at his hands. ‘Am I going to wolf out like that thing did?’

‘No.’ Derek snorted. ‘You have to be born a werewolf to do a full shift. You’re going to look more like this.’

With that he lunged forward, shifting into something that was terrifying and toothy and had no eyebrows at all and Stiles meeped in fright and fell over on his ass. Again.

‘You suck.’ He got back to his feet, eyeballing Derek and rubbing his bruised posterior. Then he stopped and gave him an intent look. ‘How come the eyes are different?’

‘Alphas have red eyes.’ Derek replies and shifted back into his human face. ‘I’m a beta. So are you now.’ He nodded at the coffee and the remaining pastries. ‘Now sit your ass down and I’ll tell you what’s going to happen.’

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A half hour later, Stiles was still hungry and nowhere near being satisfied with the explanation he’d been given. There was only the briefest of rundown, which had mostly consisted of him asking questions and Derek growling at him.

‘Okay.’ he said and narrowed his eyes at Derek. They were now on the even more dilapidated front porch and Stiles was still trying to get to grips with all the news sounds and smells around him. ‘I can’t ask you about how you got here, where you’ve been for the past six years, what you’re doing here or who the alpha wolf is? That cover most of it?’

‘Pretty much.’ Derek was unrepentant. ‘You forgot not being allowed to come back here, staying the fuck away from me and waiting for me to contact you when I think you’re ready to find out more. You’re going to go home, pretend to be sick for a week and stay inside at night. I can’t help you stay alive if you act like an idiot.’

‘I still don’t get why you didn’t just kill it.’ Stiles grumbled. He had not taken the news that Derek had only disabled the Alpha long enough for them to get away particularly well.
‘It’s a rogue Alpha.’ Derek’s voice was flat. ‘You’re lucky I was able to stop it as long as I did. It would have laid there until it healed enough and then fucked off. It certainly wasn’t there when I went back to check after I got you here.’

‘Great.’ Stiles folded his arms. ‘And now it’s after me?’

‘It will want you for its pack.’ Derek inspected his nails. ‘It’s going to come looking for you. That’s why you have to stay inside. That will hopefully give me another chance to track it down.’

‘And you’re definitely going to kill it?’ Stiles gave him a sidelong glance.

‘I’m going to try.’ Derek replied. ‘Then hopefully you’ll go back to normal. Or whatever the hell counts as normal for you. I heard somewhere that if you kill the were that bit you, you turn back.’ This last was said with a curl of his lip that revealed a hint of fang.

‘What do you mean hopefully?’ Stiles heard his voice go up in slight panic. ‘I’ll be human if you managed to kill it, right?’

‘No, I said you might be.’ Derek got up. ‘Come on. We need to get you back to your car and then you can leave me alone to clean up this mess you’ve made.’ He started walking off and Stiles had to scramble to catch up with him.

‘So that’s it?’ he demanded. ‘You’re just sending me back home with no information and advice other than develop a head cold and stay indoors.’

‘Exactly.’ Derek didn’t even look at him. ‘I find the Alpha, kill it and you turn back. Until that happens we need to make sure you don’t get into trouble or do something stupid that gives you away. Nobody can know about you or me or the Alpha and if I find out you’ve told anyone, I’ll rip your throat out with my teeth.’

‘Yeah, yeah.’ Stiles’ mind was racing. ‘Whatever you say, big bad.

They trudged through the woods afterwards until they got back to where Stiles had left his jeep. He noticed that Derek was making no move to say anything else so he just got in the driver’s side and sighed.

‘Guess, I’ll see you around.’ He was feeling a little dejected. Nothing this cool had ever happened to him and now he just felt like Derek had completely taken all the fun out of it. Although he did have a point, Stiles grudgingly admitted. He’d like to be alive to graduate.

‘I’ll find you when I need to tell you anything.’ Derek’s eyes were even paler in the morning light and Stiles found himself wondering just what colour they actually were. Derek turned and stalked off into the trees and left him there by himself. He hadn’t even offered to give him his number in case of newbie werewolf emergencies.

‘Douchebag.’ Stiles muttered and started the jeep. ‘I hope he chews your ass off.’

He reversed a little more dramatically than necessary and drove home, finding his house empty. His dad was probably still working and there was no message on his phone querying his absence, so he’d dodged a bullet on that one. Stiles grinned to himself as he wondered if now it would have to be a silver bullet. He usually adapted remarkably well to things, had learned how to not be too freaked out by the unusual, and this was no exception. It was the more mundane life experiences of bullying and stress that freaked him out so being a werewolf was not such a big deal when you were a social pariah with no mom.
He did notice just how much he felt at ease the second the familiar smells, now so much more intense, hit his nose. There was the smell of his dad’s aftershave, gun oil and leather, sweaty lacrosse gear that was still in the laundry basket waiting to be washed. It smelled like home and made Stiles’ unease that little bit easier.

He was starving though and his first priority, once he’d called the dispatcher and left a message for Noah saying that he was sick and could he call him in to school, was food. Thankfully there was sliced bread and pastrami in the fridge and he made three sandwiches and snagged a half empty bottle of soda from the fridge and headed up to his room.

There he was assaulted by a barrage of new scents and wrinkled his nose as he collapsed on his bed with his laptop in front of him and the plate of food at his elbow, the bottle on the floor in easy reach. He could smell himself first and foremost, the scent of his own body and the lingering smell of come from his sheets and the t-shirt he’d used to clean himself off the last time, and it made his nose almost twitch as his brain sorted through the different strands and assigned them an identity. It was overwhelming but also very cool and he settled down, opening his laptop and stuffing half a sandwich in his mouth in one bite. He couldn’t believe how hungry he actually was. The sandwiches disappeared quickly and he made another trip downstairs for two more and a bag of cookies he had stashed out of the way of his dad.

This time he ate more slowly and contemplated where to start. One thing Stiles prided himself on was the ability to research the fuck out of things. His best work was done with the laptop in front of him. It wasn’t always appreciated (his essay on male circumcision for Finstock being a case in point) but he knew he was smart. Maybe not Lydia smart, but he was up there. His GPA coasted along just fine without him even trying some days.

Once he had more food in his stomach he suddenly had more focus than he’d had in days, the caffeine from the soda making its way through his bloodstream. Raring to go, he grinned as he fired his laptop up and cracked his knuckles.

Let the information gathering commence.
Three hours later Stiles was jolted out of his hyperfocus by the sound of his phone ringing and realised he’d been way down deep in that hole that his ADHD drives him into. It’s the reason he did as well academically as he did and then his brain meandered and he wondered if he’d still need his Adderall now he was a werewolf. That thought didn’t freak him out and Stiles knew it was because he’d always been a little off when it came to shit like that, lost in fairy tales and fantasyland and RP games.

He picked up his phone and saw that it was Scott calling him.

‘Hey.’ He still sounded a little distracted. His werewolf research had led him down many a rabbit hole now that he’d focusing on shit other than porn.

‘Dude.’ Scott sounded worried but also ridiculously happy and Stiles knew it was probably because of New Girl. ‘Where the hell are you?’

‘Out sick.’ Stiles replied. ‘Probably something I ate.’

‘Did you actually go out last night?’ Scott asked and Stiles could hear him shift the phone from one side to the other, marvelling at how clear the sound was.

‘Maybe.’ he said and grinned at Scott’s sigh. ‘How was your phone call with Allison?’

‘Great.’ The distraction worked and Stiles could hear how excited Scott is. ‘Actually that’s why I’m calling. I have to ask you a favour.’

‘Oh now you remember that I’m your best friend.’ Stiles snorted and flopped over onto his back. ‘What’s up?’

‘So Allison said we could totally hang out but she’s already said she’d go over to Lydia’s because her and Jackson had this big fight today and she’s really pissed.’ That made Stiles blink and then he remembered. Lydia had also latched on to Allison and he’d seen them walking arm in arm through the quads and sitting together at lunch the day before.

‘So?’ He wasn’t quite sure what the problem was, although he felt jubilant at the thought of Lydia fighting with Jackson. ‘Go hang out with them.’ If he was being honest, he was actually pleased. In spite of Scott ditching him the night before, he really wanted to get back to his research and spend the night buried in obscure websites.

‘Well, I kind of wondered if you wanted to go with. That way you could give me a ride and also get to see Lydia.’ There was a knowing tone in Scott’s voice. ‘It’ll be the perfect set up, seeing as how they’re now friends. Kind of like stealth double dating.’

Stiles is not so convinced that Lydia will see it that way and snorted loudly.

‘Sure, buddy. Like Lydia Martin is suddenly going to realise I exist. Also you are aware that I’m out sick so so can do on the visitation rights, even for her. My dad will kill me if I go out.’ He huffed and picked at the hem of his t-shirt. Just his luck that he would have an opportunity to hang out with the girl of his dreams and not be able to go. He half considered just saying fuck it, but then the whole werewolf thing came back to him and he thought better of it.
Scott huffed and then put on his best wheedling voice. Stiles could almost picture the puppy eyes.

‘Come on, Stiles.’ he pleaded. ‘Say you’ll come with me.’

‘Dude, I can’t.’ Stiles kicked at the comforter on his bed. ‘Seriously.’

‘Why not?’ Scott sounded like he’s pouting now. ‘Your dad probably won’t be home for hours. You can totally sneak out.’

‘No, actually. I also have...stuff’ Stiles lifted a hand and studied his fingernails, wondering if he’d get claws like Derek had that morning. He was actually pretty bummed he couldn’t tell Scott what’s going on, but then threats of disembowelment will do that to a guy.

Then he had a brainwave.

‘Why don’t you come over here? We can watch movies.’ he offered and heard the way Scott was obviously fistpumping on the other side, his own smile breaking out as he congratulated himself on being far too smart for his own good.

‘Yeah?’ He was completely perked up. ‘That could totally work.’

They chatted a bit longer about what Stiles had missed at school and what Scott had talked about with Allison the night before. Stiles listened with half an ear and pondered being transformed into a creature of the night. Scott agreed to come over at around seven and bring stuff to eat and Stiles added some god awful romcom shit to his Netflix queue reasoning that he could do with the distraction and that the films he’d chosen would still allow him to keep working while they watched.

Scott had to go back to class so they hung up and Stiles spent the next five minutes finding and downloading a moon phase tracker onto his phone, adding the dates of the full moon to his calendar. Everything he’d researched so far had pretty much informed him he’d transform then, even if Derek had told him exactly dick with regards to this particular fact. But then he had seemed pretty convinced that he’d have Stiles back to his boring human self by then. Still, it didn’t hurt to be prepared and because Stiles was ridiculous when it came to being in the know, he’d discovered that being a werewolf didn’t make him immune to everything. Sure, according to so called experts he’d be stronger, faster and have killer senses but he was also going to be allergic to silver, aconite and vulnerable to any sort of charm that was designed to ward off supernatural creatures like garlands of dog roses and something called a werewolf whistle. That last one did give him a ferocious fit of the giggles though and every now and then, Stiles snickered. He had a whole raft of dog jokes brewing in his head and now he could totally use them on himself.

He had also found something called The Book Of Werewolves and started reading the online copy that he’d downloaded from Project Gutenburg. It was pretty interesting stuff and he learned a lot in no time at all by skimming through. Derek had told him he was a born werewolf and that meant there must be werewolf families, although pack was probably a better word, and also werewolf history. He made a mental note to ask Derek about that and kept reading until the sound of the front door opening hit his ears and Stiles almost levitated off the bed at how loud it was. He checked his phone and saw that it was after three. He hadn’t even noticed the time passing.

‘Stiles?’ His dad’s voice drifted up the stairs to him. ‘Hey kiddo, you home?’

Stiles smiled and rolled off the bed, heading downstairs to find Noah with his head in the fridge. Fatigue was rolling off of him in waves and to Stiles it smelled very distinctive, like stale air and dust all covered up in his dad’s aftershave and the familiar scent of his uniform.
‘I threw out the fried chicken you had stashed at the back.’ he said and his father had the grace to look guilty.

‘I didn’t have a choice.’ he protested and Stiles snorted. He’d already lost one parent and he wasn’t about to let a poor diet and stress filled lifestyle lead his other one into an early grave so he moved past him and got started on making an omelette while his dad poured himself a cup of coffee and sits at the kitchen table.

‘I take it you’re feeling better.’ he observed. ‘You know what it was?’

‘Probably a bug I picked up at school.’ Stiles replied. ‘You’re later than usual.’ He glanced over his shoulder and Noah gave him that look that told Stiles he was on to him.

‘I’m not telling you anything, so stop fishing.’ he said and Stiles grinned. That meant his dad knew something.

‘Okay.’ He flipped the omelette onto a plate and made up a quick green salad to go with it. ‘Here.’ He placed the plate on the table and went to grab some cutlery.

Noah sighed but accepted the offering with a wry smile.

‘No cheese?’ He sounded hopeful and Stiles relented and grabs the bag of pre-grated cheddar from the fridge. He dangled it meaningfully just out of reach until his father sighed. ‘Fine, but this doesn’t leave this kitchen.’

‘It never does.’ Stiles replied. It was sort of true. Scott ddin’t eally count because he never knew what to do with the information anyway and judging from his sudden mental incapacity due to Allison, he’d probably just forget anything Stiles told him in the following second.

‘We didn’t find the other half of the body.’ Noah sighed and started eating. ‘But we have a lead. Do you remember the fire six years ago?’

That immediately put Stiles on alert.

‘Yeah.’ he said. ‘The Hales, right?’

Noah nodded and spoke through a mouthful of omelette.

‘Well rumour has it the oldest Hale daughter was in town. A couple of people had seen her and then we got a call from her job this morning, saying that she was supposed to be back in New York four days ago. So I called the NYPD and they said that they had a missing person’s report for a Laura Hale on record filed by a friend. Not only that, but they had spoken to a couple of people and it turns out nobody can find her brother either.’

That makes Stiles drop the bowl he was busy washing into the sink. He spun around and stared at his father.

‘Shit.’ He ignored Noah’s raised eyebrow. ‘So you think it’s her who got murdered?’

‘We’ll know for sure when we get the DNA back.’ Noah replied. ‘We still have hers on file from the fire and let’s just say that we can’t use dental.’

‘Damn.’ Stiles was frozen to the spot, cold shivers going down his spine. That meant that Derek was there for a very specific reason and that maybe it was the Alpha that had killed her. He very much doubted that Derek would kill his own sister, so that was the most plausible explanation but it didn’t
tell him much else. ‘Have you got anything on why she was here?’

‘No.’ Noah sighs. ‘We’re trying to find her brother too, see if he came with her but nothing’s turned up yet. Like I said, NYPD are having a hard time tracking him down.’

That’s because he’s here. Stiles thought.

‘Wow.’ He leaned against the counter and affected a concerned air. ‘That’s pretty awful.’

‘I know.’ Noah ate the last bite of his omelette. ‘Who the hell would want to cut up a young woman and just dump her out in the woods like that.’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles was now feeling sick to his stomach. He knew that he would have to tell Derek. If he was hiding from the alpha there was no way he’d go near the cops.

‘That was good.’ Noah pushed his empty plate away. ‘Look, until we get a better handle on this, I would appreciate you staying home in the evenings. You and Scott can hang out here or go to his house, Okay?’ He got up and Stiles smiled as he comes over and planted a kiss on top of his head. ‘I just want you to be safe.’

‘Okay.’ He agreed readily enough. After all he was already under instruction. ‘Scott’s actually coming over tonight. He’s got this crush on the new girl at school and he wants to bring her over to watch movies and check in on me.’ He gave his father a smug grin. ‘Lydia Martin is coming with them.’

‘AS in your planned future wife, Lydia?’ Noah matched his grin ‘Sounds fine, just make sure you keep it clean. I’m going to be working this all night so I’ll see you in the morning. I’m going to grab a few hours sleep and then head back to the station.’

Stiles gave him a jaunty salute and watched him leave the room. He waited until he heard Noah close his bedroom door and then the sound of the shower going, taking his car keys from the hall table and going out to the police cruiser parked next to his jeep. He got in and sure enough, his dad had his case folders in the trunk. He always brought them home when he needed to think about things and Stiles found the one he wanted and sat in the front seat reading. Amazingly enough, he could still hear the shower and his father, even from outside, and was really starting to appreciate his new werewolf ears.

The pictures made him want to gag, but the coroner’s report was very informative. The weapon used was a sharp serrated blade, but it wasn’t what killed the woman. The cuts that had severed her in half were made post mortem. The cause of death was officially listed as exsanguination and Stiles knew what that meant. The fact that they hadn’t found her top half was probably very telling. After all, wolves killed by biting the throats of their prey and either asphyxiating them or bleeding them to death.

So many pennies were dropping that he was starting to feel like that little dude in Asterix and Cleopatra that gets covered in gold. He definitely needed to tell Derek. The guy was a grumpy asshole, but now Stiles knew that he had a good reason for his behaviour. If someone had killed and cut up his sister, he’d be an asshole too. And he did save Stiles’ life.

The only problem is that he couldn’t get hold of him.

What he did know was that Derek was hanging out in the old Hale house. At least he was pretty sure that’s where he had been that morning. A plan started forming in his mind. And he won’t be alone. After he took Scott and Allison home later that night (because he’d be a good host and offer to drive
them) he could convince Scott to go with him. Safety in numbers, right?

Derek did tell him not to tell anyone but then he wasn’t exactly being honest with Stiles, so he could afford a little bit of leeway. And Scott was like his brother. Derek would understand.

He hoped.

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The knock at the front door was unusually tentative and right on time at eight o’clock. Stiles’ ears had gotten much sharper in the hours between his call from Scott and the imminent arrival of him and the girls, and he could clearly hear that there was three of them outside. He could also tell that Scott was nervous, if the shuffling of his feet was anything to go by. But then Stiles could totally appreciate the nerves because Lydia Martin was outside his door. He had gotten progressively more and more worked up as the hours passed, going to shower, change and put on more deodorant than was necessary. He’d actually given himself a headache with the stuff, belatedly realising that werewolf noses were obviously super sensitive to artificial odours.

Still he thought he looked okay as he came down the stairs, butterflies in his stomach. The girl of his dreams was at his front door (he could smell her perfume even through the wood as he got close). This has been kind of a fantasy of his, ever since he’d decided that he really liked her, but when he opened the door and saw the three of them standing there, Stiles realised something was off.

Scott smelled like Stiles kind of expected him to - warm and a little earthy and with a chemical tinge from his inhaler. Allison was light and fresh, her friendly smile matched by her floral smell. It’s so weird how Stiles picking so much from smell in such a short time but he just seemed to absorb the sensory information.

Lydia, however, was another thing entirely.

Stiles didn’t know just what he was smelling but he could tell she wasn’t not happy, even without looking at the downturned corners of her mouth and the already bored look on her lovely face. Not only that but when she gave him an extended up and down, her smell changed even further and Stiles was appalled to realise that the acrid note he was smelling made him think of disgust.

Lydia didn’t just not like him, she seemed to be actively revolted by him, and that actually hurt - a lot. He stumbled back a bit and stammered out a greeting as they filed in. He saw Scott frown at him and then recovered enough to be a good host, putting on his most winning smile to try and salvage his dignity.

‘So.’ He forced a smile. ‘I guess you guys want to sit down? I got chips and sodas if anyone wants.’ He smiled at Allison, hoping to break the ice, and she smiled in response. Her smell tinged with warmth as she glanced back at Scott and Stiles briefly found himself as jealous as all hell because Allison clearly likes his best friend.

‘Thanks Stiles.’ She had a lovely voice. ‘We didn’t really get a chance to talk yesterday.’

‘I know.’ Stiles kept smiling at her and then got self-conscious at the way Lydia was looking around her like she had landed in the middle of landfill. ‘It’s not much I know - not compared to your house, Lydia.’

‘No.’ She fixed him with cold green eyes. ‘It’s not.’

‘So.’ Allison sounded too bright, obviously to counteract the supreme awkwardness. Her scent also changed, a metallic note tingling the edges. ‘What are we watching?’
They ended up watching the Avengers. Stiles was in his dad’s armchair, Scott and Allison on the sofa and Lydia on the loveseat. Popcorn and chips were passed back and forth and Stiles got up periodically to go to the kitchen to grab more sodas. They watched the first film and moved onto the next one. Lydia was spending more time on her phone than actually watching and Stiles could smell how bored she is. By contrast, Scott and Allison were riveted, their hands brushing as they dipped into the bowl of popcorn and caught each other’s eye. The ensuing blush was frankly adorable and made Stiles sink even lower in the armchair, feeling more and more horrible as the time passed. He hadn’t expected much, but the very clear indication of just how much Lydia didn’t want to be around him was making him sad.

He heaved a sigh. This is not how he had envisaged this going down. Completely unbidden, his mind wandered to Derek and what he might be doing. He thought again about whether he should say anything to Scott, but then kept his mouth shut. It didn’t stop his mind drifting though, and by the time the film ended Stiles was more than ready for them to all leave so he could get back to what he’d been doing before.

It was just before midnight when Lydia puts down her phone and her expression was triumphant.

‘Time to go.’ she announced. ‘Jackson has finally apologised so I need to go see him.’ She got up. ‘Allison?’

‘Oh, Okay.’ There’s a shuffle off the couch as Allison and Scott untangled themselves. Stiles walks them all to the door and Scott lingered while the girls went to the car.

‘Thanks, man.’ His brown eyes were sparkling. ‘I owe you one.’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles was pleased to see him so happy. ‘Next time though, don’t bring Lydia.’

‘No?’ Scott glanced over his shoulder at the car. ‘But I thought you wanted this. It was the perfect way to get you two together.’

‘She really doesn’t like me.’ Stiles said and the hurt was still there but it was sliding into resignation. ‘I just didn’t get how much.’

‘But you’ve had a crush on her since the third grade.’ Scott protests. ‘And it’s not like she doesn’t ignore you normally. What’s different now? At least you got to hang out with her.’

‘What’s different is that I finally got a clue.’ Stiles sighed, and then made a decision. ‘Look, I need to talk to you about something. Can we hang tomorrow after practice?’

‘Sure.’ Scott agreed readily. ‘You sure you want to go to practise? You were sick today.’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles slapped him on the shoulder and noticed that Scott winced when he did. He pulled back and stuck his hands in his pockets.

‘Damn.’ Scott rubbed his shoulder. ‘You been working out?’

‘Something like that.’ Stiles said. ‘I’ll catch you later, dude.’

‘Night.’ Scott gave him a little wave and headed to Lydia’s car.

Stiles watched them go and then retreated inside. He cleaned up the glasses and bowls and put everything in the dishwasher, stopping to look outside. There was a weird pull inside him, like he wanted to go outside and just take off and run through the woods out back. He walked to the kitchen door, placing his hand against the glass pane and looking outside. For a moment he felt like he could
just see a silhouette in the shadows of the back yard, but then Stiles blinked and it was gone. He sighed and felt his phone vibrating in his pocket. It was Scott thanking him and telling him that he kissed Allison good night and that his life was now perfect. Stiles could almost feel the giddy excitement coming off the screen. He skimmed through a few things as he made his way upstairs, so engrossed that he didn’t really notice the smell until he was actually in his bedroom. He looked up and saw the shadow in the corner, starting and nearly falling over onto his bed in fright. Then the smell registered properly and he huffed. There was only one person he could think of that smelled like the forest, leather and the ghost of old smoke.

‘Dude.’ He waved the phone at Derek in protest. ‘How the fuck did you get in? How did you even know where I live?’

‘You left your window unlocked and you haven’t actually moved house in six years.’ Derek replied, one eyebrow doing a judgemental dance. ‘That’s a stupid ass move. Lock them from now on.’

‘Please.’ Stiles snorted, brushing past him to lean out and check that no-one was watching the house. The last thing he needed was a nosy neighbour reporting his gentleman visitor to his dad. ‘Besides, it’s not like a pane of glass is going to stop a werewolf getting in.’ He pulled up his new app and showed Derek the screen. ‘Did you know it’s like full moon in five days?’

‘Yes.’ Derek said, arms folded. ‘I can track the cycle.’ He narrowed his eyes at Stiles and did a not so subtle sniff. ‘You had people over.’

‘I did.’ Stiles folded his arms in a perfect mirror image. ‘You told me I couldn’t go out.’ He frowned. ‘What are you doing here anyway?’

‘Forget it.’ Derek started to turn and then Stiles felt bad, remembering what his father had told him earlier. He moved quickly, grabbing Derek’s arm and catching hold of his leather jacket.

‘Hey, wait.’ he started and was silenced when Derek wheeled around, eyes blue and a low growl in his throat. He let go abruptly and then shuffles back. ‘I’m taking my hand off. But, I do need to tell you something.’ Suddenly his little drama with Lydia seemed so trivial and his shoulders slumped. Derek stilled, his eyes turning back to normal. He seemed to suddenly deflate and Stiles realised he was exhausted, amazed that he hadn’t seen it before. He was well used to running on empty and should have seen the same signs in Derek. He could also smell it, underneath the every obvious smells of junk food and unwashed male body that now told him that Derek hadn’t really had a chance to be anywhere remotely comfortable. That made him even sadder, knowing what he was about to do.

‘What?’ Derek sounded so much older than he should, almost faded out. Stiles thought about a mattress thrown on the floor in a burnt out house and a dead sister and it hit him like a thunderbolt that he was about to tell Derek that he had just lost his last living relative.

‘My dad came by this afternoon.’ He was shaking, not sure how to even begin. ‘He kind of has an idea about the body in the woods.’

‘Stiles.’ Derek started but Stiles cut him off before he could say anything else.

‘It’s your sister. At least that’s what he thinks. He also said that NYPD is looking for her and you because her job reported her missing.’ He stared at his feet, the sour note now suffusing the air telling him that Derek didn’t have as tight a hold on his emotions as he might have professed to. ‘This shit is getting pretty fucking real.’
'I already know it’s Laura.’ Derek’s voice was emotionless. ‘I found the other half of her last night before you showed up. That’s where I’ve been all day. I was burying her so no-one will find her.’

‘Shit.’ Stiles bit his lip. ‘I’m sorry, man. That really fucking sucks.’

‘I need to find that Alpha, Stiles.’ Now Derek’s eyes were glowing again. ‘That’s why I’m here. I have the name of someone, someone my family knew. He might be able to help us.’

‘Who is he?’ Stiles asked and got a soft growl in response. ‘Okay, that’s going under shit I don’t need to know isn’t it?’

‘Not so much as going under shit I don’t fucking know.’ Derek replied. ‘But yeah. If you turn back, it’s probably going to be better for you to know as little as possible. The problem is that I still need to track him down.’ He looked at the laptop on Stiles’ desk. ‘You any good with that?’

‘Uh, yeah.’ Stiles said. ‘You said you got a name?’

‘No.’ Derek huffed. ‘All I know is that he’s a druid. Laura and my mother were the only ones who knew his identity. He was the emissary for my family.’

‘A what now?’ Stiles did a double take. ‘Did you say druid?’

‘They’re kind of magical.’ Derek explained. ‘He used to work with my mom. You know, before…’ He trailed off and shrugged, the pure resignation on his face making Stiles heart ache.

‘What kind of stuff does an emissary do?’ he asked, moving to sit at his desk and feeling a lot more comfortable to get away from all the heavy emotional shit. Research he could do. He could research the fuck out of this.

‘It’s a liaison between a pack and the others in the supernatural world.’ Derek moved to stand behind him and Stiles shivered a little at his proximity, an odd tingle going down the back of his neck when he felt the air moved as Derek leaned over him. Not only that, but for some reason his heart started to beat faster and his entire body was aware of just how close they were.

‘Relax.’ Derek rumbled, but he sounded just the tiniest bit amused, although it was edged with something sharp. ‘I’m not going to eat you.’

‘Sorry.’ he muttered and Derek growled.

‘It’s fine.’ He shrugged. ‘I’m used to it.’ His emotionless tone makes Stiles feel even worse than Lydia’s rejection did.

‘You know what, this can probably wait.’ he said. ‘You just lost your sister. I get it if you want to take some time.’

‘I’m not interested in time, Stiles.’ Derek almost snarled. ‘I’m interested in finding my emissary and then locating the alpha so I can take that son of a bitch down for what he did. Can you help or not?’

‘You’re not giving me much to go on.’ Stiles protested. ‘You don’t have a name or an address, so where the hell am I supposed to start?’

‘They would have been associated with my pack.’ Derek replied. ‘Can you dig up anything that is related to the fire? The person would have been involved in dealing with what happened to Laura and me. She was nineteen so she was technically an adult but they must have helped her get guardianship of me and sort out things like insurance.’
‘Actually I think I can do that.’ Stiles’ fingers were now flying over the keyboard in a welcome
distraction. He half turned and saw Derek heading for the window. ‘You’re welcome by the way.’

Derek stopped half in and half out.

‘For the record, I never said I wasn’t grateful Stiles.’ His mouth quirked but there was no humour in
it. ‘I just think you’d be better off staying out of this.’

And with that parting shot, he’s gone and Stiles is left sitting with his mouth hanging open.

‘Too fucking late for that.’ He breathed out hard, shaking his head. ‘What the hell else am I supposed
to do?’

‘Try jerking off. Judging from the smell of your room, it helps.’ Derek’s words make him cringe in
embarrassment. He bolted to the window and saw him outside, standing next to a sleek black
Camaro. Stiles flipped him off and watched him get into the car and pull away.

He went back to his computer and spent the next three hours hunting down insurance records before
he hit on a name and smiling grimly because he actually knew who it was. The identity of the
suspected Hale emissary did surprise him, but what he knew of the man meant it didn’t sound that far
fetched. He’d been subjected to Scott’s family vet hour ever since he’d started working for Dr
Deaton and the man had even looked after Stiles’ boa when Kaa was still alive. He had a smile like
some sort of zen Cheshire Cat and Stiles didn’t quite trust him.

He did sound like a perfect candidate for a werewolf emissary though. His medical knowledge
probably came in very handy and Stiles spent a few moments thinking about going to the vet instead
of the doctor. He wanted to let Derek know what he had found, but of course he’d hightailed it again
without leaving any way Stiles could contact him.

Eventually, Stiles’s eyelids were drooping enough that he knew he had to go to bed so he abandoned
his research and changed into his sleep pants and an old t-shirt, snuggling up in bed. He still felt bad,
both about the Lydia thing and the Derek thing, although if he was being honest the Derek thing was
currently winning out. He couldn’t get over the complete lack of anything resembling normal human
emotions on Derek’s face, or the resignation when he’d spoke about his sister’s death. If that had
been Stiles he would have been taking the room apart.

He lay and stared up at the ceiling. Derek hadn’t mentioned anything else about staying off school
the next day so he assumed it would be okay. He wasn’t looking forward to hearing just how Lydia
was probably going to talk about him and having to endure an evening at his house. That got him
started on the way she had been and he found himself feeling completely put off even thinking about
her. It was pretty depressing.

He sighed and closed his eyes, and his nose picked up a hint of Derek’s scent lingering in the air. It
was far more pleasant than it had any right to be, even the stink of Derek’s stale sweat making his
nose twitch. It should have been gross, but then maybe now he was a werewolf he would appreciate
stronger smells. It certainly seemed that the more he breathed in, the more he liked it but the next time
he inhaled deeply, the weirdest thing happened. It was so weird that he actually lifted the comforter
and glared at his tented sleep pants in disbelief.

‘What the fuck?’ he muttered, squirming as his body kind of took over. His cock was now
completely hard and demanding his attention, arousal sweeping through him in a way it didn’t
normally even when deep in his preferred masturbatory fantasies about a certain red-haired person.

That made no sense at all. Sure he had maybe asked Danny a couple of times if he was attractive to
guys (gay ones of course, not guys in general he would hasten to add). And he would be lying if he’d said that he had never sneaked a peek at the guys around him in the locker room, but that was purely for comparison.

Right?

‘Shit.’ Stiles grimaced and pulled up the waistband of his sleep pants to get a better look. It was without a doubt a Class A erection he was sporting and for a second he felt incredibly guilty. It was bad enough that he knew knew just how much Lydia hated him, but to be getting hard over a guy he’d just met and who was grieving his extremely recently deceased sister seemed a step too far.

He tried to ignore it, but the smell of Derek in his room was just making everything worse so eventually Stiles gave up and jerked off, visions of multi-coloured eyes dancing in his head and Derek’s deep growl lingering on the edge of his hearing. When he came, it was desperately hard and with a sound that more guttural than he was used to making, along with a mouth full of sharp teeth and claws that made him yelp and let go of himself for fear of slicing anything off.

Yeah, that pretty much confirmed it - Stiles was completely fucked.
A Visit to The V-E-T

Chapter by HaleHathNoFury (My_Trex_has_fleas), My_Trex_has_fleas

Chapter Summary

Stiles starts to realise just how deep this all goes.

The sound of the front door closing jolted Stiles out of sleep. It’s obviously very early morning and he was sprawled on his bed and still dressed in his clothing from the day before. He heard his dad moving around downstairs and sat up, wiping away a string of drool. He really needed to get that under control and wondered if it was another side effect. That would be equal parts gross and hilarious if it was.

‘Hey kiddo.’ Noah looked up when he came downstairs. ‘What are you doing up?’

‘I woke up when you came in.’ Stiles scratched at his stomach, grimacing when it growled loudly. He’s starving again.

‘Sorry.’ Noah looked apologetic. ‘I didn’t mean to wake you. They’ve got me working all hours. How was movie night?’

‘Allison seems nice.’ Stiles walked across to the fridge and opened it, sniffing hopefully

‘She’s Chris Argent’s kid, isn’t she?’ Noah came to stand next to him, snagging some sandwich fixings. ‘We were in the same year at school. Interesting family.’

‘Really?’ Stiles poured himself a glass of juice and hopped up on the counter. ‘I didn’t know that.’

‘They moved away when I got to senior year.’ Noah told him and then frowned as Stiles stole the sandwich he’d just made. ‘You going to school later?’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles said through a mouthful of sandwich. ‘I’m also supposed to be doing some lacrosse practice with Scott later in our epic quest to get off the bench this year.’ He watched Noah for a moment. ‘You have any luck tonight?’

‘No.’ Noah’s blue eyes were sharp. ‘And that doesn’t mean I need any either.’

Stiles smiled. His dad can read him like a book sometimes. Too bad he couldn’t tell him he had a pretty good idea where Laura’s body is.

‘Are you going to get some sleep?’ he asked. ‘You can’t run on coffee and donuts, you know.’

‘Remind me who’s the kid again.’ Noah gave him a half smile. ‘Yes, I’ll get some sleep. Scout’s honour.’ He even did the salute.

‘Good.’ Stiles finished his juice and slid off the counter. ‘I guess I’ll see you some time tomorrow?’

‘Hopefully.’ Noah didn’t bother stifling his yawn. ‘I’m going to grab some shut eye and then head back to the station. Are you going to be okay by yourself for dinner tonight?’
‘Yeah.’ Stiles’ brain is already cooking up a scheme. ‘I’ll be fine.’

He waited for his dad to go upstairs and then texted Scott. A second later his phone rings.

‘Dude, what the fuck? It’s like three in the morning.’ He sounded half asleep still.

‘Hey.’ Stiles tried to inject the right amount of enthusiasm into his voice. ‘So I know we didn’t plan anything for later, but I think we should do some lacrosse practice.’

‘I can’t.’ Scott was trying to sound apologetic but Stiles can hear he really wasn’t. ‘Allison wants to study for the Chem test next week and I kind of said I would and her mom’s invited me for dinner and I can’t really say no.’

‘No, you can’t.’ Stiles knew he should feel bad that his best friend is so effortlessly ditching him but he actually feels the opposite. Now he’s got his whole afternoon free to follow other avenues of interest. ‘Look it’s cool. You go and have fun and I’ll see you later if you want. But I did tell my dad we would be together so if he happens to call, you need to cover for me okay?’

‘Sure, whatever dude.’ Scott was already going back to sleep on the other side. ‘Later.’ He hung up before Stiles can say anything else. He grinned at his phone and then jogged up the stairs, moving surprisingly gracefully before he ruined things by tripping over his sneakers and landing face first on his bed.

‘You okay, kiddo?’ Noah called from his room and Stiles righted himself and went to go lean in his dad’s doorway. Noah was in sweats and an old BHPD t-shirt, watching TV. His eyelids are already drooping.

‘Fell on my bed.’ Stiles grinned. ‘I did forget to say that after lacrosse practice we’ll maybe go out for pizza but I’ll be home by curfew.’

‘By nine. It’s still a school night.’ Noah instructed and waved him off. Stiles snickered and went back to bed. This time he had no problem falling asleep.

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The next morning, Stiles woke before his alarm and bounded out of bed. In the shower he gave himself a quick once over, frowning at the shape of his limbs. He’d never been the buffest of specimens and he got out and wiped off the steamed up mirror to get a better look. What he saw made his eyebrows nearly fly off his head.

He blinked, not quite believing what he could see. The sudden definition in his arms and shoulders was matched by what looked like a hint of a six pack. Stiles had long since given up any hope of ever having the kind of physique that would entertain a six pack, so this was beyond his wildest dreams. A delirious smile split his face from ear to ear and he fist pumped before charging out the bathroom and into his bedroom to root through his closet, thankful for once that he bought everything a couple of sizes too big.

He got dressed, snickering at himself as he pulled on his favourite red hoodie, and then went downstairs where he demolished half a loaf of toast and peanut butter, grabbed three bananas out of the fruit bowl and headed for school.

The first thing he noticed when he got there was that Scott and Allison were already kissing on the front steps. The next was that when he got out of the Jeep, Stiles was nearly bowled over by the smells. It was like an explosion in a perfume factory mixed with teenage pheromones and a healthy dose of bodily fluids. He had to physically brace himself before he could walk through the crowds
and get to the newly minted love birds.

‘Hey.’ He bounced in place and they both gave him a quizzical look. It was like being glared at by puppies and Stiles crinkled his nose in amusement at them.

‘You’re in a good mood considering you crashed and burned with Lydia yesterday.’ Scott remarked and Stiles grinned and clapped him on the shoulder, not missing the wince that got him.

‘Scotty, you look upon a reformed man.’ he declared. ‘I have bigger fish to fry than the lovely Lady Martin.’

‘Like what?’ Scott was wearing his confused puppy face while Allison was looking between them with a smile.

‘I’ll tell you later.’ Stiles said, pushing open the front door of the school and instantly regretting it. The wall of smell was almost overwhelming and it was coupled with so much noise that his ears actually felt like they were hurting.

Homeroom was hell. Lydia was refusing to even acknowledge his existence and Jackson was glaring at him like he was shit on his shoe. Stiles figured he’d found out about their little impromptu get-together and he did his level best to ignore him. He looked out the window and saw a girl sitting talking on her mobile home. He frowned as he realised he could hear what she was saying and then grinned. It seemed it was not only his nose that was in overdrive.

The rest of the day passed in a blur with Stiles spending most of it trying not to gag at the sweet way Scott and Allison gave each other heart eyes over the lunch table and eavesdropping on his fellow students to see how far his range of hearing extended. It turned out he was now the human equivalent of a surveillance device, although he wasn’t always pleased to hear what was being said.

By the time the final bell rang, Stiles was more than ready to get the hell out of there. He dumped his books in his locker, grabbed his backpack and tore out of the parking lot without so much as a backwards glance.

The drive to the preserve took him past the drive through and Stiles stopped for burgers and sodas. He had no idea what Derek liked so he got diet and regular. He had no idea why he was being so thoughtful, other than he wanted food and Derek would probably just steal his so it made sense to take extra.

He stopped to pick the lock on the preserve gate chain, now locked until further notice. Stiles was in possession of a lot of unusual skills, most of which no-one knew about, not even Scott. He drove the jeep through, getting out to relock the chain and then he was on his way into the park until he saw the roof sticking out through the trees, parking next to Derek’s Camaro and getting out with a low whistle of admiration as he peered into the window of the car. The first thing he noticed was that music was playing, the kind of electronic dance music that Stiles was definitely not expecting. He’d had Derek pegged as an angry death metal type of guy.

He walked towards the house, hearing the music cut out before Derek appeared on the front porch. He was in a white v-neck t-shirt that’s stretched indecently tight across his shoulders and Stiles melted a little, remembering the way his body had responded the night before. Derek was stupidly hot in the daylight, all muscles and stubbled jaw and Stiles realised with a little shiver of surprise that he would probably give his left nut just to lick him. As it was, he could smell Derek’s scent drifting downwind and it made him get a weird urge to go rub his face all over him. His sexuality was definitely not going to recover from this.
Derek folded his arms and glared at him.

‘You were told to stay away.’ He sounded annoyed but he didn’t smell that way. In fact he smelled distinctly not annoyed, which was odd.

‘Yeah, well I guess you probably figured out that I don’t respond well to instructions.’ He shrugged to indicate the laptop bag on his shoulder and held out the paper bag and drink holder. ‘And I think the fact that I think I found your guy and brought you take-out might make up for the disobeying the rules thing.’

Holy shit. Derek actually looked pleased, maybe even a little lost for words but then it was lost in a flurry of eyebrows.

‘Get your ass in here.’ he growled and Stiles found himself almost skipping up the stairs. He followed Derek inside and wrinkled his nose at the smell that assailed him, so much more pungent than the previous day. It was charred and awful and he didn’t want to know what the sweet cloying scent underneath it was. He had his suspicions and that made him a little sick to his stomach.

‘Here.’ He held out the drinks holder and Derek took it. ‘I got regular and diet, in case you’re worried about your girlish waistline.’

‘Asshole.’ Derek said, but the tone had changed dramatically from the first time he used it. ‘And for your information, I like the zero sugar kind. Just so you get it right next time.’

‘Hey, just because I’m now a werewolf doesn’t mean I’m your errand boy.’ Stiles retorted. He dug through the bag to liberate his two burgers and fries, setting everything on the table before grabbing his laptop out of his bag and getting set up. He took out the other two burgers, passing them one at a time to Derek. There was a second where their fingers brushed and it felt like a tiny electric shock. Stiles pulled his hand away a little too quickly and then started opening documents, knowing that his face was flaming red.

‘So I kind of hacked the City Hall.’ He couldn’t help but grin at Derek’s ill-concealed surprise. ‘You were right. The death certificates for your family were all issued to a man called Alan Deaton. Not only that but when I started digging a little further, I found the insurance claim on the house and life policies were also handled by him. Now that was interesting because it requires power of attorney. That I checked as well and got the same name. He handled pretty much everything after your family got killed.’ He stopped and waited for a reaction. ‘So that is pretty awesome but it gets better because I just so happen to know who he is.’ He gave Derek a sidelong glance and preened a little when he got an approving nod.

‘Good work.’ Derek remarked. ‘Thank you.’ He had one burger half unwrapped and consumed half of it in one bite, making a face that looked suspiciously close to happiness. It was enough to make Stiles break out into a wide smile.

‘Did you just say thank you?’ he asked, getting to work on his first burger. ‘Wow.’

‘Yeah, well don’t let it go to your head.’ Derek growled through a full mouth but it was too late, Stiles was already beaming. ‘Now are you going to tell me who he is?’

‘He’s Scott’s boss at the vet clinic.’ He shoved the rest of his burger in his mouth and gave Derek his cockiest smile. ‘So I figure we should mosey on over and talk to him.’

‘What do you mean “we”?’ Derek’s was busy with his second burger giving Stiles a look that said this was not going to be an easy win. ‘Your work is done. Now you get back in your jeep and go
home and be a good boy and stay the hell away from this.’

‘Uh, no.’ Stiles was scornful. ‘I did the work, dude. I get the pay off too.’

‘This is not a game Stiles.’ Derek admonished. ‘And I don’t need you tagging along and bothering me.’

‘You wouldn’t even have this intel without me.’ Stiles snorted, slamming the laptop shut. ‘I go and that’s the end of the story.’

He wasn’t expecting Derek to put down his soda and crowd into his space, eyes flaring blue and fangs out. He skittered back and then it was like something broke inside him and he felt a flash on intense pain in his gums. The next thing he knew he was getting right back in Derek’s face, snarling like an animal.

Derek didn’t even flinch. Instead he grabbed Stiles by the front of his sweatshirt and lifted him bodily, turning them and slamming him into the wall next to them. He crowded right in and Stiles growled, his chest vibrating with the sound. Derek was inches from him and there was something surging through him, heat and a deep seated urge to do something that would make Derek come in even closer. That wasn’t what he should want, but boy did Stiles want it.

Derek responded by roaring in his face, fangs out and eyes glowing electric blue. It was so loud it made Stiles’ ears hurt and then he reacted purely on instinct, tilting his head so his throat was exposed. He had no idea how he knew to do that, just that he had to.

Derek stilled immediately, the roar quieting to a deep rumble in his chest. Then he leaned in and Stiles felt him breathing on his neck, blowing air hot and damp over his skin. It made him break out in goose bumps and he whined, wanting more. His heartbeat was back down to a steady thud, blood rushing in his own ears as he felt his body respond.

Derek growled in reply and inhaled deeply along his neck before connecting. His stubble burned along Stiles neck as he rubbed his face over him and it was enough to make Stiles get stupidly hard.

‘Fuck.’ It came out a little strange because of the unfamiliar fangs in his mouth. ‘What are you doing…?’

‘Shut up Stiles.’ Derek rumbled against his neck, but he didn’t stop. Instead he moved to the other side and Stiles tipped his head obligingly, hands going to Derek’s hips to brace himself. He could feel the way it was soothing him and riling him up simultaneously, Derek’s deep rich smell pulling him back under control, fangs and claws receding and then it was just the two of them.

Derek pulled back and his eyes were wary.

‘You need to learn control.’ His voice was low.

‘You’re the one rubbing off on me.’ Stiles knew he should shut up, but he couldn’t. It was almost like a disease, his mouth working by completely bypassing his brain. He looked back at Derek and their eyes locked. It was all kinds of intense, enough to make his breathing hitch. This close up he could see the myriad of colours in Derek’s eyes - bits of gold all scattered on a grey-green background and kind of hypnotic.

‘You know I can teach you.’ Derek said, but he stayed put only inches from Stiles.

‘I thought you wanted me to stay away.’ He was starting to shake.
‘I changed my mind.’ Derek’s smile was slow this time, almost lazy. He looked down at Stiles’ mouth. ‘This way I can at least try to keep you out of trouble. Something tells me it just seems to find you.’ He finally moves away. ‘Okay. Get your shit so we can get the hell out of here. We’ll take my car.’

‘Sweet.’ Stiles perked up immediately. ‘I always wanted to ride in a Camaro.’ He grinned and decided to chance his arm. ‘And maybe drive one?’

‘Cold day in hell, Stiles.’ Derek growled. ‘Now move your ass.’

They drove into town and Derek glared at him when Stiles tried to change the radio station, the look enough to make him yank his hand back like he’d been burned. They got to the clinic and Stiles directed Derek to park around the back.

‘So we need a game plan.’ he said and Derek scowled at him. Stiles tried to ignore how horribly attractive it was and mentally berated himself for being an idiot.

‘You’re staying in the car.’ Derek ordered and Stiles got completely distracted by the way his thick eyebrows drew down so they were almost meeting in the middle, his mind running away to the line from one of his mom’s favourite films that said that you could always tell a werewolf by that very thing.

Derek huffed and then snapped his fingers in Stiles’ face, jolting him back into reality.

‘Hey.’ He raised the aforementioned eyebrows at him. ‘Are you even listening to me?’

‘Do you ever get tired of being so hot?’ Stiles asked and that was definitely not something he meant to say out loud. He clapped a hand over his mouth in mortification.

Derek just sighed in exasperation and got out the car. Stiles scrambled to follow and jogged to catch up so he could fall into step beside him. The clinic was empty when they went inside, and Stiles looked at Derek as Derek frowned and did a quick inspection of the reception area, sniffing as he went.

‘Coffee break?’ he asked and Derek’s eyes narrowed.

‘He’s here.’ He gave Stiles a pointed look. ‘Use your senses.’

Derek just sighed in exasperation and got out the car. Stiles scrambled to follow and jogged to catch up so he could fall into step beside him. The clinic was empty when they went inside, and Stiles looked at Derek as Derek frowned and did a quick inspection of the reception area, sniffing as he went.

‘Coffee break?’ he asked and Derek’s eyes narrowed.

‘He’s here.’ He gave Stiles a pointed look. ‘Use your senses.’

Stiles frowned and then focused. It started out as a low thump and then coalesced into a regular sound that he assumed was a heartbeat. There are others too, faster and lighter and he reasoned that those must be the animals. There were scents too, rich and acidic animal smells and the chemical tang of medication, the sharp acid of disinfectant. It was enough to make him sneeze.

Derek smiled, seemingly satisfied as he walked over to the counter and leaned on his elbow, deceptively casual.

‘Dr Alan Deaton?’ he called, voice carrying. ‘We know you’re here.’ There was the sound of someone exhaling and then a movement. Stiles had met Scott’s boss a few times before, but the normally affable man that he knew was not the one that stepped through the door, his face perfectly neutral and black eyes wary and closed off. When he saw them his scent even changed, a vinegary note coming through.

‘Do I know you?’ he asked and Derek smiled. It actually managed to make him look even more threatening.
‘You know me.’ He held Deaton’s gaze. ‘You knew my sister. And my mother. In fact, you knew my whole pack.’ There was a subtle emphasis on the last word but Deaton’s expression didn’t change.

‘How did you find me?’ he asked, folding his arms and lifting his chin, with not an ounce of fear in him. ‘No-one knew apart from them.’

‘He found you.’ Derek turned to look at Stiles and now Stiles smelled astonishment when Deaton focused on him.

‘You’re Scott’s friend.’ he said and then his expression changed to one of complete mystification. ‘And you’re… So that means you got…’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles interjected. ‘It was kind of an accident.’

‘You knew about the alpha, that Laura was here?’ Derek cut in. ‘You knew what she came to do?’

Deaton heaved a sigh. His shoulders slumped and he shook his head.

‘I told her it was a bad idea.’ he sighed. ‘I told her that it wouldn’t solve anything, digging up ghosts.’ He looked at both of them. ‘I feel I should point out that I am retired.’

‘We just need information.’ Derek folded his arms, the eyebrows back in full force. ‘That’s it.’

Deaton nodded at Stiles.

‘What exactly happened to him?’ His question was addressed to Derek.

‘The Alpha attacked him and I got in the way long enough to make sure it didn’t kill him, but you can probably tell what happened afterwards.’ Derek explained. ‘You know it’s what killed Laura?’

‘I guessed.’ Deaton looked sympathetic. ‘I know you and her weren’t that close after what happened, but I am sorry.’

‘She was here looking for something.’ Derek’s voice was flat. ‘I need to know what you know.’ Deaton considered and then nodded.

‘We better have a talk then.’ He beckoned to them. ‘Come on back. I have tea.’ He went through the doorway and Stiles looked at Derek, feeling more than a little smug that his lead had panned out.

‘Okay.’ Derek conceded. ‘Maybe this was a good idea.’

‘You bet your ass it was.’ Stiles grinned and ducked round the counter. ‘Don’t just stand there, come on.’

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The tea was peppermint and some sort of white flower Stiles didn’t recognise, but Derek took it readily and drank without hesitating so he did the same. He had to admit it was delicious.

They were in a back room at the vet, all sitting around a conference table and surrounded by filing cabinets and medical supply cupboards. Stiles was not sure he’d ever seen anything quite so funny as Derek holding a china cup in his huge hands, the way he sniffed the tea and sipped with prudish delicacy. It was surprisingly adorable and he had to bite his lip to keep from getting heart-eyes all over it, another new development that was taking him by surprise. Even his obsessive levels of Lydia worship had never seen levels like this.
Then Derek caught his eye and wrinkled his nose at the way Stiles must have smelled and the glare that was directed in his direction was harsh enough to strip paint and the illusion was well and truly shattered.

‘So.’ Deaton was sitting back in his chair, fingers steepled and his dark eyes fixed on Derek. ‘I want to know what exactly you know.’

‘Shouldn’t I be the one saying that.’ Derek growled at him. ‘Or asking why the hell this is the first time I am meeting you?’

‘Your mother wanted it that way, Derek.’ Deaton explained. ‘She knew that if anything happened to her, she would have to have someone she could trust to take care of things but who would be anonymous enough to steer clear of trouble. I did only what was required of me.’

‘Why would she want that?’ Derek’s voice rose slightly and his hand gripped the tea cup. Stiles can see his knuckles starting to go white and before he knew it, he was leaning over and taking the cup from Derek’s hand.

‘Dude.’ he cautioned, see blue flicker in Derek’s eyes. ‘Dial it back.’

‘Shut up Stiles.’ Derek snapped. His eyes were still locked on Deaton’s face. ‘So you did what exactly? After the fire.’ He raised his eyebrows in question, but the open hostility on his face was still very much in evidence.

‘I did all the paperwork.’ Deaton replied. ‘I buried your family, got the insurance paid out and covered any sign of you and your sister once you left town. Her and I both knew that whoever it was that killed your family, they wouldn’t stop until they had finished the job. It’s why she took you and ran. Peter was in no condition to go anywhere so I got him admitted to the long term care unit at the hospital and made sure that you would be as safe as you could be.’ Now he looked away and Stiles caught a hint of something in his scent.

‘You feel responsible.’ Derek said it like it was a revelation, the anger on his face evaporating.

‘Of course, I do.’ Now Deaton’s eyes flashed angrily, even as his voice rose slightly. ‘I was your mother’s emissary. I should have known there was a threat. It’s one of the reasons I retired. I could no longer serve any pack in good faith.’

‘No.’ Now Derek’s voice changed and so did his smell. It felt like shame and that makes Stiles pay attention. He’d always been good at listening and there was so much now happening in this conversation that he knew he needed to remember everything. ‘It wasn’t your fault.’

‘I did not know about the hunters.’ Deaton sighed, his face growing sad. ‘If I had, I would have been able to warn Talia. It could have saved your family.’

‘It probably wouldn’t have changed anything.’ Derek lowered his head. ‘How long were you in contact with Laura?’

‘All the time.’ Deaton relied. ‘More so in the past six months. She thought she had found something. Something to do with who they were.’

‘I know.’ Derek said. ‘The last time I spoke to her, she said as much. Then she came here and I couldn’t get hold of her. It’s why I left New York and came back to find her. I had a really bad feeling and as it turns out I was right.’

‘She was already dead.’ Deaton confirmed. ‘She came to see me when she got into town, but then she disappeared and I had no way of finding her.’
‘It doesn’t matter anyway.’ Derek pulled himself together and the emotion disappeared from his face. ‘But she was killed by an Alpha. And now I need to find it. It bit Stiles out in the preserve and if he’s going to stand any chance of surviving I need to kill it.’ He looked at Deaton. ‘Do you have any idea who it could be?’

‘No.’ Deaton was apologetic. ‘I really don’t.’ He turned and addressed Stiles. ‘What about you? I assume you’re turning.’

‘What?’ Stiles was caught off guard. ‘You mean what’s happening to me?’

‘He’s coping.’ Derek interjected. ‘And he’s going to be staying away until I can deal with this.’

‘What about full moon?’ Deaton frowned. ‘You know what will happen to him.’

Now Stiles stomach knotted and he looked to Derek.

‘Uh, what’s going to happen to me?’ He asked but got nothing but a blank face. He really should play poker, Stiles is pretty sure he’d clean up.

‘That’s a need to know, Stiles.’ Derek started and Deaton gave Derek a stern look.

‘No, it most certainly is not.’ He sounded adamant. ‘You haven’t explained this to him?’

‘I’m handling it.’ Derek growled. ‘The less he knows at the moment, the better.’

‘Absolutely not.’ Deaton shook his head. ‘He needs to know. Killing the Alpha doesn’t necessarily mean things go back to normal. Had you thought of that?’

‘It will.’ Derek insisted. ‘It has to.’

‘You need to have a talk.’ Deaton was not letting him off the hook. ‘Stiles, there are a lot of things you’re going to be dealing with, but it’s not going to sound right coming from me. You need another wolf to guide you through it.’

‘Is that what you meant by training me?’ Stiles asked Derek and caught a brief glimpse of surprise crossing Deaton’s face.

‘Partly.’ Derek admitted. He looked at Deaton and his eyes were now blazing. ‘What is it I should be explaining, exactly? How he’s going to end up spending his life running from hunters? That humans will always let him down? Or maybe how losing your entire family really fucks up your life and the only person who you are able to talk to about it is so obsessed with what happened that she spends the next six years dumping you in empty houses and leaving you alone until you turn eighteen and think fuck it so you bail and pretend like nothing ever happened?’ His eyes were flashing blue again and Stiles could smell his anger returning at full force. It was rapidly getting out of control and he looked down at Derek’s hands, seeing the claws that were already sprouting.

‘Leaving him ignorant won’t help, Derek.’ Deaton replied, but he was clearly unhappy.

‘Maybe I just want to protect him from that until we know for sure whether he can go back to being a normal kid who’s biggest fucking worry is whether the hot girl’s going to ever give him the time of day.’ Derek’s entire face shifted, fangs appearing, and Deaton was on his feet, hands up in a conciliatory gesture.

‘Derek.’ He sounded firm but not afraid and Stiles was amazed because he was ready to shit himself. ‘Calm down.’
‘Don’t tell me to fucking calm down!’ Derek roared and Stiles knew he was as close to losing it as he could possibly be as he watched him wolf out. The rage coming off of him was potent and Derek’s elevated heartbeat thundered in his ears so what Stiles did next was purely instinctual.

‘Derek!’ He moved between Deaton and Derek and he had no idea how he knew Derek wouldn’t rip his face off, but he just went with it. He reached up to get his hands on Derek’s face and basically yanked him around so he was staring into Stiles’ eyes. ‘Hey, man. It’s okay. Just fucking chill!’ He gave Derek a little shake for good measure. Derek’s furious eyes met his and he realised what he’d just done and dropped his hands, holding them up like Deaton had done. ‘Okay, backing off now.’

Then something unexpected happened and Derek backed down, claws and fangs retracting and the blue light fading from his eyes. He stepped back from Stiles, still breathing hard but regaining control so his face went back to normal and Stiles’ could hear his heartbeat starting to even out so he chanced a reassuring smile.

‘That’s it.’ He kept his voice soothing. ‘You’re cool. Just breathe, big guy.’

‘You’re such an asshole.’ Derek snarled, but he was just him again, albeit still huffy. They all stood there and Stiles glanced at Deaton to see him staring at Derek like he’d just been slapped in the face.

‘Derek…’ he started and Derek threw up a hand, silencing him.

‘Not a goddamn word.’ he hissed and looked at Stiles. ‘We need to go. Now!’

‘But…’ Stiles started to protest but Derek already had him by the scruff of the neck and was hauling him out of Deaton’s building. When they got to the car, he nearly threw him into the passenger seat of the Camaro before getting in the other side, starting the car and burning rubber all the way out the lot. Stiles finally managed to get his breath back and goggled at him in disbelief.

‘Dude?’ His own heart was pounding, adrenaline surging through him. ‘What the fuck?’

‘That was a bad idea.’ Derek growled. ‘I’m not going back there.’ He glared at Stiles. ‘And neither of you.’

‘Hey.’ Stiles sat up straight. ‘You’re not the boss of me.’

‘I’m the one looking out for you.’ Derek snorted. ‘So yeah, I kind of am.’

‘Fuck that shit.’ Stiles countered. ‘It you’re looking out for me than what about everything that Deaton said I needed to know, huh? And what the hell was all that stuff about your family?’

‘Exactly that.’ Derek snapped. ‘My family, Stiles. My business and not yours.’

‘Jesus.’ Stiles slumped back in his seat. ‘You know you’re going to have to trust me at some point, right?’ He glanced at Derek and saw how his hands tightened on the steering wheel while his heartbeat rocketed.

‘I don’t trust anyone.’ he declared. ‘It’s better that way.’ The sadness and resignation in his voice and his smell shut Stiles right up.

‘Derek…’ he started and Derek’s shoulders tensed and then the anger was back.

‘Don’t say anything else.’ he ordered. ‘Not a damn word or I swear to God I will throw you out the fucking car.’ Stiles slumped back in his seat, folding his arms and keeping his mouth shut and the rest of the drive back to Derek’s was frosty, the silence almost overwhelming.
Stiles got out and stamped over to his car, not even looking back once until he was in the driver’s seat, starting the engine and reversing. Only then did he chance a glance and saw that Derek was still in the driver’s side of the Camaro, head bowed. Stiles felt a pain in his chest, fleeting and stabbing through him like a knife but he swallowed it down and left to go home.
You're a What Now?

Chapter by HaleHathNoFury (My_Trex_has_fleas), My_Trex_has_fleas

Chapter Summary

Scott is confused, Stiles is questioning everything and Derek is snarly.

Stiles got home and parked up, still seething.

He stalked inside, slamming the door behind him and charging up the stairs. He was feeling so enraged when he got to his room that his mind started to race and he knew that he needed to talk to someone. Derek had told him to keep quiet but that wasn’t an option he wanted anymore so he took out his phone and sent a message.

Hey, I know you’re busy busy but I need to talk to u.

The reply came in under two seconds, which had to be a record for the newly-smitten Scott and Stiles was touched.

Dude. U ok?

He sighed and rubbed a hand over his face.

No. Things are kind of fucked up. I need some advice.

He threw himself on the bed in a fit of dramatics and then lay there staring at the ceiling. This was all so fucking confusing and he wanted nothing more than to get back in his car and go find Derek and make him explain himself. Then his stubbornness kicked in and he snorted angrily and got back up, going to his desk. If Derek wasn’t going to be forthcoming then he needed to be proactive. Deaton had mentioned hunters and now he at least had something to go on. He started working, getting lost in it for ages and so caught up he wasn’t expecting the call. In fact, when his phone rang, he almost jumped out of his skin.

‘Hey.’ It was Scott. ‘Can you let me in. I’ve been knocking but you are obviously zoned out.’

‘Huh?’ Stiles frowned and got up. Now he could hear Scott at the front door and checked the time, startled to see it was already after nine. ‘You done with dinner?’

‘Yeah.’ There was something in Scott’s voice. ‘Looks like I may have something to tell you too.’

‘Dammit, Scott.’ He opened the door. ‘Well, what?.’

‘Dude.’ Scott looked worried. ‘You first. You really don’t look okay.’

‘I’m not.’ Stiles replied. ‘That’s why I wanted to talk to you.’ He caught Scott by his sleeve and dragged him inside. ‘Not here though.’

They went upstairs and Stiles slumped into his chair around as Scott dumped his backpack and sat down on the edge of the bed.
‘There’s been some shit going on and I need to tell you about it,’ he said and Scott started to smell sour. His dark brows drew down and then he was leaning across, elbows on his knees.

‘It’s okay, Stiles.’ His face was an open book, radiating concern like he always did. ‘You can tell me.’

Stiles inhaled deeply, steeling himself.

‘Okay so you know how I wanted to go look for that dead body?’ he asked and Scott nods. ‘Yous asked if I did and I said maybe. Well I kind of maybe went without you and I kind of maybe got into something.’

‘Okay?’ Scott was frowning in mild confusion and Stiles inwardly cursed choosing a best friend who was a master at loyalty and enthusiastically joining in his terrible schemes and not one who was...well, better at picking up cues.

‘So I had an experience.’ He knew he wasn’t really making much sense. ‘I met someone out there. And something.’

‘Dude!’ Now Scott’s eyes lit up. ‘Is she hot?’ He was grinning like crazy. ‘No wonder you’ve been kind of weird this week.’

‘Wait, no.’ Stiles shook his head and then glared at him. ‘I’ve been weird?’

‘Yeah.’ Scott nods. ‘You were off sick and today you were distracted and not really there, kind of.’ He shrugged. ‘Now I know why.’

‘No, that’s not it.’ Stiles protested but Scott was away with the fairies by this point.

‘So it makes total sense that you met a girl you like. That’s awesome, even if it’s a little weird you met in the woods in the middle of the night. Hey, we can totally double date. Is she someone from school? What does she look like? I bet she’s…’

‘Scott!’ Stiles had to stop this disaster before it completely derails his attempt at confessing. ‘I didn’t meet a girl. I ran into Derek Hale and got bitten by a werewolf and now I am one!’ The last bit was blurted out and he could actually pinpoint the moment that the penny dropped.

‘What?’ Scott’s look of utter confusion was ridiculous. ‘Did you just say...werewolf?’

Stiles looks at him and nodded. For a moment he thought it was going to be okay and then Scott started laughing.

‘Oh man.’ His whole face was creasing up. ‘You really had me going there for a moment.’ He was actually holding his sides, the stupid bastard, and Stiles lost what little control he’d been hanging onto since he had left Deaton with a super prickly werewolf.

He lunged into Scott’s space from the chair, his eyes flashing gold and his fangs coming out and growling so loudly he would swear Scott’s hair blew back a little before he yelled and scuttled back onto Stiles’ bed, flattening himself against the wall and his face a mask of terror. Stiles was hit in the face by a flailing arm and the sudden stink of terror and it cooled him off like a glass of water right in the chops. He backed down immediately, the shock changing him back.

‘Dude.’ He was now horrified at his reaction. ‘It’s okay, it’s me.’ He backed away slowly. ‘See, giving you safe space.’ He retreated to the desk and stayed there. Scott was wheezing and he dug out his inhaler, taking several deep puffs and flopping down on the bed looking pasty.
‘Fuck.’ He was staring at Stiles, his dark eyes still terrified. ‘What the hell happened to you?’

‘Exactly what i just said. ‘Stiles repeated. ‘I got bitten by a werewolf and now I am one.’ He sighed deeply. ‘So...I kind of wanted to tell you when it happened but Derek told me not to and…’

‘Hang on.’ Scott was back in confused territory again. ‘Who the hell is Derek Hale?’

‘He was a few years older than us.’ Stiles said. ‘His whole family was killed in a fire like six years ago. Anyway that’s not important?’

‘Is he the one that bit you?’ Scott asked, his whole face scrunching up as he tried to understand. ‘No, he’s not.’ Stiles pinched the bridge of his nose. ‘Look he’s a werewolf but he’s not the werewolf. He’s been kind of helping me to understand what’s happening. Sort of. Actually no he’s not told me very much but that’s besides the point. The point is that I’m now a werewolf and you’re my best friend and you have to help me.’

That seemed to be something Scott could understand and he nodded frantically. ‘Absolutely.’ He moved forward on the bed, swinging his legs back to the ground. ‘What can I do?’

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Derek sat at the top of the stairs and listened to the house.

The last time he was there had been the morning of the fire. His mother had made him breakfast and he’d eaten it at the table with Laura, holding Cora in his lap. His father had been upstairs and Peter had come down and ruffled his hair in that annoying way of his and Derek had laughed and not thought anything of it, nor of the other nine people who had been milling around.

They hadn’t come back after the fire. There had been police and social workers and then Laura had packed them up in his dad’s Camaro and they had left California not a day later. They had gone from place to place, staying only long enough for him to get his GED, and then she’d taken off and he’d gone to college, hoping it would give him some sort of security. Afterwards he’d chosen New York as the place to start again because it was far away from his life and Beacon Hills while still close enough to Laura. It had been far away what had happened. What he’d let happen.

He lifted his head and scented the air. He could still smell Stiles lingering in the house and it stilled his anger in a way he knew it shouldn’t have. He’d nearly lost it with Deaton, his anger at the druid almost making him attack, but Stiles had stepped in and it was like his mom had done, bringing him back into himself and making the wolf calm and grow gentle under her hand.

This was not something he’d ever expected.

A wolf’s anchor was sacred, something that rooted them into their humanity and allowed them to control their inner beast. Talia had been his first anchor, just she she had been for all her children. His father James had been human, not subject to the same biological rules as werewolves. After the fire, Laura should have become his anchor. But she had been restive and angry and determined to find the people that had killed her family and that had made it difficult. Derek had never told her that he was the reason they had died, and so their relationship had become strained and the link between them broken.

As he’d gotten older, his anchor had changed. He’d grown to realise just how badly he’d been manipulated and that had fed the all consuming anger inside him. It’s constant presence had become the anchor he so desperately craved and it had given him strength. It had also made him closed off
and difficult to relate to and Derek had not had another significant relationship with anyone before he’d left to come back to Beacon Hills. It told its own tale that he was closer to a random kid he’d meet only a day previously than to anyone he’d fucked in the past six years.

He needed to cut this off and soon, before the attachment was too strong to ignore.

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‘So.’ Scott’s had his concentrating face on again. ‘You’re a werewolf and you got turned by this thing called an Alpha.’

‘Correct.’ Stiles was amusing himself by trying to hold his pen between his nose and upper lip.

‘Derek is also a werewolf, but he’s not an Alpha.’ Scott frowned. ‘Then what is he?’

‘Don’t know, don’t care.’ Stiles snorted, even though he knew that was blatantly untrue.

‘And he needs to kill the Alpha so that you turn back to human.’ Scott said. He looked at Stiles with scepticism written all over his face. ‘Just how the hell is he going to do that?’

‘No idea.’ Stiles tipped his head back. ‘God, I’m starving.’

They ended up in the kitchen with Stiles is making them pizza rolls from the freezer and watching as Scott finally seemed to get it.

‘So what does all this mean?’ he eventually asked. ‘Like are you different?’

Stikes gave him a look of disbelief.

‘Seriously?’” He pulled a face. ‘Did you miss the fangs and the glowy eyes shit?’

‘No, I get that.’ Scott was looking thoughtful. ‘But you said that wolves have better senses, right? So how much have you tried out?’

‘Well, I can smell a lot better.’ Stiles replied. ‘I can smell that you had cherry cola at Allison’s and that she was wearing watermelon lip gloss.’ He grinned at Scott’s blush. ‘I can also hear your heart beating, which is pretty cool.’

‘Are you stronger?’ Scott asked.

‘I guess.’ Stiles shrugged, thinking about Derek fighting the alpha and carrying him through the forest. ‘Maybe faster too.’

‘Dude.’ Now Scott looked downright envious. ‘Don’t you see what that means?’

‘No?’ Stiles wasn’t quite making the connection and then his brain fired and it slapped him in the face. ‘Shit! I’m going to totally rule at lacrosse if that’s true.’

‘Dude.’ Scott bounced in his seat. ‘And Finstock is totally looking for new guys for first line. You can finally get off the bench.’ His smile was wide and Stiles remembered why he was his best friend. ‘It’ll be awesome.’

Suddenly things were looking up.

‘Okay.’ He grinned. ‘I can work with this.’
‘So, this is going to change everything.’ Scott was rattling ideas off like he did when he was excited. ‘You can make first line and that means that Lydia will totally notice you and maybe break up with Jackson and then we’d be like our own group…’

And that was when Stiles remembered Lydia’s reaction to him and he instantly backtracked.

‘No.’ He shook his head. ‘Dude I told you, she really doesn’t like me.’

‘You can’t give up that easily.’ Scott laughed. ‘She’ll come around once you turn into a lacrosse god.’

Stiles watched him stuff two pizza rolls in his mouth in spite of having had dinner already, and heard a traitorous little voice in the back of his head saying that Derek was far hotter than Lydia would ever be, and boy would he turn heads at prom. Then he immediately jumped all over that thought because that made him think about the way he’d put his face in Stiles’ neck and he had read enough fanfiction to know what the fuck that was supposed to mean even if his dick hadn’t been all over that already.

No, he really didn’t want Lydia. Not anymore.

Lacrosse on the other hand was something he’d wanted forever and it would make his dad super proud to see him playing first line and maybe kicking everyone’s ass out on the field. So fuck Derek and his stupid concerns. He was going to use his new found talents and get on the team and blow everyone away. Derek would just have to suck it. That of course brought up a whole other set of images and Stiles had to get up and go stand over by the sink and take deep breaths because he was imagining Derek on his knees in front of him, looking up at him with those glowing not-quite-green eyes while he sucked Stiles’ cock like a pro and all Stiles’ blood was heading south. He really needed to get a handle on this and lacrosse sounded like a fucking perfect distraction. Thankfully Scott was blissfully unaware of his inner turmoil and Stiles turned to watch him stuff the last pizza roll in his mouth.

‘You need to try this out.’ he mumbled thoughtfully through a mouthful of cheese and pepperoni. ‘When’s your dad home tomorrow?’

‘He’s not.’ Stiles replied. ‘He’s working nights.’

‘Sweet.’ Scott got up. ‘You wanted to practice. Let’s go practice after school.’

‘Okay.’ Stiles smiled. He was feeling better already knowing that he had someone to share his secret with.

He walked Scott downstairs and they wrestled his bike into the back of the jeep before Stiles drove him home. He waved him off and turned around to drive back. As he did so, he could have sworn he saw a couple of red points of light in the trees opposite Scott’s house, but when he blinked they were gone.

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Derek ran the perimeter of the land that his family had presided over for decades. He tried to focus on his breathing, the feel of the hard packed dirt under his bare feet and the smells around him.

He’d loved to run, his pack around him. His mother had been fastest, her wolf form outpacing all of them. He knew that if was a rare gift, the ability to do a full shift, and when the power had passed to Laura he’d been more than a little envious. Now it was lost along with her and Derek knew he’d never be worthy of the legacy his family had carried so proudly. There was so much he’d never
learn, so many things Laura had never told him as they’d drifted further and further apart.

He’d buried her as best he could, even with only half a body to work with and half remembered recollections of the old chants and rituals. It made him curl in on himself with grief and guilt that he couldn’t get back what the police had found, but he was also well aware that it would only bring scrutiny when he could ill afford it. There had been enough people already giving him looks that lingered just a moment too long, appraising him at a distance and seeing his father’s face and mother’s dark hair. He hadn’t changed that much from the teenage boy that had been spirited away by his barely legal sister and he knew some had already identified him. The Hales and their terrible fate was something that had shaken the town badly.

He should have recognised Stiles sooner. His recollection of the small boy that had been attached to Deputy Stilinski, seen at town events and when Cora had been allowed to take part in community programs at the library, was of those huge brown eyes and overwhelming energy. Stiles hadn’t changed that much either, his scent still the same. It got right up Derek’s nose, now so thick and eliciting such a powerful response from him it was making his head spin.

He’d heard about the bond between mated wolves, how it could come out of nowhere and hit you right between the eyes. Stiles had been a wolf only a short time but Derek could feel the pull between them. He had no idea if it was reciprocated. Stiles smelt low key horny almost all the time, just like he had at the same age. It had made his sisters grumble but now it was making him crazy enough that he had let Stiles get in his space at Deaton’s and anchor him back into himself.

Not even Laura had been able to do that. He needed advice and it seemed like there was only one place, even if the thought of trusting the emissary that had let him and his family down grated at him to the point where he wanted to just just bite the man.

Derek slowed as he came out over the lookout point at the edge of the preserve that gave him a perfect view of Beacon Hills and all it’s twinkling lights. Here he stopped and drew in a deep breath, then frowned as he smelt the same odd scent he’d picked up from the alpha.

He took a moment to scent the area more thoroughly, listening carefully as he did. There was nothing to alert him, just the normal night-time noises, but that awful chemical stink was a lot stronger here than Derek had found anywhere else he had searched. This was somewhere the alpha came regularly it seemed and that set him on edge. Whoever it was might have had a connection to this place. It was fairly notorious as a make out spot and had been since his parents had been dating and probably even before. Since the curfew though, it had been deserted. Any human scents he picked up were days old and stale.

His mind raced as he paced the ground and then looked towards town. On instinct he moved to the edge of the rocky outcrop, threw back his head and howled. He let out all his anger and the sound echoed down into the dark trees, carried on the night air.

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Stiles lifted his head, eyes glowing as the sound of the howl sent a shiver down his spine. He knew without knowing how that it was Derek calling and the tension in his chest grew, until it almost felt like a physical tug.

He wanted to get up and go to the window, throw it open and answer. He wanted Derek to come to him, climb in and maybe stay long enough to see if there was really something in all these feelings he was having.

Instead he lay back down, but it took a long time for him to go back to sleep and when he did, he
dreamed of electric blue eyes and the sense of being watched.

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Deaton was busy bedding the animals down for the night when he felt the presence of someone behind him.

‘You ready for a real talk?’ he asked, not turning around and impressed that Derek had made not a single sound. ‘Because if not, I’d rather you didn’t waste my time.’ Now he looked around at Derek, taking in the dark shadows under his light eyes and the wrinkled clothing. ‘When was the last time you slept in an actual bed? When was the last time you slept at all?’

‘I don’t sleep particularly well these days.’ Derek said, the sharpness underneath his words mirrored in the flash of fang that Deaton got.

‘No. I can’t imagine you do.’ He sighed. ‘You’re drifting. Laura said that you’d become disconnected.’

‘She’d know.’ The bitterness in Derek’s voice was terrible to hear. Deaton remembered a sweet natured boy with a ready smile and an eagerness to learn, a little cocky perhaps but never mean with it. It was a far cry from the cold-eyed young man in front of him. But then again, loss on the scale Derek had experienced counted for a whole lot and Deaton couldn’t blame in.

‘How about this.’ he suggested. ‘I haven’t had dinner yet and there’s an excellent Indian restaurant that I happen to know your parents loved not too far from here. We can have dinner and that talk.’

For a moment he thought Derek was about to turn and leave but then his face creased and Deaton saw the exhaustion at having to live like he was and carry the burden he had been far too young to shoulder. It was hard to remember that Derek was only twenty-two. His sorrow and anger made him seem so much older.

‘Okay.’ he relented. ‘We can do that.’

‘Good.’ Deaton chanced a small smile. ‘I take it your little friend went home?’

Derek growled, low and warning and Deaton got the confirmation he wanted. He had a knack for picking things up and the way the boy had settled Derek that morning, calming him and bringing him out before he shifted like that, had made it very clear just how Derek felt about him.

‘It’s not like that.’ He was almost bristling. ‘He’s just some kid.’

‘Sure.’ Deaton smiled. ‘And I’m the Queen of Sheba.’ He moved to grab his jacket. ‘You know I do happen to understand how these things work, Derek. Emissary.’

‘Like I said.’ Derek glowered at him, hands clenching into fists at his side. ‘It’s not like that.’

Deaton chuckled as he ushered him out the back room.

‘You might want to tell your wolf that.’ He shuts the door behind them. ‘Just to clear things up.’

They took their own cars to the restaurant. Deaton was not surprised to see that Derek was driving James’ Camaro. Laura had taken it when she’d left with Derek that first time and had used it to come home. No doubt Derek had found it along with whatever else Laura had brought with her. Deaton knew she’d been camped out in the Hale house, even though he’d tried to get her to set up in a motel instead. It wasn’t like she or Derek lacked money. Between the two of them, their personal wealth
now counted in the millions, and that had been without the money left in trust to take care of Peter. Now that Laura was also deceased, Derek would be an extremely wealthy young man. He glanced at where Derek was getting out of his car and wondered about getting him to find an actual place to stay. Something told him that their current situation was not going to play itself out any time soon.

Inside and sitting in a booth at the back, Derek was ill at ease, shifting and scowling at the menu the waitress brought them. She’d looked pleased at the prospect of having Derek as a customer until he’d growled at her, barely restraining the wolf inside him. Deaton was feeling more than a little alarmed by how close to feral Derek seemed to be, but then he thought back to the sheriff’s son and how Derek had backed down for him.

The waitress brought their drinks and he decided to jump right in.

‘So we have a rogue alpha that is apparently on a killing streak, a town that is under siege and the murder of your sister to solve.’ He sipped his beer and raised an eyebrow at the now glaring werewolf. ‘But I think the most pressing situation is that we also have a newly turned beta who’s father is the sheriff of the aforementioned town.’ He decided to test the waters. ‘A beta that seems to have already made quite the impression on you. I am assuming you are aware of what this could be.’

The growl he got was threatening.

‘I don’t think this is a good time.’ Derek’s green eyes were flat and angry.

‘Is there a bond forming?’ Deaton looked at him intently. ‘I’m assuming you know what this means?’

‘He’s a kid.’ Derek muttered, looking away.

‘He’s a wolf now.’ Deaton added. ‘One yours is responding to. I think it would be remiss to try and pretend this isn’t happening. You know this is not something you can ignore.’

‘Watch me.’ Derek practically snarled and Deaton had to affect nonchalance at how petulant he sounded. It seemed that even though Derek had grown physically, the trauma he’d experienced had had an affect on his demeanour and it was unsurprisingly a negative one.

It seemed like he was going to have his work cut out for him.
Chapter Summary

Time for Stiles to see what his new wolfy powers can do.

Wednesday arrived with little fanfare. Stiles hadn’t seen or heard from Derek since Deaton’s and he was starting to wonder if he was being ignored. Not that he minded because it meant Derek not being able to bust his balls over going to lacrosse practice in the afternoon.

Their school day drew to a close as the bell rang and Stiles grinned as he looked over at Scott, knowing they both had a free period. Scott returned the smile and they shouldered their backpacks in almost perfect synchronisation. Wednesday meant lacrosse practice in a couple of hours once everyone was done for the day, so they walked down to the school playing field out the back of the school. It was fairly secluded and surrounded by trees so Stiles felt more comfortable about letting go out there.

He bounced around a bit to warm up, feeling noticeably different. There was no denying that Stiles had energy to burn, even more so than his normal hyperactive self had. Scott suggested they do a couple of laps around the field and he happily agreed. He took off and let go, tearing down the first stretch. The weird pull in his chest loosened and he just enjoyed running, the stretch in his muscles delicious. His heart was pounding but in a good way, and Stiles swore everything got just a little sharper and a little more high definition as he rounded the corner of the field. He put his head down and kept going. He didn’t stop until he heard Scott yelling and then he pulled up and saw that he was about to lap him.

‘What the hell?’ Scott was puffing hard. ‘You’re like a total machine. You just cruised the whole damn field.’ He grinned, in spite of his obvious discomfort. ‘You’re not even sweating.’

‘Damn.’ Stiles realised he’s right and that he could have also just kept going if he wanted to. He jogged in place, bordering on ecstatic. ‘You want to try some plays?’

Stiles knew he wasn’t the best player, too ungainly to be graceful and too disparate to be strategic. But the afternoon found him to be focused and sharp, his hits timed perfectly and Scott not managing to get a single ball past him.

They played for an hour before heading back up to the school to get changed for the actual practice. Stiles was breathing hard and loving every minute of it. By contrast Scott had to pull his inhaler out and was sweating like a pig, although he’d be spending most of the practice on the bench so it wasn’t going to be too much for him.

In the locker room he hummed to himself as he changed and returned Scott’s sidelong grin. He was actually taking the whole werewolf thing in his stride and more than a little excited on Stiles’ behalf at what might be coming. That and the fact that Allison was coming to watch them practice with Lydia had him bouncing like a rubber ball even if he was still a little out of breath.

Stiles, on the other hand, felt oddly calm. He had taken his Adderall bottle that morning like normal,
not sure if his new condition would affect him in terms of managing his ADHD. He wasn’t about to find out the hard way. He kicked up as others began to drift in, taking their places at their lockers and doing the same. Danny came past them and rolled his eyes at the sound of Finstock yelling his peculiar brand of motivational language at them as he came in, clipboard in hand and whistle around his neck. There were a couple of mentions of dead relatives, one of physical capabilities compared to farm animals and the usual bellow of ‘Bilinkski!’ in Stiles’ direction.

‘You think he’s ever going to get my name right?’ Stiles mused as he shouldered his crosse and clattered out after Scott, stomach knotting in excitement.

‘He might after today.’ Scott grinned. ‘You still feeling good?’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles said and meant it. He still had so much energy even after the run around, but it wasn’t the flailing kind that normally imbued his lanky frame. He found himself tracking Jackson in front of them as he chatted with Danny. Even from here he can smell them both distinctly, Danny’s Armani aftershave (God he smelled good to Stiles with his new werewolf nose) and Jackson’s Eau de Douchebag, which also happened to be Paco Rabanne. He also smelled of what Stiles assumed was arrogance and he was surprised that it smelled like actual money.

Finstock was out patrolling the field as they strapped their helmets on, barking at them through a megaphone. Stiles shook his head, the high pitched whine it emitted going unheard by the people around him but annoying the crap out of him.

‘Stop doing that.’ Scott cautioned. ‘You look like a dog.’

‘Hey, ixnay on the dog jokes, dude.’ Stiles tried to be serious but ended up snickering. Never let it be said he had no sense of humour.

‘So what’s the plan?’ Scott asked as they formed into lines, with one man in opposite goal each side.

‘Just see what happens, I guess.’ Stiles replied. ‘I honestly don’t know…’ He never got to finish the sentence because something was off enough to catch his attention and in the split second he’d taken to realise that, he’d magically caught the ball that was heading for his face. It smacked into the net with a very satisfying noise and Stiles could only gape at it. He wasn’t the only one, either.

‘Dude!’ Scott breathed in reverence and Stiles just stared at the ball.

‘Holy hell.’ He couldn’t actually believe what he had just done. Normally he’d be man down by now. Jackson was notoriously accurate when he wanted to stave someone’s face in.

‘Shit.’ Scott laughed. ‘I think this is going to be good.’

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Good turned out to be an understatement.

Stiles nailed every throw, every catch. He even did a nifty little somersault thing when Jackson swept his feet out from under him in a moment of distraction. He used the opportunity to flip Jackson off and pass the ball to Scott at every turn. Scott could read him like a book and the two of them fell into some kind of crazy rhythm where they were actually scoring goals. Somewhere in that, Allison and Lydia turned up to cheer them on. After the last pass that got Scott in sloce enough to slip it past Danny, Allison was on her feet screaming so loudly in the stands she was like a one woman cheerleading squad. Stiles didn’t miss the dirty look Jackson threw in their direction and wondered just how much he knew about the movie night with her and Lydia, who was looking about as bored as he’d ever seen her.
For his part, Finstock looked mildly blown away and when they got to the end of practice he was wearing a somewhat deranged expression. At the end of practice, he stood with his clipboard and goes through the first line for Saturday’s game, and to their everloving astonishment Stiles and Scott were both on the list.

‘What?’ Stiles was smiling so hard he thought his face was going to split. ‘Are you serious, Coach?’

‘I am. So make sure you Bobbsey Twins don’t dick it up.’ Finstock waved a finger an inch from his nose. ‘I don’t want to find out this was a fluke.’

They huddled together and shook their heads at him and he rolled his eyes before stomping off and leaving them to their combined freak out.

Jackson was livid. Stiles could smell an acrid tang oozing out of every pore and it made him happy as fuck. He threw him his most infuriating grin and watched him mutter as he stormed over to Danny, who just looked bemused.

Things only got better when Allison came screeching down from the bleachers and threw her arms around Scott’s neck and kissed him silly in front of everyone. Stiles was pretty sure he’d never seen him so happy. He was laughing along with them when he felt a prickle down his spine, almost as if someone had brushed their fingers along the back of his neck. He turned and could clearly see the figure in the treeline, black leather jacket and the mother of all scowls identifying who it is.

Derek raised an eyebrow. He did not look happy, but even that was enough to get a little flip of Stiles’ stomach and he inwardly cursed himself.

‘You just had to go and fuck things up.’ Derek growled, the words reaching Stiles’ ears easily. ‘Meet me in the parking lot. Now.’

Stiles took a second to stick his tongue out at him and watched as Derek narrowed his eyes and then stomped off into the trees.

‘Hey.’ He felt a nudge and turned to look at Scott’s worried face. ‘Is that him?’

‘Yeah, Stiles. Who the hell is that?’ Danny came up to join them. ‘He’s hot.’

Stiles panicked and flailed mentally and said the first thing that came into his head.

‘He’s my cousin.’ He gave himself a mental high five for his quick thinking and ignored Scott’s snigger. ‘He’s here visiting.’

‘Yeah?’ Danny was still looking speculatively in the direction of the trees. ‘He single?.’

‘Um...maybe?.’ Stiles shrugged. ‘I mean, I’m not surprised. He’s only your type if you like anal retentive and grumpy as hell.’

‘Why was he here?’ Danny couldn’t seem to let it go and Stiles scratched at the back of his head, giving Scott his own frantic eyebrows as he silently pleaded for help. Scott just gave him his own ‘don’t ask me’ face back and Stiles huffed in annoyance. He really needed a new sidekick.

‘He’s tutoring me.’ he finally said and Danny’s eyebrows got in on the act.

‘In what?’ he asked and Stiles’ brain was having to work overtime to keep up.

‘Lacrosse.’ he stammered. ‘It’s how I got so good. He was on the varsity team. Won a bunch of
‘You get tutored in lacrosse?’ Danny looked confused. ‘But yeah, you were pretty good out there tonight.’ He looked back at Jackson’s whistle and then jogged off, crosse over his shoulder.

‘That was close.’ Stiles blew out his next breath, glad to have avoided what could have been a disastrous conversation.

The rest of the team were suitably nonplussed or congratulatory by turns. They went back in to get changed and Scott was nearly floating on happy hormones. He did manage to come back down long enough to confirm that Jackson was looking at Stiles like he wanted to bury him alive and then jump up and down on his grave for good measure.

‘He looks pissed.’ Scott was unrepentantly cheerful. Stiles would have cared but he was too busy doing an internal victory dance at the thought of his dad’s face when he told him he’d be starting line up on Saturday.

‘So let him be pissed. He’s just fucked off that we totally stole his thunder.’ He grinned at Scott. ‘You know, you’re actually a decent player when someone gives you an opening.’

‘Yeah.’ Scott was all smiles. ‘Thanks for that.’

‘Hey, it’s what best buds are for, right?’ Stiles clapped him on the shoulder. ‘Got to impress the girl, right?’ They left the locker room and found Allison waiting for them in the corridor. To their mutual surprise, Lydia was with her.

‘So.’ She flipped her hair over one shoulder, her demeanour considerably less frosty than the last time she’d spoken to them. ‘Allison has pointed out that you are now on the starting line up and that means I have to invite you to the pre-game party on Friday night.’

It was enough to almost knock Stiles off his feet in surprise. She didn’t even smell that annoyed.

‘Okay.’ he managed. Lydia rolled her eyes at his less than verbose response and walked off. Allison grinned and did a little bounce.

‘You’re in.’ she cackled. ‘Lydia says it’s tradition that all the starting players go to the pre-game party. Now you can come with us.’

‘That’s so cool.’ Scott said and shoved Stiles in the arm. ‘See, it’s like fate is telling you to make your move.’

‘Sure.’ Stiles wanted to be happy but he also knew he had a seemingly perennially pissed off werewolf sitting waiting for him in the parking lot. ‘Look I got to go. I’ll call you later.’

‘No problem.’ Scott wasn’t even looking at him, too lost in Allison’s big brown eyes. ‘I’ll catch a ride home.’

Stiles shook his head at them both, then shouldered his bag and literally ran off, noticing that Lydia and Jackson are now embroiled in a massive argument outside the school when he skidded out the front door of the school and nearly fell down the steps to the parking lot in his enthusiasm. There was a lot of arm waving and screeching going on and he would have loved to eavesdrop but he spotted the Camaro next to his Jeep and knew he was about to get his ass handed to him.

‘Get in asshole.’ Derek hissed when he got there and Stiles snorted and shook his head.
‘No way dude.’ He took a precautionary step backwards. ‘You’ll just take the opportunity to murder me and dump my remains somewhere off the highway.’

‘Oh my God.’ Derek actually put his face in his hands, voice full of exasperation. ‘Just get in the fucking car, Stiles.’

‘No.’ Stiles put on his stubborn face and folded his arms. ‘You’ve been holding out on me. I need answers to the many many questions I have and I am not letting you kill me before you answer them.’ He lifted his chin in defiance. ‘So, suck on that Sourwolf.’

‘Don’t call me Sourwolf.’ Derek growled and Stiles took another step back before ducking around his car and getting in the Jeep. He had started the engine and peeled out the car park before Derek could think to get out and maim him.

He did not, however, count on Derek tailgating him all the way home, grumpy eyebrows in his rearview mirror.

‘You’re a goddamn psycho.’ Stiles yelled at him as he fell out the Jeep and galloped into his house, slamming the front door in Derek’s face. He grinned in triumph and strutted into the kitchen only to find Derek standing there with his arms folded and his teeth bared.

‘Dude!’ Stiles snapped. ‘You can’t come in unless you’re invited.’

‘That’s vampires, moron.’ Derek snarled. ‘What the fuck was that I just watched?’

‘That was me totally ruling at lacrosse.’ Stiles sniped back. ‘In case you didn’t know this, I’ve basically been waiting to get off the bench for fucking ever. I am not letting this gift horse look me in the mouth.’ He stopped a moment, not even sure that his mangled metaphor worked and found Derek staring at him with a scrunch up face and a look of rather adorable bemusement that resulted in Stiles realising that Derek’s two front teeth bore a remarkable resemblance to Bugs Bunny’s. That just made him laugh and, hey presto, the glare was back.

‘You could have gotten in a shitload of trouble.’ Derek was now jabbing at him with his index finger. ‘You can’t control the shift yet and you can’t show off like you’re a fucking superhero. You’ll end up either losing control or drawing the wrong kind of attention and that would be very fucking bad.’

‘Dude, chill out.’ Stiles retorted. ‘I totally have this under control.’

‘No you fucking don’t!’ Derek yelled and started waving his arms. ‘Why do you have to fucking disobey everything I tell you to do!’

‘Because you don’t fucking tell me why!’ Stiles yelled back and it just deteriorated into an argument because Derek was glowering at him and Stiles was refusing to back down and the sheer number of sarcastic insults being thrown around make them both completely oblivious to the fact that there was a third person in the kitchen until Noah cleared his throat and they both started violently, looking at him with perfectly synchronised movements.

‘Oh fuck.’ Stiles said very succinctly.

Noah’s eyebrows went up even higher and Stiles realised that the fact that Derek had him thrown up against the fridge and and was shaking him by his hoodie up until a second ago really didn’t look good at all. At least they hadn’t been wolfed out.

‘So.’ Noah said, folding his own arms and narrowing his eyes at them both. ‘Is someone going to
explain why Derek Hale is in my kitchen and just how the hell you two know each other?’

‘This is not what it looks like.’ Those were the first words out of Stiles’ mouth and he instantly regretted them. Derek’s green eyes flashed dangerously but he let Stiles’ go as if he’d burned him.

‘Sheriff Stilinski…’ he started and Noah held up a hand, cutting him off.

‘Both of you, sit down.’ he ordered and it was almost bizarre to see how quickly Derek complied, taking a seat at the kitchen table with Stiles opposite him. ‘Now I am going to make myself a cup of coffee and you two are going to stay right there until I am done and then you’re going to tell me what the hell is going on.’

‘Huh?’ Stiles frowned and Noah rolled his eyes at him.

‘You’re nowhere as good a liar as you think you are.’ he explained, going to the coffee machine and pouring himself a cup. ‘I had you pegged as being up to no good after that little moonlight walk stunt you pulled a couple of nights ago. I just so happened to stop off here because I was worried about you. Imagine my surprise when I discovered you were nowhere to be found and that the Jeep was missing.’

‘Crap.’ Stiles knew he’d been caught bang to rights. ‘Dad…’

‘And then I just so happen to get a call from Mrs Stevens across the road who saw a man climb in your bedroom window the night before last.’ Noah doctored his coffee and came to take a seat at the table. ‘And of course my first thought is that it was Scott. Christ knows you two have a bad habit of pulling shit like this, but then I remembered that Scott was here with his new girlfriend that night so I know it can’t be him. I asked her about the night before and she confirmed that Scott was at home, so now I know you’re sneaking around and when you do that it means you’re getting up to shit you don’t want me to know about. Now, it’s one thing if you’re seeing someone. That I don’t have a problem with. I don’t even care if it’s a guy, you know my feelings on that already. But now we’re all here and it turns out that it might just be someone who’s a lot older than you and who’s connected to a murder case that I’m currently working, a very odd and somewhat disturbing murder case that we have recently discussed and which you showed a lot of interest in. You can see why I might be concerned.’

Stiles threw a panicked glance across the table at Derek and saw that he’s got a frozen in the headlights look on his face.

‘Explanations would be nice.’ Noah prompted. ‘You can both talk now.’ He took a long pull of his coffee and folded his hands around his mug. ‘I’m listening.’

‘So…’ Stiles started and then Derek cut him off.

‘I’m trying to find who killed my sister.’ It came out blunt and Stiles saw Noah flinch just the tiniest bit.

‘How did you know?’ he asks. ‘We haven’t been able to get in touch with you to tell you. NYPD has been looking for your ass all over the five boroughs. Obviously that’s because you’re here.’ He gave Derek a piercing look. ‘Just how long have you been here?’

‘About a week and a half.’ Derek replied. ‘I was worried when I couldn’t get hold of her so I came to find her.’ He tapped his fingers on the table-top and Stiles sniffed. There was a sour note in Derek’s scent and he recognised it as something starting to border on distress.

‘Why the hell didn’t you come to the station?’ Noah frowned. ‘We could have helped you. We
didn’t even know she was here until we found…’ He stopped speaking and his face clouded over. ‘Jesus, I’m sorry. I’m not handling this very well.’

‘It’s okay.’ Derek sighed. ‘Neither am I.’

That surprises the hell out of Stiles because Derek has been Mr Stoic up till now, but then he remembered that Noah had been the one who had dealt with him the last time something had happened to him and how he’d probably been kind to a teenage boy who’d just lost his entire family, the same person who had also now just lost the only one he had left. That jolted him like nothing else and he opened his mouth to say something to intercede but Noah beat him to it.

‘Start at the beginning,’ he instructed. ‘I want to know everything you know.’

‘I don’t know much.’ Derek confessed and Stiles realised just how true that was. ‘I know she came back here and I also know she disappeared two weeks ago. I was trying to find her.’ He frowned and looked down at the table. ‘And I did. Just not all of her.’

‘Shit.’ Noah was now looking very concerned. ‘You found the other half of her body.’

‘Yeah.’ Derek nodded. ‘I buried her at the house. I was hoping to find who did it.’ He sighed heavily. ‘Stiles has been helping me. We ran into each other when he out looking for the what was left in the preserve. He freaked out when he found me with her and I helped him get back out but not before he’d recognised who I was and guessed what I was doing.’

‘Stiles?’ Noah was looking at him. ‘Is this true?’

‘It is.’ He battled to keep his voice steady. ‘We’ve been trying to figure out who it was since then.’

‘Christ.’ Noah rubbed a hand over his face. ‘Why the hell didn’t you call the police, Derek? Do you know how bad it looks that you’ve just told me you’ve buried the other half of Laura’s body?’

‘I needed some time to think.’ Derek protested. ‘How bad would it have looked if I’d just called you out of the blue and told you I’d found her? You probably would have arrested me.’

‘I still might.’ Noah pointed a finger at him. ‘You’ve tampered with evidence.’

‘All I did was put her in the ground.’ Derek’s shoulders slumped. ‘I couldn’t leave her lying out there.’

‘No.’ Noah got up and went to a cupboard. He came back with two glasses and a bottle of whiskey. ‘Not for you!’ He glared at Stiles, who hastily withdrew his hand from reaching for one of the glasses. ‘And I suppose that little interrogation the other night was you trying to get the inside track so you two can play Hardy Boys?’ He poured out two measures and pushed one across to Derek. ‘I don’t need to tell you boys this is a royal fuck up from every damn angle.’

Stiles blinked at his father’s language. Noah almost never cursed in front of him and usually it was when he’d hurt himself.

‘I know.’ He was contrite. ‘I’m sorry.’

‘That’s all good and well, but now we need to figure out how the hell we’re going to fix this.’ Noah said. Derek shot him a look that spoke volumes.

‘So you believe me?’ He sounded astounded. ‘That I didn’t kill her?’
‘Kid, let me tell you something.’ Noah said. ‘I saw you two after the fire, the way you held onto each other. No, I don’t believe you killed your sister. I know you two have travelled around a lot in the years after you left Beacon Hills. I also know you didn’t communicate all that much after you moved to New York. But that doesn’t negate the kind of love I saw between you that day and how devastated you both were. I’d be surprised as hell to find that you had anything to do with this. On the other hand, getting my teenage son involved in your attempt to play detective doesn’t do you any favours.’

‘It wasn’t his fault, Dad.’ Stiles interjected. ‘I may have kind of not given him a choice in the matter. And you know how persistent I can be.’

‘That is very true and the only reason I’m not going to give Derek any grief over this. I might ground your ass until you’re sixty, however.’ Now his blue eyes were shrewd. ‘Unless you tell me everything I want to know.’

‘I don’t think you have a choice, dude.’ Stiles glanced at Derek. ‘Look at him. The man is a machine when it comes to interrogation.’

Derek slumped even further.

‘I’ll tell you everything.’ he muttered, but Stiles could hear the relief in his voice.

An hour later and Noah was looking tired and the notepad he had in front of him was a lot fuller than it had been. Derek hadn’t told Noah everything, but he had told him enough. At one point Stiles got up and went to the bathroom, coming back to Noah still asking questions. Derek was giving him everything he could without giving anything away and Stiles had to admit he was impressed at how he was handling the situation.

‘So she was coming back to find leads?’ Noah asked and Derek nodded.

‘She’s been doing this for years.’ he admitted. ‘She never thought the fire was an accident.’

‘No.’ Noah was thoughtful. ‘Neither did I, but the best we could get was a possible arson verdict on the official report.’ He sighed heavily. ‘It never sat right with me. Did she tell you what kind of leads she was following?’

‘No.’ Derek dug into his pocket, coming out with a piece of paper. ‘She just had this.’ He slid it across but made no mention of anything else and Stiles couldn’t help but get the feeling that he was hiding something.

‘These are names.’ Noah was frowning at the paper. ‘She suspected them?’

‘I think so.’ Derek replied. ‘I don’t know.’ He snorted as Stiles tried to get a look at the list, but Noah glared at him and folded it up, putting it in his top pocket.

‘I’ll check them out. On the QT for now but if anything turns up then we’ll see.’ He looks pointedly at Derek. ‘I don’t need to tell you that you can’t go out to the house anymore. If it’s going to turn into an investigation then you have to stay out of it. You also need to tell me where Laura is buried. We’ll make it look like an anonymous tip came in. You also need to not sneak into my underage son’s bedroom window because that makes you look like some sort of sex offender.’

‘I can do that.’ Derek stated. ‘And I promise I won’t get in the way.’ Stiles wants to snort at that, knowing they’ll be able to get around the cops now he knows they’ll be looking.

‘Good.’ Noah said and stands up. ‘Where are you staying?’
‘I can find a place.’ Derek told him and Stiles gives him a surprised look. ‘I’ll sort it out. Get a motel room or something.’

‘Okay’ Noah replied. ‘But you’re staying for dinner tonight. Stiles, I want you to order pizza and I want everything that’s bad for my arteries on mine and you’re going to give me exactly zero grief about that. I think I’ve earned it by not throwing Derek in jail or handcuffing you to the table.’ And with that he left them alone, shaking his head and muttering about idiot boys.

Derek let out a deep breath and leaned back in his seat.

‘Fuck me, dude.’ Stiles breathed out. ‘I thought for sure we were totally fucked.’

‘The trick is to give just a little to hide a lot.’ Derek said. ‘It doesn’t help that you have the world’s worst poker face. Never ever speak again.’

Stiles held up both hands and grins.

‘Pretty sneaky distracting him with the whole murder case thing though, right?’ he asked. ‘He didn’t even ground me and he has no idea about the...other thing.’

‘Maybe.’ Derek sounded exhausted. Stiles’ guesses it must be an odd feeling, like a weight lifted but also very disquieting. Derek obviously had never meant to share this much and now he’s got Stiles and Deaton and Noah involved.

‘This is good though.’ He tried to reassure him. ‘My dad is a great cop. If he can find out who burned your house down and killed Laura, he will.’

Derek said nothing for a few moments and then his eyes narrowed.

‘Don’t think it let’s you off the hook.’ he hissed. ‘I’m still pissed at you for the lacrosse practice.’

‘Shit!’ Stiles smacked himself in the forehead. ‘I didn’t even tell him I made the line up. Fuck.’

‘Yeah, not a fucking chance.’ Derek snorted. ‘No fucking way you’re playing.’

‘Fuck you, asshat.’ Stiles was working himself into a magnificent snit. Derek wrinkles his nose at him, like he can smell it on him even without the tone and look he’s getting. ‘It’s the first time in history I made the first line. I am playing. You’ll just have to teach me some like meditation or shit to keep control of myself.’

‘Meditation or shit?’ Derek was appalled. ‘This isn’t some yoga retreat you’re on, Stiles. You could seriously hurt someone.’

‘Dude, I’ve been a werewolf for like two days.’ Stiles barrelled on. ‘How much damage could I actually do?.’

‘Enough?’ Derek snapped. ‘You have no idea just what you’ll be capable of and you’ll have very little control.’

They glared at each other and Stiles knew that he was not going to convince Derek straight off the bat. He’d need to be sneakier.

‘Okay enough. I’m starving and it’s pizza time.’ he pulled a face. ‘I guess I have to let my dad have this one even though it will set his cardiac health back about a thousand years.’

‘There’s nothing wrong with your father’s heart, Stiles.’ Derek muttered. ‘Haven’t you listened to it?
‘Huh?’ Stiles struggled briefly with the concept and then had an epiphany. ‘Oh. Is that a thing?’

‘Yeah.’ Derek looked smug. ‘It’s part of Werewolf 101.’

‘Huh, how about that.’ Stiles frowned. ‘How does it work?’

‘Depends.’ Derek said. ‘You could pick up what someone is feeling and tell they’re lying but you can also hear if someone is sick. Eventually you become familiar with the heartbeats of your family and the people who are closest to you. It’s kind of like their scent. Everyone is individual and it’s comforting to be able to tune in and listen to them.’ He caught the sudden look of deep concentration on Stiles’ face. ‘Are you listening to me?’

‘No.’ Stiles replied, grinning like a madman as he fixed on the deep steady thud that was in his ears. ‘I’m listening to your heartbeat.’

That frank admission seemed to have unexpected effect on Derek and he immediately frowned and Stiles knew he was doing the same, zoning in on the sound of his heart.

‘Is it a good sound?’ he asked quietly and Derek gave him a half-smile and nodded.

‘Boys?’ Noah’s voice came from up the stairs somewhere, making them both jump. ‘Where’s my pizza?’

‘Shit.’ Stiles started to get up but Derek already has phone out. He gives Stiles a questioning look and Stiles smiled at him.

‘Triple pepperoni for the good sheriff and a Hawaiian, extra cheese, for me.’ he said and Derek rolled his eyes at him because, of course, Stiles would order something utterly ridiculous. Whatever, he owned his choices. He listened to Derek order six large pizzas, telling the guy on the other side to charge it to his credit card and not missing the frown on Stiles’ overly expressive face.

‘You have money.’ It wasn’t a question.

‘Traditionally I use it to buy goods and services.’ Derek apparently couldn’t resist the snark so Stiles decided to match maturity levels and stuck his tongue out at him.

‘No, obviously.’ He glared at him. ‘I just thought, seeing as you were staying in the house…’ He trailed off. ‘Unless you like hanging out in a building that should be condemned.’

‘I have my reasons.’ Derek replied. ‘But I am going to look for something a little more permanent. It makes sense, especially if I’m going to be here until we find out what happened to Laura and sort out this shit with the Alpha.’ He narrowed his eyes at Stiles. ‘And keep you out of shit on Saturday.’

Stiles started to protest but Derek held up a hand and he stopped talking and listened, hearing his dad on the move and they both looked at him he came back into the kitchen, now in jeans and a sweatshirt. He went to the fridge and took out a couple of beers and a soda, plonking them on the table.

‘Feed me.’ he said and Stiles snorted a laugh.

The pizza arrived and Noah looked visibly shocked by the number of boxes until Stiles pointed out that Derek paid for it. That got a curious glance but no further comment and they sat down and start eating.

Derek took it slow, obviously aware that he’s got to at least appear human and practised from long
years of having to act like one. Stiles had no compunction, his appetite clearly kicked up into wolf levels if the gnawing in his belly was anything to go by. He demolished both his Hawaiians and then starts stealing slices of Noah’s triple pepperoni until he got his hand smacked and he retreated, rubbing it and giving Noah baleful glares.

‘I know you’re a growing boy but that’s slightly ridiculous.’ Noah pointed out. ‘What the hell is wrong with you?’

Stiles felt unbelievably smug.

‘I’m going to need my energy,’ he declared. ‘Seeing as how I’m starting line-up on Saturday.’

That made Noah choke on his beer, a particularly gratifying reaction. It even made up for the discreet kick in the shin that Derek gave him.

‘You…’ His face was a beacon of hopeful delight. ‘You made starting line-up?’

‘I did.’ Stiles grinned. ‘Finstock even forgot to call me Bilinski when he announced it.’

‘Holy Mother of God.’ Noah was beaming. ‘That’s fantastic!’ He leaned over to drag Stiles into a half-hug and that was when they both heard the sound of a chair grating against the kitchen floor.

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It had cut just too close to home.

Derek got up abruptly, not stopping to say anything and stumbling out the kitchen and into the back garden. He felt the pizza churning in his stomach, his heart starting to pound as he reached the end of the back porch and sat down heavily.

He hadn’t had a panic attack in years, had spent so long burying his guilt and sadness to the point where he’d almost forgotten how to feel. It scared him shitless that this was happening and his chest tightened. He leaned forward and squeezed his eyes shut because everything was threatening to overwhelm him, trying to dig up his anger and control the feelings inside him.

He heard the back door open as if from miles away and then next thing, Stiles was kneeling in front of him, his hands on Derek’s forearms and talking to him, a steady stream of words in a low calm voice.

‘Hey, it’s okay.’ He rubbed circles into Derek’s arm with his thumbs. ‘I’m right here, dude. Just listen to my voice and breathe.’

Derek didn’t open his eyes, but something inside him latched onto Stiles’ voice and the shakiness inside him started to ease.

‘That’s it big guy. You’re okay.’ Stiles’ voice soothed him, made him unclench his fists until he was breathing normally again. He opened his eyes and saw Stiles glance over his shoulder, aware that they’re glowing electric blue. He can see the reflection in Stiles’ own eyes, those dark eyes that seemed to glow even without the benefit of the shift. He gave Derek a reassuring smile and Derek found himself pulling back, the shift receding.

‘How…?’ he started and Stiles shrugged.

‘I started getting them after my mom died.’ he explained. ‘I still get them when I’m stressed out, so I’m kind of an expert.’ He made a weird little face, a mixture of nostalgia and sadness that Derek
recognised all to well.

‘Thanks.’ It came out barely above a whisper. Derek hadn’t let anyone see him like this for years, and he pushed away the idea of why he was so comfortable with letting Stiles see him shaking and trying to get his breathing under control, why he felt so much better when he was with him. It doesn’t make sense at all, even if Deaton thought he had all the answers.

He looked up back into those warm brown eyes and wondered about mates and anchors and everything else that he was in the dark about.

‘Hey.’ It was Noah peering out the back door and watching them. Derek could smell that he was concerned and it felt good to have someone worry about him again. ‘Everything okay?’

‘It’s fine, Dad.’ Stiles replied. ‘We’ll be inside in a little while.’ He did something with his eyebrows that was obviously a coded signal and Noah retreated.

‘He’s still kind.’ Derek didn’t know why he said it, but he felt he should. He watched Stiles’ eyes go soft as he smiled, looking back over his shoulder.

‘He’s a good dad.’ he said. ‘And you can totally borrow him any time you need to.’

That brought up all kinds of things Derek really didn’t want to deal with. He took in a shuddery breath and then steeled himself.

‘I should go.’ He moved to get up and Stiles caged him in with his arms.

‘No.’ He shook his head vehemently. ‘Not until we’ve worked out way through every Batman movie I own and eaten a shitload of microwave popcorn. Then you can go.’ He raised his eyebrows at him.

‘Why Batman?’ Derek asked and Stiles laughed.

‘Dude, have you seen yourself?’ He stood up, holding out a hand. ‘Now move your ass, Sourwolf. We’ve got flicks to watch.’

‘Don’t call me Sourwolf.’ Derek growled, but he took the hand anyway.
Thursday

Chapter by HaleHathNoFury (My_Trex_has_fleas), My_Trex_has_fleas

Chapter Summary

Things start to speed up.

Six in the morning on Thursday and Stiles was awake, largely because he hasn’t actually gone to sleep yet. Instead he was propped up in bed, pillows stuffed behind his head and his laptop on his chest, blinking back sleep. He hadn’t been able to stop reading once he’d started after Derek had gone and learning that pretty much everything on the internet was conjecture mixed in with some fact.

The movie had served as a backdrop for Derek to start actually talking to him and Stiles was now far better informed than he had been earlier. For example, he now knew silver didn’t kill werewolves but it did mean they couldn’t shift properly if it was in their system. Dog roses gave them anaphylactic shock and mistletoe was toxic, as was wolfsbane. Mountain ash inhibited their powers and lunar eclipses rendered them completely useless. Stiles had also discovered that wolves had other powers than those he already knew about, like the ability to draw pain from others or to share memories, and that was only the beginning.

It was fascinating and also very cool and now he was having a hard time convincing himself that he ever wanted to turn back into a normal human. He lay back against the pillows and looked at where the morning light was starting to seep through his blinds, frowning at the realisation that in an hour he’d have to be up and getting ready for school.

Coffee was needed.

Stiles got up and went to shower, stopping to examine himself in the bathroom mirror. He thought about shifting and then tried, sniggering when his face changed and he ended up giving himself mock growls in the mirror. He tried a few more times until he remembered that he might well get stuck like that so he stopped. His dad would have enough of a hard time dealing with what happened without having this sprung on him.

It was something Stiles was rapidly coming to realise might be something they would have to talk about. He had done a lot of thinking during the night as he had surfed the endless reaches of cyberspace, and knew that being a werewolf was not something he could hide for an extended period of time. They would have to deal with it eventually, but Stiles hoped that he would have a definitive answer soon.

Now though, it was time for school.

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Derek heard the car long before it pulled up outside the house. He was downstairs and on the porch before Deaton even got out, frowning at the sight of the man that had been his pack’s emissary.

‘Good morning Mr Hale.’ Deaton said, looking up at the house, and Derek wondered how many
times he came here, how well he had known his family. Half of him wanted to brain Stiles for this, but the other half of him was grateful beyond all reasoning. He’d have never thought to find Deaton the way Stiles had. There was no denying the kid was smart, way smarter than Derek. That wasn’t all though and he felt a warm feeling take hold as he thought back to the previous night, sitting in the Stilinski’s home that felt like he remembered his own.

‘Emissary Deaton.’ he replied and saw a flicker of amusement in Deaton’s dark eyes.

‘You know your sister would say then whenever she called me.’ he said. ‘She’d always laugh when I called her Alpha in return.’

‘She hated that stupid title.’ Derek felt pain inside him, squeezing his heart as he thought about his sister. Laura, so strong and stubborn and brave. Now that she was gone, Derek was realising just how special she was and what he’d lost. It didn’t help his cause, but he was determined that he was going to find the alpha and make them pay any way he could.

‘I know.’ Deaton placed one foot on the bottom step. ‘May I come in?’

Derek’s mouth quirked at the traditional request for entry.

‘Not much to see up here.’ he said and Deaton shrugged.

‘It’s still your land and now you’re the only one left to ask.’ he replied and that caused the hurt to intensify and then flow out into low key anger. Derek had gotten very good at living on the edge between loss and despair.

‘You are welcome.’ He stepped back and gestured. Deaton climbed up the stairs, getting to Derek and holding out a hand and Derek stared at it for a long time before he looked up and found a pair of black eyes watching him intently.

‘I’m not very good at this.’ he finally admitted and Deaton gave him a serene smile, a little sad but also reassuring.

‘That’s why I’m here.’ he replied. ‘I’m going to try and make up for the dismal lack of foresight and assistance I’ve given you in the past.’

Derek met his gaze and considered, smelling and seeing nothing that would show duplicity then, for the second time in as many days, he took the offered hand.

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Stiles heaved a sigh and looked up at the school building before slamming the Jeep’s door shut and shouldering his backpack. He was trying not to inhale too deeply, resisting the urge to recoil as two girls who reek of candy floss went past him. He scanned the front step and smiled when he saw Scott and headed over to him, Scott’s dark eyes watching him intently.

‘Hi.’ He shifted his backpack to the other shoulder, a sure sign he was ansty but also excited. ‘So what did your dad say about the lacrosse thing?’

‘He’s ecstatic.’ Stiles told him. ‘Obviously he has no clue as to why.’

‘Totally.’ Scott grinned and then looked around shiftily. ‘So? What are you going to do about that?’

‘About my dad? Christ knows. For right now though I thought I’d go to English?’ Stiles raised an eyebrow at him. ‘Sadly, I don’t think my condition precludes me from the joy of public education.’
They headed inside, Scott’s head bobbing up and down as he tried to spot Alison in the crowded hallways. They got to their line of lockers and she was already waiting there, giving Scott a lovely smile. Stiles wrinkled his nose at the flood of happy hormones that were positively oozing from his best friend’s every pore and couldn’t help noticing that they were definitely reciprocated.

‘Well, that's gross.’ he said cheerfully and they both gave him an odd look, reminding Stiles that he really needed to learn to shut the hell up.

‘So, I was talking to Lydia.’ Allison told them as she linked her arm with Scott's once they’d retrieved their books. ‘About the party on Friday.’

‘Are we still invited?’ Scott asked. ‘Say we’re still invited.’

‘You’re still invited.’ Allison looked smug. ‘I told her if you can't go, I'm not going.’

‘Sweet.’ Scott grinned and looked expectantly at Stiles. ‘So we’re going right?’

‘I don’t think that I should, dude.’ Stiles said, feeling a twinge of guilt because he knew Derek would freak out about it. ‘Pretty sure you should just go without me.’ He entered the classroom ahead of them and spotted the person in question. Lydia gave him a cool glance and normally that would have elated him, but he was feeling oddly unperturbed. In truth he was thinking about scaring up something else to do on Friday night, maybe something with broad shoulders and green eyes and a surly disposition.

‘Hey.’ Scott whispered from behind him. ‘What’s the problem?’

‘Friday, dude.’ Stiles looks over his shoulder at him. ‘It’s full moon this Saturday.’

‘So? Friday’s not Saturday.’ Scott looked bemused. ‘You should come with anyway.’

‘I’ll try but I can’t promise anything.’ Stiles turned back as the lesson started. He caught a glimpse of Allison leaning over to whisper to Lydia and it was the easiest thing to just focus a tiny bit so the conversation sounded as if they were sitting right next to him.

‘Are you sure that’s a good idea?’ Allison whispered and Lydia smirked.

‘He’s perfect.’ she hissed back. ‘Jackson hates him. He says he brings the whole team down. Who better than to drive him absolutely green with jealousy. Besides, Stiles had been stalking me for years. I might as well put it to use now he’s not a total loser.’

Stiles felt like he’d been kicked in the teeth. He hadn’t realised just how badly Lydia thought of him. Then he felt determined to shake things up a bit. Everything was going to fucking change and he had the perfect way to do it.

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‘There wasn’t very much left.’ Deaton was looking around the basement of the Hale house. ‘I took what I could and put it in storage should either of you ever want it.’ Then he caught the present tense he had just used and his mouth twisted. ‘Sorry.’

‘So what was it?’ Derek asked. He wanted desperately to leave the room. He could smell death and the sickening odour of burned flesh, even after all these years, and it was making him want to wolf out and run into the trees.

‘Books, some pictures. A few pieces of furniture.’ Deaton shrugged and rubbed his hands together.
“This house is full of ghosts, Derek. You shouldn’t be staying here.”

“She was.” Derek glanced up at the ceiling. “She was in her old room. I found her stuff.”

“And look what happened.” Deaton shook his head. “No, it’s not safe out here for you. You’re a beta without your alpha, which means unless you find a new pack you’ll become an omega. Taking on a rogue could mean you’re the next one that has to be buried.”

“I can’t do nothing.” Derek replied, his words a little harder than he’d meant to say them. “And now I’ve got Stiles to deal with, it’s even more necessary.”

“How exactly did that happen, anyway?” Deaton asked, his dark eyes alight with curiosity. “I know that there’s been a lot of noise about people staying indoors. If there’s another incident, I wouldn’t be surprised if the Sheriff instituted an even earlier curfew.”

“He was out in the woods.” Derek snorted, but he didn’t elaborate further. “Being an idiot.”

“He’s far from an idiot, Derek.” Deaton raised an eyebrow at him. “He’s a smart kid.”

“Don’t remind me.” Derek rumbled. “Hopefully, we can get this shit done and then we can deal with him.” He looked at Deaton. “Do you know anyone else who could help?”

“Not at the moment.” Deaton replied. “But I have some old contacts I can get in touch with, people I can ask. Satomi’s pack is still around. But in the meantime, you need to keep an eye on Stiles. You know what the Alpha will want.”

“I do.” Derek growled. “And I’ll be damned before I let it have him.” He saw the small smile playing at the corners of Deaton’s mouth. “What?”

“You’re already so protective.” Deaton pointed out. “That’s good. He’ll need it.” He walked past and went up the rickety stairs. “Now, let us put our heads together and figure out how to find our Alpha and what we can do with Mr Stilinski come full moon.”

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Stiles slammed his locker closed and slung his backpack over his shoulder, frowning when he felt his phone buzz. He took it out and looked at the message.

You need to come over later. We can start getting you prepared for what’s coming Saturday night.

He huffed and fired a message right back.

No can do big guy. It’s a school night.

It took all of five seconds and then his phone was ringing. The fact that Stiles had set Derek’s ringtone as the Monster Mash was just too good and he laughed and let the song play until the first chorus before he answered.

‘Yoooooo.’ He made himself sound as infuriating as possible and heard the patented Derek Hale Sigh of Exasperation on the other side. ‘What’s hanging dude?’

‘Christ.’ Derek muttered on the other side. ‘Can you be normal for five goddam minutes?’

‘Says the wolfman.’ Stiles snorted. ‘I’m in school. What do you want?’

‘You’re not going to play the game on Saturday.’ Derek said and that just got Stiles’ blood up.
‘Uh, yes I am.’ he replied. ‘You know that thing about not being the boss of me? Still fucking applies, dude.’

‘Stiles, I swear to God…’ Derek was just getting into the swing of things when Stiles hung up on him and cackled madly as he bolted down the corridor to class, skidding around the corner and narrowly avoiding taking out a flock of cheerleaders.

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Derek stared at his phone in disbelief.

The little shit had hung up on him.

He growled at the phone but it didn’t reply and he stuck it in his pocket and wondered just how the fuck he got saddled with a puppy wolf that was not only clueless but belligerent and annoying as fuck. If Stiles hadn’t been so fucking cute, Derek would have eaten his face off by now.

And just like that he was thinking of amber eyes and moles and ungainly long limbs. His physical reaction happened before he could even stop himself and Derek stared down at his very interested cock in frustration and betrayal. He’d go jerk off but that would make him feel like a pervert, so he just glared at the bulge in his jeans and willed his erection into submission, extremely thankful that Deaton had already left.

***********

The day passed quickly. Stiles floated through the corridors, smiling and generally loving life in the face of his new scheme. In the final class of the day, he and Scott exchanged grins at the thought of the following evening’s upcoming festivities while Lydia and Allison talked non-stop about it. After school the two of them drove to Stiles house to contemplate what to wear and just how much alcohol they could consume without it being detected. Now they were arguing about transportation to the party while turning down Stiles’ road.

‘You can always try and ask your mom for a ride.’ Stiles suggested hopefully. He’s not quite sure, apart from the fact that he had a car and Scott only had that stupid ass bicycle of his, how he’d been roped into playing chauffeur when he really wanted to indulge in some underage drinking.

‘I can’t.’ Scott’s eyebrows were waggling in a meaningful way. ‘I think I’m going to ask Allison if she wants to come home with me. My mom’s working night shift.’

‘Seriously?’ Stiles snorted. ‘Dude, I am not sitting outside waiting to take her home so you can get to second base.’

‘It’s going to rock.’ Scott looked smug. ‘You’re just jealous.’

‘Jesus fuck.’ Stiles shook his head. ‘Speaking of, why do I get the feeling I’m going to be third wheel again?’

‘Yeah but now you’re starting line up you’ll definitely get some.’ Scott assured him. ‘Girls are going to be lining up at the party, just wait and see.’

Stiles contemplated telling him that he was not so much interested in the girls who might be there because he currently had a hard-on for Mr Tall, Dark and Definitely An Asshole, but his bisexual crisis was going to have to wait a while and in the meantime he probably needed to play along.

‘Sure.’ He shrugged. ‘Whatever.’ He pulled into the drive of his house and they got out.
The second he opened the door, Stiles could smell something that should not have been there. He panicked briefly as Scott made himself at home and then waved his hands in the general direction of upstairs.

‘I’ll be back.’ he deadpanned and Scott snorted.

‘Dude, why don’t you just piss down here?’ he asked and Stiles pulled a face as he tried to think his way out of this one.

‘It’s broken.’ he ad libbed. ‘Got to use the one upstairs.’ He ran off before Scott could say anything, hurtling up the stairs and then throwing himself through his bedroom door and glaring at the empty space in front of him.

‘Der…’ He didn’t get to finish the word before he was grabbed and slammed against his now closed door. Derek was suddenly in his face, fierce eyebrows and blazing green eyes doing nothing for Stiles’ attempt to act cool.

‘You hung up on me.’ He said it like Stiles had killed his father and he was about to prepare to die at Derek’s hands.

‘You were being a dick.’ he hissed back and then they both froze as Scott yelled up the stairs.

‘You okay?’ He sounded mildly concerned, but then he was also so used to Stiles’ inherent clumsiness that him falling over nothing barely warranted a reaction anymore.

‘Yeah.’ he yelled back, grinning at how Derek winces, his sensitive wolf ears assaulted by Stiles’ less than dulcet tones. ‘I just tripped.’

Scott laughed and Derek narrowed his eyes dangerously at him and Stiles had to valiantly ignore how his dick took notice.

‘No game.’ Derek snarled and he glared right back.

‘Yes game. Not only that but you’re coming with me to the pre-game party tomorrow night.’ He grinned at the resulting look of dismay on Derek’s face. ‘If you’re so fucking worried, then you can come with and keep an eye on me.’ That seemed to throw Derek completely and he let Stiles go.

‘It’s a high-school party.’ he said, like it was the social equivalent of facing a firing squad. ‘Why the hell would you want me there?’

‘Because you’re the one that’s getting his panties in a bunch.’ Stiles straightened up and walked past him, flinching away as Derek made a brief lunge in his direction. ‘Asshole.’

‘What the fuck?.’ Derek sounded outraged. ‘Firstly, in no universe ever am I letting you go to the game or the party. Secondly, when you accidentally turn and eat half the guests or the opposing players, you’re going to be in a shitload of trouble.’

‘I won’t.’ Stiles grinned. ‘The party’s Friday night not Saturday so I should be fine. And if you come with me, it might even be fun.’ He gave Derek his most infuriating smirk. ‘You remember fun Sourwolf? It’s what normal people have on the weekend.’

‘I’m allergic to fun.’ Derek said with a completely straight face and Stiles raised his eyebrows at him.

‘You seriously need to lighten up.’ he told him. ‘Get drunk, kick back, make out with someone…’ He trailed off meaningfully but now Derek was smirking back at him and Stiles knew he was about
to be told something deeply unpleasant and that Derek was going to absolutely love bursting his balloon, whatever it was.

‘You can’t get drunk anymore.’ he said and Stiles frowned.

‘What the fuck are you talking about?’ he asked.

‘Wolves can’t get drunk.’ Now the smug fucker was smiling and Stiles hated him so much in that second that he actually felt like biting him. ‘Our metabolisms just burn the alcohol right off. You can drink as much as you want, but it won’t have any effect. And as for making out with someone, just imagine what will happen if you accidentally bite her tongue out.’

‘Crap.’ Stiles huffed. ‘Or his.’ He rubbed his hands over his face, hoping Derek would pick up on the hint. ‘Can I at least spend the time listening in on people’s conversations?’

‘That you can do.’ Derek replied and the weird smile widened enough to actually look genuine. ‘It’s kind of fun.’

‘So you’ll come with me?’ Stiles asked hopefully. ‘Seeing as now I know I’m going to be the only sober person there.’

‘No.’ Derek snorted. ‘I have actual adult shit to do, like go and try and find the fucking Alpha.’ He moved to the window. ‘And if you’re insisting on going, then that’s where you’ll be staying. If I catch you near the preserve tomorrow night, I will punch you in the head.’

‘Hey, it’s a step up from ripping my throat out.’ Stiles muttered after him, but Derek was already out the window and gone. He stomped back downstairs, the knowledge that he was going to be alone and sitting in a corner or saving drunk people from themselves all night putting a dampener on his earlier good mood, and went into the kitchen where Scott was frowning at his calculus homework like it was from another planet.

‘So what do you think I should wear?’ Stiles glanced briefly at the front window as he heard the sound of the Camaro pulling off at speed. ‘Ideas?’

‘Huh?’ Scott looked confused. ‘What you normally wear.’

‘But what if I was trying to appeal to someone.’ Stiles toyed with his phone and then set it down. ‘Like an older someone.’

‘Now I’ve lost you.’ Scott said and Stiles rolled his eyes. ‘Who are we talking about?’

‘Nobody.’ He sat down and kicked at the chair legs.

‘Are you serious?’ Scott laughed. ‘You’re talking about....’ His whole face creased up with the effort of thought. ‘Oh my God...Derek?!?’

‘What?.’ Stiles was completely caught off guard. He sighed when he realised that Scott had done that annoying thing where he had moments of perfect clarity. ‘Maybe.’

‘When did this happen?’ Now Scott was all ears and Stiles berated himself. Maybe he shouldn’t have been distracting someone who’s currently in danger of failing math.

‘It just did.’ he said and nodded at Scott’s book. ‘Now do your homework.’

‘You sound like my mom.’ Scott grumbled. ‘This is a big thing though. You liking some dude
you’ve just met, who’s a werewolf. Your dad’s going to kill you.’

‘You seem to be coping with it.’ Stiles pointed out. ‘Why aren’t you surprised?’

‘Because I know you?’ Scott offered. ‘And you’re not exactly straight, dude. I’ve caught you looking at Danny’s ass more than once.’

‘Glad to know I’m that transparent.’ Stiles muttered and Scott snorted a laugh.

‘Seems like Derek and Lydia have being hot and hating you in common.’ he replied and Stiles wanted to smack his face into the table. Scott was right though, it looked like he had a type.

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Deaton was at the veterinary clinic when Derek got there and they went down into the basement of the building. It was all concrete walled storerooms down here and the one at the end has a heavy steel door.

‘I used to help sometimes.’ Deaton explained. ‘Omegas that passed through town would need a place to be confined. Your mother was a fair alpha but she was also a prudent one and keeping an omega on your property didn’t sit well with her.’

‘Will it work?’ Derek asked and Deaton moved past him, unlocking the door and pulling it open.

‘See for yourself.’ he replied and Derek did a quick inspection of the cell beyond. The room was big enough for a werewolf to have room to move around freely. There was a small barred window high in one wall so that the moonlight would be able to come in but the rest of the space was bare. Normally it would have soft floor coverings and blankets for the wolf being confined. He remembered that much from his own family’s cells below the front of the house.

‘I’ll have it ready for Saturday.’ Deaton watched him inspecting the room. ‘It should hold him quite comfortably. He’ll need water and something to sleep on. No need to make him any more uncomfortable than he’s already going to be.’ He looked at Derek. ‘Would you like me to be here? I am happy to assist.’

‘No.’ Derek shook his head. ‘I’ll be fine on my own with him. It might make a pleasant change and get him to shut up for a while.’

The corner of Deaton’s mouth twitched.

‘Stiles is an interesting boy.’ he said and Derek didn’t like the undercurrent of humour he heard, feeling far too much like it was being directed at him. ‘Whenever he comes to visit Scott here, I always find him with his nose in something.’

‘That’s precisely how this happened.’ Derek growled. ‘He couldn’t keep his nose out of the preserve and now I’m stuck with him until we can kill the alpha.’ He gave Deaton a sidelong look. ‘Can you help him?’

‘Maybe.’ Deaton replied. ‘But then there’s only so much I can do. I’m not a wolf and he needs someone who is to guide him through this.’

‘I know.’ Derek shoved his hands in his pockets. ‘He’s such a stubborn little shit. I told him to stay inside tomorrow night but apparently he’s going to some stupid high school party and isn’t even considering listening to me.’ He glowered at the floor and Deatons huffed softly, not quiet laughing.
‘He should be fine.’ he said. ‘So long as he stays out of trouble.’

‘That doesn’t make me feel any better.’ Derek sniped. ‘I have the feeling that trouble has a habit of finding him.’

‘In that case, maybe you should be keeping an eye on him.’ Deaton suggested. ‘You can pass for high school.’ He gave Derek an up and down glance. ‘More or less.’

‘I am not going back to school.’ Derek snarled. ‘No fucking way.’

‘Not school.’ Deaton told him. ‘But maybe just the party. We both know what could happen if Stiles gets into a situation he won’t be able to control himself in.’

‘He’s an idiot.’ Derek grumbled.

Deaton chuckled.

‘You could do worse, you know. He’s a smart kid and he’s clearly not afraid of telling you what he thinks. He’d be a good wolf to form a new pack with.’ He gave Derek a pointed look.

‘No.’ Derek’s face darkened. ‘I don’t need anyone else.’

‘Yes.’ Now Deaton’s expression was stern. ‘Because you and Laura were doing so well on your own, clearly. Wolves need a pack, Derek. You need a pack.’

‘One skinny ass teenager with a smart mouth is not a pack.’ Derek retorted. ‘I didn’t even bite him. He’s not family.’

‘True.’ Deaton said. ‘But the least you can do is try and help him.’ He raised an eyebrow. ‘It’s what your mother would have done.’

Derek growled at him, but he knew Deaton was right. Talia would have helped a new wolf to adjust, to get used to being what they were.

‘All right.’ he huffed. ‘I’ll keep an eye on him and go to the goddamned party.’ Then he allowed his lip to curl. ‘Now what advice do you have for getting him not play lacrosse on Saturday?’

‘I would suggest the same.’ Deaton says. ‘And that way you can bring him straight here with no chance of deviations.’

They walked back up together and Deaton left him at the side door. Derek stomped to his car, grudgingly accepting that now he needed to find something to wear that didn’t look like he’d fished it out of a dumpster.

He drove around aimlessly for a while, then finally headed for the downtown area. There were a couple of nondescript motels that catered to the business crown and he pulled into the parking lot of the one that looked the most likely. His credit card got him a room for a week and he took the duffle bag he had brought with him from New York to the room and went in. It was neutrally decorated and he set the bag down on the bed and then stopped when he caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror.

Derek never stopped to look at himself more than necessary. Now though, he stood and met his own eyes in the mirror. They were his father’s eyes, that pale shading that hovered between green and grey and blue depending on the way the light hit it. His mother had called them ocean eyes and she’d said it quietly against his neck as she scented him before bed every night. Laura had had the same
eyes, but Cora’s had been brown and deep like Talia’s.

He drew in a deep breath, taking himself in and thinking about what Stiles must see when he looked at him. His clothes were grubby, worn a couple of days already and he could smell the musk coming off of them. His leather jacket was too long in the arms, but it had been in his father’s Camaro the night he and Laura had made their escape and when Derek closed his eyes he could still smell his scent lingering in the folds. James Hale had been a tall broad-shouldered man with the same sharp features as his son. The dark hair had come from him and Tahlia, although Derek’s ran to almost black and far darker than his sisters who’d been chestnut and gleaming.

Maybe that was why he’d been so fascinated by a golden angel that had descended on him and then turned into a monster from his worst nightmares. He turned away, stifling the sick feeling in his stomach that always came when he thought about her and going back out the door.
By lunchtime on Friday, Stiles was ravenous once again. He plowed his way through his burger and fries, ate half of Allison's and consumed both his and Scott’s pudding cups. He was still hungry when he pushed his tray away and saw them both staring at him, open-mouthed.

‘You hungry, Stiles?’ Scott started grinning at him.

‘Yeah.’ Stiles fished in his pocket wondering if he had enough change for the vending machine.

‘Growing boy.’ He saw Scott’s eyebrows go up and narrowed his eyes at him in response, silently ordering him to shut his mouth. The last thing he needed was his loose-lips best friend letting something slip because of the heart-eyes he had going on.

‘So.’ The sound of Lydia’s voice made them all look up as she slid into a chair next to Allison. ‘I have an idea.’

‘What kind of idea?’ Allison was smiling and then Stiles had to restrain himself from growling because Jackson was not far behind and dropping into the seat at the end of the table. His pale blue eyes were dismissive when he looked at Scott and Stiles but he kept his mouth shut.

‘Well, we have the game on Saturday, and then of course there’s the traditional season opener at my house tomorrow night.’ Lydia said. ‘But I was thinking it would be super fun if we all did something on game night too.’ She looked pointedly down the table. ‘Like pizza afterwards to celebrate the Cyclones’ inevitable victory.’

‘That sounds amazing.’ The words were out of Scott’s mouth before Stiles could kick him under the table.

‘Of course, it does.’ Lydia flicked her hair over her shoulder and a few weeks ago the gesture would have had Stiles swooning. Now it didn’t even so much as make his stomach lurch. Her green eyes swept over him appraisingly and he noticed Jackson tense up. Now even the tiniest gesture seem to catch his eye and he could smell the acrid tang of anger coming from him.

‘So who’ll be going?’ This was from Danny, who’d come to sit next to Stiles. He gave him a sidelong grin that was far too knowing. ‘And will that mean Stiles gets to bring his hot cousin along?’

‘What hot cousin?’ Allison asked and now everyone was looking at him and Stiles wanted to fall through the floor. So much for discretion.

‘No.’ he muttered. ‘He’s busy. So am I. Can’t go, sorry.’ He got up abruptly and took his tray with him, hearing the furious whispering that broke out immediately.

‘Dude?’ Scott caught up with him as he cleared his tray and set it in the rack. ‘What the hell?’
‘Saturday, Scott.’ Stiles hissed at him. ‘Full moon? Any of this ringing a bell?’

‘Oh crap.’ Scott’s face fell. ‘Guess that’s me out too.’

‘No, it’s okay.’ Stiles put his hand on his shoulder. ‘You can totally go. I’ll be fine.’ He gave Scott a wry smile. ‘I’ve got the big bad wolf looking out for me.’

The walk back to their last class was mostly Scott pleading with Stiles to go with them and Stiles chuckling because he had way more sense than that. He might have had curiosity issues that ended up with him getting gnawed on by a werewolf but even he drew the line at willingly sitting in a diner with Jackson for a couple of hours. Besides, it wasn’t like he could even go outside. Derek would go ballistic if he went anywhere other than wherever Stiles was supposed to be and Stiles had a feeling that Derek just might eat him if he acted out on a full moon.

‘I can’t.’ he explained for the last time, keeping his voice down. ‘Come on dude, don’t ask me again.’

‘Fine.’ Scott pouted and then looked concerned and Stiles grinned. He was a little slow on the uptake, but finally it seemed to have sunk in. ‘What are you going to do? Do you even know what’s going to happen to you?’

‘Not sure.’ Stiles shrugged. ‘I’m weirdly looking forward to finding out though.’

‘Do you think you’re going to...you know...’ Scott looked around them and then mimed fangs.

‘You’ve seen my new game face.’ Stiles said. ‘I think it’s likely.’

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The dry leaves crunched underneath Derek’s feet as he walked the land that used to be where his family patrolled and played under the moon. The smells were familiar, and he knew the ways without having to be told. The wolf inside him recognised this territory as well as he had grown to know the streets of New York.

‘Anything?’ Deaton asked from behind him and Derek stopped to shake his head.

‘No.’ He huffed in frustration. ‘Whoever this Alpha is, they’re cunning and they know how to hide their tracks.’ He gave Deaton a questioning look. ‘Can I ask you something. How long do you think it’s been here?’

‘At least a few weeks before Laura got here.’ Deaton replies. ‘She’s the only one they’ve killed so far but I have a feeling that she won’t be the last. Stiles could well have been a casualty if you hadn’t saved him.’ He looked up at the trees. ‘What else do you have planned for Saturday? You know he’s not going to be able to sit out the transformation quietly. He may even need to be restrained.’

‘I know.’ Derek frowned. ‘I was thinking about going in with him but that could be a very bad idea.’

‘The Alpha might well call to him and if he was anywhere he can get away from you, then he’d run straight to it.’ Deaton says sternly. ‘And you know the outcome will not be a good one. He could be influenced to kills any one of us, you even, as the Alpha seeks to impress his authority over him. If you ask me, I would stay out of it until we know what he’s capable of.’

‘I am well aware of this.’ Derek said. ‘We’ll chain him to a wall, if we have to but I don’t want his first transformation to be like that if we can help it.’
'No, neither would I.' Deaton replied. 'Just how many bitten humans have you watched turn? I would guess it’s not that many.' He raised an eyebrow at Derek’s silence. ‘Let’s assume that you’re basically flying by the seat of your pants here and say that you have no idea what you are doing. I, on the other hand, have a fairly good idea on how to handle this. We have a secure location and a few things, but hopefully chains are not going to be necessary. What we both need to do is be there to keep him calm and stop him from hurting himself or us.’

‘Why are you doing this?’ Derek asked straight out. He wasn’t completely convinced by Deaton’s good guy act and even though there was no change in Deaton’s heartbeat it didn’t mean he wasn’t being deceptive, just that he might be very good at it after having been around wolves most of his life.

Deaton stopped and looked up at the trees like he’d been doing a bit earlier.

‘The night your family was killed was one of the worst of my life.’ He turned back to Derek, his face perfectly serious. ‘I was extremely fond of your parents, and of you even though you didn’t know me back then. I took my position seriously and the fact that I missed something, that I was the one that dropped the ball, has had me doubting myself for a long time. Like I said, my retirement was a direct result. Now it feels almost like I’ve been given a second chance, and I am not going to disappoint myself or you this time.’

That caught Derek off guard and he could only stand and look back at Deaton, listening to the steady earnest thump of his heart. It also made him feel even worse, knowing the truth of what had happened that night. He swallowed hard and tried not to let it show. Thankfully Deaton didn’t seem to notice his discomfort and they carried on walking. After a short while Derek couldn’t resist speaking again.

‘So you believe in them?’ he asked and got a quizzical look. ‘Second chances?’

‘Of course.’ Deaton nodded. ‘Absolutely. Everyone deserves a second chance.’

Derek wasn’t sure why that made him feel a little better, but it did.

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School ended and Scott made noises about going to the clinic and Stiles volunteered to drive him. Scott beamed because it was a long bike ride and he happily accepted the offer, completely unaware of Stiles’ ulterior motives, which were to corner Deaton without Derek around and get some answers of his own. They walked out into the afternoon with Allison and she waved at a man in a dark SUV that had just pulled up to the steps.

‘My dad.’ she says by way of explanation to Stiles and he squinted to get a better look as she and Scott walked down the steps so he can put her in the car, standing at the window and giving the man inside a little wave. He was wearing sunglasses in Stiles couldn’t see him all that well, but he could pick up a faint smell off him and for all he looked like any suburban dad collecting his daughter, Stiles could catch a whiff of gun oil and cordite. There’s something else too, a bitter herbal note that has his eye almost watering as he followed and got closer to the car.

‘Hey Mr Argent.’ Scott turned around and beckoned for Stiles to join them. ‘This is Stiles. He’s my best friend.’

‘Hi.’ Allison’s dad greeted him and gave them a smile but when he looked at Stiles, Stiles could see the discreet watchfulness, something he was more than used to with his own father. He’d hung out enough at the station to see him use it more than once and he didn’t envy Scott trying to get up to
shenanigans with Allison if that was who was on watch at the Argent house. ‘And Stiles, is it? That’s an unusual name.’

‘Nickname.’ he offered with a grin. ‘My real name is Polish and has way too many consonants in it to be pronounced safely.’

Mr Argent gave him a nod and then sat back and Allison and Scott said goodbye and did their best puppy dog eyes at each other before the car pulled away.

‘Well, he looks scary.’ Stiles announced, slapping Scott on the shoulder. ‘Good luck trying to tap that, buddy.’

‘You should meet her mom.’ Scott laughed and looked a little wild eyed. ‘And her aunt. Now she really scares the shit out of me.’

‘Does she live with them?’ Stiles asked. ‘That’s kind of weird.’

‘She does something that means she travels a lot for work, I think so she’s just visiting right now.’ Scott replied as they started heading for the jeep. ‘Sometimes I swear she looks at me like she wants to…’ He flushed. ‘Let’s just say it’s not the good kind of look. Anyway, her and Allison are like sisters so I haven’t said anything.’

That made Stiles’ curiosity prick up its ears.

‘Like a creepy kind of look?’ he asked and Scott went even redder.

‘She keeps talking about my beautiful brown eyes.’ He shivered a little. ‘Dude, she freaks me out. Like stranger danger freaks me out.’

That made Stiles thoughtful. Sure, Derek was a stranger but even though he did creepy brooding werewolf super well, Stiles had never felt like that around him. In fact, the creepy thing was just how safe he felt around him.

‘What makes it worse is that she’s super hot.’ Scott continued. ‘But the kind of hot that super-villains are.’

‘Nice.’ Stiles laughed as they chucked Scott’s bike in the back and got in the jeep.

They chatted amiably back and forth on the way to the vet. Scott was still psyched about the party on Friday and the pizza thing on Saturday. When they get to his work, Stiles pulled in and automatically scanned for Derek’s Camaro, hoping he wasn’t not there, especially seeing as Stiles was very much not listening to him about never going back there. They got out and went inside and Scott yelled his arrival as Stiles inhaled deeply and then realises something. Deaton came out of the back store room and it was to his credit that he didn’t so much as blink when he saw him with Scott, but then they were pretty much a pair so it wasn’t unusual to see them together.

‘Hello.’ He gave Scott a serene smile. ‘You’re early.’

Stiles gave me a ride.’ Scott replied, already moving through to the back.

‘Well, you’re just in time to see the new arrivals.’ Deaton said and his face lit up.

‘She had them?’ He was already bouncing in the doorway.

‘Six of them.’ Deaton told him. ‘Why don’t you go have a look.’
‘Sure.’ Scott bounded through the door and then came back to stick his head out but Deaton waved him off.

‘I’ll keep Mr Stilinski company.’ He gave Stiles a look that spoke volumes. ‘Go on.’ He waited until Scott was safely out of earshot and Stiles grinned.

‘Thanks.’ he said and watched Deaton’s face changed ever so slightly. ‘I was hoping we could talk.’

‘Talk about what?’ he asked, his eyes guarded, and Stiles chuckled.

‘Okay we’ll play it like that.’ he says and Deaton says nothing. ‘But I came because I was hoping to ask you some questions.’

‘I probably should have expected that.’ Deaton had an eyebrow raised at him. ‘I should say that I probably won’t be much help though.’

‘See, I don’t buy that for a second.’ Stiles countered. ‘I know you can. I don’t want much, just to see what the hell I’m getting into. Derek’s been kind of like Fort Knox with the info.’

Deaton narrowed his eyes at him and then smiled and while it was resigned it wasn’t unfriendly.

‘All right.’ He sounded slightly amused. ‘First I have to ask my own question. Does Scott know?’

‘About me?’ Stiles nodded. ‘But not about you.’

‘Good.’ Deaton looked back at the door and Stiles grinned because he could totally hear Scott making cooing noises at the newly arrived puppies. ‘I’d like to keep it like that. Wait here for a moment.’

He disappeared into the back and Stiles heard him talk briefly to Scott, giving him instructions. Then he moved further into the building and there was the sound of him scratching around. He eventually came back and handed Stiles a small leatherbound book.

‘That should answer at least some of your questions.’ he said. ‘Talia gave it to me when I became her emissary.’ He ran a hand gently over its cover. ‘But I thought that you could probably get more use out of it for the present time. Let you know what you’ve got yourself into as you said. Keep it safe. It’s going to be a lot more forthcoming than Derek, at least until he trusts us a little more.’

‘He’s so closed.’ Stiles felt the little tug inside him. ‘He’s not telling me anything.’

‘There’s a reason for that.’ Deaton replied. ‘And he’s right. You need to be protected, but that doesn’t necessarily mean being kept in the dark.’

‘Forewarned is forarmed?’ Stiles asked and he nodded.

‘Something like that.’ he said. ‘But give him time. He will come around.’ They both turned as Scott came back.

‘You’ve got to come see them.’ He was bubbling over. ‘They are so freaking cute.’

‘Maybe later, Scott.’ Deaton smiled. ‘Stiles was just leaving.’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles grabbed his bag and shoved the book back inside before Scott could notice it. ‘Dad’s on swing shift so I got to be home for dinner before the party.’

‘No sweat.’ Scott waved him off. ‘Thanks for the ride.’ He was gone again before Stiles could even
say goodbye, but it was puppies so he didn’t take it personally.

‘Before you go.’ Deaton says. ‘This party tonight?’

‘Don’t, I already got yelled at about that.’ Stiles grumbled. ‘I’m going.’

‘Of course you are.’ Deaton chuckled. ‘But I expect you here tomorrow night for the full moon.’

‘Here?’ Stiles stared at him. ‘Are you sure?’

‘You’ll need to be somewhere.’ Deaton said. ‘And I happen to be equipped to deal with your particular condition. Just make sure you have a cover story.’ He doesn’t say anything else, just raised his hand in salutation and left Stiles in the front room, disappearing into the back.

Stiles left the clinic, getting into the jeep and sitting there for a while. He considered going to stalk Derek but then figured that if he wanted to talk he knew very well where Stiles lived. He stopped off at the grocery store for dinner and made it home in plenty of time to prepare everything by the time his dad got home. Noah came in, looking tired and extremely grateful when he spotted the food Stiles had made, even if it included vegetables.

‘Hey kid.’ He took off his gun and Stiles handed him a diet soda from the fridge. ‘It’s nice to actually see you.’

‘You too.’ Stiles nodded at the table. ‘Sit.’ He’d learned to cook a long time ago and now he saw it as his solemn duty to guide his father’s dietary choices away from saturated fats. ‘How was work?’

‘Long.’ Noah dished up some of the chicken bake he’d made. ‘No solid leads but we’re hopeful.’ He gave Stiles a look. ‘You hear from Derek today?’

‘No.’ Stiles was grateful he didn’t have to lie. ‘But I’m sure he’s around.’

‘I think I’ll try and track him down later.’ Noah said around a mouthful of food. ‘I ran those names on the paper he gave me. Got some interesting results.’

‘You’re still not going to tell me who was on that list, are you?’ Stiles glared at him, but Noah was completely immune.

‘Not a chance, kid.’ He punctuated his words with his fork. ‘This is not a game, Stiles. This is a murder case and I can’t have you trying to play detective.’

‘Fine.’ Stiles muttered. ‘In that case is it okay if I partake in a completely normal teenage activity and go to a party tonight?’

‘Be back before curfew and no drinking.’ Noah replied. ‘Otherwise fine.’ He grinned. ‘You deserve a reward for making first line. I’ve wangled it so I can go in a bit late so I can come watch you play on Saturday.’

‘Cool,’ That did make Stiles smile. He knew he had a chance to really make Noah proud and that was really all he wanted.

‘So where is this party?’ Noah asked, clearing the dish of chicken.

‘Lydia’s.’ Stiles was smug. ‘Seems now I’m first line, I get invited over to the cool kids’ houses.’

‘Pity you’re not interested in her anymore.’ Noah remarked and Stiles choked on his mouthful of soda, coughing frantically as Noah reached over and thumped him on the back.
‘What?’ It came out weak. ‘I could be?’

‘I have eyes, kid.’ Noah was smiling. ‘And I saw the way you were around Derek the other night. You like him.’

‘No.’ Stiles protested, feeling his face heat up. ‘Okay, he’s objectively ridiculously hot but he’s also like super grumpy and prone to thinking I’m really annoying.’

‘Not to mention six years older than you.’ Noah added. ‘But he seems like a good kid. If you were to profess an interest, it wouldn’t be something I’d be completely opposed to so long as there were ground rules.’

‘Ugh.’ Stiles flopped over onto the tabletop as dramatically as he could, ignoring the chuckling that followed. ‘Please stop talking.’

*********

The party at Lydia’s is set to start at eight but Stiles knew that only the deeply uncool would get there before nine, so he picked Scott up and then they went past Allison’s house. She was waiting for them on her front step and climbed in the back, giving Scott a quick kiss over the seat and making Stiles feel incredibly jealous.

‘So that’s what you went with?’ Allison gave him a once over and he snorted.

‘Tried and tested dude.’ he replied and yes, he’d kind of fallen back on jeans and a graphic tee and blazer because that’s what made him feel comfortable and Derek wasn’t going to show anyway and it wasn’t like he was even in a position to make out with anyone else.

‘Is that a unicorn on your shirt?’ Scott was peering at him and he grinned.

‘Deadpool’s favourite animal.’ he replied. ‘That is cool by association my friend.’

Lydia’s house was one of the nicest in Beacon Hills and it was already packed by the time they got there. Stiles found somewhere to park after dropping Scott and Allison at the front door, but it was a way down the road and he got out the Jeep grumbling and then nearly had a heart attack when a hand landed on his shoulder.

‘Fuck.’ He had his hand over his heart as he glared at Derek. ‘I need to get you a fucking bell.’

‘Stiles.’ Derek said by way of greeting and then Stiles’ stomach did a little flip flop thing because Derek was there and he looked like he’d actually made an effort to dress up somewhat. His jeans looked new, dark blue and actually clean and fitted like a second skin. He was also wearing a pristine white t-shirt and that stupid leather jacket and Stiles’ hormones were raging out of control because he totally had a bad boy kink, not to mention the fact that Derek’s scent was coming through clean, strong and unfiltered. He was so busy staring and happily inhaling that it took him a moment to realise that Derek was asking him something. ‘What the fuck is that on your shirt?’

‘Unicorn.’ He grinned, goofy with happiness because Derek was there in front of him. ‘You came after all. I’m not going to ask how you knew where though.’

‘I followed the stench of cheap beer, weed and desperate horniness.’ Derek deadpanned and then huffed. ‘Besides Deaton said it would be a good idea to keep an eye on you so here I am.’

‘Didn’t I say the same thing?’ Stiles asked and snickered at Derek’s filthy look. He held out an arm.

‘Soooo, shall we?’
‘Dick.’ Derek snorted and shoved him hard enough that he almost fell in a bush.

They started walking down the street and Stiles wondered if he should chance grabbing Derek’s hand because waltzing in with him on his arm would definitely get people talking. Derek’s levels of hotness would send his reputation skyrocketing. Derek, of course, immediately read his mind and stepped out of range.

‘I’m here to babysit you.’ he muttered. ‘And only because Deaton told me to.’ He had his hands shoved in his pockets and he looked deeply uncomfortable. ‘To make sure you don’t make an ass of yourself.’

‘Or a wolf.’ Stiles snickered and ignored the resulting glare that could strip paint. ‘To be honest I am kind of surprised Lydia’s even letting me near the place, lacrosse team or not.’

‘Why?’ Derek asked, sounding bored already.

‘Because she hates my guts.’ Stiles replied. ‘Which sucks because I was crazy about her. I’ve sent her a Valentine’s card every year since middle school. I also used to leave roses stuck to her locker but she kind of always threw them in the trash. Then there was the time I wrote her this poem and read it to her in class, but she really didn’t like that. I mean she’s been telling me for years that she hates me so God knows why I persisted, but she’s kind of a goddess so...’ He trailed off when he realised that Derek has stopped walking and turned to look at him.

‘Gee, I wonder why.’ His voice was flat. ‘That’s all kind of creepy and that’s coming from me.’

‘Uh, excuse you.’ Stiles retorted, more than a little defensive after what had happened. ‘Climbing in someone’s bedroom window is a shitload creepier than me giving Lydia tokens of my undying esteem.’

‘Did she ever tell you not to?’ Derek asked and Stiles frowned.

‘Yeah, sure she did but...’ The realisation hit him like a ton of bricks. ‘Oh.’

‘Creepy.’ Derek repeated. ‘Consent is important, Stiles. I thought you kids all knew that these days.’ There was something in the way he said it that had Stiles paying attention and he breathed in, now checking Derek’s other tells. His heart sounded steady but there’s something leaking through his scent, a dry scent almost like ashes.

‘What are you talking about?’ he asked. ‘There something going on with you about this particular topic?’

‘No, there isn’t.’ Derek said and stepped past him. ‘Can we just go and get this over with?’

Stiles trotted to catch up with Derek’s angry man-stalk and thought hard about what had just happened. By the time they got to Lydia’s house he was cringing.

‘Shit.’ He stopped dead. ‘I’m a stalker.’

‘Yup.’ Derek sighed. ‘You’re a stalker. And you’re going to be a dead stalker if we don’t go in so you can do shots and dance like a moron and find some girl to hook up with so we can get the fuck out of here and make sure you get home without being eaten by the alpha.’

‘I don’t want to hook up with a girl.’ Stiles snorted and then grinned. ‘And you’re right. I can totally do shots.’ He had a wonderful thought. ‘I literally can’t get drunk?’
‘You literally can’t get drunk.’ Derek huffed. ‘But you can be incredibly annoying.’

‘That’s all part of the charm.’ Stiles laughed and walked into the house. He was slightly disappointed that he didn’t get much of a reaction, but then several people spotted Derek behind him and he was pretty sure he heard the sound of multiple pairs of panties dropping. He glared behind him in an accusatory manner and Derek just gave him a smile that screamed serial killer but probably looked like a siren call to every single female in the immediate vicinity judging from the dreamy sighs it elicited.

‘Stiles!’ He heard Scott’s voice and saw him coming over, a red solo cup already in his hand. He stopped and gave Derek a confused look before he suddenly had a moment of clarity. ‘Oh my God. This is him. Again.’ That last is hissed and now Stiles was feeling the weight of the furious look Derek’s giving him.

‘Yeah.’ he sighed. ‘Scott this is Derek. Derek this is Scott, my best friend.’

‘You told him.’ Derek hissed and Stiles was pretty sure he’s going to get eviscerated in front of the entire room when Allison came up as well. She gave them both a sunny smile and looks at them expectantly, her dimples on display.

‘Hi.’ She was now looking Derek up and down.

‘Uh.’ Scott looked like he was about to cave so Stiles stepped in.

‘Allison, this is Derek.’ he said. ‘He’s my…lacrosse tutor.’

Oh God he was going to die. Derek’s eyebrows looked like they were about to fly right off his face.

‘Oh.’ Allison smiled, even if she looked a little confused. ‘I didn’t know that was a thing.’

‘Yeah.’ Derek sounded like he wanted to eat something. ‘And you know Stiles needs all the help he can get.’ He brought his hand down on Stiles’ shoulder and squeezed and Stiles gritted his teeth because even without claws he was going to have marks. Derek also now looking at Allison like something else was up and it was making everyone a little uncomfortable.

‘So.’ Scott was a little frantic as he took her arm. ‘You need a drink.’

‘I have a drink.’ Allison said, holding up her cup.

‘Well, you need another one.’ Scott replied and towed her away. That of course lefts Stiles there with murderwolf. Derek narrowed his eyes at him and grabbed him by the collar of his blazer, yanking him close enough to not be overheard.

‘You told him.’ And yes, that did indeed sound like a murder threat and Stiles’ heart started galloping and he fervently hoped that Derek thought it was only because he was scared shitless and not because being manhandled did things to him.

‘I had to tell someone.’ he hissed back. ‘Scott’s my best friend. We’ve known each other since we were kids. Besides you didn’t do yourself any favours by hanging out at the school like a creeper.’

‘You’re an idiot.’ Derek glowered at him. ‘An irresponsible pain in my ass who…’

‘Stiles.’ The sound of Lydia’s voice brought them both up short. She was looking gorgeous as usual and her green eyes (emerald and not weird ass sea-mist green and Christ did he just compare Derek’s eyes to sea mist he seriously needed help) raked over them both and ended back on Derek, one
coppery brow arched in question. ‘Who’s your friend?’

‘I’m his lacrosse tutor.’ Derek’s voice had an edge that could probably maim but this was Lydia they were dealing with and she simply took it in her stride.

‘All right then.’ She didn’t look like she believed a word of that explanation. ‘Just don’t be weird. I have people here who actually know me and I don’t want to be embarrassed.’ She swanned off and left them still standing there.

‘God.’ Stiles swallowed nervously. ‘She’s so freaking scary.’ He gave Derek a sidelong glance. ‘I think she might even be scarier than you.’

‘Fuck.’ Derek looked mildly horrified. ‘I think you might be right.’

Two hours later and Stiles was actually having a good time. He’d killed at beer pong, drunk a record breaking number of shots that had earned him acclaim with every jock in the place (expect that dickbag Jackson) and now he was watching Derek attempting to fend off every girl in the place. It certainly beat watching Scott and Allison slow dancing and making heart eyes at each other, when they managed to stop making out long enough to breathe. So when Lydia suddenly appeared beside him. he actually jumped and bemoaned the fact that being a werewolf hasn’t made him any less twitchy. He watched her watching Derek with a thoughtful expression on her face and then decided that he needed to say something.

‘I’m sorry.’ he blurted out and she looked at him, her eyes assessing him before she responded.

‘What for?’ she asked and she had that smell again, her nose wrinkling.

‘For basically stalking you since middle school.’ Stiles replied. ‘I kind of realise now that must have been…’

‘Creepy as hell?’ she asked sweetly. ‘Incredibly invasive? Borderline psychotic?’

‘Yikes.’ Stiles winced. ‘Yeah. All of the above.’ He was expecting a slap maybe, or at least a devastating verbal takedown but then he was blown away as she actually smiled at him.

‘Apology accepted.’ she said and then her grin turned into a smirk. ‘If you answer one question.’

‘Anything.’ Stiles agreed readily, just happy that she was actually now smelling like she didn’t completely hate him.

‘I want to know how the hell you managed to land that.’ she replied, turning back to look at Derek. ‘Because quite frankly he’s so far out of your league that I am amazed you’re even in the same zip code.’

Stiles eyes widened comically and then he flailed in protest.

‘No.’ He shook his head. ‘We are so not…’

‘I’m calling bullshit on that one.’ Lydia snorted and that was funny because he’d never heard her do that before. ‘You do realise that you both keep staring at each other when the other one’s not looking. He’s turned down every girl here, most of whom are far more physically attractive than you are and he keeps checking out your ass every time you turn around.’ She now looked at him expectantly. ‘So if he’s not your date, then what’s really going on?’
‘Nothing.’ Stiles squeaked. ‘Really, not a damn thing.’

‘Danny says he’s your cousin.’ Lydia mused. ‘But we both know that’s not true. That makes him something of a mystery and I just happen to love mysteries, Stiles.’ With that she flicked her hair and left him to realise that whining at Derek to come with him to the party might not have been such a good idea. He sighed and trudged to the bathroom, closing and locking the door behind him because he had performance anxiety when peeing and preferred not to have anyone barge in on him. He was just about to unzip when he felt something in his chest and the next second he was doubled over in pain, spasms lancing through him like he was being stabbed.

It feels like someone had got him right in the ribcage and attached a chain to it, trying to yank it right out of his body. Stiles gasped, not even able to make a sound as the agony twisted him, forcing him to grab at the edge of the vanity. He looked down and saw his claws are out and then looked up to his his eyes reflecting gold in the mirror with fangs where his teeth should be.

Oh shit. This was not good.

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Derek was leaning against the wall when he felt it. He immediately looked over the heads of the kids milling around him, on alert as he listened for Stiles’ heartbeat, inhaling sharply and bolting in the direction it was coming from. It was beating desperately quickly, prompting him to shove his way through the gathered teens and following the trail of smell that Stiles had left until he got to the bathroom. He hammered on the door, startling a couple making out in the corridor next to him.

‘Stiles!’ It was bark. ‘Get out here!’

There was a low growl from behind the door and Derek had to rein himself in tightly to not shift. He could feel something was very wrong and he knew exactly what it was.

‘Shit.’ He moved back and went in with his shoulder, splintering the lock under his weight and flinging the door open. The bathroom was empty and the window open, Stiles is long gone. The only sign of him was his blazer on the floor. Derek grabbed it and hurtled out the bathroom back through the press of bodies until he found Scott and grabbed him by the arm, startling him and Allison.

‘Come with me.’ he demanded, and Scott bleated in protest as he was hauled along with him until they got outside into the back garden where there were fewer people around the pool.

‘Dude.’ Scott protested, trying to twist out of Derek’s grip. ‘What the hell…?’

‘You know.’ Derek growled. ‘You know what happened to him.’ Scott’s eyes went wide and then he nodded, looking sheepish.

‘Yeah.’ He looked confused. ‘But I don’t now. What happened?’

‘He went out the bathroom window.’ Derek was furious. ‘I have to go look for him before he does something so stupid he ends up in serious shit.’ He lifted his head, listening and scenting the air. ‘You need to go home.’ He handed Scott Stiles’ jacket. ‘Take his Jeep and get you and your girlfriend out of here. It’s not going to be safe.’

‘What about Stiles?’ Scott implored and Derek waved him off.

‘I’ll find him.’ He looked past Scott to where Allison was now coming towards him. ‘Just fucking go.’ He didn’t stay for explanations, just took off over the back fence and into the trees before he was
running back down the street to where he left the Camaro.

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Stiles ran.

He had no idea where he was going, just kept following that tug inside of him. There was a sound, thrumming deep under the noises of the night and the pounding of his own blood in his ears, calling to him like a siren song and he couldn’t help but put his head down and run faster. He’d lost his shirt along the way, but he didn’t care. All he was fixated on was getting to the source of that call, to where he was being summoned.

The sound of something caught his attention and Stiles stopped running for a moment, shaking his head at the irritating tinny noise coming from his pocket. He ripped the phone out of his pocket and snarled as he tossed it aside, then got going again, picking up the pace as he broke through the trees to hear a howl going up. It was loud and commanding, and he went towards it as if magnetised. His nostrils flared as he breathed in deeply, the smells of the preserve thick in his nose and sorting through the tangles, pushing aside dirt and trees and animals until he found the one he was looking for. It lead him in a new direction to where he knew his alpha is waiting for him and Stiles needed to get to him as soon as he could.

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Derek swore as he pulled up at the house. In the dark he could see the outline of the ruined roof clearly and when he got out, he shivered involuntarily. He hated this place now, a reminder of everything he’d managed to fuck up in his short life and if he had been able to full shift, his ears would be laid flat against his head.

Now of course, he had more pressing matters. He’d tried calling Stiles repeatedly since he left the party, but there was no reply so Derek tossed the phone onto the driver’s seat and closed the door, raising his head to scent the air. It was cool, the forest scents filling his head with unwanted memories but he pushed these aside and concentrated. He needed to find Stiles and he needs to find him before whatever alpha waiting out there could get its claws in him.

He started jogging once he got to the treeline, listening carefully for anything that might give him a clue as to where Stiles was. There was a definite feeling that something was out there, the prickles down his spine alerting him to the fact that there was a larger and far more dangerous predator roaming the night. Not for the first time, he kicked himself for not dragging Stiles home loft and tying him to his bed so he couldn’t go to the stupid party and a stray thought leaked into his head of Stiles throwing his head back as he sank ten shots in a row with not a single ill effect, the way he had snickered when the linesman he’d taken on fell over to the side and sprawled on the floor. His warm amber eyes had lit up with good humour, his wide mouth curved in a delighted grin and it had definitely caught Derek’s attention. It was actually becoming something of a problem.

He was broken out his thoughts as the sound of a howl went up through the forest, loud and threatening enough to make him growl angrily at the thought of another wolf on his territory and he immediately headed in its direction.

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Scott pulled up at Allison’s house and avoided her eyes. He knew she had questions but he had no idea how to answer them.

‘So.’ He rubbed his sweaty hands down his jeans. ‘I’ll call you tomorrow?’
‘No.’ Allison had her arms folded. ‘We’re going to talk about what the hell happened back there and why you dragged me out of the party early and who the hell Stiles’ creepy ass boyfriend is.’

‘Huh?’ Scott scrunched his face up in mild horror at giving anything away. ‘Stiles isn’t gay.’

‘No?’ Allison gave him a look that said very clearly he was an idiot. ‘You’re probably the only one that doesn’t realise that he’s more than likely 50 percent gay.’ She narrowed her eyes at him. ‘That’s not even that part that concerns me. Who the hell is Derek and why was he even there? I want to know what’s going on and I know you know.’

‘I can’t.’ Scott practically squirmed in his seat. ‘I promised.’

‘In that case, you can kiss yourself goodnight.’ Allison announces and opened her door. ‘When you decide to trust me and tell me the truth, we can talk.’

‘I can’t.’ Scott was miserable. ‘I made a promise.’

Allison just shook her head in disbelief and got out, slamming the door hard enough to make Scott wince before storming off up the pathway to her house.

‘Shit.’ Scott moaned and dropped his head to the steering wheel. ‘Shit, shit, shit.’ He finally huffed and lifted his head. His date with Allison was a bust but his best friend was still out there and Scott knew Stiles well enough to guess where he’d gone. He wasn’t as dumb as people thought he was and he actually listened to Stiles’ rambling a lot more than he was given credit for. He turned the engine back on and pulled out to make a u-turn and go in the direction he needed to get to the preserve, grinding the gears and praying that Stiles couldn’t hear it.

***********

The pull was getting stronger and Stiles hurdled a fallen log, growling as he revelled in his newfound speed and agility. He’d never been this graceful, this in control before, and he thundered across the clearing in front of him, blind and deaf to everything else but the howls he was following.

Something thudded against his shoulder and he skidded to a stop at the pain like fire in his shoulder. It was too hot and too much and he howls as he fell to his knees and scrabbled at the metal shaft that was protruding from his bare skin. It burns like the time he put his hand on the stove, only so much worse, and Stiles barely managed to get his head up to see the four shadows that were coming out of the trees to stand in front of him. He can smell gun oil and rope and the same odd herby scent from the afternoon that made his lips curl back as he bared his fangs and snarled at them.

The next bolt went into his thigh and Stiles was howling, the pain almost too much to bear. He writhed on the ground, could smell his own blood as the man in front stepped into the moonlight so Stiles could see the gleam of it on the metal of the crossbow he was holding.

‘Looks like we got one.’ His voice was smooth, assured and just a little bit familiar as was his face and the shock of what Stiles was seeing nearly made him laugh in disbelief in spite of the pain.

‘It looks young.’ One of the others, a burly man with a rifle, steps up behind him.

‘Don’t let that fool you.’ the leader replied. ‘He looks young but they’re lethal right from the beginning. We need to catch them while they’re still learning. You can’t trust a werewolf to not kill, it’s in their natures.’ He casually rested the crossbow against his shoulder and Stiles growled deep in his throat as he looked at Chris Argent. He’d clearly not recognised who Stiles was, which his moondrunk mind told him could only be a good thing. If he could just get off the ground and to the one that was calling him he would be fine, but he felt as weak as a kitten. It enraged him amid the
pain and Stiles tried to get back to his knees. The men were coming closer and Argent lifted his other hand. Stiles saw a gun in it and he roared as best he could. The men behind Argent chuckled at his feeble attempt but the smiles soon fell away from their faces as something roared back in the dark.

‘What the fuck…?’ one of them said.

‘Stay alert.’ Argent’s light eyes were scouting the darkness. Something flew through the air behind him snarling like a wild animal, and one of the men went down screaming. Argent wheeled, gun going off, and the snarling carried as the shadow moved far quicker than even Stiles could track before the next man was caught and hurled through the air like he weighed nothing.

The lack of attention on him was enough to give Stiles time to get to his feet and he staggered away, the pain in his leg and shoulder slowing him but the adrenaline and sheer rage he was feeling enough to drive him forward to get away and down the slope behind him, sneakers slipping on the dead leaves, He could hear shouts and more gunshots behind him and as he slid down to the bottom of the slope, something leaped over him. He caught the outline of what looked like a man when it landed and saw electric blue eyes blazing at him as Derek grabbed him under the arms and hauled him to his feet.

‘Fucking run!’ he snarled and Stiles tried, but it hurt and he stumbled.

‘Derek.’ It came out mangled by his fangs and Derek made an angry noise. Stiles found himself being scooped off the ground and hauled over Derek’s shoulder and carried into the night, the impotent curses of the men behind him soon drowned out. The pain was back even more than before, his shoulder and thigh jarred by Derek’s steps and Stiles’ face banging into his stupid leather jacket. He was pretty sure he was going to die and all he wanted is to get back into the trees and find whoever called him out. He scrabbled ineffectually at Derek’s back and got a venomous hiss.

‘Shut up. Do you want the hunters to find us?’ Derek’s voice was thick and Stiles realised it was because he obviously also had his fangs out.

‘Hunters?’ Stiles growled in pain. His claws hurt and there’s a dreadful ache in his head, not helped at all by being jostled around the way he was.

‘Jesus fucking Christ.’ Derek ran faster, taking them through the trees and then nearly dropping Stiles as he fell on his ass, snarling at the shadow in front of them. The person shrieked and threw up both hands, the flashlight he was holding throwing a beam of light across the bare branches above him. A very familiar scent gave away his identity even before he spoke.

‘Don’t eat me!’ Scott was clearly terrified and Stiles could almost hear Derek rolling his eyes. He whined as Derek grabbed Scott’s collar and dragged him to his feet, pretty sure he heard something about I’m not a fucking babysitter before he passed out from the pain.

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‘What the fuck was that?’ Bellagio was back on his feet, helping Travis to get up. They both looked pained and Chris knew they had taken some hard hits. He hadn’t expected another werewolf to show up and berated himself for being sloppy.

‘An old acquaintance.’ He stared into the trees, mind racing. ‘Looks like our cub has some friends.’ He huffed and moved back from the ridge, deciding to retreat for now. ‘Come on. We’ve still got an alpha out there.’

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They got back to the Hale house and Derek saw Stiles’ jeep parked next to his Camaro. He wrenched the passenger door of his car open and dumped Stiles in the seat, grimacing at how the blood smeared shiny patches on the leather. This kid was going to be the death of them both, but he had to work hard to quell the panicky feeling he had at seeing him hurt.

‘Now fucking stay.’ he snarled and turned to Scott, who was staring at Stiles like he’d grown two heads. In his defence seeing his best friend with glowing golden eyes and fangs and claws was probably not something he was going to get used to anytime soon. That of course just reminded Derek of the claws and he leaned back into the passenger side, getting right in Stiles’ still-shifted face.

‘And keep your hands off the fucking seats.’ he barked coming back out and finding Scott staring at him with terror on his face. Derek snorted and shifted back to human looking and Scott visibly relaxed, still trying to look past Derek at Stiles.

‘Is he…?’ His voice was trembling.

‘I’m taking him back to my place.’ Derek growled. ‘I need to get the bolts out and clean him up.’

‘Is he going to die?’ Scott’s lip started wobbling and he the time to pinch the bridge of his nose in exasperation.

‘No.’ he muttered. ‘But he’s going to wish he had when I take them out.’ He lifts his head, listening for the sound of the hunters retreating into the forest. ‘Look, just get in the Jeep and follow me. I could use your help.’ He said it begrudgingly, but he had a newbie wolf on his hands so any help would be welcome. Besides, Scott seemed nowhere near as annoying as Stiles. He shaking he was so scared but he’d came out into the preserve at night because Stiles needed help and Derek had to respect that.

He got in the Camaro and gunned it out from the house, the Jeeps headlights in his mirrors. Scott managed to keep up and they drove back into town, taking the outer road to the industrial quarter and into the motel parking lot. Stiles was pretty much passed out when Derek gets him out the car and hauled him into his arms. Despite the deceptively lanky frame, he had some weight to him and Derek grunted as he settled him in his arms and headed for the room. The Jeep wasn’t far behind and Scott fell out in his rush to catch up.

‘My jacket pocket.’ Derek instructed and gave Scott a pointed look. He fished out the key and yanked the door open so they can go inside. The dim lighting makes the blood on Stiles’ skin and jeans look a dark sticky maroon and Derek’s nose was full of the metallic reek, the stink making him battle to control himself. Scott was pale and looked like he wants to puke but he had one hand on Stiles’ arm as Derek wrestled him into the tiny bathroom and dumped him in the tub. Stiles’ groaned, his eyes fluttering open. They were still glowing, even thought the rest of his face had shifted back, and Scott stumbles over his own feet in an effort to get some space between them.

‘That’s going to freak me out forever.’ he muttered and Derek snorted at him, taking Stiles’ face in his hands and making him look at him.

‘Hey.’ He held that golden stare and watched Stiles’ pupils reflect when the overhead light hit them. ‘Snap out of it. I need to get the bolts out and I’d rather you didn’t freak out and scare the shit out of Scott. Okay?’

‘Scott?’ Stiles was trying to focus and then grinned, teeth are still elongated. Scott gave an audible gulp from behind Derek.
‘Yeah he’s here and you’re scaring him so cut that shit out.’ Derek could feel how clammy Stiles’ skin was and did a quick inspection. The two bolts were solidly embedded so he’d have to do some serious work to get them out.

‘Hey, buddy.’ Stiles drew out the words like he was drunk, but Derek knew that his healing trying to kick in. Unfortunately, the silver in the bolts hindered it, so he really needed to get them out and let Stiles heal by himself. He looked at the closest bolt and braced one hand against Stiles’ bare shoulder, taking the slippery crossbow bolt in his other hand and getting a secure grip.

‘You ready?’ he asked and Stiles opened his mouth to protest. Derek took the moment of distraction and yanked. The bolt came out with a fresh gush of blood and Derek had to shove Stiles back into the tub as he bucked against Derek’s hands in agony. He had a pretty good roar on him and Derek was thankful that the motel was more or less empty as it echoed around the bathroom.

‘Oh my God. Oh my God.’ Scott whined behind him. ‘Dude. I think I’m going to puke.’

‘It had to come out.’ Derek was already on the next one. This one would be trickier, stuck in Stiles’ jeans and slick with blood but he used more force and wrenched it out, his forearms straining as he held Stiles down. The bolt clattered to the floor to join the other one, and he watched as Stiles growled and tries to snap at him before he suddenly went limp. Derek could smell him healing and he gently placed one hand back on the wound in Stiles’ shoulder and the other over the one in his thigh, closing his eyes and reached in for the pain. It was thick and rancid, making him choke as he got hold of it and drained it out, the veins on his arms carrying it away in black streaks.

‘Holy shit dude.’ Scott’s voice was awed. ‘What are you doing?’

‘Taking the pain.’ Derek gritted out. Stiles was calming, his eyes fading back to brown and his breathing less frantic, fangs and claws both retracting as he slumped back against the tub. Derek waited until he could feel that most of it was gone and finally got up.

‘Is he okay?’ Scott was hovering closer and Derek moved aside so he could get to Stiles.

‘He’s healing. Help him get his jeans off and wash the blood off. I’ll get him something to wear.’

In the room, he stumbled over to the bar fridge under the desk, taking out a bottle of water and bringing it back into the bathroom with a pair of clean sweatpants. Stiles was back with them, eyes tracking Derek as he approached. Scott had the water on, washing the blood away with the motel’s washcloth and Derek had to avert his eyes from the way Stiles’ thin cotton boxers were clinging to him.

‘Hey.’ Stiles’ voice was raspy. ‘What the fuck happened?’

‘You broke out of Lydia’s bathroom.’ Scott babbled, still washing. ‘You went out the window and then Derek busted down the door and she’s going to be so pissed and you got shot.’

‘Slow down, Scotty.’ Stiles tipped his head back, colour coming back into his face. ‘What the hell do you mean I went out the window?’ He was coming out of his daze and then his eyes widened as he looked down and took himself in. ‘Fuck me sideways.’

‘It’s healing.’ Derek cracked the bottle and handed it to Scott, then turned off the water and grabbed a towel. ‘Be thankful I could get them out in time.’

‘Man.’ Stiles’ mouth turned down. ‘Those were my favourite jeans.’ He looked up and there was an angry little glint in his dark eyes. ‘Those fuckers shot me.’
‘I told you not to go to the damn party.’ Derek huffed as Scott got Stiles to drink. ‘And you were running through the woods shifted and out of control.’

‘He was calling me.’ Stiles said and then frowned. ‘I could feel him.’

‘Who?’ Scott was looking between them. ‘Who’s he talking about?’

‘The alpha.’ Derek replied. ‘It called Stiles out.’

‘He.’ Stiles repeated. ‘Definitely a he.’ He drank the water Scott offered him, noisy gulps until the bottle was empty. ‘Fuck, those dudes though.’ He looked back at Derek. ‘They were hunters? I remember you saying that.’

‘Yeah.’ Derek nodded, hands on his hips. ‘Not the kind of people you want to run into on your first night out.’ He met Stiles’ eyes. ‘But we can talk about that later. How’s the leg?’

‘Feels better.’ Stiles replied. He got a considering look in his eyes at the concern in Derek’s voice and Derek knew he had to head this off at the pass.

‘Then you can get out of here.’ he stated and looked at Scott. ‘Get him out the tub and dressed. Can you take him straight home?’

‘Sure.’ Scott nodded. ‘Straight home.’

‘Wait, no.’ Stiles protested. ‘We need to talk about this more.’

‘No. You need to go home and sleep.’ Derek said, injecting just a hint of menace into his voice. ‘It’s full moon tomorrow and we have to be ready. If the alpha was trying to call you out tonight, he’ll definitely be doing the same tomorrow.’

‘Fuck.’ Scott was all worried puppy eyes. ‘Will Stiles try and get out again?’

‘Hey, still right here.’ Stiles snorted but they both ignored him.

‘Probably, but I have a contingency plan.’ Derek replied. ‘Just make sure he gets his ass to Deaton’s tomorrow.’

‘As in my boss?’ Scott looked bemused and then shoved his hands in his pockets when Derek growled at him. ‘Okay no questions now. We should go.’

‘Yes, you should.’ Derek said and then had a flash of inspiration. He shrugged out of his jacket and then took his henley off and handed it to Stiles. ‘It’ll help mask your scent.’

‘Great.’ Stiles muttered. ‘Eau de Asshole.’ That made Scott snicker and Derek rolled his eyes at both of them.

‘Get the fuck out.’ he ordered. ‘And don’t be late tomorrow. I want you here before nightfall and no fucking lacrosse game.’

‘Yeah, still not fucking doing that.’ Stiles muttered. ‘Good thing my dad’s working nights.’

Derek left him to get dressed. He listened to Scott haul Stiles to his feet and help him dry off. They eventually came out, and he felt protectiveness surge through him at the sight of Stiles in his clothes, their scents mingling in a way that was far more pleasing to him than it should have been. Derek ignored them, waiting until the door was shut, accompanied by a snide goodnight asshole before the sound of the Jeep starting up reached his ears. He moved to the window, watches the lights of Stiles’
Jeep pull out and then he was on the phone, tapping out a message.

*Stiles got called out tonight.*

*Well, that’s not good.* Derek could almost hear the quiet sarcasm in Deaton’s words.

*He also had a close encounter with some Hunters. It was the Argents.*

*Yes, I had heard they were back in town. We need to talk. Come over tomorrow morning.*

Derek replied in the affirmative and then stood and chewed on his lower lip for a few moments. He was angry but also horribly relieved that he had managed to find Stiles when he did. The remembered scent of Chris Argent made him growl, bringing back things he really didn’t want to remember. He thought again of blue eyes and a smile that hid the psychotic mind that killed his family and it made him feel violently ill, prompting him to bolt into the bathroom where the stress coupled with the smell of Stiles’ blood had him violently puking into the toilet bowl.

It had been a very long time since he’d had such a visceral reaction but as he slumped there, resting his head against the cold porcelain it felt bizarrely cathartic and once the spasms in his belly stopped, Derek felt cleansed. He staggered to his feet, rising his mouth out and brushing his teeth before he went started the shower going and climbed in, not even bothering to take off the rest of hi clothes.

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In the Jeep, Stiles contemplated. His brain had always worked way too quickly, but it also had its moments of brilliance and now he threaded things together in his mind and glanced at Scott. He knew he couldn’t come right out and tell him who he had seen, not with the way Scott felt about Allison. So instead he took his phone out and thought about texting Derek but his head was still swimming, his shoulder and thigh throbbing when he gingerly probed the wounds which were already closed.

‘Shit, dude.’ Scott sounded a little alarmed, but it was a world away from how panicked he had smelled earlier. ‘That’s freaking cool.’

‘Yeah, it is.’ Stiles grimaced at the residual smell of his own blood, still lodged under his fingernails. ‘Thank God my dad’s not home. I wouldn’t want to explain this.’ He surreptitiously lowered his nose into Derek’s shirt and breathed in deeply. His smell was soothing and Stiles realised how tired he suddenly felt. ‘Christ I really need to sleep. And eat. I’m goddamn starving.’

They hit the drive through and Stiles spent his last ten dollars on all the junk food he could get, cramming it in his mouth as Scott took him home. They pulled up into the drive and he smells a sharp sour note coming from his friend and looks at him.

‘Hey, what’s wrong?’ he asked and Scott was shaking.

‘You had fucking things in you, Stiles.’ His dark eyes were huge and bright with tears. ‘You were seriously hurt!’

‘And now I’m okay.’ Stiles tried to soothe him. ‘Look being a werewolf is weird as fuck but it has these great work benefits. Now go home and text Allison and apologise from me for breaking up the party because you obviously had to take her home early to come and deal with me.’ The sour note intensified and he looked incredibly unhappy.

‘She’s angry with me.’ he near whispered, glancing at Stiles. ‘She knows something’s up and I can’t exactly tell her. I hate lying to her.’
Stiles felt bad for all of a second before remembering the way Allison’s fucking father shot him. Twice.

‘You can’t tell her.’ he said sternly. ‘Promise me Scott. She can’t know about this.’

‘Okay.’ Scott looked even more miserable. ‘You want me to stay over?’

‘No.’ Stiles shook his head. ‘Are you going to be okay getting home?’

‘Sure.’ Scott sighed mournfully. ‘It’s not like anything is after me, right?’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles looked up at his darkened house. ‘You sure? We can fire up the old console if you want?’

‘No. You need to sleep.’ Scott got out and Stiles followed. He went around the car and grabbed Scott in a hug, squeezing him hard enough to make him wheeze.

‘Thank you for coming after me.’ he whispered. Scott squeezed back and then let him go.

‘I’ll message you when I get home.’ he said and started off down the road. Stiles watched him go and then decided to try a little experiment. He focused on Scott’s heartbeat and tracked him down the road. Scott only lived a few blocks away and Stiles could follow him as he finally got there and entered his own house not twenty minutes later while he was in the kitchen, chowing down on a packet of cold cuts.

He walked upstairs in the dark, switching the bathroom light on and checking himself out in the mirror as he pulled Derek’s shirt off. He was sad to have lost his one, another favourite, but that got pushed to one side as he stared in amazement at the now unblemished skin of his shoulder. It was like the injury had never existed and when he kicked off his shoes and took down the borrowed sweats, it was the same story. Only a slight residual tenderness lingered where the bolts had gone in and Stiles pressed his fingers against his thigh and frowned. He regarded his skin for a few moments and then pulled the sweats back up, padding through to his room feeling utterly exhausted now that his stomach was comfortably full.

He was about to get a clean t-shirt out the dresser when he suddenly changed his mind and went to retrieve Derek’s henley from the bathroom, pulling it over his head. The smell was fresh, Derek’s sweat and earthy scent rich and thick. It was enough to get him half hard as he slid into bed, but he was honestly too tired to do anything so he just lay there and wallowed in it. His eyelids drooped and at one point he thought he saw two blue flashes outside his window but then Stiles succumbed to sleep, caught up in strange dreams about forests and a huge black wolf that ran beside him.

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Derek sat on the roof just outside Stiles’ window and listened to his heartbeat even out and his breathing slow as he fell asleep. He was tempted to just stay put but then he thought of the alpha and got up, cracking his neck and jumping down from the roof to land soundlessly before going back to his car. He figured he could trust him to be in the same place come morning. Stiles would be exhausted by what he’d been through.

What was more worrying was the fact that he had also felt the alpha’s pull, although nowhere nearly as strongly as Stiles. It was concerning because even though he was easily able to resist, Derek knew a strange alpha that he had no allegiance to would not have influenced him like that even if he had stolen Laura’s power. It had felt vaguely familiar like someone he should have known. The thing was that his alphas were dead, his mother and now his sister. Nothing about this made sense. The
scent in the woods had also been off. He could now track Stiles by the distinctive natural notes he carried, but that other scent had been almost chemical. It wasn’t like an alpha at all and it made Derek feel very uneasy.

He got in the Camaro and sat back, breathing in the smells that clung to the surface of the seats and the carpet in the footwells. There were still lingering traces of his father here, overlaid with Laura’s smell and his own and the green sharpness of Stiles, more recent and mingling with Derek’s earthiness to make a very pleasing combination. It caught him in the chest and Derek had to grip the steering wheel and force himself to breathe evenly as the feelings inside him raged out of control for a few moments.

He tried to reach for the anger inside him, the anchor that he’d been able to rely on for years, but his grip on it was slippery and weak. He snarled and threw himself back in his seat, fighting to control himself, which of course just made him breathe harder. Stiles’ green smell grew overwhelming as he gulped it in. It took a few minutes but Derek felt himself calming and then he was perfectly still and realising that things would never be the same.

Twenty minutes later, he was back on the roof and resting his hand against the window of Stiles’ bedroom. He saw something move in the darkness and fixed on the heartbeat inside, hearing it speed up when Stiles opened the window, his eyes glowing gold and filled with a warmth Derek wanted to drown himself in as he held out a hand.

‘Come on, Sourwolf.’ His smile was like a beacon, welcoming Derek in. ‘Get your ass in here.’

It wasn’t right. Derek was older, the adult. He should have been the one dealing out comfort. Instead he found himself taking the offered hand and helped through the window, the leather jacket pushed from his shoulders before he was guided to sit on the bed. Stiles whispered to take his boots off and he did, before being pulled over to the side as Stiles crawled over him to lie down next to him, one arm going around him as he got comfortable with his nose in the back of Derek’s neck.

‘Thank you.’ he whispered. ‘Thank you for coming to find me and taking me out of there.’

‘You have to be careful of the Hunters.’ Derek resisted the urge to hold the hand that was pressed to his chest. Up close, Stiles smelled like the meadow grass in the open stretches of land between the trees behind his family’s home and it made him ache inside.

‘Tell me about them.’ Stiles asked and he closed his eyes and started talking. He didn’t stop until it was all out, how they kill werewolves that broke their rules of conduct. He told Stiles about how his family had always had a cordial relationship with the hunters in Beacon Hill, at least until the fire.

‘The man tonight.’ Stiles said when he paused for breath, the hesitance in his voice making Derek half look over his shoulder at him. ‘It was Allison’s dad.’

‘Scott’s Allison is an Argent?’ Derek asked and Stiles nodded, his face in shadow. ‘Are you sure?’

‘Positive.’ Stiles lips are moving against the skin of his neck and he had to stop himself from shivering.

‘The Argents are an old Hunting family.’ he replied. ‘They were here when my family was still...’ He couldn’t bring himself to say it but he knew that Stiles doesn’t need him to and steeled himself for what he had to say next. ‘It was an Argent that killed them, that set the fire that night.’

‘Fuck.’ Now Stiles sat bolt upright. ‘Allison’s dad is a murderer?’

‘Not him.’ Derek sighed. ‘Kate Argent. She’s Chris’ sister. She’s the one who did it.’
‘Derek?’ Stiles leaned over him. ‘What are you talking about?’

‘She told me that I was special.’ Derek turned his face into the pillow. ‘That no-one would understand us being together. I told her things about my family, about our house and she used them against me. Then she sealed them all inside one night and set fire to the place.’

‘Jesus Christ.’ Stiles’ eyes were gold again, but this time the warmth had been replaced by anger. ‘Why the hell didn’t you tell anyone?’

‘Who was going to believe me?’ Derek sat up as well, angry that he’d exposed himself this much, let himself talk too openly. ‘I was sixteen. I had no proof apart from the my side of the story.’ He shook his head. ‘No.’

‘You know it’s not your fault, right?’ Stiles growled. ‘Dude, she’s like way older than we are. Scott’s keeps telling me about how she makes him feel like she’s going to give him the bad touch any second.’

‘She’s here?’ Derek was appalled and panicked in equal measures. ‘Why the hell didn’t you tell me?’

‘Because I didn’t know who they were?’ Stiles gave him a you’re-a-stupid-asshole look, visible even in the darkness. ‘You’ve literally just told me about this and you weren’t exactly in a mood to listen earlier.’

‘You have to tell Scott to stay away from Allison.’ Derek tried to control the shaking in his voice. ‘She’s dangerous. Her whole damn family is dangerous.’

‘Dude, I don’t think Allison knows anything about this.’ Stiles reasoned. ‘She hasn’t picked up anything from me, or treated me any differently.’

‘Her family literally kills us, Stiles.’ Derek dug his claws into his palms to stop himself from grabbing him and shaking him. ‘You can’t trust them and if Scott is going to be with her, you can’t trust him either.’

‘Oh, fuck you man.’ Stiles snorted. ‘I trust Scott with my life. He’s like my brother.’

‘He won’t be for long.’ Derek told him. ‘Watch. He’ll turn on you.’

‘No he won’t.’ Stiles was insistent. ‘He freaked out a little at the beginning, but now he’s totally cool. You’re the one freaking out. Now shut the fuck up and go to sleep. I’m beat. We can talk some more in the morning.’ He flopped back down on the bed and made a grabby hand at Derek. ‘Come on, Sourwolf. We’ve been through an almighty lot of shit tonight and we both deserve a chance to get some sleep.’

‘I should go.’ Derek knew it sounded weak even to his own ears. ‘This can’t happen.’

‘Yeah?’ Stiles mouth quirked and Derek wondered what he would taste like. ‘That’s okay. Nothing has to happen. Just come here and lie down for a second.’

Derek looked at him and Stiles gazed back steadily, his hand sneaking into Derek’s. His skin was and his scent was soothing and Derek finally gave in and let himself be pulled back down. Stiles smiled against the back of his neck, resuming his earlier position, arm snaking around Derek’s waist again. This time though he insinuated his hand under Derek’s shirt and it was soft against the skin of his belly.

‘Go to sleep, Sourwolf.’ It was said through a yawn and Derek found himself leaning back into him.
'Things will be better in the morning.'

‘You don’t know that.’ he whispered. ‘Things are never better.’

‘They will be now.’ Stiles own whisper was fierce. ‘We’ve got each other’s backs now. I won’t let anyone else hurt you.’

Derek smiled in spite of himself.

‘You’re an idiot, Stilinski.’ he murmured and this time he let himself shiver as Stiles’ lips brushed the back of his neck.

‘Takes one to know one, Hale.’ He sighed. ‘Now shut up and go to sleep. And no more stalking me on my roof. I have crazy neighbours with binoculars and I don’t want to have to explain this to my dad.’

Derek sighed heavily. Maybe just for one night he could let go and forget, let Stiles watch over him and keep him safe from the monsters outside.

‘Thank you.’ he whispered. ‘For letting me stay.’

‘Motels aren’t anybody’s home, Derek.’ Stiles yawned. ‘And I told you you could borrow my family any time you needed to.’ He snuggled down behind Derek and made a soft happy noise. ‘You’re so warm.’

‘Werewolf.’ Derek replied and took the hand on his belly, holding it as gently as he could and shutting his eyes.
Game time, in more ways than one.

It was weird as fuck walking on four legs instead of two, but Stiles eventually figured it out after tripping over his own paws a few times. He was finally able to trot rather proficiently if he said so himself, and it took only a short while until he managed a rather uncoordinated canter and then he was away.

It was good, feeling the sun on his fur and lifting his muzzle to scent the air. The woods were full of good smells, squirrels and dirt and leaf litter and he stuck his nose to the ground and followed it in random patterns until he ran across another smell, one that dragged him along as if magnetised.

It was deep and had hints of tree resin, leather and grouch in it. If Stiles could smile he would, but he did what he was able to and his approximation of a wolfy grin curled his mouth, his tongue lolling out as he nosed along the line of scent, searching for its source.

He padded through the trees, the earth spongy under his paws, and it was only when he got to the Hale house that he realised that he’d been led here by the scent he was tracking. Stiles lifted his head and saw the massive black wolf he now knew was Derek lying on the remains of the front porch, front paws crossed and his head resting on them. His ears were pricked but he made no sign of moving although his blue eyes were watchful and his wolfy eyebrows twitched as he kept an eye out when Stiles came closer.

Stiles could barely contain his excitement. He immediately trotted closer to that wonderful scent and then his exuberance got the better of him and he bounced on stiff legs a few times, his happy yips breaking the stillness of the woods around him. Derek just looked at him and heaved a huge sigh, sounding like the world’s most put upon martyr, and that was too much for Stiles to cope with. He snarled playfully and dropped into a bow, tail in the air and wagging furiously.

He could almost hear Derek’s voice in his head.

you’re an idiot

That didn’t deter Stiles in the slightest and he bounced some more.

playplayplayplay

Derek sighed again and closed his eyes.

no

Stiles wiggled his rear end, ever hopeful.

pleaseplayplayplay
He growled low in his throat, delighted when Derek finally got up. He yawned and stretched out his front legs, toes spreading, before doing the same with his hind ones. Each foot got the treatment one at a time and only then did he jump down from the porch and come closer, slowly circling until he was near enough to bump his wet nose against Stiles’ in greeting.

silly pup

Stiles whined, licking at Derek’s mouth. Derek put his ears back and growled at him in reply, but it wasn’t fierce. It sounded almost fond and that just made Stiles wiggle all over in pleasure.

chasemehasemehaseme

He was not expecting to be bowled over by Derek’s mass and went limp when he felt fangs resting against his throat where Derek had knocked him onto his back. It sent arousal rushing through him to be in this submissive pose and he whimpered. There was fire in his veins, making his eyes close as he tipped his head back further, inviting Derek to take him.

There was a chuff and warm dry humour in Derek’s thoughts.

you’re impossible

He let Stiles up and for a moment Stiles thought he was going to go back to the porch and lie down. Then Derek snarled at him just as playfully, going down into a bow to mirror the one Stiles had given him before he was up and away, bounding into the trees.

Stiles gave a happy bark and followed him.

**********

Stiles jolted awake, his legs and arms still twitching as the dream faded away and he was left drooling into his mattress and humping the bed. Thankfully there was no sign of Derek apart from a dent in the pillow he was sleeping on and an open window.

Well, that was new.

Okay, maybe not the drooling or humping but definitely the incredibly realistic dreams about being a wolf. He lifted his head, making smacking noises as his tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth, and then grabbed for his phone, swearing as he missed and it went sliding off the nightstand and under the bed somewhere. He fished it out and rolled onto his back, squinting through one eye as he texted.

dude i just dreamed I was a wolf wtf?

Predictably, Scott did not reply. He was obviously still asleep.

‘Stiles?’ Derek sounded grumpy as hell. ‘You okay up there?’

Stiles huffed. Obviously Derek was not a morning person. Or an any-time-of-the-day kind of person come to think of it.

‘Weird ass dream.’ Stiles replied as he rubbed the sleep from his eyes. ‘You were in it.’

His phone buzzes and he found a reply from Scott.

Please for the love of god tell me it was PG.

Stiles snickered and burrowed back under the duvet. He certainly not going to tell Scott that he had a
terrible case of morning wood because that would probably just freak him out. He put the phone back on his nightstand and shucked his boxers before he contemplated his erection with a calculating eye. Of course doing anything in the bed with Derek just downstairs was out of the question. Still, he was hornier than normal and so he slid out of bed and grabbed the towel off the back of his chair.

‘I’m going for a shower.’ He closed the bedroom door behind him. Downstairs, Derek made a non-committal noise.

In the shower, hot water making him groan happily, Stiles thought about Derek’s green eyes, his surly expression and that stupid stubble that made him look like he had just slid off the front page of GQ and then he was going for it, breathing picking up as he stroked his cock and tried to pretend that he wasn’t going to come in under three minutes flat. He imagined Derek behind him, one hand braced against the wall as the other rested against Stiles’ hip. He pictured the way Derek’s teeth had dimpled his skin in the dream, thought about being fucked by him with Derek growling and driving in hard, the impact of his hips enough drive Stiles against the tile. It did turn out to be embarrassingly quick, or at least it would have been if Stiles gave a shit. He braced his forehead against his arm, chest heaving and his hand sticky, grinning like a crazy person as he breathed in the acrid scent of his own come.

If he’d been a little more with it, he would have heard the crash of cutlery being dropped in the kitchen and the muffled swearing of a werewolf that had just got an earful.

********

Derek stared at the ceiling, ears burning red and his heart pounding.

He hadn’t meant to listen in but he’d been so focused on scratching around in the kitchen to find something he could make for breakfast that he hadn’t realised what Stiles was doing until it was too late and then it was like he’d lost all ability to control himself. Usually he could tune out things he wasn’t meant to listen to, but the breathy moans coming from the floor above him had been alluring enough that he’d stood there helpless to do anything else.

Of course, that was when the front door opened and Noah had come inside and Derek was thrown back onto the back foot again he walked into the kitchen and saw Derek standing there like a deer caught in the headlines.

‘Good morning.’ His shrewd blue eyes were calculating when he gave Derek a quick look up and down and Derek felt like he was fifteen again and had been caught making out with Paige in his bedroom, violating his parents’ open door policy. Interestingly enough, Noah reminded him an awful lot of his mother in his quiet authority and he instinctively looked away.

‘Stiles was drunk.’ It was the first thing he thought to say. ‘I brought him home so he didn’t have to drive. I swear nothing happened.’

‘Christ, kid.’ Noah’s mouth quirked. ‘I think it’s safe to say that you would make a truly terrible master of crime.’ His dry tone was gently cutting, so much like his son’s that it was momentarily astonishing. Thankfully, a loud thump interrupted them before Derek could say anything else stupid and then he glanced down at the carton of eggs and the bottle of milk he held in his hands.

‘Do you like pancakes?’ he asked, feeling more tentative than he had in a long time. ‘Sir.’

‘As a matter of fact I do.’ Noah grinned and undid his utility belt, setting it and his holstered weapon on the table. ‘Hang on a minute though and I’ll show you where I hide my secret stash of bacon.’
Stiles hovered at the top of the stairs and listened to his father and Derek talking. It amazed him to even hear a couple of quiet chuckles pass between them as he made his way down and then stood in the doorway. From his seat at the table, Noah turned to look at him and Stiles winced because he knew that particular expression.

‘Hi Dad.’ He rubbed at the back of his neck, mind racing as he tried to come up with something that would keep him and Derek out of trouble. To his astonishment though, Derek not only looked remarkably relaxed but also had a bowl out and was making what looked suspiciously like pancake batter.

From scratch.

Fuck his life. Stiles wanted to just jump him right fucking then.

‘You can cook?’ He didn’t meant it to sound quite so accusatory and he got the eyebrows for his tone. It was made even worse but the fact that they were in stereo.

‘Yeah.’ Derek’s sarcasm could cut glass. ‘I don’t live on Cheetos and shit like you.’

‘Language.’ Noah says mildly behind his mug, but Stiles could hear the amusement in it.

‘Don’t you dare side with him.’ he hissed and his father’s eyes briefly regarded him.

‘There’s some chocolate chips in the top cupboard behind the plates, Derek.’ he said. ‘Stiles thinks I don’t know about those.’

‘Got it.’ Derek opened the cupboard and reached in and Stiles found his eyes drawn to the strip of bare skin revealed as his t-shirt rode up. Then he realised what he was doing and turned away, but not too soon for his father to notice him noticing. The amused look on his face told Stiles that he’d clocked him and Stiles went red. He stomped over to the fridge and took out the orange juice before going to get three glasses.

‘I thought you weren’t supposed to be eating those.’ he admonished. Noah snorted and Derek moved over and nodded at the stove as Stiles stepped in next to him.

‘You can do the bacon.’ he instructed and Stiles grumbled and picked up the package.

‘You two are in cahoots.’ he accused and then he was getting looks from both directions.

‘So.’ Noah’s voice was deceptively neutral. ‘Anyone want to fill me in on what exactly is going on here?’

‘Uh...would you believe it was a spontaneous sleepover?’ Stiles ventured and Noah raised an eyebrow at him. ‘Okay, maybe not.’

‘I told him you got drunk last night.’ Derek cut in. ‘I said that I had to go get you and Scott from the party and bring you home because neither of you could drive and he called me to ask for help.’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles jumped on that immediately, even if it meant getting grounded for the drinking. Better than making a surprise, I’m a werewolf announcement. ‘And then Derek stayed over to make sure I didn’t choke on my own puke.’

‘What have I said about the drinking?’ Noah was stern. ‘But I am grateful that you asked for
someone to drive you and didn’t attempt it yourself.’ He looked at Derek. ‘Thank you, Derek. And seeing as my son has no sense of his own boundaries, I think he can repay us by getting more coffee.’ He held up his mug and smiled.

‘What?’ Stiles was mildly outraged but he knew he was getting away pretty much scot free. ‘I’m busy cooking your contraband pork products here.’

‘Better do extra and grab the maple syrup on your way past then.’ Noah retorted and then checked his watch. ‘On second thoughts, I need to get out of this uniform. We had a drunk in last night and I think the fumes have soaked themselves in.’ He got up and left the kitchen, but not before giving Stiles his I’m watching you gesture behind Derek’s turned back.

‘Shit.’ Stiles snorted when he heard Noah’s bedroom door close. ‘Thinks he can get away with eating off the goddam approved list.’ He turned and then stopped dead at the look on Derek’s face. ‘Dude, you okay?’

‘I’m sorry.’ He looked away, surprisingly awkward. ‘I didn’t mean to overstay my welcome.’

‘Oh shut up.’ Stiles grinned and hit him in the arm, gratified at the way Derek winced. ‘You’re almost acting like a real boy. Don’t fuck it up now.’ He turned the bacon and glanced at him, his heart stuttering at the shaded stubble on Derek’s face.

‘Thanks.’ He said it in a soft voice and that just made the burgeoning butterflies in Stiles’ stomach start a lazy dance.

‘Don’t mention it.’ he replied and chanced a gentle shoulder bump.

Noah came back downstairs not too long after and they all sat down to eat. Stiles watched him carefully, breathing in his father’s clean scent. It was soothing and reminded him of being a child again and how Noah would pick him up and cuddle him after he got home.

‘So am I forgiven?’ he asked and Noah chuckled.

‘Son, I wouldn’t push it too hard if I were you.’ He waved a hand at him for emphasis. ‘The only reason I haven’t grounded you for the underage drinking is that you acted like an adult and because I intend sitting in the front row tonight to see you play first line.’ He glanced at Derek. ‘You’re coming to watch aren’t you?’

Derek looked a little startled and then frowned at Stiles, who knew exactly what he was getting at and studiously avoided his eyes.

‘I hadn’t planned on it.’ he admitted and Noah made a considering noise.

‘I hadn’t planned on finding you in my kitchen making breakfast but here we are.’ He waved a hand at him for emphasis. ‘The only reason I haven’t grounded you for the under age drinking is that you acted like an adult and because I intend sitting in the front row tonight to see you play first line.’ He glanced at Derek. ‘You’re coming to watch aren’t you?’

‘Yeah, I know.’ he said to Noah. His next words were for Derek. ‘Dude, he’s a cop. You can bet that he knows a lot more than that. Also, Dad was on the team when he was at BH.’

‘I actually played with your uncle Seth.’ Noah said. ‘He was good too. Ran all our asses into the
ground.’ Then he caught himself. ‘Sorry, that probably wasn’t the most sensitive thing to say.’

‘No, it’s okay.’ Derek poured the batter into the pan and then looked at Stiles cooking the last batch of bacon in a particularly judgmental way. ‘You’re going to burn it.’

‘Bite me.’ Stiles retorted, muttering as he was bumped out the way. ‘Hey no fair, you have superior muscle mass.’

‘I have superior everything.’ Derek smirked and Stiles’ brain immediately went there and he had to go and stick his face in the fridge again to hide his blush.

Breakfast was incredible. Stiles was glad to bow to Derek’s clearly superior pancake making skills to go along with the muscle mass and whatever else he was definitely not thinking about. Noah ate a stack of pancakes and a huge pile of bacon strips, making very appreciative noises. Stiles relaxes a bit and so did Derek, losing some of the wariness that he seemed to carry with him at all times. By then end of breakfast he was actually chatting lacrosse plays and he’d even managed a couple of small smiles. Stiles thought it was excellent progress and internally high-fived himself for convincing Derek to stay the night.

After breakfast he had to do the dishes and Derek went back to retrieve his jacket and go home. When he came back into the kitchen it was to thank Noah for his hospitality and Stiles almost giggled at the serious old fashioned way he did it.

‘No problem, son.’ Noah smiled over his coffee, looking remarkably sphinx-like. ‘I’ll see you later at the game.’

‘Sure.’ Derek gave Stiles a look that could kill at twenty paces as he went out the back door. ‘I’ll see you later, sir.’ He didn’t bother to say goodbye to Stiles.

‘So, that was interesting.’ Noah’s voice interrupted him as he listened to Derek walk past the side of the house.

‘Yeah.’ he replied. ‘Hey, I’m really happy you’re coming to watch tonight.’

‘Of course.’ Noah said. ‘I wouldn’t miss it. I’ll go on shift straight after though so I hope you don’t mind your old man showing up in his uniform?’

‘Nope.’ Stiles started clearing the plates. He dumped them in the sink and then heard his father clearing his throat.

‘You know, your mom and I always thought there would be a fifty fifty chance that you liked boys as well as girls.’ Noah said it almost conversationally. ‘You kissed Greg Mackie in third grade and told us you were going to marry him. That was before Lydia of course.’

‘I did?’ Stiles was mortified, turning the water on and glad his back was turned so Noah couldn’t see how red he was going. ‘Oh.’

‘So that conversation we had.’ Dammit. He could hear his father grinning at him. ‘You want to rethink your position?’

‘Maybe.’ Stiles hedged. ‘But we’re not dating. He really did just sleep over.’

‘Last night, yes.’ Noah smiled. ‘But I’m not blind kiddo, and if you stared at his ass any harder you’d spontaneously combust. I’m hoping you’re sensible enough to know that whatever you two do together, I’ll worry. Also the age of consent is eighteen so I don’t want to be given any reason to
haul his ass downtown. Keep it PG and bring him around so I can get to know him properly and supervise and we won’t have a problem.’

‘Hang on.’ Stiles was now frowning and trying to catch up. ‘Did I just get permission to date Derek Hale?’

‘No.’ Noah grinned. ‘But you did get permission to continue seeing him. Dating sounds far too official for two people who’ve just met. Like I said, I’m reserving judgement until I get to know him a little better.’ He got up. ‘Now I’m going to grab some sleep. Can you go to the store and get your kit in order for tonight without adult supervision, or do I have to lock up the liquor cabinet?

‘We don’t even have a liquor cabinet.’ Stiles grumbled but accepted the half hug and kiss on the top of his head as Noah passed.

‘No we don’t.’ he replied and left the room, chuckling all the way up the stairs.

‘Okay.’ Stiles didn’t really know what to say so he carried on cleaning up. When he was done he headed back upstairs and buried himself face down in his bed, breathing in the smell of Derek and himself in the sheets and sighing happily. It was a good smell, a smell that made him happy and horny and a little bit love drunk.

His dad was right. He’d date Derek in a second.

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Derek got to the motel and sat in the car, hands clenched around the steering wheel as he tried to make sense of what he’d done.

He’d never meant to let things get that far, or to let himself get close to anyone like that again. He hadn’t shared a bed with anyone since his family had died, neither had he allowed himself to feel anything like what he suddenly found himself feeling, sitting in the Stilinski kitchen and having pancakes like a completely normal person.

He liked this boy, far too much if he was being honest. Stiles could have freaked out with what happened to him the night before, but he’d just rolled with it. And then he’d invited Derek into his bed, like it was nothing. He’d smelled of trust and comfort when they’d been together, his warm skin heating Derek through. He’d missed that so much, the warmth of another wolf next to him. Laura had withdrawn after the fire, her and Derek sleeping in separate rooms and not so much as touching, and it had broken him in more ways than one. He didn’t blame her, knowing that she was struggling with so much more than he could ever understand, but he’d wanted it so badly.

Now it was being given freely to him and Derek knows if he let himself fall into what Stiles was offering, he’d never come back up from it. He inhaled at the sleeve of his jacket, the scent of Stiles clinging to it, and felt the wolf inside him curl up and whine. It wanted Stiles, wanted to be close to him.

His phone buzzed and Derek startled. He heaved a sigh and took it from his pocket.

*Looks like we dodged a bullet :)*

The message was under a number he didn’t recognise, listed only as Batman. Derek shook his head, smiling in spite of himself. Maybe he shouldn’t have been surprised that the little shit had obviously programmed his number while he’d been downstairs freaking out in the kitchen while Noah cornered him.
Your dad needs to know. He bit his lip as he typed, an affectation that he hadn’t had in years.

DUDE. He’d kill me and then he’d kill you. No way.

Derek huffed and got out the Camaro and went inside. He found the motel room as he left it. He stopped and breathed in, Stiles scent and the iron tang of his blood almost staining the air. It made his fangs descend, and he breathed in through his mouth to take more in as he ignored the tug in his chest, the need to go back to the house he’d just left and pin Stiles up against something sturdy. Maybe he’d even put in a claim that would make them a pair in more ways than just what they were.

He went to shower, the hot water clearing his head even as he felt disappointment at washing the smells away - even the remnants of blood collected around his feet. He’d just settled on the bed when he heard movement approaching and he knew it was Deaton. He got up and went to open the door, catching the vet with his hand raised to knock.

‘Good morning.’ he said and Derek stood aside to let him in and the emissary came in, carrying a duffle bag and giving Derek a look.

‘Stiles.’ It wasn’t a question.

‘He changed last night.’ Derek replied. ‘There were hunters. You know everything I do.’

‘Maybe a little more.’ Deaton put the bag down. ‘Chris came to see me this morning.’

‘What?’ Derek had to bite back his anger. ‘Why?’

‘He wanted to know if I knew anything.’ Deaton replied. ‘How he knows about me, I’m not sure. I didn’t give anything away if you’re wondering. Just played my role as I always have.’ He raised an eyebrow. ‘I think we’re going to have our hands full.’

‘They shot Stiles.’ Derek growled. ‘But I don’t think they recognised him.’ He decided to keep the news about Scott’s association with Argent’s daughter to himself for the time being.

‘Is he all right?’ Deaton asked. Derek looked at him, trying to hide his curiosity. He’d never ever gotten to know what kind of things an emissary did. Talia had kept all her betas out the loop, and he wondered just what Laura and Deaton might have talked about. As if reading his mind, Deaton held his gaze, his face serious.

‘He knows how important it is that he’s here tonight?’ he asked and Derek sighed.

‘He fucking better.’ he replied.

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Scott arrived exactly an hour after Derek had left and Stiles hustled him up to his bedroom, making sure the door is securely closed before they started talking so they wouldn’t wake Noah.

‘Holy shit dude!’ Scott’s hiss was fraught. He scrabbled at Stiles’ t-shirt and Stiles lifted it, unable to keep the smug smile off his face.

‘Not a mark.’ he hissed back. ‘How freaking cool is that?’

‘Damn.’ Scott looked envious. ‘I wish I could do that. No more asthma.’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles stopped smiling. ‘Me too buddy.’ He put a hand on Scott’s shoulder. ‘It would be awesome, you and me both werewolves. I kind of wish I didn’t have to turn back.’
‘I don’t blame you.’ Scott went to sit down on the edge of the bed, looking downright morose. ‘So Allison’s not returning my calls or texts.’

Stiles rubbed a hand over his hair. ‘I’m sorry.’

‘It’s okay.’ Scott said. ‘Like, this is big. And it’s your secret, dude. I won’t tell. I promised.’

‘Good.’ Stiles grinned. ‘So, you want to hear on how I’m planning on kicking ass tonight and how you’re going to help me?’

‘Yeah.’ Scott perked up. ‘I have to ask what’s going to happen after the game though. Derek told me I have to get you to the clinic.’

‘Full moon, dude.’ Stiles replied. ‘I think the same thing as last night is going down.’

‘Shit, yeah.’ Scott frowned. ‘That was intense.’ He grimaced. ‘I bet Lydia is pissed.’

‘Fuck.’ Stiles winces. ‘I know.’

‘I can’t believe it.’ Scott said. ‘That Derek actually broke down the door to get to you. He was like, mildly unhinged.’

That makes Stiles look up, and he ducks his head just as quickly because he can feel the heat in his cheeks.

‘He was?’ He tries not to sound pleased. ‘Damn.’ He glances up but it’s too late and now he has to watch Scott’s face as something dawns. It’s like watching ice melt, but Scott gets there in the end.

‘Oh my God.’ he laughed. ‘I knew it. You’re totally falling for Derek Hale.’ He looked delighted.

‘Excuse me, but have you seen him? Derek’s sex on legs with the walking and the brooding and the ass. And do not get me started on the eyebrows. Or the fact that right now, I kind of want to lick him all over. Even though he’s a huge dick. Fuck, I wonder how big his dick is. I bet it’s like…’ Stiles made a measuring gesture with his hands and Scott mock gagged.

‘Okay enough. That’s just…gross. Although I suppose he’s kind of objectively hot in a weird creepy older guy way.’ Scott admitted, even though his face was all scrunched up in that bemused way he got when he didn’t quite compute. ‘So long as you think he is though, that’s all that counts.’

‘I think he is.’ Stiles grinned and shakes his head at himself. ‘What even the hell is this?’

‘Okay, so we take things one step at a time.’ Scott reasoned. ‘We get through the lacrosse game, get you to Dr Deatons and you can have your full moon wolfing out thing. Then we work on getting you laid.’

Stiles thought his brain must have short circuited and he gave Scott an amazed look, but Scott was wearing his earnest face.

‘Are you serious?’ he asked and got the puppy grin.

‘Why not?’ he replied. ‘You’re always bitching about being a virgin and now I’ve got Allison so you should have someone too.’

‘I guess.’ Stiles knew he sounded defensive, but fuck it. ‘And it’s not like I want to jump him or anything.’ Then he noticed Scott is giving him a look that said he didn’t believe a word he was saying. ‘Okay, I totally would.’
'You’re a sixteen year old virgin, Stiles.' Scott pointed out. ‘You’d climb him like a tree.’ He laughed. ‘In all the positions.’

‘Fuck yeah.’ Stiles grinned. ‘And what kind of best friend would you be if you weren’t going to help me get laid.’

‘True.’ Scott’s dark eyes were twinkling. ‘We just got to be sneaky about it, though.’

‘Who are you and what have you done with Scott?’ Stiles asked, feeling oddly touched.

‘You’re kidding, right?’ Scott smiled. ‘This is the craziest thing that’s ever happened to us. Who else is going to have your back?’

‘Thank you.’ Stiles sat down next to him, holding out a fist. ‘You’re the best friend a guy could have.’

Scott accepted the fist bump and nodded sagely.

‘Damn straight I am.’ he said with a perfectly neutral face and Stiles laughed and shoved him off the bed.

*********

Derek spent the rest of the afternoon at Deatons, making stilted conversation that avoided all reference to the fire and his family and helping to set up the room downstairs in the basement where they were going to hold Stiles. He laid down a mattress and got supplies set up. It wasn’t not that far from what he’d gone through when he’d hit puberty and his parents had had to keep him locked up that first full moon and the few following that until he could control himself. It had helped to have his anchor there, but he didn’t know what Stiles felt connected to that might help ground him, although he thought using Noah would probably be a good start. He had been out of control the previous night and Derek knew that they’d need to get that under control quickly to help him resist the alpha’s call. He thought the Sheriff made a lot of sense for Stiles to use his father as his anchor. They were close, bonded in a way that could work for Stiles just like Talia had been his before the fire. He had to stop right then, his chest tightening as he thought about his family. It hurt, far more than he’d allowed it to for a long time, but breakfast at the Stilinskis had knocked something loose inside him and Derek desperately wanted to lock it away again.

The sound of the door opening behind him jolted him out of his thoughts and he turned to see Deaton watching him. As usual, his face was inscrutable.

‘I will be back tonight.’ he said. ‘You may need my help. Especially if the alpha tries to call Stiles out again.’

Derek just nodded and Deatons left him alone with his thoughts. He was finally satisfied and went back upstairs. Deaton was busy with a basset hound that yodeled when Derek went past the back door of the examination room, but he didn’t stop. He went out the back door of the clinic and headed to the motel. There he showered and dressed, telling himself that he was antsy it was the full moon and not because he was going to watch an idiot baby wolf try not to fuck things up on a lacrosse field.

He lay on the bed in his briefs and watched TV for a few hours, letting himself feel the wolf’s pull the closer they got to evening. Being without Laura felt hollow and disorienting and Derek could feel the deep seated ache inside him getting worse. He missed her, more than he had ever expected to. She’d been an absent alpha and sister, but she was pack and nothing felt right without her. He briefly
considered going over to the hospital to see Peter but that wasn’t something he was ready for, so instead he just stayed where he was, feeling the shift towards evening as an almost tangible thing and sitting up to pull on his boots on when the sky outside finally began to dim.

Derek knew the drive to school like he knew everything else about Beacon Hills. He found an empty spot in the lot and parked the Camaro well away from everyone else before taking the pathway that lead around the back of the school towards the lockers rooms and the fields. He remembered playing there himself, lacrosse matches and basketball games in the gym. Those had ended when they’d left, and home-schooling hadn’t come with a whole lot of extracurriculars and he swallowed hard as he pushed the back exit open and stepped into the hallway, inhaling sharply.

The smells were what hit him hard. The school still smelled exactly the same, the riot of scents that kids carried - perfume and deodorant and the hormone ridden stink of hundreds of teenagers. Derek stuck his hands in his pockets and stuck to the side of the hallway as he made his way to the door that would get him to the locker rooms.

He could hear the sound of a pep rally in the gym and there are boys trickling in and out the locker room so he waited. It didn’t take long for Stiles and Scott to appear from the direction of the gym, backpacks and crosses on their shoulders, and Derek felt a little surge in his chest when Stiles’ head came around immediately, nostrils flaring as he scented Derek and his face breaking out in a wide smile when their eyes met.

Derek waited for them to come over, noticing how Stiles looked and smelled completely enchanted by the fact that Derek had come to watch him. Derek had to school his own face into a neutral expression because inside his wolf was dancing around in little circles, tail wagging.

‘You came.’ Stiles couldn’t keep the happiness out of his voice or scent, bleeding sugary sweet into the air. ‘I didn’t think you would to be honest.’ The steady beat of his heart showed he was being honest and Derek felt bad for just a second.

‘Just trying to see if I can talk you out of it.’ he growled and then Stiles’ brown eyes widened and he started laughing in a way that said that particular objective was definitely futile.

‘Yeah, no.’ he snickered. ‘But I’m really happy to have my own personal cheerleader.’ It was cheeky and Derek had to resist snarling at him.

‘Shut up Stiles.’ he muttered but the words don’t have their normal bite and it was really starting to piss him off that he liked this boy. ‘Before I rip your throat out. With my teeth.’

‘See, you don’t scare me anymore big guy.’ Stiles smirked. ‘I know what a giant fluffball you really are.’

Derek couldn’t take that lying down so he grabbed Stiles by his jacket and slammed him into the row of lockers. Stiles let him for all of two seconds before his eyes were flaring gold and his teeth looked decidedly sharper when he grinned at him and Derek found himself flashing his own eyes in response.

‘Uh, guys?’ Scott was looking between them, his own scent now coloured with anxiety. ‘Do we really want to be doing this out in the open.’ He gave them a baleful glare and Derek snorted.

He grabbed Stiles by the arm and towed him down the corridor to where he remembered there being a storage closet, yanking the door open and all but hurling Stiles inside. Instead of protesting though, Stiles just smirked at him and leans back against the wall once Derek got in and slammed the door shut behind him.
‘The janitor’s closet, Derek?’ He grinned. ‘So, are you going to kill me or make out with me.’

‘Neither.’ Derek snapped. ‘I need to talk to you.’

‘Yeah, well there’s this device known as a smart phone Sourwolf.’ Stiles replied, but he was staring at Derek’s mouth. ‘I know you know how to use one.’

‘This is important.’ Derek took a step back, balling his hands into fists. ‘Look, you need to be careful tonight. Out on the field. You can’t give anything away so I’m telling you you need to have something to focus on.’

‘Like the game?’ Stiles was frowning.

‘No.’ Derek huffed and rubbed a hand over his face. ‘Look, all wolves have an anchor. It’s something you can hold onto to keep yourself balanced, stop the wolf from taking over. You need one for the game.’

‘Oh you’re telling me this now?’ Stiles all but squeaked. ‘What the fuck, dude? I could have used this yesterday.’

‘Well, if you’re not going to listen to me then we need to start making sure you’re not going to hurt anyone.’ Derek snapped back. ‘So shut the hell up and do what I tell you.’

‘Fine.’ Stiles folded his arms. ‘So exactly where the hell am I going to find an anchor at this time of night, O Keeper of All Wolfy Knowledge?’ Derek can practically hear the capital letters under the ten feet of sarcasm and he growled threateningly as he got up in Stiles’ space and flashed his eyes at him again, completely unimpressed when Stiles just growled back with eyes flaring an answering gold in the dim light of the cupboard. It doesn’t have the desired effect though and suddenly Derek wasn’t just annoyed, but also feeling something else entirely. He calmed himself down enough to step back and huffed again.

‘Your dad.’ he said. ‘Use him. Tonight when you’re playing, just focus on his heartbeat, on him being there. That can be your anchor.’

Stiles had also retreated to his side of the closet, and was now looking like he got it.

‘My dad.’ He nodded. ‘Got it.’ His face was quizzical. ‘What’s yours?’

_Fuck._

‘Anger.’ Derek declared, even as he said it realising that it was no longer true. He had to make himself believe it so that Stiles doesn’t notice anything odd. Thankfully he just laughed.

‘That’s so broody emo, I can’t even.’ He had an eyebrow quirked at Derek. ‘You use anger to centre yourself?

‘It works.’ Derek snarled and Stiles held up both hands.

‘Whatever dude. I will do my best to make sure I don’t wolf out and eat anyone.’ He gave Derek what he obviously believed was his most winning smile.

‘Stiles...’ Derek started the admonishment but didn’t get to finish it because the door flew open and Scott fell in there with them.

‘What the hell?’ he hissed. ‘You do realise that Danny saw you drag Stiles in here and he now thinks
you two are making out before the game.’ He looked Derek up and down. ‘He thinks you’re Stiles’
boyfriend. There was no way he was buying the lacrosse tutor thing.’

‘No. That is so not what is happening here.’ Derek nearly fell over moving away before he glared at
Stiles. ‘Look, don’t forget what I told you.’ He turned to Scott. ‘You get everything sorted out?’

‘Yeah.’ Scott nodded. ‘I told my mom that I’m staying at Stiles’ house tonight so I can totally be
there if he needs me and the Sheriff is working all night.’ He grinned and Stiles returned it and Derek
wants to bang their heads together before they fist bumped or did something else equally
boneheaded.

‘Good.’ He narrowed his eyes at them. ‘Straight after the game. Do not make me come find you, or I
will bite both your faces off.’

‘Jesus fuck, okay.’ Stiles muttered and Derek yanked the closet door open and stepped out only to
see both Danny and the boy that Stiles had pointed out was Lydia’ boyfriend standing there staring at
him, although Danny looked considerably more amused than Jackson did. Derek glared at them too
for good measure and stomped down the hall when they flinched back, his internal monologue
swearing profusely.

Outside he could breathe easier and he looked down in the direction of the playing fields. When he
got there, Derek went directly to the stands, walking underneath and running a hand along the metal
tubing. He and Paige had come here a couple of times, making out and giggling before it had all
gone to shit. It had also been the place Kate had first approached him, strolling out of the woods to
sweet talk him and get him to cut through the trees with her to get into her car.

He only realised his claws are out when he feels them sink into the wooden seat in front of him and
he quickly pulled them back in again, focusing on the sound of a couple of kids coming down the
pathway from the school. They came into sight, all carrying kit bags and laughing so he left the
bleachers and moved into the trees.

***********

Inside the closet, Stiles and Scott celebrated with a high five and a chest bump which resulted in
Scott flying back into the wall a little too hard.

‘Shit.’ He rubbed a hand over himself, grimacing. ‘Dude, you have to learn to check that.’

‘Sorry.’ Stiles was flying high. ‘Did you see his face though? And his heart did this weird bunny hop
thing when he denied it and he started smelling all weird.’

‘I have no idea what you’re talking about.’ Scott was smiling. ‘But I can see that your crush is well
on the way to being a full obsession. You weren’t like this last night so I’m guessing something must
have changed.’

Stiles stood and thought about how Derek had said that anger was his anchor and the shifty way he’d
looked at Stiles when he’d said it. He had a good nose for lies and that had smelled just like one.

‘I think it has.’ He threw an arm around Scott’s shoulders. ‘Now for part two of make Derek Hale
fall in love with me.’

‘Dude?’ Scott looked at him. ‘What happened to just getting off with him?’

‘Fuck that.’ Stiles was smiling madly. ‘I’ve just upped the stakes.’ He grabbed Scott’s arm and
hauled him out the closet only to see Danny and Jackson watching them, looking completely
weirded out.

‘I didn’t know you were into threesomes, Stiles.’ Danny said, although his voice was a little strained.  
‘Next time can I join you and your crazy hot boyfriend?’

‘See.’ Stiles turned around and pulled his smug face. ‘Danny already thinks we’re dating.’ He did a fist pump and skidded down the hall, Scott running to keep up with him.

************

Noah arrived and parked the cruiser right outside the school entrance. He was just getting out when he saw Melissa coming from her own car, a jacket thrown over her maroon scrubs.

‘I managed to get away between shifts,’ she said by way of greeting. ‘Are we too early?’

‘How else are we going to get the best seats?’ Noah grinned and offered her his arm. ‘It’s not everyday our sons are playing first line.’

God, I know.’ Melissa couldn’t seem to stop smiling. ‘I nearly burst a blood vessel when Scott told me.’ They stopped and had a shared moment of parental pride before they went up the stairs and started their walk around to the playing fields.

‘So the boys are staying over at your place tonight?’ Melissa asked and Noah nodded.

‘I’ll only be back in the morning,’ he replied and she heard wistfulness in his voice, recognising it all too well.

‘The joy of working night shift.’ She sighed a little. ‘I wish I could be around more but you know how it goes.’

‘I do.’ Noah said. ‘At least they’re good kids, Mel. It’s not like they’re doing drugs or having orgies.’ He laughed and then stopped and looked at her, mild horror on his face. ‘God, you don’t think they are, do you?’

‘Of course not.’ Melissa laughed. ‘I do get the feeling that Scott’s little romance has hit its first bump in the road though, judging from the way he was moping when I went to work this morning.’

‘Yeah, well I’m about to be right there with you.’ Noah confessed. ‘Except I think mine is a little more worrying.’ He chuckled. ‘I think Stiles is angling to get himself an older boyfriend.’

‘Oh?’ Melissa stopped and then kept walking. ‘Boyfriend?’

‘It’s not completely unexpected.’ Noah told her. ‘Stiles thinks I don’t know about the porn history on his laptop. Not all of it is of women.’

‘That’s okay though, right?’ Melissa asked and Noah nodded.

‘It’s not the boy part that’s the problem,’ he said. ‘It’s the twenty-two year old part that’s the problem.’

‘Oh, I see.’ Melissa was grinning. ‘Kind of like your past coming back to haunt you, isn’t it?’ She laughed at the look on Noah’s face. ‘Come on, now you get to experience what your father-in-law went through.’

‘It’s the only reason I’m not forbidding Stiles from seeing him,’ he explained. ‘God knows, Claud and I used to sneak around all the time and I don’t want that for him. I want Stiles to trust me and tell
me things. And honestly, I was starting to worry about his little obsession with Lydia Martin. At least
now he’s talking about something besides the fact that she’s got strawberry blonde hair and won’t
give him the time of day.’

‘So what are you going to do?’ Melissa asked as they came round the back of the school to the fields.
The bleachers were starting to fill up already, parents and students crowding to find a place to sit.

‘I’m keeping an eye on them.’ Noah said and then stops and surveyed the crowd. ‘There.’

They make their way to an empty spot and Noah kept looking around until he spotted a familiar
shock of black hair and lifted a hand as they sit down. Derek caught sight of him and then ducked his
head. Noah was not going to be put off that easily so he put his fingers to his lips and whistled and
when Derek lifted his head, pointed very deliberately at the empty space next to him. Derek’s mouth
twisted but he started coming towards them, climbing up the side of the bleachers with a martyred
expression like he was Joan of Arc going to the stake.

‘Is that him?’ Melissa asked, her dark eyes sparkling. ‘Well, I have to say that I’m impressed. Your
son has excellent taste.’

‘Oh hush.’ Noah nudged her with his elbow. ‘He looks like a Marlon Brando wannabe but this kid is
not bad. He just needs a little direction. I think he’s kind of lost.’

‘Oh no.’ Melissa started cackling. ‘You want to adopt him.’

‘What, no.’ Noah brushed her off, but he had to admit that she wasn’t as far off as she might assume.

‘You do.’ Melissa laughed. ‘You’ve got your face on, the one where you want to take home every
sad sack story or lost kid and feed them cookies and keep them forever.’ Her smile was brilliant. ‘I
know you, Noah Stilinski.’

‘He’s had a tough life.’ Noah watched as Derek stopped and then seemed to be at a loss as how to
get to them, moving awkwardly between people. ‘And I was there when he lost his family, Mel. I
know what he’s been through and I wouldn’t wish that on my worst enemy, let alone a sixteen year
old kid.’ He looked up as Derek finally got to them. ‘Hey, Derek.’

‘Sheriff.’ Derek had both hands jammed in his pockets, shoulders rounded and Noah felt a rush of
sympathy. He knew how to spot a trauma victim when he saw one and Derek had it written all over
him.

‘Derek, this is Melissa McCall.’ Noah watched as Derek liberated one hand long enough to shake
hers.

‘You’re Scott’s mom.’ he said and Melissa looked at Derek’s sad green eyes and gave Noah a look
that told him that she wanted to adopt him too. They could both recognise someone that needed
looking after and Derek, for all that he was technically an adult, definitely needed it.

I am.’ she replied and Derek just stood there, shifting on his feet until Noah took pity on him.

‘For Pete’s sake kid, just sit the hell down.’ He indicated the seat next to him. Derek hesitated and
then sat down and Noah frowned because he was like a furnace next to him in the evening air.

‘I guess you don’t catch cold easily.’ he remarked and Derek looked like he was about to jump ten
feet in the air. Even his tension had tension so Noah chuckled and put a hand on his shoulder,
squeezing gently. ‘Relax, we’re just watching the game.’
‘Yes, sir.’ Derek said and then proceeded to sit like he had a stick up his ass.

‘So how do you know the boys?’ Melissa asked and Noah decided to field that one.

‘Derek’s been coaching Stiles while he’s in town.’ He knew they hadn’t made Laura’s death official yet, not while they were still investigating her murder, and he also didn’t want Derek hightailing it if he brought up his sister.

‘Oh, that’s nice.’ Melissa offered a smile. ‘So I guess we have you to thank for this.’ She gestured at the field and Derek caught Noah’s eye. Noah just gave him a look he hoped Derek could interpret and then it seemed to work. Derek leaned past him to look at Melissa, apparently trying to appear slightly less like a serial killer when he answered in his strangely soft voice.

‘He’s really improved. And he’s teaching what I tell him to Scott. Because they’re friends.’ It sounded strained and Noah wondered just how many people Derek spoke to in a day beyond asking for his change or giving a coffee order. Melissa seemed to have picked up on his stilted tone and was looking at him quizzically and Noah stepped in.

“So, are you joining the boys tonight?” he asked Derek, wondering if he was factored into Stiles and Scott’s after game plans.

‘No.’ Derek said and Noah breathed an inward sigh of relief. ‘I have other plans.’

‘Good.’ he said, a little too quickly and then backpedaled. ‘Because you know, rules and not being there when there’s no adults around. Not that I don’t trust you boys, but I know Stiles and he can be a handful when he goes after something he wants and I don’t want you getting put in an awkward position.’

He was a little surprised when Derek’s green eyes went like saucers and a look of horror crossed his face, his ears going scarlet. It was actually rather endearing and Noah felt reassured by this reaction.

‘Stiles and I are not dating.’ he protested and Noah laughed and puts a hand on Derek’s arm, mildly alarmed at how it bears a distinct resemblance to an oak branch.

‘I know. He told me.’ He grinned at Melissa, who was looking extremely amused by the whole ordeal. ‘But I also know that you two have been spending time together and maybe something might come of that so this is me just laying out the ground rules. You’re welcome at the house anytime there’s someone to supervise and I would not be averse to you maybe taking him to a movie so long as he’s home by curfew. I also want you to know that you can come and talk to me, man to man, about anything you may need or just want to ask.’ He waited for a response, grinning at how he’d managed to put Derek on the spot with his little speech that he may or may not have rehearsed several times during the day and in the cruiser on the way over.

‘Thank you, sir.’ Derek ended on something that sounded suspiciously like a squeak and he was completely red. Noah nodded acknowledgment and looked back at the field, pleased with himself and the mature cool dad way he’d just handled things. He gave Melissa a wink and settled in for the game because he just handled the shit out of that.

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Stiles was bouncing off the walls. He felt so full of energy, so ready to just go play, that it was making everyone look at him like he was a freak, even more so than usual.

‘Jesus, Stilinski.’ Jackson’s mouth twisted in distaste. ‘What the fuck did you take?’
‘Nothing.’ Stiles was grinning like a maniac. ‘Just high off life, Jackson. You should try it sometime.’

Jackson glared at him and stormed off muttering but Stiles was far too happy to care. He grabbed his helmet and crosse and followed Scott back out the locker room, all of them now changed and ready to head down to the field. His senses were going nuts, the pungent locker room smells, the noise of people all around him and his own overexcitement making him feel like he was being bombarded with stimulation. Even on his most ADD days, he’d never been subjected to something like this. At the same time though, it wasn’t the horrible low key buzz in his brain that his ADD gave him, the feeling that he’d like to just soak his brain in a bowl of ice water for a few hours. Instead it was like he was feeding off of this and when Danny good naturedly bumped him from the left, Stiles bumped back and grinned.

‘So seriously?’ Danny asked. ‘Does he have a brother? A cousin? Any kind of male relative will do.’

‘He’s not my boyfriend.’ Stiles replied and glanced at Scott. ‘Yet. I’m kind of hoping to seduce him with my awesome lacrosse playing prowess.’

‘Really?’ Danny laughed. ‘Why don’t you just grab him by the dick and make your interest known. It’s not like he’s going to put up a fight.’

‘He won’t?’ Stiles had to admit that he was not really well versed in this particular field. He’d quizzed Danny a few times on things and also made an ass out of himself asking him if he found Stiles attractive before falling off a chair, but now he realised that he had a golden opportunity.

‘No.’ Danny scoffed. ‘He’s a guy. Trust me, just lay a couple of moves on him and he’ll come running.’ He looked smug. ‘That’s how I do it.’

‘Yeah, but you’re…’ Stiles waved a vague hand at him. ‘You. You have dimples and things.’

‘And you’re not exactly ugly, Stiles.’ Danny pointed out. ‘Your dress sense sometimes leaves a little to be desired but you do okay. Besides, I know what it looks like when a guy’s into you and he looks at you like that, when he thinks you’re not looking. He was doing it all night at the party before your escape out the bathroom window.’ He gave Stiles a questioning look. ‘What happened last night anyway?’

‘Too many shots.’ Stiles laughed to cover up the lie. ‘Man, I was flying. Going out the window seemed like a good idea.’

‘Uh huh.’ Danny shook his head at him. ‘If you say so.’ He moved ahead to catch up with a glowering Jackson and Stiles looked at Scott, whose dark eyes were slightly panicked.

‘Dude.’ he hissed. ‘That was close.’

‘It’s cool Scott.’ Stiles took a deep breath. ‘Let’s get out there and go kick some ass.’
Chapter Summary

After the game comes all sorts of hijinks.

The whistle blew and Stiles felt like he’d never been so on point in his life.

It was enough that he got to trot onto the field with the rest of the first line, that he got to look up and see his dad beaming at him from the bleachers and sitting next to Melissa, waving at him with pride etched into every line of his face. That alone made his life right there. But then Stiles saw Derek sitting with them and he looked like he was actually sort of smiling, a little less hunted and a little more human, and Stiles knew that this was what was going to stay with him from this night. It made him happy, feeling that he could give Derek just a little bit of normalcy in what must be such a fucked up situation that the only way he was coping was to cut himself off. Well, that was not going to happen anymore, not on his watch.

‘Bilinski!’ Finstock’s yell brought him up short. ‘Stop daydreaming and get your head in the game!’

‘Shit.’ Stiles muttered and moved to his position, catching Scott’s eye and getting a grin. He could tell why Stiles had been distracted and Stiles blew out a deep breath and focused, waiting for the whistle.

‘Stiles, keep your head up.’ Derek’s voice was soft, barely audible and Stiles grinned at the wonder of werewolf hearing. ‘Do you hear me?’

He nodded and glanced across at his opposite number, seeing how he was already targeting Jackson taking the face-off. It set off something inside him, a strange urge to chase and bring the player down. He growled happily behind his cage and shivered in anticipation.

‘Calm down.’ Derek’s voice was a little tense. ‘Your heartbeat is way up. You need to control it. Remember what I said and focus.’

Stiles tried, he really did, but then the whistle blew allowing Jackson to fight off the opposing player. He took the ball, running down the field with the rest of them in pursuit so Stiles’ marked player turned and ran with the field. Stiles bared his teeth and took off after him, feeling the adrenaline course through his body as he picked up pace he’d never been capable of before. It felt insanely good, his body damn near singing and as the player in front started weaving in to tackle Jackson it was like a red rag to a bull. Every instinct, every fibre of his body screamed at Stiles to give chase and he did, charging in and hitting the boy with a shoulder tackle that knocked him flying.

The whistle blew but right then Stiles got why Derek had been so dead against him playing as he stood over what was ostensibly his prey, panting hard and wanting to throw himself at the other boy, maybe get his teeth in his throat. The sound of people shouting and cheering in the bleachers was lost to him and the only thing he was aware of being the boy’s pounding heart as he looked up at him, throat bared.
‘Stiles!’ The sound of Scott’s voice seemed very far away but he managed to look up and saw his best friend’s dark eyes were wide with something that was close to fear, the clean smell of fresh sweat tainted by a sour note. He grabbed Stiles by the arm and hauled him out of the fray as the boy picked himself up and everyone moved back into play. He didn’t want to go, dragging his feet until he heard the growl, so low it was almost subsonic.

‘Goddammit Stiles!’ Derek sounded furious. ‘Calm the fuck down!’

‘Dude.’ Scott was still hanging onto him, his voice a low hiss as he moved to block Stiles from view of the other players. ‘Your eyes are glowing.’

Stiles shook his head, trying to stamp down on the urges that were making him crazy and squeezing his eyes shut.

‘I…’ he gritted his teeth, but he could feel himself changing, the bones of his face reshaping themselves as he shifted.

‘Stiles!’ Derek growled, low and urgent. ‘Remember to use your anchor. Do it.’

Stiles squeezed his eyes shut, starting to slow his breathing down and using the techniques he learned for his panic attacks to try and counteract his shift. He let himself zone in on Scott’s hand on him and reached out, listening for Noah. He had to sort through a rush of noise so he pictured his dad’s face at that moment, the pride he’d seen on it.

He found it after a few seconds. His father’s heart was beating strongly enough in a steady, comforting rhythm, soothing the turmoil inside him so that Scott felt happy to ease off and let him go. Stiles knew that he was no longer in danger of giving himself away. He tried to latch onto the sound but there was something else at the edge of his hearing and it drew him away and in towards it like a siren song.

This heartbeat was stronger, deeper. It sounded like thunder in his ears the more he zoned in, hypnotising him until it was the only thing he could hear and he turned to look towards its source, knowing even before he did what he would find.

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Derek sat in the bleachers, his entire body frozen.

He could feel it, the tentative connection brushing just at the edge of his consciousness. His first instinct was to shy away from it. He knew what it was, but this was not the time and it most certainly was not the person he should be feeling this with. It wasn’t right he reasoned, just a reflex that was probably happening because it had been so long since he’d even thought about getting close to another person, and Stiles had a way of getting under his skin that was beyond inappropriate.

God, he wanted it though.

It was so tempting, pulling at him strongly enough he could feel the wolf inside him howling to be set free so it could chase Stiles down and get its teeth in the back of his neck. It wanted to take him down, wrestle him into the dirt and play fight, get dirty and loud and just take and take and take.

‘Derek.’ Stiles’ gold eyes were fixed onto him, the glow in them apparent even behind his face cage.

‘Get your head in the game.’ he whispered, heart starting to pick up pace even as he tried to fight it. ‘Stop looking at me.’
'You...I want...’ Stiles trails off and even from there, Derek could see the hesitation in him, the hope for something he knew he shouldn’t be asking for.

Fuck it.

He reached out and listened to the way Stiles’ heart was beating, catching hold of the tenuous silvery thread between them that was the start of something and holding fast.

‘I’m here.’ He met Stiles’ eyes and kept tightening the bond between them. ‘Just hold on to me.’

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Stiles felt it go through him like a lightning bolt, shooting up his spine and into his brain, like two live wires being touched together.

Just like that, Derek’s voice, his heartbeat, everything crystalised into such perfect clarity that it nearly knocked the air out of him. He felt the tug strengthen but at the same time it was being fed into him as well, a loop of feeling being shared and returned. A deep seated calm came over him, a purpose of thought he’d never experienced before taking over and he smiled and turned back to the game as the whistle blew.

This time he was quick, graceful and aggressive, running fast and hitting the opposing player in front of him hard enough to knock the boy on his ass, scooping up the ball and taking off. The wolf that he now was ran with him and it was joyous and perfect and Stiles wanted it to never end as he hurdled a downed player and took the shot with perfect accuracy, the ball smacking into the net with a satisfying thwack that brought cheers thundering in his ears. There was yelling as Scott got to him and bounced him around, but Stiles only had eyes for one person and when he looks at the stands, it wasn’t his ecstatic father that he was locking eyes with. The corner of Derek’s mouth curved up and Stiles’ breathing caught as he basked in the approval thrumming through the link between them.

‘Good work, Stiles.’ Derek’s voice was coloured with something warm that made Stiles’ pulse race even faster. ‘Now do it again.’

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The next play started and Derek watched.

Next to him, Noah was yelling his head off with Melissa, the shouts of a father enraptured by how his son was excelling. It made Derek a little sick to think about it, remembering his own father doing the same thing when he used to play, but at the same time it also gave him the feeling that everything was going to be okay.

On the field, Stiles was slaughtering the opposition. That first goal had given him the confidence to really let himself go and Derek watched in admiration as he played, those long limbs of his that were so clumsy at times now affording him speed and reach. He was almost poetic in the way he moved. The rest of the team were now in on the whole idea and Derek felt an odd sort of pride at how Stiles was not a selfish player, passing and receiving in turn. The next goal went to another boy, and then the one after to Scott.

Stiles played as part of a team.

Part of a pack.

Derek felt something light up inside him, something he hadn’t felt for so long. He wanted to believe that he could have this again.
Maybe he could.

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Noah was so happy that he felt like he might actually have an emotion induced heart attack if he was not careful.

He was so proud, so ridiculously proud. Stiles had never been the kind of kid that had been a real athlete, too clumsy and uncoordinated to get his arms and legs to move in unison a lot of the time. Christ, Noah had seen his kid trip over literally nothing.

But there was another goal and then another and Noah was on his feet, yelling like he’d lost his mind and Melissa was yelling beside him just as loudly because her boy was out there too, also scoring goals and playing like there was nothing wrong with him at all.

Stiles jogs back from the goal where he’s just hammered the ball in again and he looks up and Noah smiles like his face is going to split and waves both hands at him in delight. Stiles smiles behind his cage and gives him a thumbs up, but then his eyes flick to Noah’s left and that’s when Noah knows for sure. He teased Stiles about it earlier but now he’s sure as hell that his son is goofily, head over heels for the young man next to him.

He turned to look at Derek and found him also on his feet, not cheering and with his hands shoved in his pockets but smiling all the same. It was small and still blurry with sadness that was probably not going to go away for a long time, but it was there and Noah was sideswiped by a memory of a six-year old Stiles watching Lilo and Stitch with them at the cinema and whispering in their ears that he was going to wish for a very special angel to be his friend like Lilo did. That year he’d met Scott at elementary school, and for a long time Noah had thought that maybe Stiles had got his wish.

Now of course, it was so clear that Scott wasn’t it.

The boy next to him was no doubt damaged. He hid away under a layer of black leather and disdain but Noah was willing to bet every dollar he had that Derek was looking for someone who would understand him. He’d experienced far too much loss in his short life, but then so had Stiles. Yes, there was the age difference to think about, but Stiles wasn’t not like other kids. He was hard in ways that Scott didn’t get, using sarcasm and self-deprecation as his armour. He and Derek had more in common than Noah thought they realised. He made a decision and reached out to Derek, slapping him on the shoulder in an unmistakably fatherly gesture.

‘What the hell have you been teaching him?’ He yelled to be heard above the cheers, making Derek jump as though startled before looking down, abashed.

‘He’s a quick learner.’ he replied and Noah laughed and went back to cheering for his son.

*********

It was half time and Stiles was walking on air. He was barely panting, wiping the sweat from his forehead as he took his helmet off. Next to him Scott’s thick hair was all over the place, his face wreathed in smiles as he waved up at Alison and Stiles noticed for the first time that she was there. Not only that, but she was sitting with Lydia and he was more than a little surprised to see her grace him with an arched copper eyebrow and a knowing nod.

A month ago and that would have sent Stiles into a frenzy of hormones, but now he saw it for the friendly gesture it was and grinned in reply. Alison and Scott, however, were so busy making heart eyes at each other that Stiles laughed and rolls his eyes at them and then Lydia did the same and it’s
like they’re suddenly on the same wavelength and when the hell did that happen?

‘Hey.’ He got shoved none to gently and turned to see Jackson glaring at him. ‘Keep your goddamn eyes to yourself, Stilinski.’ His face was twisted in an angry sneer and Stiles realised with a rather delicious sense of schadenfreude that Jackson reeked of what could only be jealousy.

‘Chill out, dude.’ He gave him his most infuriatingly cocky grin, the one that got him detention every time from Harris. ‘I’m not trying to steal your girlfriend.’

‘Like you could.’ Jackson spat, bridling at him enough that Danny actually came over and dragged him off.

‘What the hell is that about?’ Scott looked bemused. ‘It’s not like he didn’t see you with Derek earlier.’

‘He’s just being an asshole.’ Stiles snorted, now looking up for where Derek was watching him, green eyes intent. He couldn’t resist raising both eyebrows at him in a how about that? gesture and smiling when Derek just rolled his eyes at him. That prompted a conversation conducted by eyebrow for a few moments until Finstock called them into a huddle and Stiles had to go. He slapped Scott in the chest with the back of his hand to get him to stop making googly eyes at Allison and they jogged over.

‘Right we’ve got them by the balls!’ Finstock was rubbing his hands together with unconcealed glee. ‘Time for a change up.’ He looked at Stiles. ‘You. Bilinski, right?’

‘Sure, Coach.’ Stiles didn’t have the heart to correct him.

‘You’re facing off.’ Finstock held up a hand as Jackson immediately started voicing his objections. ‘Shut up, Jackson. You’re moving like my ninety-year old grandmother after she had her hip replaced.’

Scott gave Stiles a sidelong glance that said very clearly he was in deep shit and Stiles knew he might as well have a target painted on his back. The thing was, tonight he didn’t give a fuck.

‘Sure thing, Coach.’ He smiled as he said it, looking at Jackson and daring him to answer. Revenge was indeed a dish best served cold and Stiles was going to shove it right down Jackson’s throat. This was for every time he’d been shoved into a locker, every bruise from a sneakily lobbed ball, every cutting remark.

‘Get this right and you’re going to be drowning in pussy, kid.’ Finstock said and Stiles winced.

‘Really Coach?’ he asked. ‘Maybe not the best thing to say.’

‘Yeah, didn’t you know, Coach?’ Jackson really just couldn’t keep his mouth shut. ‘Stiles likes guys. His boyfriend’s watching in the stands.’ He clearly meant it to be disparaging but all it did was make Danny glare at him, obviously furious at the jibe.

Finstock, however, was completely unfazed.

‘Choking on dick then.’ he amended. ‘Whatever floats your boat, kid.’

‘Uh.’ Stiles didn’t know whether to be horribly embarrassed or touched at the sentiment. ‘Thanks?’

Finstock nodded and then whacked Jackson around the back of the head.
'That’s for being a homophobic asswipe.’ he said and Jackson was now looking positively murderous.

The whistle blew for the second half and as Stiles put his helmet back on he heard Derek speaking.

‘They play too defensively.’ It sounded like he was speaking to Noah, but Stiles knew the words were meant for him as well. ‘You’ve got to get around them and you can do that by faking left on the attack.’

‘You think that will work?’ Noah asked and Stiles grinned at being able to hear them both as clearly as if they were standing next to him.

‘Yeah, Derek.’ He kept his voice low. ‘Will that work?’ He knew he was being a little shit, but it was fun and when he looked up at the stand, Derek was giving him one of his more fearsome glares. ‘Hey now, don’t look at me like that, you’ll give the game away.’

‘You are such a little asshole.’ Derek muttered and then had to clear his throat and make it sound like he was coughing when Noah questioned what he’d just said. It was enough to make Stiles cackle as he jogged back into the line.

He was excited. He faced off occasionally in practice, but this was an actual game and he was in the spotlight for the first time in his life and Stiles found he liked it. He glanced over at Scott and got an encouraging smile, enough to settle his nerves.

‘Look sharp.’ Derek’s voice cut through the crowd. ‘Focus. You got this.’

Stiles took a deep breath in and reached out, wrapping himself around Derek’s heartbeat. He let the sound of it fill him and then opened his eyes and threw himself into the game. The whistle blew and he easily beat the opposing player to the ball, getting it in his net before bolting down the field, zigzagging to avoid tackles and then spotting an opening.

‘Left.’ Derek’s low growl made him grin.

‘Already on it.’ he replied and side stepped two players, charged down a third and did a cool little jump thing as he slammed the ball into the back of the net. Even with all the cheers he could hear a snort from Derek and damn if it didn’t sound just the littlest bit happy.

‘You’re a such a fucking show off.’ Yeah he was definitely happy. It made Stiles smile as he ran back to his overexcited teammates, pumping his fist and bracing himself as Scott jumped all over him.

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The final whistles went and Noah was hoarse. He had no idea how he was going to work the night shift and prayed that it was a quiet one and that he didn’t have to speak that much. Next to him, Melissa was overjoyed as she jiggled up and down, barely containing her excitement.

‘Our boys.’ She was close to squealing. ‘They were amazing.’

Noah looked at her and her dark eyes were shining. It makes him think of another dark eyed woman who would probably be incoherent right around now and that made him sad. It wasn’t nothing he hadn’t felt before, especially with all those milestones that Claudia missed out on. The last one had been Stiles turning sixteen and getting his license, face lighting up when Noah presented him with the keys to her old Jeep. It still caught him in the chest though, a tight feeling that meant his smile faltered for a second and that was when he felt the hand on his arm.
It was strong, he could feel that much, and it steadied him. He looked up into those oddly hued eyes that he remembered from James Hale, Derek’s long dead father. Talia had had dark brown eyes, but James’ had been the same heterochromatic green as his son. Derek actually looked a great deal like him, bar the sandy blond hair, and it gave Noah a shiver. Derek frowned and then briefly squeezed Noah’s arm and let him go before turning away and leaving his spot next to them, pushing his way through the crowds of students and parents and going down to the field.

‘What it something we said?’ Melissa asked him, her face questioning.

‘No. I think it’s just ghosts.’ Noah watched him go, seeing how Derek disappeared around the bleachers before looking back at the field where Stiles was generally being shoved from player to player in happy celebration. His helmet was now off, his brown hair sweaty and sticking up everywhere and his smile was so bright it could probably illuminate the whole field by itself. Noah waved at him and Stiles waved back and broke free from the knot of boys. Noah looks to Melissa and she nodded and it was their turn to go down to the field.

‘Dad!’ Stiles ran across to them and Noah laughed and held out his arms, catching Stiles in a tight hug. He smelled awful, sweaty and hormonal as teenage boys tended to be, but underneath was that smell that Noah remembered from the first time Stiles was placed in his arms in the hospital. He tightened his arms around him and Stiles responded, his grip enough to make Noah’s ribs creak, and then the unthinkable happened and his sixteen year old son hauled him off his feet, surprising the hell out of him.

Stiles set him down a second later, but it had done the trick and now Noah was looking at him with appraisal. Stiles was tall and still growing, probably going to top out at just shy of six feet. He was probably not going to be as tall as Noah, too much of his mother in him for that, but he suddenly noticed that Stiles was a lot broader in the shoulder than he remembered. Not only that but he was all lean muscle, deceptively gangly but strong nonetheless. Noah shook his head and reached up, hand to Stiles face, and Stiles beamed at him.

‘Did you see me, Dad?’ He was jubilant. ‘I was freaking amazing out there.’ It wasn’t arrogant, just enthusiastic, and it made Noah smile.

‘Yeah, I did.’ He gave Stiles’ cheek a gentle tap. ‘You did good, kiddo. I’m real proud of you.’

‘Yeah?’ Stiles turned as Scott comes up, his arm around his mother. ‘We won, Scott.’

‘Dude.’ Scott was shaking his head in disbelief, his smile almost as bright as Stiles’. ‘We kicked ass.’

‘I think this calls for a celebration.’ Noah said, then checked his watch. ‘Dammit, I have to go. Tomorrow night?’

‘Absolutely.’ Melissa agreed. ‘We can go for burgers, all four of us.’

Scott immediately got the puppy eyes and Stiles grinned.

‘I’m sure Allison will come if you ask her.’ he said and Scott smiled again.

‘Her and Lydia are waiting at the bleachers.’ he replied, looking meaningfully in their direction and Melissa snorted at him.

‘Go on then.’ She gave her son a gentle push. ‘Don’t keep the ladies waiting.’

‘In that case, I’m going to go to work.’ Noah said. ‘Mel, I’ll walk you to your car.’
‘Okay.’ Melissa gave Scott a quick kiss on the cheek. ‘Are you boys going straight home?’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles said. ‘We’re just going to hang and maybe get some pizza, watch a movie.’

‘Will Allison be there?’ Melissa asked pointedly and Scott blushed.

‘Just for a little while?’ He gave Stiles a pleading look, impressing Stiles with his acting skills. ‘If that’s okay.’

‘It’s fine.’ Noah knew that look all too well. ‘Just make sure she doesn’t stay overnight.’ He offered Melissa his arm and she laughed and took it.

‘He is completely gone on that girl.’ she said once they were out of earshot and Noah chuckled.

‘Things are starting to get interesting around here.’ he replied, looking briefly over his shoulder at where Stiles was not looking at the bleachers but staring out into the forest that surrounded them.

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‘Dude, you coming?’ Scott asked but Stiles kept looking into the trees. He knew Derek was out there, could hear him breathing and make out the deep thud of his heart. The intimacy of it made him inhale sharply and want to chase the other wolf deeper into the trees.

He lifted his head and stared up into the sky, now dark and clouded over. He couldn’t see the moon, but he could feel it in his blood. The adrenaline from the game was now gone, replaced by that same connection he felt earlier thrumming just underneath his skin and Stiles scented the air, nostrils flaring. There was the briefest flash of blue from in the trees and he answered it, his own eyes illuminating for a second as he felt the heat flashing in his chest.

‘Stiles.’ Scott put his hand on his shoulder. ‘Hey, you okay?’

‘Go.’ Derek’s voice was soft but it carried well enough to Stiles’ ears. ‘We’ll talk about this later. The moon is rising and you need to be safe.’

Stiles nodded and let Scott pull him away, even though his feet wanted to walk in only one direction and that was the one that lead to Derek. He kept looking over his shoulder, the pull getting stronger and more urgent the further away he got.

Oh my God!’ Allison squealed and threw herself at Scott the second they gets to them. ‘You were amazing.’

Scott was all smiles as he kissed her and Stiles wanted that. He wanted to throw himself at someone, preferably someone tall and dark and grumpy, kissing the frown off that gorgeous face. Instead he met Lydia’s eyes and gets an arch smile.

‘Well, well Stiles.’ she smirked. ‘Haven’t you suddenly become very interesting.’ Her green eyes were darker than Derek’s but nowhere near as beautiful.

‘Sorry, Lydia.’ He couldn’t believe he was teasing Lydia of all people. ‘But I’m kind of taken.’

‘Oh, I know that.’ Lydia retorted. ‘But it makes Jackson jealous when I talk to you and a jealous Jackson is very generous.’ She came over and stood on tiptoe, kissing him on the cheek. ‘Congratulations on ascending to lacrosse god status. I’m sure it will be very educational. I did happen to notice that your very handsome boyfriend was in the stands with your father.’
Stiles just stared at her as she turned to Allison.

‘We have to go.’ she announced. ‘Allison is helping me pick out Spring formal dresses and then we’re going to watch the Notebook and cry.’ She gives Scott a bright smile as she stole his girlfriend from under his nose. ‘You boys get home safely and don’t forget the curfew.’

‘I’ll call you later.’ Allison giggled as she let Lydia tow her away and Scott looks like he’s been told that someone ran over his puppy, his protest dying in his throat.

‘I was going to ask her to come with us.’ he grumbled. ‘We could have totally gotten burgers before going to the clinic.’

‘And she’s blown you off for online shopping and chick flicks.’ Stiles laughed. ‘Besides, we’re supposed to be getting me through my first full moon, remember, and Derek said not to be late.’

‘Yeah, about that.’ Scott looked at him quizzically as they walked back up to the school. ‘Aren’t you supposed to be sprouting hair and teeth and all that shit.’

‘Moon’s not at its fullest yet.’ Stiles said. ‘But we should probably get changed and then get the fuck out of here.’

‘You know why we’re going to the clinic?’ Scott asked. ‘I mean, I get it’s easy to get into because I have keys but it seems kind of weird to be doing this behind the Doc’s back.’

‘It’ll all become clear.’ Stiles did his best Harris voice and Scott snorted with laughter.

The locker room was a riot, boys laughing and yelling in the showers. The stink of sweat and male bodies was strong, but also good, and Stiles inhaled the steamy air and then wheezed as he was dealt a massive slap on the back by Finstock.

‘Bilinski!’ He was yelling right in Stiles’ face, making him want to whine because it was an actual assault on his newly sensitive ears. ‘What the hell was that tonight? Why the hell haven’t you been playing like that all this time?’

‘Growth spurt, Coach.’ He moved back a step and gave him a winning smile. Finstock narrowed his eyes at him and walked off, stopping once to yell at Greenburg and flick him with the towel he was carrying, provoking a loud yelp.

Scott gave him a look and Stiles followed him to their lockers. It took a while to strip off his pads and uniform, grabbing his towel and heading for the shower. They were in amongst the stragglers and by the time they are done, it was just them. They got dressed and Scott checked his watch.

‘It’s half past six.’ he said. ‘We could still stop for food on the way, maybe?’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles slung his backpack over his shoulder and slammed his locker door, about to suggest they also pick up some for Derek when Jackson appeared from around the corner looking murderous. He ignored Scott completely and walked right up to Stiles, getting in his face.

‘What the fuck are you on?’ he hissed and Stiles moved, getting distance between them. Jackson smelled awful, anger and jealousy leaking out of him like toxic waste.

‘Nothing.’ He got his hands up and shoved Jackson away, taking care not to be too aggressive about it. He didn’t want to lose it, but the the anger was building even as his brain told him he wasn’t in a position to actually do something about it.
‘Bullshit.’ Jackson sneered. ‘I’m going to find out, Stilinski. And when I do, you’re going to let me in on the action or I’m taking it to Finstock and he can get your ass expelled.’

‘Jesus, Jackson.’ Scott looked appalled. ‘What the hell are you talking about? Stiles isn’t on anything.’

‘Like hell, he’s not.’ Jackson was still eyeing him. ‘Nobody gets that good in a week. You two losers are up to something and I’m going to find out what it is.’

‘Fuck off!’ Stiles was now on edge and he wanted nothing more than to get right back in Jackson’s face and bite him. His gums were itching like crazy and there was a sharp pain in his nail beds, his claws threatening to come through. He clenched his fists to restrain himself and felt them pricking his palms.

‘Stiles.’ Scott was starting to sound panicky. ‘Dude, you need to calm down.’ He came up next to Stiles, putting a hand on his arm.

‘Yeah, Stilinski.’ Jackson’s smile was as unpleasant as his voice. ‘Calm the fuck down. WE all know how ugly roid rage is.’

It was the last push Stiles needed and then he was snarling, getting both hands on Jackson’s shirt and literally throwing him up against the opposite bank of lockers. He was just about to throw himself at Jackson, claws out and eyes flashing and Scott’s frantic yelling reduced to nothing but an irritating buzz in the back of his head when someone stepped in front of him. He snarls at the newcomer, feeling nothing but fury at being prevented from reaching Jackson, and that was when Derek roared in his face. It was commanding enough for Stiles to snap right out of what he’d been about to do and he fell back, claws and fangs retracting immediately. Derek’s eyes were electric blue, his fangs out but not completely transformed. He stepped back, the shift fading, and spoke directly to Scott with one hand pointing behind him at Jackson.

‘Get that asshole out of here.’ He kept his eyes fixed on Stiles, the green almost luminous with anger.

‘Got it.’ Scott was white. He turned and tried to bundle Jackson away from the lockers but Jackson was not done.

‘I knew it.’ His voice was shaking. ‘You’re a fucking freak, Stilinski! You wait ‘til my dad hears about this!’

His words were enough to prompt another deep snarl from Derek and he wheeled around, grabbing Jackson and holding him up with one hand. Jackson went red and wriggled like a fish on a hook.

‘I don’t need to tell you what will happen if you say anything, right?’ Derek shook him for good measure. ‘No-one will believe a word you say and I’ll make damn sure that very pretty car of yours gets trashed. Do you understand me?’ He raised his eyebrows in question and Jackson nodded.

Derek dropped him on the floor and Jackson stumbled to his feet and let Scott drag him out of the locker room.

‘Fuck.’ Derek glared at them as they made it out the door before he turned those sharp eyes on Stiles. ‘What the fuck did I say?’

‘He was being an asshole!’ Stiles bit back. ‘You can’t seriously be taking his side?’

‘This is meant to be a fucking secret.’ Derek hissed. ‘Now I have to deal with another fucking teenager knowing what the hell you are, and me now too.’
'Don't worry about Jackson.' Stiles muttered. 'He won’t do a thing to jeopardise his stupid car. I think he loves it more than Lydia.' As much as he hated to admit it, Derek was right. It also didn’t escape his notice how Derek’s proximity was calming him and he took a few deep breaths.

'You better hope not.' Derek growled. 'Now get your ass out to the car. You can’t be trusted out tonight.' He turned on his heel and stormed out the locker room, leaving Stiles jogging to catch up with him. They found Scott in the parking lot, chewing on a nail.

'He was shitting himself.' he reported, giving Derek a very nervous look. 'I can’t say I blame him. You sure he can be trusted?' This was to Stiles and he was impressed that Scott had the balls to even be around him and Derek.

'It’s fine, Scott.' Derek had the passenger door of the Camaro open. 'Stiles, get in. You take the Jeep and follow us.' He stood and glared at them until Stiles huffed and dug his keys out of his pocket, chucking them at Scott. Scott caught them but still looked dubious until Derek heaved a sigh and backed down a little. 'Look, the moon is getting higher and Stiles needs to be somewhere he’ll be safe and where everyone else will be safe from him. Now please drive the damn car.’

Scott finally got into the Jeep, prompting Stiles to get into the Camaro. Derek shut the door on him and stormed around to the other side, getting in and giving Stiles a glare that would have completely intimidated him a week ago. Now, he could smell the concern that was motivating it and sighed.

'I’m okay.' He shrugged. 'He pushed my buttons.'

'You almost lost it out on the field too.' Derek put both hands on the steering wheel then looked over, his eyes glowing blue and making Stiles’ heart stutter. 'I told you to find an anchor.'

'I did.' He shivered, watching the response on Derek’s normally emotionless face as his own eyes lit up.

'You can’t.' Derek sounded like he wanted to believe it. 'This is a terrible idea.'

'It just happened. You were just there and then I couldn’t hear anything but you.' Stiles took a deep breath. 'And it worked. Didn’t you see how great I was out there?'

'Yeah, I did.' Now there was the smallest smile playing around Derek’s mouth and Stiles wanted to lean right in and kiss him. He settled for beaming at Derek instead.

'So?' He was nervous, desperately wanting an answer to the unspoken question that’s hovering between them.

'Fuck.' Derek shook his head and started the car. 'You’re the most aggravating little shit I have ever met.'

'But that works for you, right?' Stiles was on the edge of his seat.

'Seems it does.' Derek muttered and the steady beat of his heart was music to Stiles’ ears.

They didn’t speak on the drive, simply sitting there as Derek pulled into the lot at the clinic and Stiles saw the jeep follow suit a moment later. Scott got out and followed them to the building.

'Kind of different to the last time we were here, huh?' he says and elbowed Stiles. 'So you want to explain why we’re here? Where are we going to put Stiles?'

'We’ve got something set up downstairs for tonight.' Derek replied, taking his phone out and tapping
‘What like some sort of bondage dungeon?’ Stiles was joking but the smirk on Derek’s face made him hesitate. ‘Dude, please tell me that you’re not going to tie me up.’

‘No.’ Now Derek was smiling and it looked slightly unhinged, so much so that Stiles and Scott actually took a step closer to each other. ‘I was actually going to chain you to the wall.’ He gestured for them to go to the door. ‘After you.’ They walked past, both of them trying their best to stick to the wall.

‘He’s not really going to do that is he?’ Scott hissed.

‘You saw him tonight. The alpha could call him out and we need to keep them apart. Besides, the hunters are probably going to be out as well and the last thing we need is Stiles getting shot.’ Derek tilted his head as if listening.

‘Shit.’ Stiles winced. ‘That is an experience I definitely don’t want to repeat.’

‘Good.’ Derek watched as the door opened. ‘Then we can get started.’

Scott saw the man waiting for the man the door and his face scrunched up in confusion.

‘Dr Deaton?’ His expression was one of pure bemusement.

‘Who else were you expecting?’ Deaton gave them his sphinxlike smile. ‘Now shall we go downstairs and get started?’

Derek had to admit that there wad a tiny bit of glee inside him at seeing how Stiles’ eyes got wide when he saw the room, his scent spiking with a mixture of fear and anticipation.

‘You can’t lock me up all night.’ he squeaked. ‘I’ll go stir crazy.’

‘We have to.’ Derek replied. Now that they were inside the building and locked down in the basement, he was finally starting to relax. Stiles would be safe down there and the alpha wouldn’t be able to get to him.

Deaton kept giving them knowing looks and Derek knew he’d cottoned on to the way he and Stiles were reacting to each other. Scott was thankfully oblivious, smelling like panic and overwhelming curiosity. His reaction to finding out that his employer not only knew about werewolves but was also in on the fact that Stiles was now one has been better than Derek would have expected. It was clear that he liked and respected Deaton and he was a lot calmer now that he had got something to do, notably help Deaton with securing the room.

‘I’ve used mountain ash for the frame of the building.’ Deaton indicating the tiny barred window at the top of the room. The moon is just visible now through the glass and Derek felt it pulling at him. Stiles was clearly getting agitated as well, pacing back and forth.

‘What is that for?’ Scott asked and Deaton showed him the jar he was holding.

‘Mountain ash is able to act as a barrier to supernatural.’ he explained. ‘The alpha that’s hunting Stiles will not be able to get in.’ He smiled at him. ‘We’re going to do the doorway at the top of the stairs as well. You and me will be in the room just outside this one, so we’re the first line of defense as it were.’ He gave Scott a searching look. ‘You’re all right doing this, aren’t you?’
‘Yeah.’ Scott nodded vigorously. ‘My mom thinks we’re staying over at Stiles’ house. I don’t want to leave.’

‘Good.’ Deaton looked approving. ‘We shouldn’t have too much trouble. Derek will be in the room with Stiles and we can try and get some sleep out here.’ He handed Scott some keys. ‘There’s sleeping bags and supplies in my car. Can you go get them?’

Scott took the keys and jogged off and Deaton waited for him to leave before turning and looking at them both, eyebrows raised.

‘It looks like things have escalated.’ he said and Derek could smell Stiles’ nervousness before he even spoke.

‘What?’ He laughed but it was brittle. ‘Nothing’s escalated.’

‘You’ve chosen an anchor.’ Deaton was smiling again. ‘It’s Derek, isn’t it?’

Stiles looked like a deer in the headlights rather than a wolf before his shoulders drooped.

‘Yeah.’ He sounded sheepish. ‘It just happened.’

‘It doesn’t just happen Stiles.’ Deaton said kindly. ‘It’s natural that when wolves find their potential mates that they immediately fixate on them and the wolf in question becomes their anchor.’

His words had an immediate effect on Derek, startling him into action. He threw up both hands and protested, ignoring Stiles’ face changing to an expression that managed to combine both hopefulness and horror.

‘No.’ He really couldn’t get into this now. He couldn’t even look at Stiles, but he could hear the way his heartbeat was rocketing and smell the sweet scent saturating the air, indicating that Stiles was so lovestruck that it was not even funny anymore.

‘Derek’s chosen you as well.’ Deaton was talking to Stiles, his serene face threatening to break out into a smile. ‘There’s a connection between you. You can feel it?’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles’ eyes were wide. ‘Dude, I’m your anchor? And what the hell is a mate?’

‘Fuck.’ Derek shook his head. ‘You’re not supposed to be. Mates are a fucking fairy story.’

‘Just because you don’t want to believe it, it doesn’t mean that it doesn’t work like that, Derek.’ Deaton was stern. ‘Your mother would have told you that.’

‘He’s sixteen!’ Derek snapped. ‘He’s a fucking kid!’

‘Screw you!’ Stiles was now glaring at him. ‘I’m not a fucking child, Derek!’

‘It doesn’t matter!’ Derek growled at him. ‘That doesn’t change just because we’re supposed to be…’ He couldn’t bring himself to say it.

‘So it’s like a thing?’ Stiles was looking at Deaton. ‘Like what, soulmates?’

‘In a way.’ Deaton said. ‘Can I ask what you felt the first time you saw Derek?’

‘I…” Stiles was looking at him, more than a little sheepish. ‘I wanted to climb him like a tree.’ He frowned at Deaton. ‘I thought it was just me being… you know, a horny teenager.’
‘It was more than that.’ Deaton said. ‘Even if you hadn’t been bitten, the connection would have been there.’ He was now looking at them both, his face thoughtful. ‘This is quite the turn of fate.’

‘I don’t believe in fate.’ Derek folded his arms. ‘It’s all bullshit.’

‘Clearly it’s not.’ Deaton’s black eyes were sparkling and he looked like he was enjoying himself far too much. ‘And now the connection is in place, it’s only going to get stronger. I wouldn’t try to stand in the way of that, if you get my meaning.’

‘Not a goddamn chance.’ Derek back up. ‘No.’

‘Just let nature take its course.’ Deaton said. ‘Your wolves will want to get to know each other a bit better.’

Derek started to protest but Scott returning interrupted the conversation as Deaton instructed him on where to put everything. Then he turns to Derek.

‘You know the drill.’ he said and Derek growled.

‘Shoes and shirt.’ he muttered to Stiles.

‘Dude, what?’ Stiles wrapped his flannel shirt around himself. ‘Why?’

‘Because you’ll probably shred it if you don’t.’ Derek explained, pulling his henley over his head and then sitting down on the edge of the mattress to take off his boots. ‘You’re also going need to lose the jeans as well, actually.’

‘Why don’t I just go naked?’ Stiles snapped, but he stripped to the waist and toed off his sneakers, stubbornly leaving his socks on.

‘It’s all right.’ Deaton assures him. He took their shirts and shoes and handed them off to Scott before going to grab a bag. ‘I have water and protein bars here. I think that should tide you over.’

‘Thank you.’ Derek took the bag and stashed it in the corner. He rolled his shoulders, feeling the pull inside him growing stronger.

‘You going to be okay?’ Scott asked and Stiles looks at Derek, his face one huge question mark. Derek sighed and reaches for the connection between them, sending reassurance through it. Stiles’ face changed as he relaxed, the tension leaving his shoulders.

‘Yeah I’m fine, Scotty.’ He smiled at his best friend. ‘I guess I’ll see you in the morning.’

Deaton herded Scott out and the heavy steel door was closed so it was just the two of them. There was the grating sound of it being locked and Stiles let out a harsh breath. He started pacing back and forth again and Derek could smell the mix of confusion and agitation and let him be. Christ knew Stiles’ first full moon was going to be trying without the bombshell that he and Derek were a little more than Derek had been letting on.

He shifted back on the mattress and closed his eyes, bringing up one knee and leaning his elbow on it. He’d had so many full moons but he still remembered what it was like when he hit puberty and the shift changed for him. That was when he’d felt every bit as out of control as Stiles was no doubt feeling now.

‘Were you going to say anything?’ Stiles asked, the sudden change from silence to sound shaking Derek out of his thoughts. He opened his eyes and saw that Stiles was standing there with a stubborn
set to his shoulders and a watchfulness that was new. Derek suppressed a smile because he could see the wolf in it clear as day.

‘No.’ He told the truth. ‘I wasn’t sure what it was.’ He leaned back against the wall again. ‘Look, it’s not as cut and dried as Deaton says. Mates are an outdated concept. It doesn’t necessarily mean we’re destined to be…’

He was completely cut off as he suddenly found himself with lapful of Stiles, strong hands gripping at his shoulders and Stiles’ mouth bruising his in a very messy kiss that was all inexperience and enthusiasm and undeniable heat. It took Derek’s breath away and his instincts kicked in. He gripped the back of Stile’s neck, growling as he took control, slowing the kiss down with the wolf inside him nearly out of its mind with want. That got him a high-pitched whine and a flood of pheromones that assaulted his nose and practically melted his frontal lobe. He barely has the control needed to break them apart but he manages and saw that Stiles’ eyes were glowing gold, his fangs dropped but not yet in a full beta shift.

Derek looked at him, really looked, and saw what he’s been trying to deny this whole time. Stiles was beautiful, his mouth full and his cheeks flushed as he breathed heavily. It was enough for Derek to let his own eyes flash and drop his fangs in kind.

‘You asshole.’ Stiles’ voice was rough, making him sound older. ‘You were going to make it seem like it was just me.’ His smile was bright and happy and Derek couldn’t stop himself. He leans in, tracing one fang with his tongue, and Stiles made that lovely sound again, his claws digging into Derek’s bare shoulders.

‘You’re such a fucking brat.’ he snorted and Stiles laughed.

‘A brat that you want to bone.’ He grinned and it was so smug that Derek couldn’t decide if it was obnoxious or endearing, even with the fangs. ‘I’m your fucking mate.’

‘It’s not half as romantic as Deaton makes it sound.’ Derek knew he should tip Stiles off his lap but now his cock was fully invested and he growled as Stiles caught on and then wriggled on him. Derek grabbed him around the waist, trying to wipe that smug smile off his face.

‘Are you kidding me?’ Stiles laughed. ‘I hit the goddamn jackpot. You’re hot like burning, dude.’ He snarls playfully at Derek and licked over his mouth. ‘Now I really think we need to do something about this.’

‘No.’ Derek knew he had to put the brakes on. ‘You can get that right out of your head. If I claimed you properly, there’s no way we could turn you back, even if we kill the alpha.’

Stiles pouted at him. Derek tried desperately to ignore how cute it was.

‘So what can we do? I really really want you.’ He crinkled his nose in consideration and that finally broke through Derek’s reserve. He gave in and buried his face in Stiles neck, inhaling deeply. His smell was addictive, especially now that they’d made the connection between them. It was thick with arousal, almost syrupy, and Derek felt Stiles tentatively respond, his own nose lowering to Derek’s neck as he scented him.

‘This is so much hotter than it should be.’ He sounded astonished and Derek felt bad because he’d told him practically nothing about this. That had to change.

‘Smell is important for pack.’ He said it on an inhalation. Stiles smelled so good and it was becoming more and more difficult to hold back. He ran his hands up Stiles’ back, feeling overheated skin that
was smooth as silk under his fingers and dotted with moles. Derek traced lines between a set of them, and felt Stiles shiver in his arms.

‘I’m starting to get that.’ He was still sniffing him. ‘Why do you smell so incredible?’

‘It’s the connection, the fact that we’re compatible.’ Derek nosed along Stiles’ neck.

‘So you are into me.’ Stiles sounded delighted. ‘Shit. That never fucking happens to me.’

‘That’s because people are idiots.’ Derek gently pushed him away and looked up at him. ‘But I am serious. No sex. You know we can’t.’

‘Fine.’ Stiles grumbled. ‘Can we at least make out?’

Derek watched him, all hopeful anticipation and plain old horniness. It was disgusting how adorable he found it.

‘Yeah, okay.’ he said and Stiles crowed and then stuck his tongue down Derek’s throat.

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Scott looked at his watch.

It had been a half an hour and Deaton had told him more about werewolves than he’d ever wanted to know.

‘Wow.’ He frowned. ‘So what else is real? And how do you know about this?’

‘I used to work with Derek’s pack.’ Deaton said. ‘Before the fire. When Laura and he moved to New York, I stayed behind. I looked after their uncle for a while hoping he’d get better, but he didn’t and I severed what ties I had with the supernatural and became just a vet.’ He smiled. ‘Now it seems I am coming out of retirement and it looks like you’ve been dragged in head first.’

‘He’s my best friend.’ Scott replied. ‘I have to be there for him.’

‘Good.’ Deaton nodded approvingly. ‘He will need a friend he can trust.’ His dark eyes were piercing. ‘I don’t need to tell you that this has to be kept secret. No-one can know outside the four of us. There are people out there that would hurt Derek and Stiles, even kill them if they could.’

‘But why?’ Scott asked. ‘I get that the alpha is bad news but Siles would never hurt anyone.’

‘They think he could and for some of them, prevention is best served by making sure he never lives to do it.’ Deaton explained. ‘They are supposed to abide by a code but that doesn’t always get put into practice.’

‘So what do we do?’ Scott asked.

‘We help keep them safe.’ Deaton said and looked over at the door.

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Inside the room, the air was thick with the smell of them both and Derek felt like he was actually getting high off it. They were still on the mattress, everything else outside the room forgotten.

Stiles was wonderfully pliant and responsive beyond anything he’d ever dreamt of. His mouth was wet from all the kissing, Derek’s stubble marking him as clearly as if he’d been bitten. Both of them
were hard, neither of them getting off yet although it had pretty damn close.

‘Derek.’ It was plaintive and Derek growled and committed himself to biting down on Stiles’ neck until he was shuddering. He could smell Stiles leaking through his jeans as he growled and dug his claws in, breaking the skin on Derek’s shoulders. Derek replied, setting his teeth in enough to make Stiles whine. It was good, the push and pull and flashes of pain as their marks healed over in seconds. Sex with a human was never as good as with a wolf because Derek was always scared of letting go, of hurting them. Here though he had someone who could give back as good as he got and he moved, dragging his tongue down the jut of Stiles’ collar bone before tracing over it with his fangs.

‘Holy shit.’ Stiles was panting hard. ‘So many new kinks, Jesus fucking Christ.’ He threw his head back and the long line of his throat was exquisite to Derek’s eyes. ‘Derek, this is really fucking hot and all but I’m like two seconds away from coming.’

Derek smiled against his skin and kept going, lifting Stiles up until he was level with one perfect pink nipple. Stiles’ skin was perfect, pale and smooth and unblemished apart from the dark moles that embellished it like punctuation marks. He thumbed at the nipple, admiring how it pebbled under his touch, and then licked at it softly enough to make Stiles’ moan, a long drawn out sound that elicited a snarl from Derek that was nothing but possession. He latched on, tonguing softly and inhaling the smell coming off Stiles’ overheated skin before he realised he’d gone quiet. He lifted his head and saw that Stiles was listening intently, eyes fixed on the window. Derek focused and heard the sounds coming from the lot and knew exactly what it was that had caught Stiles’ attention.

‘Stiles.’ He growled it low but Stiles ignored him. He whined but not in pleasure or pain. If anything it sounded like the whine of a cub that wanted its pack. He started shoving at Derek and Derek let him up. Stiles got to his feet and went straight to stand under the window, head tilted as he listened.

Derek got up as well, erection fading as he watched how Stiles had become completely fixated on whatever was calling to him. He moved to the door and tapped on it, blood is running cold as he waited for Deaton to answer. Thankfully he heard him get up on his side and move to the door.

‘What’s wrong, Derek?’ He didn’t sound particularly perturbed but then again, Deaton could probably be confronted by the end of the world and face it with nothing but a raised eyebrow.

‘The alpha is calling Stiles out.’ Derek had to raise his voice to be heard on the other side, shifting back to human as he spoke. ‘He’s under the window.’

‘Try and distract him.’ Deaton instructed. ‘He can’t get out anyway. I have put mountain ash across the door.’

‘You should secure this one too.’ Derek couldn’t believe he was saying that but it makes sense, even if his every instinct was screaming at him to escape.

‘You won’t be able to get out either.’ Deaton warned him.

‘I know, but it will be safer for him.’ Derek stood back and heard the sound of the ash falling. He reached out a hand to test and could feel the repulsion provided by the barrier, his stomach twisting in panic as knowing he was trapped.

He turned his attention to Stiles as much to distract himself, and started moving towards him. He only got a couple of steps closer when Stiles went into a full beta shift and growled menacingly, worlds away from where they had been only a few moments before. There was no recognition in his eyes and Derek’s immediate reaction was to shift as well, growling in defense. This felt horribly wrong
and he knew that he was too far gone, the connection too established to let Stiles go. The very thought that another wolf was coming between them made him furious and he roared, the sound deafening in the enclosed space.

Stiles roared in reply, claws out and already in a defensive stance. Derek found himself mirroring him, his control slipping as he tried to restrain himself from just launching himself at Stiles. This was not what he’d expected and now he was questioning the choice to seal them inside the room with no way out.

Stiles growled low and threatening, and Derek heard the howl that filtered in from outside. It distracted Stiles long enough that he could leap forward, knocking him to the ground and getting on top of him. He didn’t want to hurt him so he was less rough than he should have been and the next thing, Derek was flying through the air and hitting the wall behind them.

Stiles landed on top of him and there was a blinding flash of pain as his claws sunk into Derek’s flank. He roared in pain and shoved Stiles off of him, rolling to his feet and settling in on all fours. He could hear Scott and Deaton shouting at them, but now he was seeing red and he snarled and rushed at Stiles, getting him around the waist and bearing him to the ground while fending off the blows that Stiles was throwing at him. He got his legs up, kicking Stiles off and then flipping himself back onto his feet. He barely had time to dodge when he landed because Stiles was completely out of control and that was when Derek stopped trying to hurt him and started fighting for real.

He caught Stiles when he threw himself at him and heaved him at the wall, rushing in and grabbing him, pinning him with his hands around his wrists and using his body to hold Stiles against the flat surface. Stiles flailed wildly, and Derek’s body worked on instinct. He snarled and sunk his teeth right into Stiles’s neck at the junction with his shoulder, hearing Stiles whine before he went limp. Derek tightened his hold, the taste of Stiles’ blood between his teeth, and then he realised what he’d done.

There was enough time to think oh fucking hell and then Stiles roared in his ear and sunk his own teeth into Derek’s neck. The jolt that went through him was like electricity, shocking him into silence as he felt the bond change from the tenuous silvery thing it was into something that was almost tangible and shimmering between them. Derek felt it lock down and he let go, pulling back horrified at what he’d just done, eyes fading back to green.

Stiles was breathing like he’d been running suicides but the crazy look in his eyes was gone, the brown as warm and familiar as it had ever been. There was blood on his mouth, Derek’s blood, and he frowned.

‘What…?’ He looked like he’d just woken up. ‘Derek…?’

‘Shhh.’ Derek didn’t know what to say. He leaned in and rested their foreheads together. ‘Can you feel that?’

Stiles looked like he’s thinking and then it was like everything was coming to life between them, the bond now fully formed and singing as all his feelings flooded into Derek, just as he knew his were doing the same to Stiles. He could feel the confusion and fear inside Stiles but he could also feel his attraction to Derek, all warm affection and a deep vein of what could only very politely be called lust that was directed right at him.

Stiles lifted a hand to his neck, taking it away and staring at the blood on it. Then he looked at the matching bite on Derek’s, still panting like crazy, and Derek did the only thing he could think of and grabbed his face in his hands and kissed him like they’d both die if he didn’t.
Stiles made a muffled sound and then he was kissing back, his tongue in Derek’s mouth and his hands everywhere it was possible to reach. In the background, Derek could just hear the howling of the alpha but it sounded so far away. All he wanted to listen to was the thump of Stiles’ heart, hammering away in his ears. His scent was roiling around them both, mixing with Derek’s and even thicker than it was before and Derek grabbed the backs of Stiles’s thighs, barely breaking the kiss to haul him up and slam him into the wall.

Stiles moaned into his mouth, locking his ankles at the small of Derek’s back as he rolled his hips up to meet Derek’s, the friction between their cocks nearly enough to drive Derek mad with the need to claim him. He met every thrust, slamming one hand into the wall to brace them as Stiles raked his claws down his back.

It felt incredible and he ignored the yells from outside the door. Derek couldn’t even make out words anymore before he was gone, biting at the perfect stretch of skin in front of him. The smell was indescribable and Derek lowered his head to fit his fangs back into the bloody marks he’d left. The taste sparked on his tongue and he felt fingers in his hair as Stiles arched up against his mouth, snarling at him as he ground back against Derek and pulled hard on his hair. The flash of pain in his scalp was enough to make Derek raise his head and redouble his efforts, locking eyes with Stiles as he forced him to submit and throw his head back, howling as Derek drove him over the edge. He followed seconds later, the bond singing with their mutual climax as he held them there until he couldn’t resist anymore and slid to the floor, taking Stiles with him. They ended up in a graceless heap, both still shifted.

Outside the alpha roared in fury and Derek managed a choked off laugh as he realised just how irreversibly screwed they both were. Stiles managed to lift his head and made a grumpy little sound as he buried his nose in Derek’s neck.

‘You asshole.’ He licked over the bite mark he’d made. ‘You could have at least let me get my jeans off. This is going to be as uncomfortable as fuck.’

Derek heaved a sigh and kissed his neck.

‘Shut up, Stiles.’ he said and, for once, Stiles did as he was told.
Chapter Summary

Things can only get better...maybe?

Stiles woke up with a thick head and a stale coppery taste in his mouth. It felt kind of like a hangover, but not. It was almost like he’d just been returned to his body, not that that made any sense at all.

He inhaled and the smell nearly knocked him out, thick with notes of sweat and semen and something animal that he’d learned was the base note that Derek carried. Then he clocked that he was half naked, jeans clawed near to ribbons, and wrapped around something very large, warm and furry. It was enough to wake him all the way up and he gasped and tries to sit up in shock, but was stopped by a deep rumbling growl and pinned back to the mattress by a massive black paw.

Derek.

Stiles first instinct was to flail and he did so spectacularly. His last coherent memory was Derek taking him down onto the mattress after he’d bitten him. Derek turning into a very large canid had not been on the cards, at least not for him. He managed to squirm enough that he could turn over and was greeted by a pair of very recognisable eyes in a face that regarded him with something that looked like amusement. Stiles was momentarily charmed by the fact that Derek’s eyebrows of doom translated even when he was in what was presumably wolf form. He lay absolutely still, so close that he could really appreciate all the colours in Derek’s extraordinary eyes. He had a little patch of silver fur under his chin that Stiles wanted to tug on and he was so soft, especially the fur on his undercarriage that Stiles was currently cuddling.

‘Dude.’ he breathed. ‘How the hell did you do that? I had no idea you could turn into an actual wolf.’

Derek yawned in his face, massive fangs exposed in a very pink mouth. He laid his head back down and Stiles smiled at him and lifted a hand to scratch through the thick fur on his head.

‘So that happened.’ He couldn’t stop smiling, taking in the smell permeating the room. It was thick, making him a little light headed but so good that he couldn’t help inhaling deeply. Derek chuffed in a decidedly mocking way and Stiles tugged on an ear, grinning when Derek flicked it away in annoyance.

‘You know I could get used to this.’ He rested his head on his folded arm and poked at Derek’s muzzle. ‘You and your fine as hell furry ass.’

Derek made a soft rumbling noise and nosed at him, his wet tongue dragging over the lower half of Stiles’ face, making him giggle and try to shove Derek away.

‘You’re such a sappy asshole.’ he snickered. ‘So what the hell did happen last night?’ He felt the ache in the junction of his neck and shoulder and reached up to feel where there was skin that was
raised under his fingertips in the outline of Derek’s teeth. ‘I don’t remember all that much after you bit me, but I can kind of smell that we obviously did a whole lot of something. This whole room reeks of come.’

Derek sighed in that put upon way dogs did and Stiles dug his fingers into his side, smiling as Derek actually rolled his eyes at him.

‘You going to talk to me or just be all mysterious?’ he asked, grimacing at the way Derek snorted in his face. ‘Okay fine, but you’re going to have to change back sometime. You can’t drive the Camaro like that. You need thumbs.’

Derek growls at him but Stiles was on a roll.

‘I guess Deaton will have to give me the keys. I’ll have to drive you back to the loft, maybe get you some dog food in a can?’ He laughed when Derek retaliated by sticking a very wet nose in his ear, flailing happily at him. ‘Fuck off. Just because you had your dick on my dick doesn’t mean my ears are fair game.’

He blinked in surprise because the next minute, Derek’s black fur seemed to almost melt away and his features rearranged until he’s human again, the popping noises of the bones moving making Stiles wince. Finally it was just human shaped Derek lying there next to him with a look of murderous intent on his face.

‘If you ever feed me dog food, I’ll rip your balls off.’ he threatened, rolling to his feet. Stiles went bright red when he realised that he was looking at Derek in all his naked glory, choking on his own spit a little before he spotted the mark on Derek’s shoulder. It looked like a very light scar, the skin almost silvery and Stiles knew it was from his own teeth.

‘Fuck…’ He met Derek’s green eyes, saw how they moved to the same spot on his own shoulder where it ached. ‘What did we do?’

‘Something incredibly stupid.’ Derek smelled and looked embarrassed, which surprised the hell out of him. ‘This is probably the worst fucking thing we could have done.’

‘Worse than hooking up?’ Stiles didn’t want to know. He had some vague memories after the biting but they felt like they were in the abstract. He couldn’t stop touching the mark on his skin and even as he did, he feels a deep possessiveness inside him.

‘Worse than eloping to Vegas.’ Derek said in all seriousness. ‘It’s a claiming bite. It’s used as a prelude to mating.’

‘Oh my God!’ Stiles sat bolt upright and craned his neck trying to look at his own shoulder. ‘Did you put a supernatural ring on it?’

‘Yeah.’ Derek’s nose was all scrunched up and Stiles was torn between freaking out and getting up to kiss him on it. ‘Sorry.’

‘Oh fuck.’ He put his face in his hands. ‘My dad’s going to kill me.’

‘I think we may have covered that already.’ Derek stretched the kinks out of his back and Stiles was distracted from his plight long enough to admire him. It was the first time he was getting a really good look at him, the lean lines of Derek’s body and every perfectly defined muscle shaded by the muted light coming through the window. He blushed when he gets to the trail of black hair leading from his navel down that Stiles just wanted to run his tongue along until it reached the soft line of Derek’s uncut cock. He let out a helpless little noise and Derek looked at him with a raised eyebrow.
'My eyes are up here, Stiles.' His tone could have stripped paint, but there was also a little quirk of the corners of his mouth and he didn’t smell anywhere as pissed as he sounded.

‘Fuck that.’ Stiles snorted, getting up so he was standing next to Derek. ‘How the hell are you this hot? How are you even with me?’

‘I think I am going to be asking myself that on a regular basis.’ Derek remarked in a dry tone. ‘Apparently we just fit.’

‘Damn.’ Stiles started grinning like a maniac. ‘Lucky fucking me.’

Derek opened his mouth to retort but then the clank of the door being unlocked shut them both up. Stiles looked around frantically as Deaton stuck his head in. Derek wasn’t bothered by the fact that he was standing there naked so Stiles dived for cover behind him. Deaton’s face was the picture of amusement and Derek smiled in that toothy way of his that said he was completely unrepentant while Stiles huffed and fought the urge to sink into the floor.

‘Where’s Scott?’ he asked and Deaton came into the room, arms folded as he regarded them.

‘I sent him on a coffee run.’ he replied and looked at them in a very pointed way. ‘I see the claiming bites have been taken care of.’

‘Not really part of the plan.’ Derek grumbled but Deaton shook his head.

‘On the contrary.’ He smiled at them. ‘It’s actually the best thing you could have done. Now the alpha will have no hold over Stiles because the claiming bond effectively cancels it out.’

‘Dude.’ Stiles grinned and smacked Derek in the arm. ‘That’s a win, right?’

‘It most certainly is, Mr Stilinski.’ Deaton confirmed. ‘This way we don’t have to worry about the alpha calling you out, which means you are going to be able to help Derek try and track him down without the fear that he could be used against you.’ His face turned stern. ‘That is now going to be our first priority. I know that the police and the Argent hunters will be looking as well, but I feel that there’s something not quite right with this scenario. I have never seen this happen before and it doesn’t sit well with me.’ He looked at Derek. ‘Have you been to see Peter? If the alpha is aware that you are here and has already killed Laura, it may be after him as well.’

‘Who’s Peter?’ Stiles asked and felt something take root in his chest, a disquieting sense of concern and guilt that made his stomach lurch. It took a second to realise it was coming from Derek.

‘He’s Derek’s uncle.’ Deaton explained when Derek didn’t answer. ‘He also survived the fire but he’s been in a catatonic state since it happened.’

‘I didn’t know.’ Stiles said, looking at Derek. He could feel pain in between the other emotions and his first instinct was to comfort so he put a hand on Derek’s arm, tugging him into a hug. Derek was obviously too surprised to protest but he stood stiff in Stiles arms for a few seconds before he relaxed and made a tentative movement to put his own arms around Stiles’ waist. Stiles could feel the conflict in him and tightened his hold.

‘Why are you hugging me?’ Derek whispered it in his ear.

‘Dude.’ Stiles whispered back. ‘I know how it feels.’ He wasn’t sure how he knew what to do but he let it out, the sadness he carried everywhere with him like a worn piece of clothing that had become too comfortable to let go of. He felt Derek accept it and then it was coming back, just so much more than he would ever imagine it possible for a person to carry. It overwhelmed him for a second, but
then Stiles steeled himself and bore up under it. He was an old hand at this, had done it for his dad often enough, and that was when everything felt real to him. Derek eventually pushed away from him, but it wasn’t not harsh or annoyed. Instead there was gratitude in his eyes and understanding thrumming through their connection.

The sound of Deaton clearing his throat interrupted them and the moment passed, but Stiles wanted to jump around because he felt like what had just happened was monumental.

‘I would imagine that Stiles needs to get home.’ Deaton said and Stiles nodded.

‘My dad’s probably going to be home soon.’ He looked at Deaton. ‘What time is it?’

‘Just after seven.’ Deaton walked back out and they followed him. ‘When Scott gets back you and he can leave. In the meantime, get dressed.’ He smiled. ‘I don’t think Scott would appreciate your current state of undress, Derek.’ His tone was heavy with meaning, but Stiles noticed that Derek made no move to mention how he’d shifted to a full wolf. Instead he just accepted fresh clothes from Deaton while Stiles pulled on his shirts and hoodie, sitting down to put on his sneakers and inspect the rips in his jeans. The t-shirt he was wearing thankfully covered up the bite mark, which meant he wouldn’t have to explain it to Scott.

They were fully dressed when Scott came back down the stairs, bearing coffees and a bag of what Stiles could smell were muffins. His stomach growled and Deaton smiled as he handed out the food.

‘You’ll need to eat,’ he pointed out. ‘Your body is going to need a lot more fuel.’ He turned to Derek. ‘Have you given much thought to training him?’

‘Yes.’ Derek said and that surprised Stiles, but his mouth was full of muffin (and Christ everything tasted so good this morning) so he said nothing.

‘You have?’ Scott asked with wide eyes and Derek snorted at him.

‘I really don’t have a choice, do I?’ He glared at Stiles but Stiles was quite proud of the fact that he was pretty much immune.

‘So what are we going to do?’ he asked, unable to hide his grin. ‘You going to teach me how to sniff for rabbits and pee on trees because I think I can probably kind of do that already.’ Scott snorted a laugh at this and they high fived each other while Derek gave them the ferocious eyebrows.

‘You need to take this seriously.’ he growled, intimidating even with a mouthful of muffin. ‘For now you’re going to act like a proper werewolf, even if it kills you.’

‘I think I can handle it.’ Stiles was smug. ‘Besides you can’t put a ring on it and then break it.’ He ignored the way Scott choked on his coffee and focused on giving Derek his most infuriating smile.

‘You’re not going to break, Stiles.’ Derek told him, arms folded. ‘Time we started turning you into a proper wolf.’

A capital idea.’ Deaton was smiling. ‘You can begin with sensory training and getting him to control the wolf at will. From what I’ve seen Stiles only shifts in response to the alpha and when he’s in a heightened emotional state.’ He gave Stiles a quick up and down. ‘Agility training might be a bit of stretch at the moment, even with his improved reflexes.’

‘Hey!’ Stiles was slightly outraged, even though he knew it’s a fair call.

‘Fine.’ Derek’s eyes were narrowed in amusement at his expense. ‘I’ll get on that.’
'Not today though.' Stiles snorts. ‘I don’t know about you but I really want to sleep for like twenty-four hours and we’re supposed to be having dinner with Scott and Melissa tonight.’

‘Yeah.’ Scott chimed in.

‘Fine.’ Derek huffed. ‘Tomorrow then. No arguments.’

‘Harsh, man.’ Stiles shook his head at him. ‘Now I am getting my ass home and I’m taking this nerd with me. You can come with us.’ He grinned as he was assaulted by the feeling of Derek’s supreme annoyance, grabbing Scott by the arm and taking him with him.

They left Deaton packing up and Derek followed them out to the Jeep. He leaned in Stiles’ open window and glared at him.

‘The only reason I’m letting you get away with this is so I don’t have to listen to you whine.’ he muttered and Stiles knew he had him right where he wanted him. It made him feel a little drunk on whatever this weird new feeling was and he leaned out the window and kissed Derek just because he could. Derek jolted a little and then responded, one hand resting lightly at the back of Stiles’ neck to keep him there until he’d kissed him rather more thoroughly than Stiles had anticipated. It was their first proper kiss sans werewolf face and it was stupidly good, so much so that he was actually completely breathless when Derek finally let him go.

Derek’s eyes shifted colour, the green moving into grey, and Stiles was lost, his heart thumping joyously as he remembered just what they had done. He brought up one hand and rested it where the bite mark was under Derek’s shirt and to his surprise Derek smiled at him. It was slow and almost shy but also beautiful and Stiles couldn’t help but smile back.

‘Silly sourwolf.’ he murmured and Derek turned his head and kissed the inside of his wrist.

‘Leave your window unlocked.’ he told him. ‘I’ll be over later.’

Stiles moved back from him, turning the car on and almost marinating in his happy hormones. He didn’t even notice that Scott was watching him with his mouth hanging open until they hit the first set of lights.

‘Dude.’ He sounded mildly scandalised. ‘You kissed him. Also what the hell was that with the Beyonce reference?’

‘Um.’ Stiles floundered for a second and then gave up. Even Scott wasn’t dumb enough to convince him that he just hallucinated the whole thing. ‘Yeah, Derek and I might be kind of a serious thing now.’

‘Like a make weird ass noises while you’re locked in a room together serious thing?’ Scott was grinning. ‘You know that room is not completely sound-proofed right? Dr Deaton and I could hear you. It sounded like you were trying to eat each other.’

That just made Stiles think of things that he really shouldn’t think of while driving and he started giggling like a small child. He was still sniggering when he dropped Scott off at his house. Scott said a sleepy goodbye and stumbled inside. Stiles waited until the front door closed before he started for home. The drive was thankfully empty when he got there and he charged in, galloping upstairs to shower before he dressed in a t-shirt and pyjama pants and went back downstairs. He was still starving and his first order of business was to grab the box of cereal from the cupboard and then contemplate a bowl. He wrinkled his nose in dissatisfaction at his options before finding a mixing bowl under the sink and chucking half the box into it and filling it three quarters full with milk. He
grabbed a tablespoon and merrily demolished the whole thing, belching loudly to the empty house when he’s done.

The sound of the cruiser turning into the street caught his ear and he quickly washed and dried the bowl and spoon, hiding the evidence before the car stops outside. He heard his father walk up to the house, his steps heavy like his dad was carrying a weight and his scent was sour with fatigue and a sense of worry that went beyond what he normally had and Stiles instantly knew something big had gone down.

‘Hey.’ He stood in the doorway of the kitchen, watching Noah take off his utility belt and hang it up. ‘Rough night?’

‘You could say that.’ Noah looked troubled. ‘I guess it’s going to be all around town in a couple of hours so you might as well know. There was another murder last night.’

‘Really?’ Stiles was instantly intrigued, his inner armchair detective coming out front and centre.

‘Yeah.’ Noah heaved a sigh. ‘At the school.’

‘What?!’ Now Stiles was right back to bouncing. ‘Who was it?’

‘A driver. He was found in one of the buses.’ Noah moved past him and Stiles followed him back into the kitchen, going to pour him some coffee and doctoring it with cream and sugar before he handed it to him and went to the fridge, pulling out eggs and the stash of bacon Noah had bought.

‘What happened to him?’ he asked and Noah looked at a loss.

‘We’re calling it an animal attack. The poor son of a bitch was inside one of the buses, had his whole damn throat ripped out.’ He took a sip of coffee and then gave Stiles a suspicious look. ‘And that’s all I’m telling you.’

‘Oh come on.’ Stiles whined, cracking the eggs into a bowl and whisking them with a fork. ‘You can’t hold out on me. There’s got to be some perks to being the Sheriff’s kid.’

‘Noope.’ Noah looked at the pan where the scrambled eggs were cooking. ‘It’s bad though. We’ve got the whole department coming in again. After finding Laura Hale, the mayor’s office is going to be on my ass. I’m literally eating this and going back out again so no dinner with Scott and Melissa.’ His face was guilty when he looked at Stiles. ‘I’m sorry, kid. You’re going to be on your own again tonight. I don’t suppose you can ask him and Derek if they wants to come over, stick around for a bit?’

‘Are you serious?’ Stiles was astonished. ‘You’re allowing Derek to come over while you’re not here?’

‘Well, I’m hoping that you’ll be sensible enough not to jump him all over the furniture with Scott in the room.’ Noah replied, one eyebrow cocked. ‘Melissa said that she’s probably going to go in to the hospital and I don’t want you to be here by yourself while something is running around taking bites out of people.’ He made an apologetic face, watching as Stiles dished up the eggs and bacon and grabbed the toast he’d just made and set it all down in front of him.

‘Can we get pizza?’ he asked and Noah narrowed his eyes at him.

‘Make Derek buy the pizza.’ he said through a mouthful of eggs. ‘And no funny stuff. I don’t want the three of you playing amateur detective.’
‘Got it.’ Stiles felt only slightly guilty about the fact that he and Derek had been fooling around in a full moon induced frenzy the night before and even less that he was going to spill everything the second Derek got through the door. ‘All hands will be kept above the waist and we will not leave this house.’

‘Good.’ Noah practically inhaled his breakfast, and then accepted a second cup of coffee. ‘I’m going to grab a couple of hours sleep and head back out.’

‘Okay.’ Stiles watched him get up. ‘I’ll text both of them and tell them to come over. Derek can help us with our homework.’ He grinned at the thought of forcing Derek to do calculus.

After breakfast, Stiles went to lounge on the couch, idly flicking through the channels as Noah slept upstairs and thinking back to what he could recall from the night before. He still had Derek’s scent clinging to his skin and there was nothing more he wanted than to rub himself all over him later and reassert his claim on him. He’d never had himself pegged as the possessive type but it was on full force now and Stiles wondered if it’s another facet of the wolf coming out. It made sense that it would be. He listened to the shower stop and the sound of his dad getting ready for a nap, the springs of his bed creaking softly as he got in. Stiles stared at the ceiling and thought about his mom for a bit, how she and his dad always seemed like they were made for each other. It had been almost seven years since she died, but Noah still wore his wedding ring and slept on his side of the bed and Stiles wondered about that as well, if that’s what he and Derek might be like.

That thought made him feel all warm and fuzzy, and he startled as his phone buzzed. Stiles picked it up and smiled as he read the message.

Stop it. I can feel you thinking about shit you shouldn’t be.

He snickered and tapped out a response.

Make me, sourwolf.

You’re an asshole.

Still with the asshole. You need to come up with a new schtick.

I need to come up with a way to eliminate you from the face of the planet.

Your face needs to be eliminated from the face of the planet.

You’re such a fucking child.

That made Stiles laugh out loud. He dialed Derek’s number and heard an exasperated sigh when the call was answered.

‘Your dick didn’t say that last night.’ he said and he could have sworn that he could hear Derek’s eyebrows judging him through the phone.

‘What do you want, Stiles.’ Derek grumbled. ‘I was sleeping.’

‘Liar. You were just messaging me.’ Stiles was delighted that Derek was being such a dick. ‘You were lying in bed pining for me.’

‘Werewolves don’t pine.’ Derek snorted. ‘Why aren’t you sleeping?’

‘My dad came home and told me some dude got his throat ripped out in the back of a school bus.’
Stiles said as casually as possible. ‘Sounds like our alpha.’

Derek went from grumpy to alert in second.

‘Shit.’ He was getting up, Stiles could hear it clearly. ‘Do we know who he is?’

‘Just a bus driver from school.’ he replied. ‘Got caught in the wrong place at the wrong time probably.’

‘I don’t think so.’ Derek was moving around. ‘Look, I’m coming over.’

‘Great.’ Stiles grinned. ‘That means I don’t have to invite you. Because you were. Invited that is. By my dad. Just much later, so you can go back to bed and turn around three times before you lie down and go to sleep.’

‘What?’ Now Derek sounded as suspicious as Noah had not too long ago and Stiles rolled his eyes at the realisation that he might be not-dating his father. He also noticed that Derek has completely ignored the dog joke. ‘Why did he do that?’

‘Because he doesn’t want me to be alone and so inviting my sort-of boyfriend makes him feel better. He’s working flat out so he won’t be home until tomorrow again.’ he explained and then bites back a giggle at the splutter from the other side. ‘If it makes you feel any better, Scott’s been invited as well.’

‘He said that?’ Derek eventually asked, sounding horribly uncertain. ‘He called me...you know. That.’

‘That?’ Stiles laughed. ‘Dude, you can say the word boyfriend. I mean, you kind of laid a claiming bite on my ass, so I think boyfriend is not that far off the mark.’

‘It wasn’t on your ass, dipshit.’ There was a little huff on the other side, but Stiles could feel the warm glow filling him through the bond. It was almost as if Derek was happy, perish the thought.

‘I can’t help it your aim is shitty.’ He snickered, admitting that he was probably going to hell for baiting the werewolf. One way trip, all expenses paid.

Derek growled. It vibrated through the phone and Stiles’ stomach lurched as his body responds automatically, heat surging in his chest and his claws popping out. He growled back and then smiled when he felt the answering rush of heat between them.

‘So good thing?’ he asked and he could hear Derek smiling.

‘Yeah.’ He managed to make it sound like a huge concession, but Stiles knew he was totally fronting. ‘I guess it’s okay.’

‘Cool.’ Stiles was all smiles. ‘So come over in a couple of hours, and we can get pizza and after Scott inevitably passes out in a food coma maybe we make out on the couch.’

‘Christ.’ Derek huffed. ‘I can’t believe I’m dating a high schooler.’

‘Shut up.’ Stiles said happily and then yawned. ‘I need to sleep. I feel like I got thrown into a wall. Oh yeah that’s right, I did get thrown into a wall.’ He cackled and hung up on Derek’s indignant protestations before trudging upstairs, his own fatigue now well embedded. He got to his room and fell face first into his bed, asleep before he even had a chance to think.
On the other side of the phone, Derek put one hand behind his head and smiled at the ceiling, knowing he was acting like a stupid hormone ridden teenager and, for the first time in what feels like forever, not actually caring.

It was liberating, feeling something so simple as his attraction to Stiles. Derek hadn’t allowed himself this since the fire, and he felt like his whole perspective on life has been turned on its head by a pair of warm amber eyes and a smart mouth. It was a good feeling though, and he wallowed in it and contemplated what had happened the night before.

The full shift had been completely unexpected. Laura had been able to do it, just like their mother but Derek had always thought he’d never be able to. Talia had always said that it took balance and harmony with one’s wolf to achieve and the fact that he’d managed to do it completely unconsciously after biting Stiles had been a shock to put it mildly. By then Stiles had been passed out and Derek had bounced around the cell for a few minutes, simply delighting in how at peace he felt in his new form. Then he’d curled up around Stiles and gone to sleep.

Deaton had given him a strange look when he’d left and Derek wondered if he’d guessed what had happened in the room. Either way, he was going to keep it quiet for a while. He flopped back down on the bed after getting some water, turning over until he was comfortable and smirking to himself at what Stiles has said about turning around three times before lying down.

It’s only much later that he woke up, stretching and feeling the pleasant sensation of a good rest and the way his body was re-energised. It had been a long time since he’d woken up with something other than a sense of despair and it was nice.

Derek took a long leisurely shower, the slipslide of his hands over his own body making him think of Stiles and not in a particularly PG way either. He closed his eyes and brought back the sounds and smells, the stickiness of semen in his jeans and the way Stiles’ eyes flashed gold at him when he came, his soft panting turning into harsh moans. Derek let himself want, jerking off with measured strokes that kept him on edge until he fell over with abandon, his growls echoing off the tiles.

There was a blinking light on his cell when he got out the shower, Stiles begging for ice cream as well as pizza, and Derek smiled because he knows he would give into whatever Stiles wanted. It was in wolves to provide for their mates and now he and Stiles were skipping around that and although the consummation may never happen and Stiles might go back to being human, he could have this for whatever time they had.

He got dressed and took the Camaro past a place he hadn’t been to in years. It was where his family had gone every weekend after the kids’ various sports games on a Saturday. Derek stopped outside and looked at the front, seeing how it hadn’t changed at all in the time he’d been gone. There was a knot in his stomach, and he sat there for far longer than he should, memories that he had suppressed coming back in waves. The smell of his pack, the sound of his mother’s voice. His father’s terrible dad jokes and the way he and Laura would roll their eyes at each other. Peter’s sharp smile, Cora kicking him in the shins under the table as cousins ran between tables of adults.

It hurt, but now it felt like it was a pain he could live with if he had a new pack. Noah wasn’t a wolf, but he had an alpha’s instincts and Derek would be happy to be part of what he offered.

He got out and went inside, half expecting to be disappointed but the smells were the same and he ordered his favourite, plus two Hawaiians for Stiles and Scott with extra hot wings on the side. He bought four bottles of soda to go with it from the store down the road while he was waiting, along with two pints of ice cream, and then went back to pick up the food.
He arrived at Stiles’ house and the door opened before he even got to the sidewalk. It was still light enough out to see that he obviously woken him. He was wearing pyjama pants that were covered in tiny white stormtrooper helmets and a faded red t-shirt, rubbing his eyes as he stood on one foot in the doorway, the other resting at the back of his calf, sleep rumpled. Derek could smell him from where he stood, warm and soft and enchantingly endearing as he blinked at him with his mouth curling into a pleased smile and scenting the food with his nose in the air like a real wolf. Derek felt a pull in his chest and let himself get reeled in towards him.

‘My hero.’ Stiles smirked and held out his hand for the pizza boxes. ‘Scott’s on the way over.’

Derek unloaded them into his hands and followed him in, waiting until Stiles had set them down on the kitchen table before doing the same with the other bags and then getting hold of him around the waist and hauling him up so his ass was on the counter. Stiles made a surprised noise that Derek stifled with his mouth, licking insistently until Stiles opened up for him. It was wet and messy but Derek wanted and he was going to take as much as he’s allowed. He cupped Stiles’ face and pressed in deeper, sweeping his tongue through his mouth until Stiles was hard in his pants and arching up against him with mindless little whines through his nose. It was so sweet and Derek had to forcibly pull himself back, utterly gratified by the little noise of disappointment he got.

‘Pizza’s getting cold and you need to get dressed before Scott gets here.’ He smiled evilly and backed off, and Stiles gave him a furious look, eyes flashing gold and fangs elongating involuntarily.

‘It can wait and Scott has seen me in a whole lot worse than my pjs.’ he grumbled, clawed hands fisted in Derek’s shirt. ‘Get the fuck back here.’

Derek laughed and gently nosed at him before loosening his hands, mindful not to let Stiles rip his shirt.

‘First lesson in being a competent werewolf.’ he said. ‘Self-control.’

‘Oh fuck you, Hale.’ Stiles sniped with his eyes still flashing, his shoulders slumping when Derek escaped and went over to the table. ‘You’re a fucking cock tease.’

‘You’re only just figuring that out?’ Derek laughed and opened the box with the hot wings. ‘Come on, go get dressed so we can eat.’

‘Sadistic asshole.’ Stile slid off the counter, giving his erect cock a sad look even as he finally calmed down enough that his face goes back to human. ‘What a waste.’

‘You’ll live.’ Derek smiled but when Stiles crowded up next to him, he dropped a kiss on his head and flashed his eyes in turn at him, breathing deep as Stiles’ green-grass scent turned syrupy sweet with happiness. He sent him upstairs with a gentle smack on the ass, Stiles growling as he stomped upstairs. Just in time as well, because as his feet hit the top the doorbell rang and Derek went to answer it. Scott was on the front step and he was grinning like a lunatic.

‘Dude.’ He nearly fell in the door. ‘Did Stiles tell you about the bus driver?’

‘I probably knew before you did.’ Derek said. ‘I’m amazed that he hasn’t dragged us out the door yet.’

Scott snickered and headed straight for the kitchen, nose twitching. Derek tried to imagine what it might have been like if he’d been the one bitten and shuddered at the thought. He was busy raiding on of the boxes as Stiles came back down, now dressed but still barefoot.

‘Here’s your abomination.’ Derek grabbed his box and Stiles accepted his pizza with glee, grabbing
one of the containers of hot wings and sticking a bottle of soda under his arm.

‘What do you want to watch?’ His voice drifted back as Derek collected napkins and follows with his own food, shaking his head at the sight of Scott trying to balance everything else in his arms.

‘What have you got?’ he asked and Stiles snorts.

‘What don’t I have?’ He was on the floor behind the coffee table and Derek sits on the couch. Scott got the armchair and Stiles moved to sit between Derek’s knees.

‘That one.’ He had his laptop has open and Netflix up. Derek nudged him with a foot when he spotted something on the menu.

‘Seriously?’ Stiles was grinning. ‘You like that shit?’

‘Shut up and put it on.’ Derek ordered and the credits rolled up. Scott was already elbow deep in his pizza.

They ate in silence, all of them focused on the food. There was a moment when Derek saw Stiles doing illegal things to the neck of the bottle of soda and kicked him, but apart from that it was almost peaceful. Stiles leaned back against his legs when he was done and picked up a steady commentary on the film with Scott chiming in.

After the first one, Derek went to get the ice cream and they ate it right out the container with spoons. Stiles was now on the couch next to him so they could share, his feet tucked under himself and leaning into Derek’s side. It was instinct to put an arm around him when they were finished and Stiles sank into the hold happily, making a soft rumbling noise that Derek didn’t think he’s even aware of if Scott’s astonished look was anything to judge by. It made his own wolf curl up, sated and sleepy, and he scratched a hand through Stiles’ hair, noting how much it had grown in only a week.

‘I need to get it cut.’ Stiles remarked, looking at him. ‘Is that a werewolf thing?’

‘Yeah.’ Derek tugged on the stands gently. ‘It grows like grass.’ He smiled when he heard Stiles heart pick up. ‘You like that?’

‘I’m finding out I like all kinds of things.’ Stiles looks up at him, the upside down angle making him look adorably odd.

‘You guys are so gross.’ Scott mumbled through a mouthful of Phish Food.

‘Ass.’ Stiles retorted. ‘Like you and Allison are any better.’ He did get up though and Derek followed suit as they went into the kitchen. He watched Stiles throw the containers in the trash and then he was back, arms around Derek’s waist. His warm brown eyes were guileless when he nudged at him with the tip of his upturned nose. It reminded Derek just how young he was and he sighed and turned serious.

‘Last night got out of hand.’ he said as gently as he could. ‘Both of us lost it. That’s not going to be the case from here on out. There’s going to be no sex.’

‘Okay.’ Stiles said. ‘I can do that. But making out is okay? Maybe hands?’

‘We’ll see.’ Derek returned the nuzzle. ‘Your dad doesn’t seem to mind us being together, but we need to follow the rules.’

‘He was eight years older than my mom.’ Stiles said with a grin. ‘My grandparents hated him when
they first got together.’ His expression was wistful. ‘My mom would have probably grilled you though.’

‘Moms are supposed to do that.’ Derek thought about Talia, then checked his watch. ‘It’s after nine. Guess we should go have a look at that bus. Any idea where it will be?’

‘Probably at the police depot where they keep the towed cars.’ Stiles said. ‘They’ll need to process it, if they haven’t already.’

‘Okay.’ Derek considered their options. ‘I’ll need you to go in there with me and Scott can be lookout. You might be able to pick up something that I can’t seeing as you have a connection with the alpha.’

‘What are we going to do?’ Stiles’ eyes were bright with excitement.

‘Try and figure out what we’re dealing with.’ Derek explained. ‘There’ll also be a much better chance of getting the alpha’s scent in the bus.’

‘Scott!’ Stiles yelled and he appeared like magic in the doorway. ‘We’re going over to the depot.’

‘Do I have to?’ Scott looked sceptical.

‘Unless you want to go and cry under Allison’s window.’ Stiles snickered and turned to Derek. ‘He wanted to go over to Allison’s after my dad cancelled tonight but her dad got kind of freaked out about the alpha and enforced the curfew.’ He pulled a face. ‘Guess he’ll be out trying to hunt it.’

‘I would say that’s a safe bet.’ Derek thought about what the Hunters would be doing. ‘They’ll probably be sweeping the streets. We’ll need to be careful we don’t run into them.’

‘Or my dad.’ Stiles said. ‘We should take your car. If anyone spots the Jeep, I’m toast.’

‘Like I’d get in your deathtrap anyway.’ Derek snorted but he knew that Stiles was right. He was sharp and thought in a far more strategic way than his outward appearance of being chaos personified would suggest. ‘And we’re in no danger of breaking down in the Camaro.’

‘Hey!’ Stiles sounded hurt. ‘That Jeep is the best goddamn car in town buddy. And don’t let me catch you saying anything that might hurt Roscoe’s feelings.’

‘Roscoe?’ Derek couldn’t help but grin at the ridiculous name.

‘He was my mom’s.’ Stiles was now looking away and Derek could smell the change in his mood, the bitter note of sadness. ‘It’s not like my dad could afford to buy me a new car when I got my license.’

Now that suddenly made a lot more sense and Derek felt shit for making fun of something he understood all too well. Ignoring Scott, he backed Stiles up against the counter and sighed as he put his arms around him. It cost a lot to open himself up like this but this boy had a way of getting under his skin. Stiles stiffened at the gesture and then his own arms came up, hesitant as he hugged Derek back. Derek stuck his nose in his soft brown hair and inhaled, Stiles scent rolling over him.

‘The Camaro was my dad’s.’ He swallowed hard, fighting back the feelings he normally pretended don’t exist. ‘Laura took it when we left. I get needing a connection.’

‘Yeah?’ Stiles’ voice was small, a lost child’s voice. He shrugged as Derek let him go, eyes suspiciously bright. ‘It’s just a thing, but it makes me feel like she’s not all gone.’
'Yeah.' Derek thought about the phantom scents in the Camaro, the hint of his dad’s aftershave that still clung to the leather jacket Derek wore like a second skin in spite of the fact that he’d never quite grown into it. He stepped back, now embarrassed at this show of emotion but Stiles caught him by the shirt and then he was back in Derek’s space, nose in Derek’s neck as instinct took over and Derek accepted it, lowering his own to the soft stretch of skin just above the collar of Stiles’ t-shirt. ‘Go put your damn shoes on so we can go.’

‘Okay.’ Stiles bounded off and left Derek alone with Scott. He was surprised to see Scott’s normally open face set in watchfulness.

‘He really likes you.’ he said. ‘So make sure you don’t do anything that would require me to kick your ass.’

‘It’s cute that you think you could.’ Derek retorted. ‘And that talk was a lot scarier coming from the Sheriff.’

‘Whatever dude.’ Scott was clearly doing his best Eastwood impersonation. ‘Just putting it out there.’ He turned and left the kitchen, thumping up the stairs. Derek shook his head at him and went into the living room. He moved around, looking at the pictures that showed Stiles and Noah while he waited, noticing that there was only one of them with Stiles’ mother. She and Noah looked like they were very happy, the two of them flanking Stiles in a Little League uniform and looking about eight or nine. He wondered about that, whether it was the last photograph of her before she got sick. Stiles looked like her, with her dark hair and eyes and sweet smile and the same tilt to the tip of his nose. He picked up the frame and studied the picture. He’d never given much thought to the fact that Stiles’ mother had died, but it would have had to have been the same year his own family did.

‘Hey.’ Stiles was back, now dressed in his red hoodie. ‘Scott’s got a nervous bladder so he’s gone to pee before we go.’ He moved to stand next to him, taking the frame and Derek smelled the sadness creep back in, seeing how Stiles’ eyes fixed on his mother as he looked at the picture.

‘Do you have any pictures left?’ he asked. ‘After the fire?’ His simple curiosity mitigated the question and he found himself taking out his wallet from his back pocket. The picture had been taken just before Paige. It was a late summer day, his family all in the frame. His mother and father were at the back and he was in front of his dad, who had one arm looped around his neck. He was the only boy and they had been close. Cora was in Talia’s arms and Laura on her other side, leaning in with her head resting against Talia’s shoulder.

Derek looks at them all, happy and smiling and close as pack always is. Then he hands the picture to Stiles, taking the frame in exchange and putting it down.

‘You all look really happy.’ Stiles says. His voice is wistful. ‘You had siblings. I always wanted someone else.’ Then he looks up, horrified at what he said. ‘God, I’m sorry.’

Derek took the picture back and looked at the faces he still remembered so well.

‘It’s okay. We were happy.’ He put the picture back gently. ‘We were close. I mean, they pissed me off sometimes but I loved them.’ He could feel his control slipping and reels it back in. ‘We should go.’

Stiles hand landed on his arm.

‘You got me now.’ he said, earnestness in every word. ‘And my dad. We’re not much but you can have us if you want.’
Derek looked at him, the way his doe eyes were shining. He gave Stiles a light cuff at the back of the head and got a smile.

‘Yeah?’ he asked, trying to sound like that wasn’t the best thing he’d heard since he got back to this shitty town. ‘You want me in your pack?’

‘Fuck yeah.’ Stiles replied and kissed him, still a little hesitant. Derek let him, wrapping an arm around his waist and showing him how it was done until Scott came in and made vomiting noises.

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They drove over to the depot. It was dark but when they got around the back, there were lights on in the fenced off area. Stiles exchanged a look with Scott when they got out the Camaro.

‘Shit.’ Scott wrinkled his nose. ‘This is not good. If we get caught we’re going to be grounded forever.’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles had it even worse. He could smell the blood, and something murkier that he had the awful suspicion is somebody’s insides. It was a red sort of smell and he watched Derek lift his head and scent the air, not even hiding the wolf inside him.

‘Can you smell that?’ he asked Stiles and he frowned and did the same, not missing the look Scott was giving him as he drew the air in through his nose and mouth, picking up that weird animal smell underneath the overwhelming stink of bodily fluids. It was the same smell from the woods, the edges sharp with an almost chemical tang.

‘The alpha?’ He looked at Derek, who nodded and stalked over to the chain link fence. Stiles looked over at Scott, who shrugged and they followed him to the barrier and looked through. The yellow bus was at the back and Stiles frowned.

‘I’m surprised they haven’t locked it inside. Good luck for us I suppose.’ He gives Derek a look, feeling slightly queasy. ‘We’re not going to touch anything, right?’

‘No, Stiles.’ Derek’s snark was cutting. ‘I’m hoping we’re not a complete idiots.’

‘Blow me.’ Stiles snorted and turned to Scott. ‘Give us the signal if anyone comes.’

‘No problem.’ Scott looked immensely pleased that he didn’t have to go and look as well. Derek rolled his eyes at them and took a flying leap, catching the wire and levering himself up and over in a showy move that saw him vaulting over effortlessly and landing on the other side without a single sound.

‘Show off.’ Stiles muttered and made his own ascent, far slower than Derek. He got to the top and then jumped to the ground a good ten feet below, landing easily if not soundlessly even if he flailed a little when he did.

Derek had his hands in his pocket, eyebrows doing an expectant dance as Stiles straightened up, heaving a sigh and grabbing him by the collar before dragging him off to the bus in question. Stiles yelped and managed to get his feet under him, trotting to keep up. They moved around the vehicle and the smell was so thick it was almost tangible. Stiles’ nose twitched and his lips curled back automatically. The smell was getting right up his nose and Derek was watching him intently.

‘Well?’ he asked and Stiles shook his head.

‘Nothing yet.’ They both looked at the bus. ‘Oh man. Really?’
‘Don’t be such a baby.’ Derek growled but Stiles could feel his unease. Without even thinking, he moved in closer to him and was gratified when Derek stepped into his space with a reassuring rumble that calmed him down instantly. He rubbed his face on Derek’s shoulder, the leather creaking.

‘You first.’ he mumbled. ‘You’re bigger.’

‘Fuck that shit.’ Derek responded, surprising him. ‘You’re almost as tall as I am.’

‘Yeah, but you’re like a foot wider.’ Stiles protested. He jumped when Derek linked their fingers together.

‘Come on.’ He tugged at Stiles hand, swallowing noisily. ‘Together.’

‘Ugh.’ Stiles let himself be towed. ‘Fine. But if it’s in there, I’m tripping you and running like hell.’

‘Funny.’ Derek muttered as they got into the bus. The air inside reeked and they both fell back under the assault on their noses.

‘Fuck.’ Stiles swallowed back a wave of nausea. ‘Man, that is gross.’ He raised a hand as if to ward off the smell. ‘What the hell did it do?’

‘Ripped whoever it was to pieces.’ Derek was moving forward, but Stiles knew he was reluctant. He hung back a few seconds and Derek glared at him over his shoulder. ‘Get your ass up here and help me.’

‘Oh God.’ Stiles gritted his teeth and moved, his sneakers squeaking on something that felt suspiciously tacky. ‘Man, I’m so going to puke.’

‘Hey.’ Derek raised his eyebrows at him. ‘Snap out of it. I need you to focus.’

‘Christ, okay.’ Stiles flailed a hand at him, trying not to breathe too deeply. ‘What the hell am I supposed to do?’

‘Go look.’ Derek said like he thought Stiles was being an idiot, shoving him past him and towards the back of the bus before moving down the aisle after him. The smell intensified and when they got to the final rows, the dark shiny patches coating the floor and seats were all too noticeable.

‘Oh that is disgusting.’ Stiles recoiled and backed up into Derek. ‘Why are we doing this again?’

‘Jesus, Stiles.’ Derek lost patience and pushed him out the way. There was a brief tangle as he tried to get past and then he was sniffing around and Stiles really couldn’t get over the fact that that was a literal statement.

The pain came out of nowhere and was so great it made him double over, eyes igniting and claws extending as his mouth flooded with saliva that dripped out over his fangs. The images flashing in front of his eyes were worse though and his vision bled red as he panted for air.

The man was terrified, screaming for help before he was cornered and then a hand rose, massive claws glinting as it came down to rip out the man’s throat spraying blood everywhere. Stiles could almost feel it hitting his face and then there was nothing but the fetid smell of the man’s belly being opened up as the alpha attacked him in a frenzy.

‘Stiles!’ The shout snapped him out of his panic, Derek’s hands tight around his wrists as he shook him. His eyes were electric blue in the dark interior and his voice is pitched higher than normal. His
grip tightened when Stiles managed to focus on him for all of two seconds before he twisted free and bolted for the door of the bus. He fell out the door and hurled his guts onto the ground, still doubled over when he felt Derek behind him. Concern and worry permeated their connection and a hand comes down on his back, rubbing gently.

‘It’s okay.’ Derek’s low growl was soothing. ‘It’s a lot.’

Stiles braced himself on his knees, spitting the foul taste out of his mouth.

‘Shit.’ he muttered. ‘That was stupid.’

‘It’s okay.’ Derek repeated. ‘We’ll get rid of it. What did you see?’

‘I saw it ripping that dude to pieces.’ Stiles spat again and then wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, wrinkling his nose at the smell. ‘Christ, that was fucking awful.’

‘Go back to Scott.’ Derek said. ‘I’ll take care of this.’ He was already looking around and then walked off. Stiles saw that he’s headed to the back of the building that make up one side of the depot so he dragged himself over to the fence and saw Scott standing there, his face stricken.

‘You okay?’ He grimaced. ‘I heard you puking.’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles started climbing back over the fence. This time the drop jolted his stomach but he recovered quickly. The sound of water drifted over and he realised that Derek had got a hose and was washing down the tarmac where he had thrown up and he bent over again, fighting the nausea.

‘You need to sit down?’ Scott was hovering over him.

‘No, I’m good.’ Stiles stood straight and looked at the lot. ‘I just want to go home.’

Derek was back a minute later, jogging across to the fence and vaulting over.

‘I went back in.’ he said. ‘I’ve picked up the scent.’ He put a hand to Stiles’ neck, warm and comforting. ‘Go home. I got this.’

‘You’re going to track him?’ he asked and Derek nodded.

‘Yeah.’ He gave Stiles a long look. ‘Stay inside and be safe. I’ll call you if I find anything.’ He took out his keys and handed them to Stiles.

‘You’ll be careful, right?’ Stiles whined, not caring that Scott was now staring at him in astonishment. Derek held his gaze and his expression softened.

‘I’ll be okay. Go home, Stiles.’ He leaned in to touch his forehead to Stiles’ before taking off, running for the trees and blending into the dark.

The ride back to Scott’s was quiet, even with the excitement of getting to drive the Camaro, and they exchanged brief goodbyes when they got there. There wasn’t much to say and when Stiles pulled the Camaro in next to his Jeep, he realised that his stomach was knotted and not just because of the incident in the bus. He reached out through the bond and got a ghost of a touch back.

He was all too happy to get himself up to the front door, unlocking it and leaning back against it when he was inside. He let out a long breath, and started the seemingly endless walk to the stairs, exhausted by everything that had happened in the past two nights finally coming to a head. All he wanted was his bed and maybe a warm werewolf to keep him company.
He climbed the stairs, his head buzzing with all the things he was dealing with and he didn’t notice anything wrong until he was at the top and looking down the hallway. It was dark at the end where the door to his father’s bedroom stood open. A prickle went down his spine as he caught the smell of something that shouldn’t be there. Two red eyes gleamed in the darkness and the space filled with a deep growl, completely feral and devoid of anything even remotely human.

Stiles stood frozen to the spot, his heart hammering up to levels that would probably have seen him keeling over as a human. His every instinct screamed at him to run but this was his house and he stood his ground, even as he knew that it was probably the stupidest thing he could do. The alpha stepped forward, coming into the half light that was coming through the open doorways and Stiles could really see how fucking huge it was, its twisted shape and gnarled claws scratching on the floorboards as it started to stalk him. It growled angrily, the sound reverberating through the space between them. Stiles wanted to drop to the floor and present his belly in submission, something his mind was railing against. It was that or run, which seemed to be the most intelligent choice at this particular moment.

Instead he braced himself, shoveing his panic aside as he shifted and roared in anger and fear and disbelief that this thing had invaded his home. The sound that came out was almost as loud as the alpha’s challenge and surprised the shit out of him. The alpha came up short and for a second Stiles could swear he saw disbelief cross its face.

It roared again and this time it was close enough that Stiles got a blast of hot foul breath and felt its drool spatter across his skin. He grimaced, knowing he was probably supremely stupid for letting it get that close to begin with. He stumbled back and tripped over his own feet, ending up on his ass and scrabbling to get away.

That all fell away though when the alpha snarled and stopped at the sound of something that made Stiles’ blood run cold in terror.

‘Dad.’ He breathed the word, listening as the cruiser pulled up outside and then cut out. There was no way he could let this thing get his dad, not if he could help it. The sound of the car door closing caught the alpha’s attention it stilled, one giant paw lifted in a stance that was remarkably dog like.

It was enough to give Stiles the time he needed to scramble to his feet and bolt back down the stairs. He was still shifted, but he didn’t even think about that as he threw himself into the hallway, skidding to a stop when he saw Noah in the doorway about to hang up his jacket. His father’s face screwed up the same way his did when something confused him and then he was flinching in shock, hand immediately going to his sidearm.

‘Stiles?’ His voice was soft and laced through with desperate fear.

Stiles met his eyes, knowing what he must look like before the moment was shattered by the alpha barrelling down after him. He couldn’t stay, couldn’t let it get his dad and he ran through the kitchen, not stopping for anything. He shouldered through the back door and felt it break under his charge. The sound of shots and a bellow of pain followed before red eyes appeared behind him, the alpha chasing him out the house and across the yard. Stiles took off, hurdling the back fence easily before running into the trees where there was nothing but woods behind them.

As he ran, he tried to think what he should do but the only instinct he had was to get the alpha far from his house and the only family he had left. It was right behind him, it’s deep panting breaths and the thump as it rebounded off of trees loud in his ears.

There was light through the trees and Stiles veered away, knowing that meant houses on the other side. It was a bad move because the alpha anticipated his path. Stiles felt searing pain through his
side as he went flying through the air and hit a tree, falling to the ground in a heap. It was agonising but he clutched at the rips in his side made by the alpha’s claws and tried to stagger to his feet. The alpha was only a few feet from him, fangs glinting as it lowers its head and prepares to charge.

Stiles squeezes his eyes shut, waiting for the end.

Another roar tore through the night and jolted him back into reality. He knew that voice, his entire soul filling up with hope and happiness and relief. It was Derek and Derek would save him.

The alpha howled and wheeled to face its new attacker as Derek flew right out of nowhere, eyes blazing blue and fangs bared as he landed on the alphas back. He sank the claws of both hands into its sides, growling and snarling and biting all at once. The alpha snapped at him, trying to twist enough to throw him off but Derek hung on like a burr. Stiles could feel how furious he was through the connection between them and it was enough to get him on his feet and throwing himself at the alpha too, wanting nothing more than to take it down and protect Derek just as he was protecting him. He landed a solid hit, his claws sinking into the alpha’s shoulder and ducking as it swung its massive head back around to retaliate.

In the fray, Derek was thrown off. He landed and rolled to his feet in one fluid motion and then he was back. They took turns to duck and claw and strike at the alpha, almost like a dance. Stiles could feel when he was supposed to move by feeding off the feelings he was getting from Derek.

The alpha landed a lucky blow, and Derek howled in pain, grabbing at his stomach. There was dark soaking through his t-shirt and Stiles smelled blood, going into a frenzy and ignoring the pain he was in, giving it everything he had. He slid under the alpha’s neck to pop up on the other side and crouch protectively over Derek, snarling at it as he protected him. The alpha retreated a step and then reared up, bellowing as it prepared to strike. That was when the shot rang out and it howled in pain, an explosion of fur and meat from its shoulder misting the air.

Stiles dropped to his knees, grabbing at Derek and trying to haul him away. He looked to the source of the shots, heart filling when he saw his dad standing there with the police issue shotgun raised as he took aim again and shot, pumping the reload and firing again and again until the alpha yowled in agony. Just as quickly as it started, the fight was over as it turned and fled into the trees.

Noah lowered the shotgun and watched it go. Stiles fell back on his ass, arms around Derek as he pulled him close. He whined, all his instincts on go as he nuzzled his face, rubbing their cheeks together. Derek’s hand came up to hold on tight and he growled in response as he tried to soothe Stiles and he relaxed a tiny bit, petting at Derek’s hair and processing what had just happened.

‘Stiles?’ His father’s voice made him look up. Noah had moved closer and he was staring at the two of them like they had grown an extra head each.

‘So you know that night you were looking for Laura in the woods?’ His voice was shaky even as he shifted back enough to talk, his eyes still gold. ‘I maybe went out to look as well and got bitten by an alpha werewolf. Derek’s been tracking it because we’re pretty sure it killed her. Derek’s also a werewolf but he’s the good kind and he’s been helping me.’ He stopped to breathe.

Noah frowned and then shook his head, trying to comprehend what he’d just been told.

‘What the fuck?’ He was clearly at a loss. ‘What the fucking fuck, Stiles?’

Stiles winced. He knew that voice.

‘It makes more sense when you hear the whole story.’ he offered. ‘Also we’re both kind of hurt so
maybe we can do this back at the house?’

That immediately spurred Noah to action and he hoisted Derek up and then gaped at the obvious wounds in his belly. He looked at Stiles next, going white enough to see even in the dark.

‘Shit.’ He grabbed Stiles by the arm. ‘He got you?’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles felt the pain now that his adrenaline was subsiding. ‘It’ll be okay though.’ He gave Noah a wan smile. ‘Werewolf powers are pretty useful.’

‘Nothing you’ve just told me makes a lick of sense.’ Noah muttered, bracing Derek against his shoulder and goggling when he made the mistake of looking down. ‘Jesus Christ, son. Are those your goddamn insides?’

‘It’s okay.’ Derek rasped. ‘I’ll heal. We need to get out of the trees in case it comes back.’

‘Okay.’ Noah agreed. ‘But then we’re sitting the fuck down and you’re telling me everything. From the beginning, no omissions or alterations. Got it?’

‘Deal.’ Stiles replied and helped him drag Derek back into the trees. They went as slow as possible, Derek trying to walk as best he could and still hold whatever the hell was bulging through his tattered shirt from inside his stomach. Stiles was pretty sure it wasn’t good and he had to bite back an urge to hurl again.

‘Dude.’ He had Derek’s other arm over his shoulders so he couldn’t even hold his nose. ‘You smell like shit.’

‘It’s the blood.’ Derek muttered. ‘Fuck, he really went deep.’

‘We need to get you to a hospital.’ Noah was insistent but Derek shook his head.

‘I’ll be fine.’ He was pasty and shaking now, barely able to speak. ‘I just need to get it cleaned up and bandaged and my body will take care of the rest.’

Stiles looked over his head, meeting Noah’s eyes as they shared an exasperated look.

‘Can we at least call Deaton?’ he asked and Derek growled and nodded.

‘Deaton?’ Noah asked. ‘The vet? He knows about this? How?’

‘It’s a long story.’ Stiles told him.

‘Don’t worry, I’ll make sure we have time.’ Noah’s eyes were piercing and Stiles knew he was in deep shit so he just put his head down and helped carry Derek to the fence that bordered their yard. They heaved him over and crossed the lawn to the back door, which was shattered and hanging off its hinges.

‘Ah.’ Stiles made a face. ‘Sorry about that.’

‘It’s coming out of your allowance.’ Noah replied and together they wedged Derek through the door and into the kitchen where they lowered him into a chair. ‘You sit and keep an eye on him. I’m going to get the first aid kit.’ This was directed at Stiles.

‘Get the one from the cruiser.’ he calls after Noah and then slumps in his own chair. Noah went, muttering about werewolves and crazy kids and how he was probably going insane and Stiles grinned. His dad was taking it far better than he thought he would. He looked across at Derek,
getting the eyebrows. It was impressive that Derek could manage that much annoyance considering his stomach was ripped open.

‘So that was fun,’ he grinds out and Stiles snickered in spite of himself.

‘I vote we tell him everything.’ he said. ‘Let’s start with the fire and go from there.’

‘Whatever.’ Derek huffed and closed his eyes. ‘He’s your father.’

‘Fuck off.’ Stiles grinned and kicked Derek’s foot. ‘Hey, you came to save me. Like Superman.’

‘I heard you roar.’ Derek’s eyes stayed closed. ‘I knew that you’d probably do something stupid, so I came to get your ass out of trouble.’

‘Shut up, you love my ass.’ Stiles smirked at the ghost of a smile hovering at the corners of Derek’s mouth.

‘Maybe.’ he replied. ‘Just a tiny bit.’

Stiles was still sniggering when Noah got back, arms full of first aid kit. He dumped it on the table and went to get the kitchen scissors, cutting Derek’s shirt away. Stiles started digging supplies out of the kit.

‘I guess we should probably explain.’ he said and Noah gave him an exasperated look.

‘Let me do this first.’ he said. ‘Then you can spill your guts.’ He caught what he said and gave Derek an apologetic look. ‘Sorry. That was in bad taste.’

‘It’s okay.’ Derek wheezed. ‘I’m starting to think that foot in mouth disease runs in the family.’

‘He’s got us there.’ Stiles was delighted at the Derek’s snarky tone.

‘Shut the fuck up and help me.’ Noah grumbled but it was too late. Stiles couldn’t help it and he laughed out loud and reached for Derek’s hand, his heart filling when Derek squeezed back.
Chapter Summary

Now the Sheriff is in the know.

‘So me get this straight.’ Noah was pinching the bridge of his nose. ‘The Hales were all werewolves. The Argents are hunters, or people that kill werewolves. They are only supposed to do this when a werewolf is rogue.’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles had his confession face on and it was all scrunched up and if Derek wasn’t in so much pain he’d actually be smiling at it.

‘But then along came Kate Argent, who was not such a good hunter. She seduced Derek when he was sixteen, torched the Hale house and then took off.’ Noah put his hand down and looked at Derek.

‘Yes, sir.’ he confirmed, wincing at the horrible shiver across the thin skin of his stomach where his wounds were slowly knitting together.

‘Fast forward six years, we have Laura coming back from New York because she suspects the fire wasn’t an accident. Something kills her and bites you.’ Noah cocked a finger at his son.

‘Alpha werewolf.’ Stiles said doing the same thing, and Derek had to bite back a wheeze because they were so similar in mannerism it was eerie. ‘Then it bites me out in the woods.’

‘The woods I specifically told you to stay out of.’ Noah’s blue eyes were narrowed.

‘That is technically correct.’ Stiles hedged. ‘Anyway I get attacked, Derek fends it off and hey presto werewolf me.’

‘Christ.’ Noah dragged both hands through his hair. ‘This is fucking insane.’ He looked back at Derek. ‘So Deaton falls into this how exactly?’

‘He was my family’s emissary.’ Derek replied. ‘They’re like intermediaries between the human world and the supernatural one.’

‘So he would know if shit was going down around here, wouldn’t he?’ Noah’s voice was stern and Derek nodded.

‘You said he knew more than he was telling?’ He was curious about that. Noah caught the question and sighed.

‘Things have been happening around here that haven’t been too kosher.’ He pushed away from the counter. ‘Before you came back we got a call about a deer in the preserve that got found by a couple of dog walkers.’

‘A deer?’ Stiles was frowning. ‘What does that have to do with all of this?’
‘This deer had its throat ripped out.’ Noah told them. ‘Not only that, but a pattern had been carved into its side. Now I’m guessing that it was probably this alpha wolf that did it, judging from the wounds.’

‘What kind of pattern?’ Derek asked and shifted a little to ease the ache in his sides.

‘A spiral.’ Noah scratched at his cheek and Derek felt his blood run cold at the words. ‘I went to Deaton to see what he knew and he blew me off. Now I know why.’ His look at Derek was questioning. ‘You know what it means?’

‘Symbols are important to werewolves.’ he found himself saying. ‘Every pack has one, but there are others that are used to communicate.’

‘Is that what your tattoo is?’ Stiles asked and he nodded.

‘So what does the spiral mean?’ Noah asked and Derek bit his lip.

‘Revenge.’ He shook his head. ‘But that doesn’t make sense. The only people that would want revenge would be my family and they’re all dead.’

‘Except for you.’ Stiles said.

‘And your uncle.’ Noah was looking thoughtful.

‘Yeah, but Peter’s catatonic.’ Derek pointed out. ‘It can’t be him and it’s not me so who the hell is it?’ He was exhausted. The healing was taking it all out of him and Noah seemed to realise this. His face softened and then he was talking to Stiles.

‘Get Derek upstairs.’ he instructed. ‘He’s staying here until he’s better and you’re going to keep an eye on him.’

‘But school…?’ Stiles started and Noah shook his head.

‘I’ll call you in sick tomorrow. I don’t want either of you out after dark and when Stiles goes back to school and I’m not here you will be, Derek. I’ll feel a hell of a lot better knowing you’ve got each other’s backs.’ Derek felt a rush of gratitude and nods willingly. ‘Now, besides us and Deaton who else knows?’

‘Scott.’ Stiles said. ‘I told him.’

‘Good.’ Noah was thinking again. ‘Call him and get him to bring your homework over. I need to do some digging.’ He looks at Derek. ‘Do you know a man called Garrison Meyers?’

‘No.’ Derek frowned. ‘Should I?’

‘He’s the bus driver that was killed.’ Noah tapped his finger against the counter. ‘He also used to be an insurance investigator.’ He looked grim. ‘Not only that but he’s on the list you gave me. The one your sister had.’

‘Oh crap.’ Stiles was already there. ‘He’s connected?’

‘When we had that first talk about it not being an accident, I started digging.’ Noah says. ‘Meyers was the one who signed off on the Hale fire being an accident. He got let go by the insurance company not too long ago for irregularities and took the bus driving gig to pay his bills.’

‘Shit.’ Stiles turned bright eyes on Derek. ‘You know what this means? Someone else knows.'
Someone who didn’t have Laura’s list.’

‘But nobody else does.’ Derek protested. ‘And I never told anyone about Kate. Not even Laura.’

‘But she was investigating on her own.’ Stiles reminded him. ‘And I hate to break it to you dude, but you’re kind of easy to read. You carry that damn cross around with you all the time.’

‘He’s right.’ Noah added. ‘But then why is she dead? If she got too close and someone killed her, I could understand, but then why keep killing?’

That was when it suddenly came crashing down around Derek’s ears.

‘He needed to be an alpha.’ His astonishment at this realisation was second only to his anger when he realised just why Laura had been killed. ‘That fucking bastard. He killed her to take her power.’

‘Is that a thing?’ Noah was asking Stiles and getting a shrug. ‘Derek?’

‘Wolves become alphas in two ways.’ Derek’s mind was racing. ‘We inherit our power through the family line, which is why Laura became the alpha when the fire happened.’

‘Or…?’ Noah prompted him.

‘Or you can take it by killing another alpha.’ Derek growled. His eyes flashed involuntarily and he saw Noah recoil.

‘I’m not getting used to that anytime soon.’ he said. ‘Would Laura have known what that symbol was?’

‘Of course.’ Derek told him. ‘She was training to take over from our mother, so she would have been very aware of all of that stuff.’

‘So maybe she got tipped off about the idea that someone was looking for revenge.’ Noah mused. ‘But it turns out to be a trap, someone kills her and takes her power. Then they start going after the people that are connected to your family. Do you know where she was staying while she was here?’

‘She was in our house.’ Derek replied. ‘I found her stuff and the Camaro there. That’s where I got the list from.’ He looked away. ‘There was something else though. I didn’t give it to you the first night because of the connection to what my family was. There was another piece of paper. It had a drawing on it.’

‘What did you do with it?’ Noah asked.

‘It’s at the motel where I’m staying.’ Derek felt the sick lurching of his stomach as he thought about her.

‘Would you mind if I go get it?’ Noah’s voice was gentler, the voice of a father rather than a cop.

‘No.’ He bit back a wave of sadness that was almost debilitating. ‘That’s okay.’

‘All right.’ Noah held out a hand. ‘Give me your key. I’m going to go have a look for it. It might be something that can help us.’

Derek dug his key out his pocket and handed it over, giving Noah the address of the motel.

‘Thank you.’ he said. ‘I can’t repay what you’re doing, but I appreciate it.’
‘Kid, something is ripping people to pieces on my watch.’ Noah’s anger showed in his eyes. ‘They bit my kid. They killed your sister and a man she was looking into and I seriously doubt they are done. This is what my job is, finding people like this and shutting them down.’

‘I’m not even sure it is a person anymore.’ Derek said. ‘Although I really don’t know what the fuck could have happened to turn a wolf that badly.’ It was terrifying to even contemplate and he shivered, making Stiles look at him and whine.

‘Well, I reckon it’s time to find out.’ Noah had steel in his voice. ‘You boys go to bed. I need to get back to the station and start working on this.’

‘What about the door?’ Stiles looked over at where Derek had managed to wedge some of the door back enough to keep out the night, the rest covered over with taped up garbage bags courtesy of Noah.

‘I’ll call someone first thing in the morning.’ Noah came over and Derek watched him drop a kiss on Stiles’ forehead. ‘Bed and sleep. I don’t care if you’re a werewolf or not, those injuries need to heal properly.’

Stiles smiled and held onto his arm, leaning into him a little.

‘Okay.’ he said. ‘We’re not going anywhere.’

‘Good.’ Noah kissed him again for good measure, making Stiles’ nose crinkle. ‘Love you, kiddo.’

‘Love you too, Dad. Be careful, okay?’ Stiles let him go, his scent full of worry.

‘I’ll try.’ Noah walked to the door but he stopped briefly at Derek and put a strong sure hand on his shoulder, squeezing in the same way his own father used to, nothing but gratitude in his eyes. ‘Thank you for saving my dumbass son. I’m glad you were there tonight.’ He ignored Stiles’ outraged noise.

‘You’re welcome, sir.’ Derek replied and Noah smiled.

‘You need to stop calling me that.’ His mouth quirked. ‘Especially after seeing how close you two have become.’ His eyes also had a twinkle in them that was undoubtedly amused. ‘I don’t need to give you the talk do I?’

‘No.’ Derek grimaced. ‘To be honest, right now I just want to lie down for about a hundred years.’

‘I think you should.’ Noah said. ‘I’ll see you boys in the morning.’

‘Hate to break it to you Dad, but it’s already morning.’ Stiles called after him and got a snort in reply before the front door slammed shut. They sat in silence for a few moments, but Stiles was already twitching and Derek couldn’t help the pained smile that crossed his face.

‘Go on.’ He raised his eyebrows at him. ‘Say it.’

‘Oh my God!’ Stiles was nearly vibrating, his scent flooding with borderline hysteria. ‘What the fuck!?’

‘I know.’ Derek slumped across the table. ‘Jesus fucking Christ.’ He closed his eyes, ready to just pass out right there. ‘Your dad’s right. This is fucking insane.’ He threw out a hand and felt Stiles take it. ‘You okay?’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles choked out. ‘I’m not the one with huge fucking holes in me.’ His eyes were warm
with affection and concern when Derek opened his to look at him. ‘Come on, let’s get you to bed.’

He helped Derek up the stairs and into his room, his own breath drawing short as the healing gouges in his ribs pulled tight. Thankfully they were nowhere near as deep and already the skin over them was whole and clean. He stopped and laid Derek down on his bed as gently as he could, then fussled over the dressings around Derek’s midriff for a moment. Noah had seen to them first and then done the same for his son and they both stank of antiseptic. Derek was in a pair of Noah’s sweats and one of his t-shirts, which fitted him better than Stiles’ did.

Derek waited patiently for him to get done before Stiles slid in next to him, the bed dipping under their combined weight. He eased up to Derek, mindful of both their injuries as he pulled the covers over them. Derek moved his arm so Stiles could curl up along his side with his head on his shoulder. He felt like a wolf now, the heat from his skin coming through the thin fabric layers that separate them. His scent was still there under the medication and Derek turned his head to bury his nose in his hair.

‘I’m beat.’ It was said through a gigantic yawn and Derek smiled.

‘So sleep.’ he murmured. ‘You heard your dad.’

‘Mmm.’ Stiles’ eyes were already closed. ‘You’re the best pillow.’ He snuggled closer and Derek winced slightly as the movement jostled him. ‘Sorry.’

‘I’m okay.’ He’d been saying that a lot tonight and in spite of the fact that he was only being held closed by bandages and gauze and surgical tape, Derek actually believed it when he said it. He tightened his grip slightly. ‘Hey, can I ask you something?’

‘Sure.’ Stiles practically had his face in Derek’s armpit. ‘What?’

‘What you said about joining your pack.’ Derek faltered, knowing that this was something that he’d been denying himself since he finally separated from Laura and moved to New York. He was quiet for too long and Stiles lifted his head, frowning at him in the dark.

‘Hey.’ He worked himself onto one elbow, his own grimace and the flare in his scent telling Derek that his own injuries were still painful as well. ‘You can ask.’

‘I think I’d like that.’ Derek whispered. ‘I’ve missed this. Having ….’ He trailed off, not able to say it.

‘A family?’ Stiles finished for him.

‘Yeah.’ Derek tried to swallow down the lump in his throat. He wouldn’t cry, hadn’t been able to in years, but he was as close as he’d ever gotten. Everything felt raw, like all his nerve endings were exposed to the air and the slightest brush across them would be agonising but Stiles’ scent and his warmth next to him were like a soothing balm that healed even as it made him more tired than he’d ever been.

‘You know that would be totally cool, right?’ Stiles’s nose was gently nudging at his face. ‘My dad likes you and well, you probably know I’m crazy about you already.’

‘Or you’re just crazy.’ Derek said it without thinking and felt the snicker, Stiles’ body shaking gently in his arms.

‘Probably.’ He finally settled back down with his arm is across Derek’s chest, carefully steering clear of the bandages. It was grounding and Derek brought his right hand up to hold onto the fine boned
wrist, feeling the steady beat of Stiles’ pulse under his fingertips.

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Noah drove, keeping his eyes open for anything that looked out of the ordinary.

He wasn’t stupid, never had been, and he’d known for a long time that Beacon Hills was not what it seemed. He had good instincts and he trusted them, and now that he’d seen his own son turn into something truly otherworldly with his own eyes he understood a lot more. The memory of the girl, the one in the accident the night Claudia died, came back to him and Noah sucked in air through his teeth and wondered just what the hell was out there that he still didn’t know about.

He thought about the Hales, about Talia and James and the kids that he’d known in passing. All the Hales had been home schooled until they went to middle school and now he got why that was the case. Talia and James had been good people though, strong and steadfast and devoted to each other in a way that had made him smile. He remembered the kids too. Derek had been sporty and headstrong, Laura a bubbly outgoing teen that had taken part in community outreach programmes and Cora was a bundle of energy that he’d seen tearing around the market with her mother or one of her aunts. Hell, he even remembered Peter Hale, with his sharp clothes and even sharper smile.

He got to the motel and parked, leaving the cruiser and letting himself into Derek’s room. There was precious little in the way of belongings and he found Laura’s things in the closet. There wasn’t much - changes of clothes and her wallet, some keys. Noah was about to give up when his fingers brushed a slip of paper wedged into one of the pockets of her backpack. He worked it out and unfolded it, staring at the pencilled sketch. It was a drawing like Derek said, something that looked like a stylised wolf, and it immediately sets his Spidey sense tingling. The phrase was one that Stiles loved to use but which he also defaulted too. After all, not all those comics in the garage were his son’s. He pocketed the piece of paper and checked the wallet for anything else before packing everything back and leaving the motel.

He got back to the station and gave everyone on duty a quick greeting, hearing the reports from his deputies as they gave him the rundown of what had been happening. Everyone was jittery, the murder playing on their nerves. He listened and issued orders and then it was into his office where he fired up the terminal on his desk. Stiles made frequent jokes about the lack of computing power at his disposal and Noah felt it keenly as he waited. His impatience played out in the way he taped his fingers against the desk, trying desperately to compartmentalise as his anger finally worked its way out. He was seething by the time he logged into the station’s server and started bringing up names. He’d meant to look into this sooner, but all the craziness had seen him sticking it on the back burner. He’d meant to look into this sooner, but all the craziness had seen him sticking it on the back burner. Now he was sorry he didn’t, especially when it turned out that Garrison Meyers was only the tip of the iceberg.

The second name, Bradley Simpson, had no criminal record that included arson and nothing else to suggest he would ever have been looked at. He was joined by Jason Unger and Donald Reddick, both of whom have done time for minor arson. That all made perfect sense. The only name that might stand out was that of Adrian Harris, his son’s chemistry teacher at BHHS. He was undoubtedly the one who could have supplied them with enough accelerents to level a building several times larger than the Hale house, making his involvement understandable although Noah had no idea why he would have risked his career like that. The search for the symbol turned up nothing, and he resolved to hand it over to Stiles in the morning. His son was a genius when it came to using what he referred to as his Google-fu, much to Noah’s amusement. He had no doubt that Stiles would probably be able to turn up something.

He tracked Simpson down to a video store in Beacon Hills. The other two men were currently listed
as of no fixed abode and Harris was, of course, employed at the high school. Noah made notes and put them on his watch list. Right now the murder was his priority but if they were involved in any way at all, he wanted to know.

Next, he started looking into the Argents.

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Stiles woke up slowly, his face buried in Derek’s chest and his scent filling his nose. It was probably the second best way to wake up, after cuddling a wolf roughly the size of a cow and he made a happy noise and wriggled closer.

Derek rumbled back, the vibration coming from deep in his chest. He watched, waiting for Stiles to blink his eyes open. He finally did and smiled at Derek. The warm feeling was back, suffusing through Derek’s blood until he wanted nothing more than to tighten his arms around Stiles and never let either of them get out of bed again. He shifted and his body protested, not quite healed yet, so instead he turned his head and Stiles looked at him.

‘Can I ask you something?’ His voice was rough with sleep and Derek was caught on the back foot because a question was not how he expected his day to start, but then he should have probably expected it knowing Stiles.

‘What?’ he asked and Stiles looked at him in the same way he might study an interesting conundrum.

‘Your eyes are blue.’ He reached up and traced a light fingertip along Derek’s eyebrow. ‘But mine are gold and the alpha’s are red.’

‘That’s not a question.’ he countered and Stiles gave him a pretty good glare considering he had just woken up.

‘Is it a born wolf thing?’ he asked and Derek sighed, knowing it was probably best to come clean and steeled himself.

‘Blue means I killed someone.’ He looked away. ‘An innocent.’

‘Wow.’ Stiles was sitting up, and he smelled surprised. ‘You killed someone?’

‘Yeah.’ Derek couldn’t bring himself to look at him. ‘My first girlfriend was called Paige. I wanted her to be a wolf, but my mom wouldn’t give her the bite so I got another alpha to do it.’

‘But if she got bitten then why…?’ Stiles frowned and then realisation crossed his face. ‘What happened to her?’

‘The bite didn’t take. It’s a risk. It doesn’t always work.’ Derek closed his eyes, trying to blot out the memory of Paige in his arms with black blood leaking from her mouth and the smell of her body shutting down. ‘I just wanted her to stop suffering so when she asked me to make it stop, I did.’ He didn’t go into detail, didn’t want to remember the sickening sound of Paige’s bones breaking or the way she went limp.

‘Fuck. That must have been fucking awful.’ The shock in Stiles’ voice made him open his eyes and chanced a look at him. To his astonishment, he didn’t look horrified. Instead his face as filled with sympathy.

‘Why are you okay with this?’ Derek tried to move, wincing at the residual pain in his stomach. ‘I’m a murderer, Stiles.’
‘No, you aren’t.’ Stiles looked bemused. ‘It’s not like you wanted to kill her, right?’

‘Well, no…’ Derek started, all too ready to explain why he was a terrible person when Stiles snorted at him.

‘And she was suffering right. Like, she was already dying?’ His eyebrows were raised in question and Derek nodded.

‘She was, but it was my fault for putting her in that situation.’ he replied. ‘I’m the reason she died.’

‘Did she ask for the bite?’ Stiles was still looking at him with the odd combination of sympathy and frustration like Derek just wasn’t getting it.

‘No.’ He frowned. ‘In fact we never actually spoke about it. It was Peter who suggested it. He even set up the alpha who bit her.’

‘Your uncle?’ Stiles scratched at his jaw. ‘Why would he do that?’

‘Because he knew what would happen when she found out what I was.’ Derek said. ‘He said she would leave unless she got the bite. It would be good, we could be together and she’d be safe from anything else that might happen to her. I was so desperate to have her with me forever that I didn’t even think about how dangerous it was.’

‘Hang on.’ Stiles sat up. ‘Did you even ask her if she wanted that? Or did you just go on what your uncle told you?’

‘What? No. I mean Peter did convince me but I’m the one who went along with it.’ Derek growled. ‘That’s why it’s my fault. Paige died because I was stupid and selfish and I wanted us to be together. I listened to Peter and it cost Paige her life. I was the one that got her to go to the distillery and led her right to the alpha.’ He could feel himself shutting down at the sick feeling recalling that night brought on. ‘I tried to take it back, but she’d already been bitten when I tried to save her.’

‘Dude.’ Stiles was shaking his head at him. ‘You know you were totally manipulated into that, right? I mean, how old were you?’

‘Fifteen.’ Derek replied and now Stiles made disparaging noises.

‘So your much older family member, someone you know and presumably trust, pretty much convinces you that this is a good idea and then sets all this up?’ He looked particularly unimpressed.

‘A set up?’ Derek was having trouble computing. ‘What the hell are you talking about?’

‘Christ, Derek.’ Stiles waved his hands around. ‘That’s like manipulation 101. You want something so you convince someone to do it for you.’ He looked thoughtful. ‘What would your uncle have to gain though?’

‘Huh?’ Derek was trying to keep up. ‘I don’t get what you’re saying.’

‘Okay, so bear with me.’ Stiles said. ‘But my dad’s a cop and one thing I’ve learned is that you suspect fucking everyone and everything. Why were you so ready to believe him, especially if you hadn’t even told her about what you were?’

‘I…’ Derek faltered. ‘Peter told me that it had happened to him. He said that he’d been in love with someone and they’d left him when they found out he was a werewolf. He didn’t want that for me.’
‘So he tells a fifteen year old teenager to lure his girlfriend into getting a bite she could have possibly been killed by?’ Stiles shook his head. ‘Why didn’t you just ask your mom?’

‘Peter said that she’d never do it.’ Derek remembered this clearly, the argument he and Peter had had. ‘I had no choice.’

‘Okay but did you ask her? Stiles had his eyebrows up again and Derek growled. This was starting to feel more like an interrogation than a confessional and it was completely throwing him.

‘No.’ He wanted to turn over and ignore what was happening, but Stiles kind of had him where he couldn’t get away.

‘So you just took his word for it?’ Stiles asked. ‘You didn’t think that maybe this was pretty hinky shit going on? I mean, he basically manipulates you into thinking that you’ve got to do this, gets you to set up your girlfriend and then what? Was he even there when it happened?’

‘No.’ Derek scowls at him. ‘He showed up afterward.’

‘Fucking hell, Derek.’ Stiles is now giving him a look that is screaming that he’s an idiot. ‘And you think that this was your fault?’ He shakes his head again, this time far more vociferously. ‘You got conned, dude. Big time. There’s not way Paige’s death is on you.’

‘I’m the one who killed her.’ Derek protests.

‘Are you?’ Stiles said, still unconvinced. ‘Because I’d say that you are probably the last person who’s responsible for that fucking debacle.’ His mouth twisted. ‘Your uncle sounds like an asshole.’

‘Yeah, well he’s paying for it now.’ Derek muttered, but his mind was racing. He’d been so caught up in feeling guilty about what happened, he’d never really stopped to think about it. ‘You think he wanted something?’

‘No.’ Stiles gave a mirthless little chuckle. ‘I know he did. I know I look like an a goofy kid, but I’m pretty good at getting what I want. I know how to manipulate someone because I do it to Scott all the time. You just got to ask yourself what he would gain. And how would it work anyway? If the alpha that bit her wasn’t your mom, she would have been in a different pack wouldn’t she?’

‘Yeah, but we would have been mates.’ Derek said. ‘That’s what Peter told me.’

‘Did she smell like me?’ Stiles asked, now clearly curious and just a tiny bit jealous if his scent was anything to go by.

‘No.’ Derek realises that he was certain nobody had ever smelled like Stiles to him. ‘I didn’t honestly feel the same draw that I did to you.’

‘So then she obviously wasn’t your mate?’ Stiles pointed out. ‘The question is why Peter wanted you to think she was. Whatever the reason, you can bet it wasn’t anything to do with you and all about your uncle getting what he wanted.’

Derek let that sink in. Peter had been older than him, out of school but still young enough for Derek to look up to him, even idolise him a little. He’d always been a bit strange, his sense of humour slightly skewed and with a way of making you agree with him about pretty much anything. It had broken all of Derek’s trust when Paige died and he’d been very careful to hide everything that happened with Kate as a direct result, which had turned out to be an even worse idea.

‘Sourwolf.’ Stiles was looking at him, his face back to sympathetic. ‘You’re a grumpy douche and
you’re probably the most emotionally constipated person I’ve ever met, but you’re not cruel and you would never hurt anyone on purpose. I truly believe that.’ He placed one hand right over Derek’s heart and the simple gesture had his breathing going all out of kilter. ‘You didn’t have to save me from the alpha that first night, but you did. Just like you saved me last night. You’re not a bad person.’

‘Or maybe you’re just a terrible judge of character.’ Derek grumbled and Stiles huffed and flicks him on the nose.

‘Maybe.’ He was grinning. ‘But I don’t think I am.’

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Deaton heard the sound of the clinic’s doorbell and left the store room, going into the examination room and frowning when he saw Noah Stilinski standing there in his uniform and looking particularly officious.

‘Sheriff.’ He put on a pleasant smile. ‘How can I help you?’

‘I need to ask your professional opinion.’ Noah had a brown manila folder with him. ‘You’ve probably heard about the death at the high school that happened on Saturday night.’

‘I did.’ Deaton started to feel suspicious. He knew it paid to be on his guard around Noah. The sheriff was far too astute to be taken lightly. ‘It sounded like a particularly violent act.’

‘It was.’ Noah moved to the examination table and set the folder down. ‘He was ripped to pieces and I am being quite literal when I say that. I realise that what I am about to show you is quite graphic but I would really appreciate your input.’

‘You think it was another wild animal attack?’ Deaton was very careful to keep his face perfectly neutral.

‘You tell me.’ Noah opened the folder, his sharp blue eyes not leaving Deaton’s face. He placed several glossy shots on the table and slid them across. ‘What do you think could have done this? Another mountain lion perhaps?’

Deaton was immediately on alert. After the last time Noah had come to see him with regards to Laura Hale’s death, he’d lied and tried to get Noah onto the wrong trail. It had taken a great deal of self-control to not react to seeing Laura’s body. He’d known it had to be her even without the top half. Hunters had a very distinct signature. He took his time, perusing the pictures. It was clear that the alpha had struck again, this time with a ferocity that was truly frightening.

‘There’s a lot of tissue damage.’ he said. ‘It’s difficult to say.’ He was aware of Noah coming to stand close to him, leaning over and looking at the pictures as well.

‘You have another explanation?’ he asked.

‘No.’ Deaton knew he has to shut him down. I’m very sorry. I can’t help you.’ He started to move away but then Noah chuckled.

‘Now you see?’ He was looking ever so slightly gleeful. ‘That shit really isn’t going to wash anymore, Doctor Deaton. You’re going to have to start being straight with me.’

His smile had precious little humour in it and Deaton weighed his options. He folded his arms, giving Noah a steady look. If this was going to be a showdown, he needed to make sure that the sheriff
knew that he was not some teenage perp he could walk roughshod over.

‘How much do you know?’ he asked and Noah’s smile widened. It was actually quite terrifying in its intensity and Deaton moved around the opposite side of the table for good measure.

‘All of it.’ Noah replied. ‘I know that this man was killed by an alpha werewolf, the same werewolf that bit my son. I know that it’s also the thing that killed Laura Hale and that she’d been back in town investigating the fire. I know that Derek is in this up to those ferocious eyebrows of his, but I can’t exactly say anything because my son seems to have fallen ass over tits for him in an alarmingly short space of time and I also know that last night that thing came into my house, smashed my kitchen door to smithereens and took every shotgun round I had before it ran its ass off into the woods.’ He leaned both hands on the table. ‘How’s that?’

Deaton sighed and bowed his head as he processed. He really needed to get a handle on things and do some damage control. Then again, having the sheriff in the know could prove to be extremely useful.

‘You want some coffee?’ he asked. ‘I have a box of Krispy Kremes in the back. I think we’re going to need them.’

‘Now you’re speaking my language.’ Noah said and followed him out the room.

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By the afternoon, Stiles was bouncing off the walls and Derek kind of wanted to sit on him a little bit.

Or maybe a lot. Just to keep him still for five minutes.

He’d managed to migrate from the bed to the couch, his insides feeling less like they’d gone through a cheese grater. Stiles, the little fucker, was completely healed and so he was doing his best to entertain himself which meant he was basically just annoying the fuck out of Derek while trying to look after him.

It’s not that he didn’t appreciate it, but Derek was feeling a little raw after his confession that morning. He wanted to hide a bit, wrap himself in on himself and heal inside as well as out. It was a lot harder to ignore the pain when it was being poked at, and Stiles was a nosy little shit. He was also far too clever to let Derek off the hook when he tried to lie, and Derek got the feeling that would have been the case even without the werewolf abilities.

‘You need to calm the fuck down.’ he said and Stiles looked up, his face a little startled and his nails in his mouth.

‘I’m calm.’ he replied, sarcasm dripping from every syllable. ‘It’s not like my life has turned into a horror flick overnight. The only reason I’m still going along with it is that I get to stick my tongue in your mouth.’

‘If that’s your only motivation, then it sucks balls.’ Derek observed and Stiles flipped him off and got up off the couch.

‘I can’t sit around here.’ He started pacing back and forth. ‘I need to get out there and start looking around for something that will get us back on track.’

‘Well, you’re not going out alone.’ Derek growled and got an arched eyebrow in response. ‘You dad was very clear on that particular instruction.’
‘So?’ Stiles snorted, eyes narrowed at him. ‘It’s not like I ever do what he tells me to do. And don’t think that because you got all territorial on my ass that I’ll listen to you either.’

‘I wouldn’t dream of it.’ Derek drawled, giving back as good as he’s getting. ‘But I am telling you that I’ll bite your legs off before I let you go out there alone.’

‘Then you’re just going to have to come with.’ Stiles told him. ‘Besides, we’ll need you.’ He started heading out the room and Derek swore and got up as Stiles thumped up the stairs.

‘What? Why?’ he asked and then huffed in annoyance when he got no answer. ‘Stiles, for fuck’s sake. What the hell are we doing?’

‘Going to see your uncle.’ Stiles yelled from his room and Derek stopped dead.

‘No.’ It comes out without him even thinking about it. ‘No fucking way.’ He started stomping up the stairs in temper and then winced when it jolted his injuries.

‘Dude.’ Stile stuck his head out the door as he got up the stairs. ‘You’re the only one that’s going to get us in. We need you.’

‘Did you miss that part where he’s also in a catatonic state?’ Derek glowered at him. ‘Because the last time I checked, that meant not being able to speak.’

‘Oh ha ha.’ Stiles started flinging clothes around. ‘Yes, I know that. But if we go and see him, maybe the staff there will be able to tell us something. Like if anyone has been trying to visit him. That’s also why we need you.’

Derek opened his mouth to protest and then grudgingly realised that actually made a lot of sense.

‘Goddammit.’ He walked over and snatched the shirt Stiles was holding out, a gleefully triumphant smile on his face.

‘You know I’m right.’ he said and Derek growled at him again and then looked at the shirt, holding it up.

‘This is never going to fit.’ He chucked it back.

‘Then I guess we’re stopping off at your place to get you some clothes.’ Stiles started getting dressed. He gave himself a critical look in the mirror on the inside of his closet door, his own shirt still in his hands. ‘Did you come out the womb with a six pack? Am I ever going to get one?’

‘I work out, Stiles.’ Derek found a shirt that looked vaguely like a reasonable size and pulled it on and then folded his arms, quickly unfolding them when he felt the seams of the shirt pull precariously. ‘You’ll put on some muscle mass with being a wolf, but that doesn’t mean you can skip leg day.’

‘Great.’ Stiles rolled his eyes. ‘Forever a loser.’

‘You’re not a loser.’ Derek corrected him. ‘I would never mate with a loser.’

‘No?’ Stiles looked delighted. ‘So you think I’m cool?’

‘I wouldn’t go that far.’ Derek snorted and shoved him into the closet, grinning at the outraged squawk. They took the Jeep and bickered continuously all the way to the motel before Derek remembered that Noah had his keys.
‘Fuck.’ He made a face.

‘Guess it’s Plan B.’ Stiles sniggered.

‘And what the hell is that?’ Derek asked and got a wicked grin.

Plan B turned out to be breaking in.

‘They need better security.’ Stiles told him while very skilfully picking the lock. Derek just stared at him.

‘Why is it that the son of the sheriff of Beacon Hills knows how to pick locks?’ he asked and Stiles snickered.

‘I can hotwire a car too.’ He grinned at Derek’s raised eyebrow. ‘Come on, I have severe ADD. Do you have any idea how many times I’ve left my keys somewhere?’

‘That is entirely not comforting.’ Derek mutters following him into the room and immediately stripping off the very uncomfortable shirt.

‘Hey. I come with an incredible skill set.’ Stiles bounced on the edge of the bed. ‘You may have won the genetic lottery but my brain is like a steel trap, baby.’ He tapped his temple for good measure and Derek wondered again just how this had become his life.

He could smell Noah in the room but he was pleased to see that whatever the Sheriff may have found, he’d put everything back where he found it. It only took a moment to get redressed, checking his abdomen for anything worrying. The wounds had finally sealed shut completely and while he was still in some discomfort, the worst of the damage is gone. Stiles watched him, heart rate kicking up a notch when Derek pulled on a clean shirt on.

‘You have a one track mind.’ he snorted.

‘Ha.’ Stiles leans back, palms flat on the bed. ‘I’ll have you know that multi-tasking is my forte.’ He then gets an adorably shy look on his face. ‘So this mates thing? It’s serious, right?’

‘It is.’ Derek stuffed his remaining things into his duffle bag and hauled it over his shoulder. ‘Which is why we’re taking it seriously.’

‘Cool.’ Stiles crinkled his nose. ‘Why me though?’

‘You smell right.’ Derek said and that made Stiles frown.

‘So that’s all it is?’ He sounded a little disappointed. ‘Body chemistry?’

‘Not all of it.’ Derek replied. ‘But it’s a lot of it. You need to fit with your mate, have wolves that are compatible.’

‘So our wolves are like...smitten with each other?’ Stiles asked and Derek laughed softly. He thought of his own wolf and how it wagged its tail frantically whenever Stiles is near. In fact, that was exactly what it was doing now, head tilted and whining happily.

‘That’s it.’ He went to the door. ‘You want to move your ass here? I thought we were on a schedule.’

‘So say we get mated for real?’ Stiles hopped up and followed him out the room. Outside he looked at Derek quizzically and the light hit his eyes, turning them to amber. It was enough to momentarily
stop Derek in his tracks and stare at how beautiful Stiles actually was when he wasn’t being a colossal dork. ‘Then what?’

‘Then we belong to each other.’ he explained. ‘If you wanted we could get married, but we wouldn’t have to. It would mean nobody else for either of us. Ever.’ He said the last word with gravity, half expecting Stiles to be put off, but all he got was eager excitement in his scent.

‘Does that mean you’d come to all my school dances with me?’ He was smiling. ‘Because that would be awesome. I’d totally have the hottest date there.’

Derek hid his smile and gently cuffed him as they went back to the car.

‘Idiot.’ He couldn’t hide the affection in his voice.

‘Hey, I just want to be in the know.’ Stiles protested. ‘I know the plan is for us to get the alpha and stop him killing people, but I have to say this part of it is kind of cool.’ He shrugged. ‘I’m first line, I have a smoking hot maybe-boyfriend and my life has gotten about 1000 percent more interesting.’

‘It’s also gotten about a 1000 percent more dangerous too.’ Derek pointed out. He did preen a little at the description of himself as smoking hot though and his wolf was one very happy camper.

‘Oh, don’t smell so smug.’ Stiles backhanded him in the chest and there’s now some serious strength behind it. ‘You know you’re hot.’ He went around and opened the door.

‘You know you’re actually really cute.’ Derek said when he’d climbed in and Stiles had started the Jeep. He hadn’t missed the wistfulness earlier when Stiles was checking himself out in the mirror. ‘And I like you pretty much the way you are. I might have a thing for those.’ He nodded at Stiles’ face and got an astonished smile when Stiles lifted a hand to his neck, brown eyes sparkling.

‘You like my moles?’ He looked and smelled adorably abashed. ‘I always thought they were ugly.’

‘They’re not.’ Derek replied. ‘They’re like little constellations. I might want to play connect the dots with them.’ He gave Stiles a meaningful glance. ‘With my tongue.’

It was very gratifying to smell the sharp burst of arousal and see how wide Stiles’ eyes went.

‘Dude.’ He breathed the word with an almost religious reverence. ‘That’s so freaking hot.’

‘Well, it’ll have to wait.’ Derek told him. ‘Now drive. I’ve got my single remaining family member to harass.’

‘Are you going to be okay with this?’ Stiles asked as he pulls out of the parking lot. ‘I kind of didn’t even ask.’

‘I have to see him sometime.’ Derek said, thinking about the last time he saw Peter. Laura hadn’t allowed him to go with her to the hospital, worried about traumatising him further after the fire. He didn’t want to confront the reality that his uncle was nothing more than an empty shell in a hospital bed. Still, if it gave them a lead on the alpha then it would be worth it.

‘I know but I kind of shoved this in your face.’ Stiles’ mouth twisted. ‘I do that and I don’t always think about what will happen afterwards so if I do overstep just like yell at me to not. Hopefully I’ll listen.’

Derek looks at him. Stiles was the only person who’d had this level of concern for him since his family died. He thought of the declaration that he was now part of the Stilinski pack and how much
that meant to him.

‘You know you’re a really good person.’ he said. ‘I think that’s why my wolf chose you. That and
the fact that you smell really good.’

‘Yeah?’ Stiles was smiling. ‘You do too. All leathery and pine-foresty.’ Then he went scarlet as he
realised what he had said and he looked so mortified that it made Derek’s stomach do a funny
flipping thing. This could be a lot more serious that he’d thought. He stayed quiet all the way to the
hospital when he sensed the change in Stiles’ demeanor and smelled his scent tinge with sourness,
reaching out to put a hand on his knee.

‘You know that checking if you’re okay thing goes both ways.’ he offered. ‘Are you going to be
okay going in there?’

‘No.’ Stiles gave a weak laugh. ‘But with how clumsy I am, I haven’t exactly been able to avoid it.
Besides, Melissa works there. That’s Scott’s mom.’

‘Oh.’ Derek looked at him in question. ‘I’m guessing we’ll have to avoid her?’

‘Probably a good idea.’ Stiles undid his seat belt. ‘She’s a lot smarter than Scott and she’ll ask
questions about who you are.’

They went in the side entrance and scouted around for a second to find the signboard that told them
that the long term care unit was at the back of the building. There was a nurse at the station when
they got there and she raised her eyebrows at them.

‘Can I help you?’ she asked and Derek turned on his tried and tested smile, knowing full well how it
charmed the pants off practically anyone.

‘I hope so.’ he said. ‘My name’s Derek Hale. I’m here to see my uncle.’ He could see Stiles gawking
at him out of the corner of his eye and gave him the smallest sub-sonic growl. Stiles immediately
schooled his face into something less suspicious (although not by much) and shuffled in behind him.

‘Oh.’ The nurse looked at them both, clearly not convinced. ‘He hasn’t had a visitor for a long time.’

‘No.’ Derek said. ‘I’ve been in New York since the fire and only just got back to town. I wanted to
come and see how he is.’

‘Of course.’ The nurse was now looking a little uncomfortable and Derek knew she was thinking
about his family. ‘I am sorry. About what happened.’

‘Thank you.’ Derek hated this, the pity in her eyes. She nodded briskly at his sudden cold tone and
held out a hand.

‘Driver’s license? I need some form of photo ID. Just to confirm you’re who you say you are.’ she
explained, now not meeting his eyes.

‘Sure.’ Derek took out his wallet and handed it over. Stiles was peering over his shoulder and then
stifled a noise as he caught sight of it.

‘Sebastian?’ he whispered and Derek decided then and there to wreak bloody revenge and find out
what monstrosity he was hiding. The nurse inspect the card and then handed it back, gesturing
down the corridor.

‘He’s down there, third on the left.’ she said and Derek thanked her. They started down the corridor
and his feet got heavier as anxiety got the better of him.

‘Hey.’ Stiles’ hand was on his shoulder. ‘Just keep breathing, big guy. You got this.’

The door of Peter’s room was ajar and a red haired nurse came out just as they get to it.

‘Oh?’ She didn’t look or smell pleased to see them. ‘Can I help you?’

‘I’m here to see my uncle.’ Derek said, and he sniffed discreetly. The medicinal smell of the hospital layered everything, but he could also catch something corrupt that he definitely recognised.

‘Of course.’ The nurse stepped around them and marched down the hallway. Derek turned to watch her go, the hairs on the back of his neck prickling.

‘Well she’s creepy.’ Stiles said next to him. ‘Think her name’s Nurse Ratchett?’

‘Come on.’ Derek moved into the room. It was a typical hospital room with a bed and nightstand and privacy curtain. He took a deep breath and moved to stand next to the bed and get a good look at his uncle for the first time in six years. Peter Hale had been a handsome man before the fire. Now looking at him, Derek could still see the vestiges of those looks that had often gotten his uncle free coffees at the local cafe. That was only from one side though. The other was terribly scarred from the fire, the skin waxy and unnatural looking almost like Peter was wearing a prosthetic.

‘Damn.’ Stiles was staring at him. ‘Dude got hit pretty bad.’

‘He made it out though.’ Derek shoved his hands in his pockets and fought the urge to release his claws. ‘But at what price.’

‘I thought you guys could heal from anything.’ Stiles moved in closer, looking at Peter intently.

‘Within reason.’ Derek shook his head. ‘Laura told me that his injuries were so severe that he would never have survived them if he were human. The coma is his body’s way of healing him.’

‘So shouldn’t he be healed by now?’ Stiles looked confused. ‘It’s been six years.’

‘I don’t know, Stiles.’ Derek stared down at his uncle’s hands, which were clasped over the bedclothes. The nails were neatly trimmed but something catches his attention. He sniffed again, the chemical odour from earlier coalescing into something with the distinct scent of dirt and the same corruption lingering at the doorway.

‘Derek?’ Stiles was watching him. ‘Dude? What?’

Derek ignored him and reached out, taking Peter’s right hand. His uncle’s skin was warm and alive but not the temperature a werewolf would normally run at. He lifted the hand and bent his head, sniffing more intently.

‘Smell.’ he ordered and Stiles grimaced.

‘Dude.’ He looked unconvinced. ‘You’re asking me to smell your uncle’s fingers? That’s like super creepy.’

‘Just do it.’ Derek growled and Stiles pulled a face and complied.

‘He smells like dirt.’ His brown eyes sharpened as he gets it. ‘But if he’s comatose then how could he get outside?’
‘Maybe he didn’t.’ Derek scented the air again. ‘Can you smell anything else?’

‘Yeah’ Stiles copies him, his nostril flaring. ‘It stinks like the alpha. And maybe chemicals?’

‘Yeah.’ Derek inhaled deeply. ‘I smelled it in the woods when I was tracking the alpha and on Laura’s body. I wasn’t sure what it was but then I smelled it all over the alpha when it attacked us last night too.’

‘So that means it was here?’ Stiles hissed, looking around. ‘It got into the hospital?’

‘Shit.’ Derek’s blood ran cold at the thought. ‘Maybe this is some kind of vendetta. Maybe it’s trying to take all of us out, the last Hales and the people who killed my family.’

‘Okay, that makes no sense at all.’ Stiles said. ‘We’re missing something.’

‘Maybe.’ Derek looked back down at Peter. ‘We can’t leave him here.’

‘He’s safe here, Derek.’ Stiles put a hand on his arm. ‘If the alpha hasn’t killed him in here, it shows that.’ He tugged on Derek’s sleeve. ‘Look, getting him out of here will probably take a while anyway. We should talk to Deaton, maybe get something to keep him even safer but it’s not like we can take him to my house.’

‘No.’ Derek agreed. ‘Okay. But we need to let your dad know. Maybe he can get him some extra security or something. That should make the alpha think twice.’

‘Good idea.’ Stiles shoved his hands in his pockets, clearly uneasy. ‘Look, could we go? This place is creeping me out.’

‘Yeah.’ Derek stepped back. ‘Not a lot to see here.’ He felt horrible inside, remembering how Peter was never quiet, never this still. They exited the room a little more quickly than was graceful and nearly galloped down the corridor past the nurses’ station and heading for the exit.

‘This is turning into a fucking Nancy Drew mystery.’ Derek grumbled when they were back in the Jeep and Stiles looked at him like he’d just won the lottery.

‘Nancy Drew?’ he asked.

‘Laura was crazy about those books.’ Derek replied. ‘I might have stolen them from her to read.’

‘Oh my God!’ Stilles crowed. ‘You’re a secret nerd! And your middle name is Sebastian. Dude! This is great. You’re just like me.’

‘No.’ Derek stuck his finger in Stiles’ beaming face.

‘Bullshit.’ Stiles snapped playfully at his finger. ‘And you’re tapping this. Well, kind of tapping this.’

‘Whatever.’ Derek sat back and started thinking. ‘Okay we need a plan.’

‘Which I will be in charge of.’ Stiles stated. ‘But we also need food.’

‘Fine, we’ll go to the store.’ Derek’s healing was taxing his body and he definitely needed food. ‘I can make dinner.’ He caught Stiles’ grin. ‘What? I can cook and if I’m going to be staying there a while, I’d like to earn my keep.’

‘You could do that in other ways.’ Stiles replied as casually as he could and Derek snorted.
‘Like I said.’ He smirked at the idiot he’d hitched himself to. ‘One track mind.’

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In the hospital, Jennifer Hall waited until her colleague went on her rounds to check on the patients on her ward before taking out her cell phone and dialling a number from memory.

‘You said you wanted to know if he came around.’ she said without greeting the person on the other side. ‘I’m calling to tell you he was just here.’ She listened. ‘No, he was with some kid I didn’t recognise. They stayed for about ten minutes and then took off.’

The person on the other side was clearly not happy and Jennifer’s brows knitted in annoyance.

‘Look, you don’t pay me enough to draw attention to myself. The treatments will be administered as they have been. If I change his medication protocols, it’ll be suspicious. I do my best but I can’t watch him twenty-four seven.’ She huffed at the answer. ‘No, he’s not getting out without my knowledge. You can trust me on that. I’m here until eleven. If you want to come in, you better do it before I leave.’

The person on the other side disconnected the call and Jennifer smiled to herself, getting up and walking down the corridor to the room the visitors were in. She went inside and closed the door, smiling as she approached the bed.

‘You’re causing quite a stir, Mr Hale.’ she said. ‘Your master is not very happy with you. The bus driver was messy and you missed your mark last night.’ She reached out and adjusted the covers. ‘I hate to think what they’re going to come up with to punish you.’

She hummed as she bustled about the room, making sure things are neat and tidy before leaving once again, completely missing the way Peter’s hands tightened briefly on the covers and icy blue eyes tracked her to the doorway.

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‘Get off that.’ Derek was rolling his eyes at him and Stiles scoffed and ignored him completely. He was currently riding the shopping cart down the parking lot, making spaceship noises just like he used to do all through his childhood.

‘Make me.’ he shot back and yelped as Derek grabbed the back of his hoodie and he flew backwards off the cart and into Derek’s arms. It was not unlike hitting a brick wall. Derek huffed and set him down, commandeering the cart and driving it in a far more adult manner into the store. Stiles shoved his hands in his pockets, dragging his sneakers so they squeaked along the floor, cackling when he saw how Derek scowled at him.

‘So what do werewolves typically eat?’ He threw caution to the wind. ‘Do we prefer kibble or wet food?’

‘Shut up, Stiles.’ Derek was heading in the direction of the fridges. He stopped at the meat counter and Stiles flailed in protest.

‘No.’ he said. ‘Absolutely not. It’ll just give him license.’

‘You know as amusing as it is that you police your father’s diet, I don’t think one night of steak is going to kill him.’ Derek pointed out, grabbing five packs and dumping them in the cart.

‘Says you.’ Stiles immediately retrieved them and put them back. ‘Red meat is a killer in men over
forty.’

‘So is prostate cancer.’ Derek picked the steaks back up and put them in the cart again. ‘Are you telling me you’re going to make a habit of checking that as well?’

‘No, gross.’ Stiles huffed and tried to pick the steaks back out. Derek growled at him and he growled back on instinct and there was a very undignified scuffle over the steaks for a few minutes until they realised that three people in the same aisle had stopped to watch them.

‘Move.’ Derek shoved him in the back and Stiles tripped over his own feet, glaring at him when Derek snorted with laughter.

‘You’re such a dick.’ he hissed as he regained his balance and affected a nonchalant attitude as they passed the onlookers.

‘For that you can pick the vegetables.’ Derek said sweetly and Stiles kicked him in the ankle.

‘I finally get a boyfriend and he’s the most annoying person on the planet.’ he grumbled, even though he was having the time of his life. There was nothing he loved more than bickering but Scott rarely managed to keep up with him.

‘That’s because he’s driven to it.’ Derek stopped and mulled over potatoes before picking some out. Stiles knew he was being immature but he stuck his tongue out at him all the same and then ducked a stray hand, before grabbing a bag of kale and some green beans and hurled in them in the cart.

‘I don’t want him to die.’ he blurted out. Derek stops and his face softened, his scent changing.

‘I know.’ he replied. ‘But there’s such a thing as being too protective.’

‘Like you wouldn’t be?’ Stiles chewed on a nail. ‘If you could go back, wouldn’t you sit on Laura until she decided not to come?’

‘I would.’ Derek’s face was neutral but Stiles could smell he was sad. ‘I would never let her go. We weren’t as close as we could have been. Shit happened and I didn’t help her as much as I could have. I’d do things differently now.’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles moved in, instincts driving him to rest his cheek against Derek’s shoulder. ‘I’d tell my mom how much I loved her a lot more.’

‘Yeah.’ Derek’s breath skimmed the top of his head, a not quite kiss but it made Stiles’ heart thump all the same. ‘Me too.’

They wandered the aisles, arguing over the finer points of breakfast cereals and pop tarts, whether regular Cheetos were superior to hot ones and how much jerky Derek seemed intent on buying. At the checkout, Stiles packed while Derek paid and then they hauled out the extraordinarily large number of bags to the Jeep and loaded them into the trunk.

‘We eat a lot, don’t we?’ Stiles eyed the overflowing trunk.

‘Yeah.’ Derek rearranged some bags and closed the trunk. ‘You should have seen our weekly shop.’ He grinned and chucked a bag of Twizzlers at Stiles. ‘Think fast.’

Stiles smiled as he caught them easily, ripping them open with his teeth. It was very satisfying. He got in the car and offered the bag to Derek, only a little surprised when Derek took two and chomped on them. They had finished the candy by the time they got to the house to see the cruiser parked
Noah was at the dining room table when they went inside. He’d changed into jeans and a sweater, his reading glasses on his face as he regarded them making two trips to bring in everything before going back to what he’s doing. Stiles left Derek unpacking the food and went to stand behind him.

“What’s up Daddio?” He leaned on the back of Noah’s chair.

“I will pay you a million dollars to never call me that again.” Noah replied and Stiles heard Derek snort with laughter from the kitchen. ‘And I am putting things together. Meet the Hale house arsonists.’ He nodded at a set of mugshots.

‘Seriously?’ Stiles reached over and Noah smacked his hand. Derek had come out the kitchen and he was now at the table also staring at the photographs.

‘Who are they.’ he asked and Stiles saw a muscle twitch in his jaw. It was not hard to see and smell the anger in him and he whined in sympathy. That got a raised eyebrow from his father but he said nothing, addressing himself to Derek instead.

‘These are the men from the list.’ he explained. ‘These two have criminal records for arson. I think it’s clear that they were the ones who assisted in torching the house. This is the late Mr Meyers. I also looked up the Argents. It seems Christ Argent is in the arms business.’

‘Hunters.’ Derek all but spat the word. ‘So now what?’

‘We need some hard evidence to link them all.’ Noah said. ‘I’m definitely going to be having a quiet word with Adrian Harris in the future.’ He handed a photocopy of a drawing to Derek. ‘So this drawing I got from Laura’s things, do you recognise it?’

‘It’s a wolf, obviously.’ Derek said, taking the paper. ‘That’s the reason why I didn’t show you right away. The connection must be with the Argents somehow.’

‘I don’t know yet.’ Noah replied. He took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes. ‘I need to sleep. Maybe this will all make more sense in the morning.’

‘Food first.’ Stiles could smell his fatigue. ‘Then you can go to bed.’

‘Derek can take you to school in the morning and collect you.’ Noah said. ‘I’ll go back in tomorrow and see what else I can find.’ He looked at Stiles. ‘Scott’s dating the Argent girl, right?’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles was looking at the drawing in Derek’s hand.

‘See of he can get anything out of her.’ Noah leaned back in his seat. ‘I guess we should have dinner.’

‘I’ll take care of that.’ Derek handed him back the picture. ‘We got steak.’

‘Oh, I like him.’ Noah immediately perked up and Stiles glared at Derek.

‘Don’t get used to it.’ he muttered and Noah grinned.

‘Derek knows how to get on my good side.’ he retorted. ‘I think he’s going to be my new favourite.’

Derek’s smugness intensified and Stiles bared his teeth at him, grumbling all the way to the kitchen as he got dragged off to help with dinner. Noah’s glee extended to the baked potatoes and he even ate the kale and green beans without complaint. Stiles had to grudgingly admit that Derek knew how
to cook. There was idle conversation about baseball, a brief argument about the Mets versus the Yankees and by that time, they’re all yawning. Noah inspected Derek’s now healed midriff, his eyes widening at the complete lack of evidence of any damage.

‘That’s something else.’ he said.

‘It helps.’ Derek cleared the table, effortlessly carrying all the dishes over to the sink. ‘Alpha inflicted injuries heal slower, but they do heal.’

‘Is there anything that is lethal to werewolves?’ Noah asked. ‘Silver?’

‘It hurts but it doesn’t kill us.’ Derek replied. ‘Aconite is lethal and so is mistletoe. Electricity hurts us and stops us from shifting.’ He pulled a face. ‘Hunters use all of those things to kill us.’

‘How?’ Noah asked. Stiles also paid attention to this. He’d gotten kind of carried away by the idea that he was pretty much invulnerable, especially after healing from the claw marks in his side.

‘They use rounds with aconite cores.’ Derek replied, letting water in to do the dishes. ‘They coat projectile weapons in silver and use the electricity to torture pretty much the same way humans do. They’ve had centuries to perfect their techniques.’

‘Still.’ Noah looked thoughtful. ‘Those things would also be helpful in taking down the alpha, wouldn’t they?’

‘Yeah.’ Derek turned the water off. ‘But you’d have to be able to get your hands on them.’

‘Electricity is no problem, we got plenty of tasers at the station. Could Deaton help us with the other stuff though?’ Noah asked. ‘He seems pretty knowledgeable.’

‘You saw him?’ Stiles was filled with curiosity.

‘We had a very enlightening conversation.’ Noah said and Stiles’ stomach twisted as he wondered just how much Deaton had told his father. He could see that Derek was also apprehensive, his eyes darting to Stiles for a second. ‘He explained a lot about what we’re dealing with.’

‘Oh?’ Stiles didn’t want to give the game away. He’d said nothing about how he spent the full moon and hopes like hell that Deaton hadn’t either. Noah didn’t seem to be angling for anything, but he knew from experience how sneaky his father could be.

‘He agrees with you about the deer.’ Noah said to Derek. ‘He also promised me that he’s on board with making sure Stiles stays safe.’

‘He could help.’ Derek replied. ‘Although I don’t know how much he knows about making bullets.’

‘That part I can take care of.’ Noah assured them. ‘I can find someone to do that if he gets us the other thing. Aconite, you said?’

‘It’s also called wolfsbane.’ Derek explained. ‘What else did you find out?’

‘That Kate Argent is in town.’ Noah said. ‘She’s staying with her family. Has been for a couple of weeks.’ He glanced at Derek, obviously concerned.

‘We know that.’ Stiles pulled a face. ‘She’s harassed Scott a couple of times when he’s gone there.’ He looked at Derek. They hadn’t told Noah after anything about Peter but now was probably as good a time as any. He raised his eyebrows and Derek frowned in concern and Stiles growled at
‘Fine.’ Derek grumbled and folded his arms. Noah was looking between them, apparently bemused.

‘You both realise you just had an entire conversation with your eyebrows?’ His mouth quirked. ‘Spit it out, boys.’

‘We went to see Peter today.’ Derek told him. ‘At the hospital.’

‘Oh?’ Noah’s eyes narrowed. ‘I thought I told you both not to go anywhere.’ He was using his dad voice and Stiles winced and looked at Derek to see him wincing as well. ‘Did you find anything useful?’

‘Yeah, Derek’s middle name is Sebastian.’ Stiles couldn’t help grinning. ‘That’s like the dorkiest name in existence.’ Derek rumbled at him and Noah gave him a look before chuckling.

‘Has he told you his name’s Mieczysław.’ he said and Stiles choked in indignation.

‘Dad!’ he hissed and Noah gave him an affronted look.

‘You make fun of his name, then I give him ammunition.’ he replied before going back to Derek. ‘Stiles hates it. He even defaced his driver’s license so nobody could find out. I don’t think Scott even knows what it is. Trust me, compared to that Sebastian is a very nice name.’

‘It was my grandfather’s.’ Derek explained and Noah smiled.

‘Well isn’t that a coincidence.’ He nodded at Stiles. ‘It was his grandfather’s name too.’

‘God.’ Stiles threw himself dramatically back into his chair. ‘I’m starting to feel somewhat victimised here.’

‘You’ll live,’ Noah said. ‘But seriously, anything useful?’

‘The alpha was there.’ Derek replied. ‘In his room. We could smell it.’

‘How though?’ Noah asked. ‘That’s a closed ward and I’m we would have had reports of something rampaging through.’

‘He’s a werewolf, Dad.’ Stiles shrugged. ‘I’m assuming that he’s human looking when he’s not howling at the moon.’

‘Good point.’ Noah made a note. ‘I’ll get hold of the visitor log. Okay then. We have a lot of work to do. Stiles, you’re on finding out what that drawing. Derek, you’re on security and I’ll start chasing up Harris.’ He shook his head at them when they both started protesting at the same time, holding up a hand. ‘Shut up both of you. I’m going to bed and then we are stating this questionable and dare I say it highly illegal investigation tomorrow.’ He huffed. ‘Fucking werewolves. Next you’re going to tell me unicorns are real.’

‘You know Mom would have been very disappointed in your swearing.’ Stiles sniped at him. ‘Just putting that out there.’

‘Your mother had a filthy mouth.’ Noah retorted. ‘And I loved her dearly for it. There’s no doubting you get it from her.’ He narrowed his eyes at them. ‘Now it’s a school night. You need to go to bed and Derek needs to be in the guest room. I’m letting this whole dating thing slide seeing as there’s bigger fish to fry, but now I know how to kill you Derek and I won’t hesitate to use deadly force if I
find you in my son’s bed again without permission or getting up to things that could get you arrested. So let’s just make sure everyone’s hands stay out of everyone’s pants and we’re all good.’

‘Oh my God, Dad!’ Stiles yelled, horrified at the implication. Even Derek looked appalled, his ears burning red.

‘Yes, sir.’ He sounded strained. ‘I promise that will not happen.’

‘Good.’ Noah looked downright cheerful. ‘Switch off the lights before you come up.’

Stiles glared at his back and then folded his own arms, sulking as he realised that he’d lost his cuddle buddy for the evening.

‘Well this blows.’ he muttered.

‘And there will definitely be none of that!’ Noah yelled down the stairs and they both jumped about a foot in the air.

‘Are you sure he’s not a werewolf?’ Derek asked and Stiles flipped him off.
Chapter Summary

A week after the alpha attack and everything is quiet, but not for long...

Stiles was woken by the sound of Noah’s cell going off down the hall and realised two things. The first was that something must have happened because it was still dark outside. The second was that his dad is going to kill him because he’d woken up with his fangs in the pillow and his claws ripping through the sheet and into the mattress for the third time this week because he was unbelievably horny and humping the mattress like he’s just discovered what his dick was for. He gingerly disengaged himself, grimacing at the fact that he was so hard it hurt, whining softly and with his whole body aching for something he didn’t really understand. He needed Derek, the feel of his skin and his scent in his nose. The urge had been intensifying as the week had gone by and now it was Friday, he was going a little crazy.

The sound of the shower made Stiles lift his head. He could hear his father humming and then closed his eyes to listen for something else, smiling when he found it. He’d been getting better and better at this, honing in on the steady beat of Derek’s heartbeat in the guest room across from him. They’d had precious little privacy what with the alpha lying low and no new attacks keeping Noah on double shift. He’d been home every night for dinner, effectively blowing all Stiles cunning plans on getting into Derek’s very tight jeans right out of the water. There had been a couple of clandestine make out sessions on the couch and in the Camaro but nothing compared to what happened on the full moon. Derek had been taking his promise to Noah very seriously, dropping Stiles off at school and picking him up to make sure he got home safely but he’d also been keeping his distance, standing hidden in the treeline on Wednesday while Stiles was at lacrosse practice and basically giving nobody any indication to suspect that they had been getting up to anything that might resemble shenanigans. He’d point blank refused to act like Stiles’ boyfriend at school, parking at the back of the lot and definitely not standing waiting for Stiles to flounce down the stairs and plaster himself all over him (as he was secretly hoping he would). All in all, it had been downright frustrating and Stiles had been retaliating by jacking off in his bed, making what he hoped were alluring noises, but Derek had refused to take the bait and sneak into his room after lights out. Instead he’d been a perfect gentleman, making them all dinner and chatting with his father and holding Stiles’ hand while they watched TV.

Noah dropped something in his room, muttering under his breath, and Stiles had to grin. His father had always been very careful not to curse in front of him too much, but this past week had seen him throwing that rule out the window as he got to grips with the realisation that the supernatural not only existed but was living in his house. He’d been quizzing Derek about werewolves and so Stiles had inadvertently learned a lot more about himself and what he was now capable of. The way Derek talked about pack and what it meant had brought things a little closer to home.

He waited until Noah walked past his room, closing his eyes and pretending to be asleep when his door cracked open and then closed again once his father had checked on him. He’d been doing that since Sunday, his concern obvious in his scent. Stiles had never really thought about the way his father smelled but now it was a very useful barometer as to his mood. Derek had also been helping
him to try and isolate individual scents while he was in a familiar place and Stiles was a quick, albeit erratic, learner.

Noah went downstairs and Stiles tracked his steps, listening for the front door to close before he made his move, getting up and going to the window. He watched the lights on the cruiser come on as Noah pulled out the drive, grinning like mad because he now had the perfect opportunity as he tilted his head to listen. Derek was still sleeping surprisingly deeply for someone who’s usually so on edge. Stiles felt a little bit proud of that, realising all too well that this was probably the first time since coming back to Beacon Hills that Derek had been able to sleep deeply enough to fully relax. He looked it too, coming into the kitchen in the mornings with his black hair sticking up in all directions and his green eyes blinking sleepily. It was enough to make Stiles simultaneously melt and want to throw himself in Derek’s general direction and he was of the opinion that Derek going commando in sweatpants should be outlawed by the Geneva Convention.

He scampered to the door of the guest room, easing it open to see the object of his affections sprawled across the bed. Derek was shirtless, the triskele standing out against his bare skin and easily seen with Stiles’ new werewolf night vision. Derek’s smell came rolling over him and he breathed it in, almost tasting the air and stifling a growl as his cock took an interest before throwing caution to the wind and moving to the side of the bed. After all, his dad had said that his bed was off limits but nothing about the one in the guest room and Stiles was very good at reconciling inconsistencies and using them to his advantage.

‘Derek. Hey. Wake up.’ He knelt down and poked at Derek’s unresisting cheek, huffing when Derek snuffled into his pillow and rolled over, giving Stiles his back. Stiles rolled his eyes. He’d come to learn that Derek Hale was actually a champion sleeper when given the opportunity. Still, it gave him license to make a move and Stiles smiled to himself as he lifted the covers and eased in next to him. Derek was warm in just his boxers and there was an awful lot of skin on skin contact as he aligned himself along Derek’s back and nuzzled at his neck, his wolfy instincts making him rumble contentedly at being so close. There was a soft sigh on the other side and then Derek’s sleepy voice. He sounded more than a little exasperated.

‘Stiles.’ His voice was all gravelly and it made Stiles’ toes curl. ‘What are you doing?’

‘Nothing.’ He smiled and chanced a soft kiss to Derek’s bare shoulder, resisting the urge to just bite. ‘Just seeing if you’re awake.’

‘Ugh.’ Derek shifted and his head turned just enough for Stiles to glimpse a hint of dimple, another surprise development. ‘Don’t you have your own bed?’

‘Sure, but my dad’s just left the house I’ve been good all week so I figure we’re owed a little fun time.’ Stiles snuck a hand onto Derek’s hip, hips moving in a gentle thrust to Derek’s very delectable backside. ‘You can’t tell me that doesn’t sound good. And I can smell you now, so you can’t hide it from me.’ He inhaled again, tracking the sharp spike in Derek’s scent.

‘You’re such a little shit.’ There was clear affection in Derek’s tone and Stiles marvelled at how quickly they’d fallen into this. He turned over and he was close enough that Stiles could catalogue a whole range of things he was smitten with, from the sweet buck-toothed smile he was getting to the myriad of colours in Derek’s hazy eyes. He smiled back and then Derek’s mouth is on his, warm and perfect. Stiles pressed up as close as he could, making small noises when he felt Derek’s cock against his thigh and his arm came around to pull him in close. Derek responded by licking at his mouth and Stiles let him in. He loved kissing Derek, couldn’t really get enough of it and the patient and skilful way Derek mapped out his mouth to leave him breathless. He eventually broke away for air and opened his eyes to see Derek smirking at him before he leaned in and rubbed his face all over Stiles,
more like a giant cat than a werewolf.

‘You okay?’ His voice was teasing. ‘Do I need to get the smelling salts?’

‘Fuck you.’ Stiles snipped and dove right back in. His own efforts were a little clumsier and their teeth clacked for a second before Derek placed one warm hand at the side of his neck and slowed him down. He sucked gently on Stiles’ bottom lip and it was game over. He couldn’t take any more and before he even knew what he was doing, he was molesting Derek’s thigh in a way that was anything but graceful and Derek growled at him, a low vibration that just spurred Stiles on. He snorted with laughter as he fought to get a hand under the waistband of Derek’s boxers, but it was halted in its quest to get to the aforementioned ass and Stiles swore loudly when Derek gently pulled it back up to a safer point of contact.

‘Not a good idea.’ He sounded regretful.

‘Fuck good ideas.’ Stiles was getting a little desperate. ‘Look you don’t have to put your dick in me. I am so okay with the not having a dick in me. Just let me get off a little, okay?’

‘You can’t get off a little.’ Derek was using his tone of infinite logic and Stiles snapped playfully at him, teeth scraping over stubble.

‘I would if you weren’t being such a stick in the mud.’ he complained. ‘It’s only third base, dude. Please?’ He looked at Derek imploringly. ‘We can just use hands. Maybe mouths if you want to push the boat out a bit?’

‘God.’ Derek huffed, nose resting against Stiles’ cheek. ‘You really don’t make things easy. Do you have any idea how hard it is to stay focused with you smelling like that?’

Stiles did an internal fist pump and wriggled in what he hoped was an attractive manner.

‘Come on, Derek.’ he wheedled, trying to get his hands down the back of Derek’s boxers again. ‘One teeny little orgasm. We’ll both feel a lot better.’

‘No.’ Derek smiled at him fondly. ‘You’re going back to your bed.’ He held Stiles’ gaze and tried to look like he was resisting, but Stiles could smell him, the thick musky scent of pheromones that seeped through everything. He leaned on closer, nose trailing down Derek’s cheek and letting his eyes flare. Derek growled so softly it was only a vibration through both of them, but his eyes flashed in answer and when Stiles got close enough he kissed him, mouth lingering and tongue sliding back into Stiles’ open mouth so he was practically vibrating with anticipation as he moved his hands back down to Derek’s pants, nearly swooning at how incredibly smooth his skin is.

‘Is this okay? Because I really want you right now.’ He was panting and Derek reached up to run his fingers through Stiles’ hair, tugging lightly as he smiled.

‘Yeah.’ His other hand was moving as well, sliding down Stiles’ side to rest gentle fingers at the waistband of his boxers. ‘Just go slow, okay. And tap out anytime if you need to.’

Stiles took a moment to look at him, seeing past the electric blue stare to the vulnerability underneath. He knew what it cost Derek to trust him like this and he also felt the weight of the responsibility he had to keep him safe. He growled, fiercely possessive all of a sudden, and pushed down to scent mark Derek’s neck.

‘I promise I’ll keep you safe.’ He didn’t know where the words were coming from, but he had to say them. ‘I’m not her. You’re not her. Nothing here is anything but what we want it to be. And if I push to hard, you have to push back and tell me to back off.’
Derek stared at him and then the air seemed to thicken, the scent of him becoming almost suffocatingly thick. He yanked Stiles to him into a messy kiss that got increasingly desperate until Stiles couldn’t breathe. Derek rolled them over a little so he was on top, his weight pressing Stiles down into the mattress and making him growl happily. He got Derek’s ass in both hands and moved so their cocks are almost perfectly aligned, the friction unbelievably good. Derek was hard and thick and smelled incredible, and it was like a whole added layer of almost physical sensation. Derek obviously felt the same way because he buried his face in Stiles’ neck, bracing himself on his elbows as he rolled his hips in a devasating rhythm that had Stiles snarling at him.

‘Your heart is beating so fucking fast.’ he panted, his breath hot on Stiles’ skin. He turned his head, allowing Derek all the access he wanted and thrusting up enough that it sent lightning down his spine when their bodies connected. He raked his nails down Derek’s back, kissing him deep and slow and Derek replied with languid drags of his tongue through Stiles’ mouth.

He started moving, going in a completely unexpected direction with his mouth at the corner of Stiles’ dotting little kisses that were as soft as breaths of air before continuing down his neck. He made Stiles gasp when he licked along his collarbone, punctuating each touch with a gentle bite. Stiles panted hard as the kisses trailed down his chest, letting out a strangled noise when Derek shot him a wicked look through those impossibly long eyelashes and dragged his tongue right over Stiles’ left nipple. His frankly embarrassing squeak was enough to get a low huff of amusement and then Derek did it again, flicking with the tip of his tongue so Stiles had to bite his own lip to stop himself from shouting the house down. In all his self-explorations he’d never managed to make something so simple feel so good.

‘Fuck…Derek...’ He trailed off into a whine.

‘Uh huh?’ Derek licked over him again, his tongue warm and wet. ‘You like that?’

He switched to the other side and Stiles knew that he wasn’t going to make it. His cock felt like it was about to go off like a three stage rocket from all the pent up frustration and he dug his nails into Derek’s shoulders. There was a low growl of warning but Stiles was just the right side of not giving a fuck so he growled right back. Derek’ lifted his head, eyes still burning blue and that broke through whatever semblance of control Stiles had, claws and fangs out as Derek trailed his tongue down Stiles’ stomach, licking along the line of hair from his navel until he could press his entire face against Stiles’ cock, inhaling deeply.

‘You said mouths.’ There was a flash of a wicked smile as he glanced up. ‘You want me to blow you?’

‘Fuck, yes.’ Stiles nearly brained himself against the wall in his attempt to nod vigorously. ‘Christ, yes. We are a-okay for blowjobs. In fact I would be willing to not say a single word for the rest of the day if you put your mouth on my dick. Seriously.’

Derek’s laugh was muffled by Stiles’ boxers and the effect of fangs pressing lightly over his nether regions. He should be scared out of his mind by the proximity but instead of trying to squirm away, which every coherent part of his brain told him he should be doing, Stiles found himself arching up into the damp heat of Derek’s mouth as he licked along the line of his cock, his tongue velvety soft even through the fabric. It was mind blowing and when Derek caught the waistband in his teeth and pulled it down, Stiles started shaking and then next thing he was coming all over Derek’s face, set off by nothing more than a burst of hot air on his cock and the thought of Derek’s mouth on him.

‘Oh fuck.’ He managed to feel mortified once the aftershocks wore off, realising he’d just ruined his first actual potential blowjob. He flopped back on the bed, squeezing his eyes closed and not wanting to be faced with the visual confirmation of his epic failure. Then he heard Derek laughing.
Stiles had heard him laugh before, sometimes mirthless and sometimes so sharp it hurt to hear, but this was heartfelt and light and Stiles cracked open one eye to see what the state of play was, smiling in spite of his embarrassment because Derek was a state, swiping at the sticky white lines that traversed the bridge of his nose and his cheeks and were sticking in his stubble.

‘At least we know you’ve got good aim.’ he deadpanned.

‘Oh jeez.’ Stiles couldn’t help the flare of heat in his chest. ‘That’s so fucking hot.’

‘Yeah?’ Derek raised an eyebrow at him and absently licked a string of come off his fingers from where he’d wiped it off his face. ‘Not what I was expecting, but I guess this can work.’ Then he smiles and it was like the sun coming up.

‘Are you kidding me right now?’ Stiles flailed horizontally. ‘I couldn’t even wait until you actually had your mouth on me. I’m sorry I’m such a stupid asshole who...’ He didn’t get any further because Derek surged up, facefull of come and all, and kissed him quiet.

‘It doesn’t matter.’ His voice was warm with affection. ‘It happens and you’re a virgin and kind of a weirdo so it’s not like I shouldn’t have expected it. Besides it just means I can take my time with you next round.’ He was still smiling so Stiles growled at him and then smacked him on one unyielding shoulder.

‘Now you’re the asshole.’ He slumped back into himself. ‘I can’t believe you’re making fun of me.’

‘No.’ Derek was suddenly serious. ‘I would never do that or laugh at you for this. What we do has to be fun for both if us and that means if shit happens we smile at it and not make it something it isn’t. And in case you hadn’t noticed, my cock is still very hard and really into this. I should also probably tell you that one of the benefits of being a wolf is that you’re going to get it up again in a few minutes.’

‘Yeah?’ Stiles did the same, smirking at the sight of Derek’s now-wet boxers. ‘You need a hand with that?’

‘No.’ Derek rocked back on his heels and pulled his cock out, hand moving desperately. Stiles drank him in, breathing hard until Derek came all over his stomach with a reverberating growl that seemed to go on until Stiles’ stomach is streaked white. The smell of them both was intoxicating, plugging right into the animal part of his brain as the wolf inside him howled. He felt claimed, secure and happy and even more so when Derek fell back down to cover him with his own body. For a while it’s nothing but heaving chests and panting until they looked at each other and then both of them broke down into frantic giggles until it died off and Stiles lay there in astonishment, taking it all in.

‘Goddammit.’ Derek rolled off him onto his back, looking at his soiled hand and then lazily licking it clean, his green eyes blurry with pleasure when he looked at Stiles.

‘Okay.’ He was transfixed by the steady lap of Derek’s tongue. ‘That was amazing.’

‘Yeah?’ Derek smiled, a proper brilliant smile. ‘Good.’ He stretched out next to him and Stiles turned to see that he still had come caught in his stubble. Curious, he gave it a tentative lick, hand on Derek’s chest so he could feel his heart thump. It wasn’t as awful as he’d thought it would be and Derek snorted and batted at him playfully then hauled Stiles over so he was sprawled on top of him. He stuck his face in Stiles’ neck, scenting him, and Stiles smiled and returned the favour, rubbing his cheek against Derek’s neck.

‘I like this.’ he says and Derek licked a wet path up his neck, rumbling in agreement.
‘Me too.’ He pulled back so they can look at each other. ‘Better?’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles lay down and settled in on his shoulder, yawning. ‘And we still got time to get an hour in before we have to get up.’

‘You staying here?’ Derek pushed him, but it wasn’t hard enough to dislodge him. ‘I thought I told you to go back to your bed.’

‘Fuck that.’ Stiles was wonderfully sleepy. ‘If you want me to go, you’ll have to carry me there.’

‘Asshole.’ Derek yawned, but he made no further move to get rid of him until the alarm on Stiles phone went off an hour later and he scrambled out of Derek’s bed to go and turn it off. He came back to find Derek in the bathroom, shower already on and one hand stuck under the water to test it by the time Stiles stumbled in. There was a lot of jostling to get them both in together, shoulders knocking and Stiles’ arms and legs waving around as they got clean. Afterwards he sat on the counter and watched Derek shave, more than a little envious of the fact that he managed to make it look so easy. His own relationship with a razor was a little more fraught and he was pleased he didn’t have to shave every day like Derek clearly had to.

Derek gave him a sidelong look and then reached out lightning quick to smear shaving cream across his cheek and Stiles made gagging noises and swiped at him.

‘You’re such a dick.’ he grumbled and then immediately regretted it when Derek laughed and grabbed him, kissing him until they were both a mess of shaving cream.

Afterwards they were eating breakfast when Stiles had a thought.

‘Can I ask you a favour?’ he ventured and Derek arched an eyebrow at him in answer, spoonful of muesli halfway to his mouth.

‘You already came on my face, Stiles.’ There was a hint of a smile when he said it and Stiles blushed to the roots of his hair and kicked him under the table.

‘No douchebag. I just meant could you like do the boyfriend thing?’ He dug his spoon into his cereal and barrelled on. ‘When you pick me up this afternoon.’ He looked up and saw that Derek was frowning.

‘What the hell are you talking about?’ he asked and shoved the spoon in his mouth.

‘I mean you always just like, make me jump and roll.’ Stiles said. ‘And to be honest, I kind of want to show you off a bit, you know. Show everyone I got enough game to land someone as hot as you.’ He felt silly saying it, but it was out there now. Derek looked at him and tilted his head in a way that was entirely canine.

‘Are you telling me you’re only with me for my looks?’ he drawled and Stiles snorted at him.

‘Dude. You’d do the same fucking thing if you were me.’ He jabbed his spoon at him. ‘I’m allowed to lord it over all those stuck up assholes at Beacon High for two minutes.’

‘You know you don’t owe anyone anything, right?’ Derek was looking at him intently. ‘There’s nothing wrong with you.’ He carried on eating and Stiles huffed.

‘Not the point.’ He poked at his cereal. ‘It was probably great for you. You were like captain of every sports team and probably had people falling at your feet.’
‘I was only captain of the lacrosse team and the basketball team.’ Derek replied evenly. ‘And I had exactly one girlfriend who I killed and then I got seduced by my psychotic substitute teacher who turned out to be a hunter. So yeah, maybe not such a great time at high school.’

‘Christ.’ Stiles slumped further in his seat. ‘Way to make me feel like an asshole.’

‘That’s not it.’ Derek sighed and reached out, hand over his. ‘I’m just saying that you’ve got a lot going for you. You’re smart and funny and way more attractive than you think you are.’

‘Yeah, that’s not really making me feel any better.’ Stiles narrowed his eyes at him.

‘Fine.’ Derek replied, doing the exact same thing back at him. ‘But I am not carrying your goddamn books.’

When they got to the school it was mayhem as usual. The murder on campus had thrown everything into chaos, with everyone talking about nothing else all week. Stiles grabbed his backpack from between his feet and opened the door.

‘I’ll see you later.’ He was about to get out like he normally did when Derek smirked and grabbed the front of his shirt and hauled him over, kissing him full on the mouth. He hadn’t done that in public at all and Stiles lost it a little, smiling like a goof when he was finally let go.

‘See?’ Derek bopped him on the nose with his forefinger. ‘I can do boyfriend.’ Then he ruined it all by shoving Stiles out the car with a sharp grin.

Stiles flipped him off through the window and watched him floor it out the parking lot. He was still standing there when Scott pulled up on his bike, having narrowly avoided being run over by the Camaro. He took off his helmet and bounds up to Stiles, dark eyes sparkling.

‘That’s like five days in a row, dude.’ He held his hand out for a fist bump. ‘You two are like a serious item.’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles felt like he could actually float into school. He’d been keeping Scott appraised of developments. He’d also told him about the alpha attack and that his dad knew, and they’d had a serious talk about telling Melissa too, although now he actually had something noteworthy to mention. ‘I got to come on his face this morning.’ He did not mention that fact that it was an accident and Scott did a double take, his mouth falling open.

‘Really?’ He looked amazed. ‘That’s…’ He seemed to be struggling for words and Stiles gave him a toothy grin.

‘Awesome?’ He grabbed Scott’s arm and dragged him along. ‘Because it was.’ They found the object of Scott’s affections at her locker and she gave them a sunny smile, her and Scott having made up during the week when Stiles got sick of the dying puppy eyes.

‘Hi.’ She kissed Scott hello and smiled at Stiles. ‘You look happy.’

‘I am.’ Stiles shoved one hand in his pocket and grinned, running the other over his growing hair. ‘Had a really good morning.’ He winked at Scott and got a shake of the head.

‘Good.’ Allison had Scott’s hand in hers. ‘So I was thinking seeing as we’re kind of all paired up, we could all do something tonight. What do you think?’ She looked at Scott.

‘I think it’s a good idea.’ He was looking at Stiles. ‘You and Derek could come.’
‘Like a triple date.’ Allison beamed. ‘That’s a great idea.’ She started bouncing and Scott beamed back at her and they were both look so cute together it made Stiles feel a little sick, especially with all the hormones clogging the air. He knew he was pretty dreamy but he’d never be that bad, mostly because he and Derek were actually both assholes. Then he clocked the word triple.

‘Hang on.’ He narrowed his eyes at them. ‘Who else are we talking about?’

‘Me and Scott, you and Derek and Lydia and Jackson.’ Allison explained and Stiles threw Scott a look.

‘Nuh uh.’ He shook his head. ‘Look I love Scott like my brother and you are pretty cool, but I am not going on a triple date with that douchebag. I don’t care how much fun it would be.’

‘Oh.’ Allison looked a little taken aback. ‘Okay. I hope you don’t think he’d be weird about you and Derek. I mean, Danny’s his best friend.’

‘Oh it’s not that.’ Stiles replied. ‘Believe me it’s way more complicated than that.’

‘So what is it then?’ Allison stopped and looked between them. ‘I know there’s something shady going on. Scott won’t tell me what it is, but I’m not stupid Stiles and I don’t believe it’s just you and Derek being a thing.’

Well, fuck.

‘Um…’ Stiles was on the spot, desperately trying to come up with something. ‘It’s...well...so we’re like…’ He looked at Scott hoping for back-up, but Scott was even worse at doing this than he was so Stiles took the easy way out and ducked his head, near galloping down the corridor to home room and skidding around a corner, almost taking out Greenburg as he did.

The morning went fairly smoothly, although Allison kept giving him looks. Stiles did his best to avoid the subject but she started up again when they all convened for lunch. Now he was sitting chewing on his juice box straw while Lydia and Allison threw around suggestions for the triple date after commandeering the table they were at, with Danny opposite him. He was grinning.

‘So you’re now the token gay?’ he asked and Stiles choked on his juice.

‘Dude.’ He cleared his throat. ‘Token bi, thank you very much.’

‘Whatever.’ Danny laughed. ‘I think you’d be better off coming out to Jungle with me tonight. I can show you the scene, such as it is in Beacon Hills.’

‘No.’ Lydia was glaring at both of them. ‘We’re all going out on a nice couples only date night, and there will be no interference.’

‘God.’ Jackson threw his head back in a truly dramatic fashion. ‘Do we have to?’ He waved a hand around. ‘I can think of a hundred things I would rather do, like stab myself in the face with this fork.’ He gestured with the aforementioned implement for dramatic effect.

‘So what should we do?’ Lydia was giving him a death glare that was truly magnificent. She could definitely give Derek a run for his money and Stiles vowed to never let them become friends.

‘We could go out to watch a movie.’ Allison suggested and he snorted, then realises he had and looked up to see them all staring at them.

‘Sorry.’ He smiled apologetically. ‘But I don’t think I like the same kinds of movies you guys do.’
‘Yeah.’ Jackson sneered. ‘Not everyone thinks the Notebook is the pinnacle of filmmaking, Lydia.’

‘You have no taste so I am ignoring that comment.’ Lydia snipped and then looked thoughtful. ‘How about something a little more active. We can let these boys blow off some steam.’ She looked at Jackson. ‘How about bowling? You love to bowl.’

‘With these idiots?’ Jackson sneered. ‘I need actual competition for it to be fun.’

Stiles glared at him, shoving fries in his mouth and trying to bore through Jackson’s skull with his eyes.

‘Dude.’ Scott was getting in on the act now. ‘We are totally competition. We bowl all the time. In fact, I’m a great bowler.’ He completely ignored Stiles’ look of surprise. Jackson raised an eyebrow at him and he rolled his eyes.

‘Then it’s settled.’ Lydia was smiling. ‘We’ll meet you at the alley at seven.’

‘So what have you guys heard about the attack?’ Danny asked when the silence got too much, shining his apple on his sleeve. ‘They’ve officially come out and said it was an animal attack. They’re saying cougar maybe.’

‘Or a mountain lion.’ Jackson said.

‘A cougar is a mountain lion.’ Lydia muttered under her breath and then looked up when she realises Jackson was staring at her. ‘Isn’t it?’

Stiles wanted to lean over and tell her that she didn’t need to act like an idiot to impress her stupid boyfriend. He also wanted to get away from that conversation before they started asking him questions, which inevitably happened when you were the sheriff’s kid.

‘Yeah.’ He hoovered up what’s left of his fries and stood up. ‘Scott, can I talk you you?’ He jerked his head meaningfully and Scott nearly fell over himself getting up. Allison was watching them intently and Stiles grabbed Scott’s arm and towed him out the cafeteria once they’d gotten rid of their trays.

‘What the hell?’ he hissed. ‘You’re a terrible bowler.’

‘I know.’ Scott groaned. ‘I just couldn’t stop myself from saying it. At least you’ll be there.’

‘Hey, I haven’t even asked Derek if he’ll come with us.’ Stiles said. ‘He might think it’s totally lame.’

‘Dude, come on.’ Scott had the puppy eyes out. ‘It’s one night and we can totally take out Jackson. It’ll be sweet.’

‘Fine.’ Stiles dug his phone out.

**Triple date bowling tonite?**

His phone buzzed not a second later.

*I am not exaggerating when I say I would rather disembowel myself with a spoon made from mountain ash. Twice.*

Stiles snorted with laughter and replied.
Way to be overdramatic sourwolf. Please? I’ll let you come on MY face later.

There was a few beats of silence and then another buzz.

Ugh. Fine. But I reserve the right to not speak to any of your little friends.

Deal.

‘He’ll do it.’ he told Scott. ‘But don’t expect him to talk to you.’

‘That’s weird.’ Scott replied. ‘He’s weird. But then you’re not exactly normal so you kind of suit each other.’ His cheerful grin made it impossible for Stiles to be insulted.

‘Oh gee thanks, Scott.’ He shoves him a little harder than strictly necessary, cackling when Scott went into a locker.

The end of the day arrived and they headed out so Scott could get his bike. There was a mass of giggling girls on the front step, ranging from freshman to senior, and for a second Stiles wondered if there’s some sort of thing nobody had told him about. They pushed through and then he saw the cause of the commotion and the recollection of what he’d said that morning comes back from where it’d been elbowed aside by conspiracy theories and avoiding Allison. He’d asked Derek to do the hot boyfriend thing and boy was he delivering, leaning against the Camaro parked front and centre in his leather jacket and his sunglasses, long legs stretched out and looking fine as hell. It was enough to make Stiles trip over his own feet and nearly go sprawling. When he recovered he saw the smug bastard grinning and it made the whispering around him goes up exponentially. Scott snickered and elbowed him in the side.

‘Dude, I think your boyfriend came to get you.’ He was grinning, the jerk. ‘What’s that all about?’

‘I might have said something this morning.’ Stiles confessed. ‘And now I am really regretting it because he did exactly what I asked him to do.’

‘Dude.’ Scott’s smile was wide. ‘You are dating a hot guy. It’s like dating a hot girl like Allison. You just got to own it.’ He pushed Stiles forward. ‘Go get him, Wolfboy.’

‘Oh, shut the fuck up.’ Stiles laughed but he was moving, taking the steps one at a time and feeling like he was starring in his own John Hughes movie. He made it halfway down and caught the smirk being thrown his way. Stiles lifted his head, subtly scenting the air and Derek leaned back against the hood, legs slightly spread. Behind Stiles, the gathered girls started speculating madly as to who he was there for and Stiles started feeling cocky as he took the last few steps, because hell yeah that hot guy was there for him. He got to the bottom of the steps and Derek straightened up as he approached, all the people in the background fading away as Stiles got to him.

‘Hi.’ he said and Derek snorted in amusement and reached out, taking his backpack.

‘You should see your face.’ he replied and then he had one hand on Stiles’ neck, kissing him in front of everyone while Stiles could only stand there and feel himself melting into the tarmac.

‘I thought you said you weren’t going to carry my books.’ he blurted out when Derek let him come up for air, his cheeks burning as he realised everyone on the steps had stopped talking to stare at them.

‘Yeah, but this way I figure I can get to come on your face and your cock.’ Derek said and it made Stiles meep loudly, especially when he took in the unbelievably cocky grin on Derek’s face.
‘Holy shit, dude.’ He was breathless again but Derek just opened the passenger with a dramatic flourish.

‘You getting in or what?’ he asked and Stiles nearly dove in head first, yelping when Derek swatted him on the ass and chucked his backpack in after him. He was still smirking when he got in the other side and Stiles glared at him only partially mollified when he opened the window and caught the whispers coming from the crowd on the steps, all of which seem to be a variation on how the hell did he catch that. He smiled and Derek started the Camaro.

‘Happy now?’ he asked and Stiles nodded.

‘Yeah.’ He was hunched into himself but smiling like a maniac, sneaking a glance out the window and seeing the unconcealed envy on the faces of the girls watching. ‘I am.’

‘You should be.’ Derek’s face softened. ‘You know you’re the prettiest one there.’

‘Dude.’ Stiles was ridiculously pleased at that. ‘Did you just call me pretty?’ His face felt like it was on fire, but his heart was thumping away happily. Derek just shook his head at him and tore tears out the parking lot, nearly running over a string of people as he did.

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When they get to the house, the cruiser was in attendance. Stiles started gnawing at a nail as Derek parked and he could smell his worry. They all knew the alpha was out there and could well go after Noah so he reached over and gently pulled Stiles’ hand from his mouth,

‘Hey.’ He leaned over and nosed at Stiles’ cheek, rumbling at him in an effort to comfort. ‘You okay?’

‘I hate that he’s going to be out there.’ Stiles huffed and Derek nodded.

‘I know.’ He gave the hand a squeeze. ‘But he’s in the know now. He’s got a much better chance being aware of what he’s dealing with.’

‘I guess.’ Stiles opened his door and grabbed his backpack, every move telegraphing anxiety to Derek. Inside the house they find Noah in the kitchen, snacking on a sandwich and dressed to go out on shift.

‘Boys. You have a good day at school?’ This was to Stiles.

‘Yeah.’ He shrugged and headed to the fridge and Derek his a smile. Stiles was almost permanently hungry these days and Derek had been good at making sure that it was always full. He watched Stiles grab a soda for himself before chucking one at him, catching it out the air without even looking.

‘Good.’ Noah smiled at Derek. ‘Thank you for getting him home. I appreciate you looking after him.’

‘No problem.’ Derek replied, feeling his ears go red as he thought about how Noah might feel about just how well he’d looked after Stiles that morning.

‘Now if we could just get someone to look after you.’ Stiles grumbled, going to sit at the table.

‘I’ve been doing this job for twenty years, Stiles.’ Noah went to put his plate in the dishwasher, coming back and pressing a kiss to the top of his head. There had been a lot of those during the
week. Stiles reciprocated, getting up and hugging him until Noah wheezed and tried to shove him off.

‘You’re too damn strong, kiddo. My ribs aren’t built to take werewolf hugs.’ He made exaggerated pained noises but Stiles snorts and refuses to let him go. Derek knew he found his father’s scent as soothing as he did Derek’s and he watched Stiles inhale deeply, listening to his heartbeat steadying while Noah looks down at him with affection clear on his face.

‘You know it’s extremely weird to be sniffed by my own son. I’m assuming all this is perfectly normal behaviour.’ he remarked and Stiles growled softly at him, finally releasing him.

‘It is. Most wolves are extremely tactile.’ Derek sipped his soda. ‘Stiles has adapted to being a wolf extremely well. He’s picking up on the instinctual behaviour I do and running with it.’ He meant it too. Stiles was showing remarkable control, probably a combination of his willingness to embrace the wolf inside him and the bond they had formed.

‘You know.’ Noah said. ‘I think some of those abilities could come in very handy in the police force. Imagine how easy it would be to track a suspect with your sense of smell.’

‘Some are.’ Derek replied. ‘You’d be surprised how many of us there are in mainstream careers.’

‘I suppose you have to earn a living like the rest of us.’ Noah was now regarding him in a considering way. ‘Do you have any plans for a long term career, Derek?’

Stiles blinked in surprise. Derek knew having a job obviously wasn’t something either he or Noah had probably thought about, but he’d had a life in New York. He’d lived in an apartment and bitched about rent, gone out to bars, had friends. He’d had a life.

‘I used to work from home mostly.’ he replied and that just made Stiles even more curious, judging from the expression on his face.

‘Yeah?’ Noah raised his eyebrows in query. ‘What did you do?’

‘Translation.’ Derek was a little abashed. He’d never liked talking about this, always felt a little odd whenever his parents drew attention to it. ‘I have a Masters in Foreign Languages.’

‘Dude, how?’ Stiles interjected. ‘You’re like what, six years older than me?’

‘I graduated early, got on a correspondence programme that let me do some extra credit.’ Derek shrugged. ‘And I’m kind of a polyglot.’ He was even more embarrassed now and Stiles’ mouth fell open as he took in what he’d said.

‘How many?’ Noah asked, looking equally astonished. In their defence, Derek knew his current appearance really didn’t lend itself to the image of a highly intelligent language prodigy. They’d never seen him in New York in regular person clothes and commuting on the subway, going about his life like anyone else.

‘Seven. English, Spanish, French, Italian, Russian, Japanese and German.’ he replied. ‘It’s not a big deal. It’s just a very useful way to make a living.’ He did not mention that he really didn’t need a job because the collective wealth of the Hale family was such that he actually didn’t need to work a day in his life.

‘Dude!’ Stiles was staring at him like he’d just declared that he could do magic. ‘That’s amazing.’ He immediately looked like he was coming up with a plan and Derek had learned to recognise that particular look and the implications thereof.
‘I’m not helping you with homework.’ he stated. ‘I did my time. You can suck it up and learn like everyone else.’

‘But Spanish is so hard.’ Stiles whined. ‘You don’t even speak the best one either.’ He sounded so pathetic that Noah chuckled at him.

‘I don’t think many people speak Polish outside family, Stiles.’ he said and Derek’s ears pricked up.

‘You do though?’ he asked, now interested in being the one asking questions for a change.

‘With a name like Stilinski, of course. Claudia and I both did.’ Noah replied. ‘Stiles grew up speaking it as well. It was the only language his great grandmother could communicate and he was completely bilingual by the time he was in elementary.’ His scent grew sad. ‘Claudia was far better at keeping up with it though. We don’t speak it as much as we should.’

‘So you’re fluent?’ Derek looked at Stiles and Stiles grinned, all smug assurance.

‘Pretty much.’ He was clearly proud of himself and Derek’s brain started whirring at the thought of maybe taking it up. He hadn’t learned something in a while and it would be a good way for them to bond that didn’t require them to be naked.

Maybe. Naked Polish lessons could be fun too.

‘You could teach me.’ he ventured and Stiles’ whole face lit up.

‘Only if you help me with Spanish.’ he bargained and Derek smiled.

‘Fine.’ he relented.

‘Don’t let the little bastard con you.’ Noah was shrugging into his jacket, giving Stiles a look that said he knew exactly what his son was up to. ‘You boys staying in tonight?’

‘No actually.’ Stiles replied. ‘We’re going bowling.’

‘Christ.’ Noah laughed. ‘Try not to break anything please, including Derek.’

‘I don’t think he could break me.’ Derek replied before blushing furiously at the idea of him trying.

‘Not what I meant, kid.’ Noah grinned. ‘It’s just that Stiles and a bowling ball are not a particularly safe combination and now he’s a werewolf, I can’t imagine that being any better.’ He slapped Derek on the shoulder and walked out the kitchen, leaving Stiles glaring daggers after him.

‘I’m not that bad.’ he grumbled.

‘No, you’re not.’ Derek listened to the cruiser start up and pull out with half an ear.

The last thing he really wanted to do was go out. He’d gotten quite used to having Stiles to himself during the week, sitting on the couch and watching TV after eating dinner and getting to kiss like he never really got to when he was a teenager. His relationship with Paige had been pretty short lived and Kate...well, the less said about that the better. She’d never been one for kissing, preferring to get right to the main event.

By contrast, Stiles was enthusiastic in that stumbling boyish way he’d been at that age and he had to admit that sometimes he still felt like that. He’d been around, New York had been good for that, but there had been no connection or relationships to speak of. He was as new to this as Stiles was and so he’d enjoyed their feverish make out sessions, the way Stiles panted just from a hand brushing over
the soft skin of his belly when Derek slipped a hand under his shirt. His smell, always strong under normal circumstances, intensified when he was horny and he made these amazing little whimpery sounds when Derek was sucking on his tongue. The fact that their wolves are shamelessly rubbing themselves all over each other, metaphorically speaking, only makes things more heightened. He had really enjoyed their tussle in the morning, the taste of Stiles’ still strong in his sense memory even after brushing his teeth and many coffees.

He smiled, thinking of how Laura would have mocked him relentlessly for his choice. The memory of her still cut deep, but there wasn’t the same despair that there was even a week ago. Stiles had made things a lot more bearable, him and his father and his new pack of three. Noah was not his alpha, but he was as good as one for the time being and Derek planned to hold onto this for a while. He could afford to compromise.

‘It’ll be fun.’ Stiles looked shifty. He mumbled something else and Derek raised his eyebrows at him.

‘Excuse me?’ He glowered at him and watched how Stiles avoided his eyes. ‘Did you just say even if Jackson and Lydia are going? Why the fuck would you agree to go out with them?’

‘Because Allison is Lydia’s new best friend and she’s dating my best friend.’ Stiles whined. ‘And because Scott said we’re totally going to kick Jackson’s ass at bowling, which was a big fat lie because Scott is actually the worst bowler on the planet.’

‘Good thing for you I’m not then.’ Derek told him. He was actually far more invested in making this boy smile than was good for him but what the hell.

‘Really?’ Stiles’ whole face lit up. ‘Are you telling me that my awesome boyfriend is going to kick Jackson’s ass?’

‘He’s lucky it’s not the only thing I’m going to kick.’ Derek snorted, preening a little. He hadn’t been bowling or dated in forever but he was starting to remember what it was like to have fun. And he had to admit, pissing off the jerk that laid hands on Stiles sounded like fun.

‘Cool. I’m going to go shower and get changed.’ Stiles was already bounding to the stairway. ‘Can we go in the Camaro? It’s way sexier than Jackson’s dumbass Porsche.’

‘Yes, we can go in the Camaro.’ Derek had to hold back a laugh and when the hell was the last time he had done that.

‘Great.’ Stiles yelled loud enough to make Derek wince. ‘You’re also way hotter than he is.’

‘Thank you.’ he called back before the bathroom door slammed shut and the shower started. Half of him was tempted to go and crowd in with Stiles again, but he had been elbowed one too many times in the ribs that morning so he opted for going to lounge on Stiles’ bed instead while he showered. He liked the smell of it, liked to linger over the things in Stiles’ room. It reminded him of his own before Paige, before the fire and how his life had gone to shit. He had lost everything he had that night, not only emotionally but physically. That would have been hard enough as a human, but the loss of scent and the way his room smelled was another gut wrenching blow he’d had to deal with.

He heard Stiles get out and pad down the hall, coming in drying his hair and with another towel around his narrow hips.

‘Shower’s free.’ he said, his pale skin pink from the hot water and Derek lifted his head, scenting him. Stiles smelled so much more like himself without the day’s scents and he grinned as he watched
Derek. ‘You’re a lot more obvious about that when it’s just us.’

‘Humans get worried when we behave differently.’ Derek smiled ruefully moved to sit on the edge of the bed. ‘I was taught very early on that we don’t sniff company or out in public. I meant what I said earlier though. You’re picking it up quickly.’

‘Thank you.’ Stiles looked and smiles happy at the praise before he turned serious. ‘I’m trying, dude. I know how important it is to you that we get this guy. Make him pay for what he did to your sister.’

That little declaration touched Derek in the most ridiculous way and before he could stop himself he was on his feet and taking Stiles’ face in his hands to kiss him soft and sweet until Stiles completely melted into it. That was until the towel around his hips came undone and fell to the ground. They parted and looked down, Stiles face and Derek’s ears going red.

‘Oops.’ Stiles looked up, still blushing furiously. ‘Kind of weird that I let you almost suck me off this morning and now I’m embarrassed that I lost my towel.’ He then clocked Derek’s ears and smiled shyly. ‘Although it seems I’m not the only one freaking out.’

‘It’s your fault.’ Derek muttered averting his eyes as Stiles gathered up his towel. ‘I turn back into a teenager around you. And I was a fucking awkward teenager, Stiles. The only reason I actually spoke to Paige in the first place was because I literally ran into her.’

‘Okay so that’s almost as good as the dorky middle name.’ Stiles was grinning even as he juggled his towels, falling over as he dodged Derek’s half hearted swipe.

‘Still cooler than you.’ he growled and ignored Stiles’ strident laughter as he stomped off to his own room.

His own shower progressed without incident and he dressed, considering the state of his wardrobe. All his things were still in New York, but maybe he could have some things packed up and shipped down to Beacon Hills, especially if it looked like he’d be there for a while. He didn’t feel like he’d be able to go back himself any time soon.

Stiles came and lurked in the doorway while he dressed, making snarky comments about taking fashion tips from Batman and running away when Derek threw a shoe at him. He finally got downstairs in herded Stiles out the door and into the Camaro, listening to him call Scott on the way so he waiting for them when they get to his house. He grinned as he jogged down the steps and to the Camaro and Stiles got out and pulled the seat forward so he could squeeze in the back.

‘This is such a cool car.’ Scott enthused and Derek was pleased even if he was wearing his poker face.

‘Totally hotter than the Porsche.’ Stiles said, never really getting tired of that fact.

‘Yeah.’ Scott was now giving Derek his toothiest grin. ‘So do I have to give you the best friend talk and tell you not to knock my buddy up?’ Derek growled loudly in retaliation and he fell over in the seat with a small yell.

‘Okay.’ He had both hands up in surrender. ‘No best friend talk.’

‘It’s not like I did that to Allison, dude.’ Stiles told him and Scott scrunched his face up in confusion.

‘That’s ‘cause she’s not a guy.’ he pointed out like Stiles was dumb for even saying it and Stiles started to protest so Derek glared at both of them.
‘Enough.’ he said. ‘There will be no warning or threatening or innuendos because if there are, I’ll eat both of you.’ Then he caught the wicked smile that was all over Stiles’ face. ‘And you can shut the fuck up.’

‘Just sayin’. ’ Stiles waggled his eyebrows at him. ‘You know you can totally hit that.’

‘Ew, gross!’ Scott yelped in indignation from the back seat and jammed his fingers in his ears.

‘Only if you can promise not to go off before I even get your cock in my mouth.’ Derek said it casually and Scott made dying llama noises.

‘Great. Sourwolf used humiliation.’ Stiles slouched down as far as he can in his seat. ‘It’s super effective.’

‘You bet your ass it is.’ Derek snickered and kept driving.

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The bowling alley was deserted when they get there. Stiles had no doubt that the murder the weekend before was to blame, along with the curfew that his dad had put in place. Most kids had been talking about house parties and so there was hardly anybody out. He and Scott fell out the car and when he caught up to Derek he had a minor crisis of confidence trying to decide whether he should take his hand before Derek took his on the back swing like it was nothing and linking their fingers together. It made him go pink with pleasure, so stupidly happy at such a tiny thing. Next to them, Scott was smiling happily as he clocked their joined hands. Inside they stopped to get shoes and Stiles was bouncing a little because Derek had done the holding the door thing for him and was now paying for them as well.

‘So is this like a proper date? Not just a hanging out with my friends date?’ he asked and Derek gave him a look like he was nuts.

‘Yes, Stiles.’ he said in an over-deliberate way. ‘It’s an actual date. Considering this morning, I thought it might be a good idea for us to have at least some formalities.’

Stiles nearly fell over at that.

‘Dude.’ he hissed, feeling utterly delighted. He and Scott left Derek buying snacks and went over to find Lydia, Allison and Jackson on the lanes, where they had already commandeered one.

‘Oh look.’ Jackson’s face was a picture of disdain. ‘It’s testicles, left and right.’

‘Blow me.’ Stiles snarked back, grinning at the way Jackson looked past him and then went visibly pale when he saw Derek approaching. He shut up immediately and Stiles wanted to punch the air in victory at having gotten him to shut up.

‘So.’ Lydia’s raspberry lips were curved in a knowing smile. ‘This is the first official outing for you two, isn’t it?’ Her eyes were on Derek and Stiles decided that wasn’t a good thing at all. Lydia was studying him the way she studied a particularly fascinating calculus problem.

‘So what if it is?’ He scooted closer to Derek, feeling the strangest urge to rub his face all over him. He thought for sure Derek was going to be uncomfortable, but Derek actually looked a little bit amused and the same feeling was infiltrating their bond.

‘So nothing.’ Allison said, clearly trying to smooth things over from where she was sitting with Scott pretty much glued to her. ‘It’s cool.’
Stiles felt rather than heard the growl, the vibration so low none of the others caught it at all and he covertly jammed an elbow into Derek’s ribs. The growl stopped instantly and he was getting the benefit of both the Glare and the Eyebrows. He ignored both and claps his hands together.

’Sow we bowling or what?’ he asked and Jackson rose from his self-imposed grump to jab a finger at them.

‘You’re going down, Stilinski.’ he hissed. ‘You and your guard dog.’

Stiles didn’t know what was more horrific, the fact that he had in fact promised to go down on Derek later or that Derek was closer to being an actual dog than Jackson thought, as indeed was he. His nervous giggle came out choked and he clapped a hand over his mouth. Now the Eyebrows were definitely judging him and Scott was going cross eyed with the effort not to laugh out loud.

It got worse once they actually started bowling.

Scott was predictably awful but he really didn’t seem to give a shit because Allison was going all out for Girlfriend Cheerleader of the Year. Lydia was surprisingly and elegantly lethal with a bowling ball and had a higher score than all of them, Derek included.

‘It’s all about calculations.’ she told them after another flawless strike and Stiles noticed that while he would have been watching her like she was a dream goddess come to earth even a month ago, now all he admired was how perfect her aim was.

Derek, for his part, had resorted to aggressively beating Jackson’s score and sitting with his legs open, no doubt doing some kind of overt werewolf territorial display. He was also giving Jackson looks that would have set his head on fire if he were flammable. Stiles would be lying if he said it wasn’t just a little bit hot. Jackson, meanwhile, was leaning back in his seat not quite as well as Derek (nobody glowered like him) even if he was giving it the good old college try.

‘Stiles.’ Derek didn’t break the stare-off between them. ‘You’re up.’

‘Oh good.’ he muttered, getting up and going to get his ball. Even with newly acquired werewolf powers he was ungraceful and barely managed to stop the ball from hitting the gutter.

‘Good one, Stilinski.’ Jackson smirked and Lydia kicked him in the ankle making him splutter in pain.

‘Be nice.’ she ordered and he folded his arms and started sulking. Stiles flipped him off and went to sit down, watching as Scott got up for his turn, Allison cheering him on with bright lovestruck eyes. Derek was watching her. He smelled suspicious and also a little confused.

‘You okay.’ Stiles kept his voice low.

‘She’s just a kid.’ Derek murmured. ‘She doesn’t even know.’ He seemed to shake himself out of whatever he was thinking. ‘Can we go?’

The sudden change of mood sets Stiles’ stomach lurching in sympathy and he nodded.

‘Sure.’ He checked his watch. ‘It’s almost curfew anyway.’ He tapped his watch at Scott as he came back from yet another awful attempt and Scott nodded in agreement.

They all went and handed their shoes. Stiles sat next to Derek and watched the methodical way he laces his boots. The protectiveness inside him intensified, made stronger by the sadness that was seeping through Derek’s scent. He reached over, touching him on the arm so Derek looked up, his
eyes distant. He made a soft rumbling noise and Stiles leaned into him, returning it. The sadness eased a tiny bit and they left. The others were already outside, Scott and Allison kissing in a way worthy of a Shakespearian tragedy.

‘Time to go, buddy.’ Stiles said. ‘You need to turn Allison loose.’ Next to him there was a soft huff and he felt Derek ease a bit.

‘So we’ll see you all later.’ Lydia waved. ‘We’re going to get a movie and go watch it at Jackson’s house.’ She waggled her fingers at them as Jackson is stomping off and then followed with a flounce.

‘I think she likes you.’ Stiles said to Derek. ‘Or at least she doesn’t quite know what to make of you.’

‘She’s smart.’ Derek’s face was unreadable. ‘She reminds me of Laura.’

‘Oh, that’s my dad.’ Allison said and waved at the black SUV pulling into the lot and just like that Derek was suddenly backing off, melting into the shadows behind them. Stiles knew why so he said nothing as Allison gave Scott a final kiss on the cheek and trotted over to the car just as someone got out of it and came around the front.

It was not her dad. Instead Stiles saw a woman and heard Allison greet her as Aunt Kate and his blood ran cold because he knows damn well that Derek was watching this unfold in front of them.

‘Fuck.’ It slipped out and he glanced behind him, the scent he was getting no longer sad but angry. It was the most he’d ever felt from Derek, the bond between them stretched tight with anger and something that felt like an almost feral distress and that made Stiles furious, knowing that even seeing this woman had that effect on Derek.

‘You have fun sweetie.’ Kate’s voice was sugary sweet but Stiles could hear something underneath it that made his skin crawl. ‘Who’s the cutie over there.’ She was looking in his direction and Stiles shoved both hands in his pockets.

‘Oh, that’s Stiles. He’s Scott’s best friend.’ Allison said and then she’s frowning because she was also looking for Derek, presumably to introduce them. She beckoned and Stiles was torn. He really didn’t want to get anywhere near that woman, but he knew if he acted off he’d just draw attention to himself.

Kate watched him approach and he could see she was attractive as hell, but seriously creepy with the way she was looking at him. He’d had enough lectures on the dangers of sexual predators from his father to give no-one the benefit of the doubt and he was very unsettled by the way her blue eyes raked him from head to toe.

‘Another one with brown eyes. You know how to pick them Ally.’ she purred. She moved and she was graceful in the same way a predator would be. ‘So are you the third wheel, sweetheart? I can’t imagine it’s fun watching these two all night. Maybe next time I should come keep you company.’

Stiles wanted to back up but it was too late because she had one hand smoothing over the collar of his shirt and he heard the growl behind him. He had a second to give Scott a startled glance and then a very large obstacle was standing between him and Kate and her face went from seductively predatory to completely shocked in seconds.

‘Stiles already has someone to take him out.’ Derek’s voice was cutting. Kate took a step back and her face smoothed out, her smile back in place.

‘Hey, Derek.’ The saccharine tone she was using made Stiles want to bite her face off. ‘I had no idea
you were back in town. Or that you have a habit of hanging around with a group of teenagers. You
know a lot of people would be very suspicious of a grown ass man wanting to be around underage
kids.’

‘Yeah, well it’s a good thing then that my dad, who also happens to the Sheriff, knows that Derek’s
my boyfriend and is also completely okay with it.’ Stiles snapped before he could stop himself. It
was making him furious what she was implying, knowing how she manipulated Derek when he was
even younger. He took Derek’s hand, just daring her to say something.

He could see the astonishment on Scott and Allison’s faces. They had no idea what was going on.
Stiles also knew that he and Derek might as well have just painted targets on their backs because as
Kate looked between them he can see her connecting the dots and coming up with just who the other
beta werewolf probably was. She held up her hands, painted lips curving up.

‘No offence meant.’ He eyes were flat, the rancid stench of fury pouring off her in waves. ‘Funny, I
had no idea you swung that way Derek. You certainly didn’t when I knew you.’ The implication
was clear and Stiles abandoned any common sense and opened his mouth but Derek beats him to it.

‘That’s because I had no idea what I was missing,’ he said evenly, but his green eyes were cold.
‘Turns out I prefer this side of the bench. God knows it’s better than anything I had before.’

Kate clearly wasn’t as pleased with Derek’s announcement and she was clearly holding back
whatever reply she so desperately wanted to give. There was another note in her scent, overly sharp
like unripe apples, and Stiles realised it was jealousy. That surprised him completely. Derek made no
move to let go of Stiles’ hand. If anything he held it tighter.

‘Kate?’ Allison’s voice is tight and unhappy. She’s not stupid or unobservant in the way Scott is and
Stiles knows that now she’s not going to leave this alone until she gets answers. ‘We need to go.’

‘Sure, sweetie.’ Kate stepped off, her mouth twisting the tiniest bit. ‘God knows what kind of
animals are out tonight.’ She stalked back to the SUV and Allison followed, shooting Stiles and
Derek one last confused look before she got in the car. Scott waved goodbye as the SUV drove off
and he turned around with questions all over his face. For a second Stiles wanted to just grab him by
the shoulders and shake him for loving Allison after what her family had done. Instead, he moved in
closer to Derek, putting his arms around his neck. He was half expecting Derek to resist but he
relented easily, arms around his waist and his face in Stiles’ neck.

‘I’m sorry.’ Stiles whispered. ‘I know it hurts.’ He did too, could feel it spiking like an angry rash
through Derek’s feelings and scent.

‘She’s driving around like it was nothing.’ Derek’s voice was muffled but Stiles could hear the tears
in it. ‘Like killing my family meant nothing. She has no remorse at all.’ He snuffled and then it came
out, low and venomous. ‘I hate her.’

‘I know.’ Stiles tightened his arms and held on until Scott cleared his throat, clearly uncomfortable
with whatever was going on.

‘Stiles?’ He was shifting from one foot to the other. ‘Dude, what the fuck was that?’

‘It’s okay, don’t worry about it.’ Stiles pulled back, shielding Derek as much as he could. ‘We need
to go.’

They walked back to the Camaro, Scott no longer chattering about how wonderful Allison was and
the whole time Stiles could feel the tension in Derek’s body and smell how upset he was. Thankfully
Scott kept quiet for the whole ride back, only breaking the silence to thank Derek before he got out of the car. Stiles went with him and walked him to the door.

‘You know I can get into my own house, right?’ Scott asked and there was an undercurrent of irritation there when he looked back at the car. ‘Is everything okay? That was pretty intense back there. I didn’t know Derek knew Kate.’

‘It’s a long story,’ Stiles said. ‘Derek and her used to be something but it ended really fucking badly and he hates talking about it.’ He listened carefully for a moment, but heard nothing inside Scott’s house. ‘I’ll text you tomorrow. We can hang later if you want?’

‘I can’t.’ Scott said. ‘Allison’s invited me for dinner.’ He was looking at Stiles like he wanted to ask him everything but then his face shut down and he went inside, closing the door without saying goodnight. Stiles wanted to bang his head against the wall because this was all getting too hard to keep quiet. He got back to the car, looking over at where Derek was sitting stony-faced and silent and it made Stiles nearly sick with anger to feel what was going through him - a never ending stream of guilt and loss and self-hatred that he knew Derek had no right to feel.

‘Hey.’ He said it a little too loud and Derek winced, like even words were too much for him to bear. ‘None of this is your fault.’

‘She’s right though.’ Derek didn’t look at him. ‘I’m just like her.’

‘Bullshit!’ Stiles growled and he couldn’t keep his eyes from flashing. ‘You’re nothing like her. She’s a fucking psycho and you’re not for one. Secondly, I choose to be with you regardless of what you are. You’ve never hidden that from me and you’ve told me things that I know for a fact you’re never told anyone else. You trust me and I trust you right back.’ He snapped his seatbelt into place. ‘No let’s go the fuck home so I can make you tea and fucking look after you because right now all my instincts are telling me to go after that bitch and fucking kill her for what she did to you.’

He finally shut up when Derek looked at him, disbelief and hope and fear and just about everything else fighting it out on his face. It was the most Stiles had ever seen him emote. Then he leaned across, too quick for Stiles to even take a breath before he was being kissed so desperately it made his blood catch fire. He kissed back, catching Derek behind the neck and holding on tightly.

‘She’s never going to hurt you again.’ he growled when they parted, eyes glowing. ‘I won’t fucking let her. You’re mine.’ It was slightly more possessive than he wanted it to sound but by the way Derek flashed his eyes back at him and then growled into his neck, Stiles was pretty sure he was okay with that.

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Kate was furious.

She was not used to this, feeling so out of control, had never had a problem with what she did. Taking down wolves was in her blood, has been since the day she turned thirteen and her father put a gun in her hand and got her to shoot the werewolf in the old barn out back in the head. Chris had been sick the first time he’d killed but not her. She’d stood strong and the approval in her father’s eyes had meant more than anything ever had and she still lived for it - to be the best, to be Daddy’s favourite.

Seeing Derek was not something she was expecting. She knew that he and his bitch sister had gotten away, but she’d never thought that he’d show his face back in Beacon Hills and had honestly thought Chris was seeing things when he’d told her, but now it looked like she would get a second chance to take Derek down. Not only that, but now she was sure the teenager with the pretty brown
eyes and attitude coming out of his ears was the mystery beta they were looking for. There was something in the way he and Derek were together that also told her that this was much more than kids playing boyfriends. She’d had the pleasure of killing mates in front of each other, manipulated their overwhelming need to protect each other to make them do things in exchange for a promise to save the other, not that she ever followed through. It was always such fun seeing the hope die in their eyes.

Derek had been one of her first targets. He’d been so pathetically easy to seduce, still hurting from losing the Krasikeva girl that he’d all but fallen into her arms. She’d used wolfsbane diluted in beer to drug him enough that first time that he hadn’t been able to stop her when she’d opened his jeans and made him hard enough to climb on top and fuck. It had gotten her off like crazy, the knowledge of what she was doing and what would come later. She’d taunted him for months after the fire until Laura had gotten wise and dumped their cells. The pain in his voice as he’d cried on the phone had been like mainlining heroin.

The Derek she’d seen tonight though, he was completely different. He was angry but at the same time so controlled and icy that she’d been tempted to say something just to rile him up. The way he’d stepped between him and his whelp had infuriated her. He’d grown up to be beautiful and she’d felt the pull between her legs as she’d looked at him. He’d be fun to break and make into her pet again but she knew that he’d never submit willingly.

Chris had been adamant that she was not to kill him. Derek had apparently done nothing they could pin on him since he’d been back and they knew he was not the alpha, but that wouldn’t stop her. Kate didn’t so much see the Code as a guideline, more like a set of impediments to what she knew was their real mission in exterminating every wolf from existence.

She’d have to be sneaky though and that would mean using outside help. Even an inexperienced were could be difficult to take down. Allison being friends with the boy was also out of the question and she glanced over at her niece. Chris hadn’t wanted to start her training until she was out of school, but Kate knew that she would have to get in first.

‘That boy, Stiles.’ she said. ‘He said he was the Sheriff’s son?’

‘Yeah.’ Allison replied. Her dark eyes were guarded and Kate knew she wanted an explanation. Good thing she was in the mind to manufacture one for her.

‘He says he knows but I think that maybe he doesn’t know everything.’ She chose her words carefully. ‘Like the fact that Derek Hale shouldn’t be anywhere near his son.’

‘How exactly do you know him?’ Allison asked and Kate made her expression as distressed as she could. She was an excellent actress and knew Allison would eat up everything she told her.

‘We were involved once.’ She took a shuddering breath, watching how Allison’s face became sympathetic. ‘He was violent and I ended it.’

‘Violent?’ Allison’s voice was barely a whisper.

‘He’s dangerous Ally.’ she said. ‘He used to hit me, force me to have sex with him. I hate to think what he’s doing to that boy, Stiles is it?’ She shook her head, playing it for all she was worth. ‘He’s just a teenager. He’ll get hurt. You need to help him.’

‘Oh my God.’ Allison’s face was now a picture of righteous anger. ‘I knew there was something funny going on.’ She clenched her fists and Kate smiled to herself. Allison was as easy to manipulate as her father. ‘Why didn’t you go to the police?’
‘Because he threatened me.’ Kate was crowing inside. This was too good to be true. ‘He knows us all, Ally. It wouldn’t surprise me if the reason he’s here and with that kid is to get back at me. His whole family were strange and while they never ever proved that it was arson when his house burned down, I’m pretty sure that he did it. He’s psychotic and you need to stay away from him.’

‘I will.’ Allison was still furious by the look of things and Kate knew that things would be very interesting. ‘Scott’s coming for dinner tomorrow. Can you help me tell him. I don’t want him to be around Derek either if that’s what he’s like and he can help us get Stiles away from him.’

‘Oh honey, I don’t know.’ Kate said, sounding reluctant. ‘I never told your dad what he did and you know what he’s like. We’d have to keep it just between the three of us.’

‘Of course.’ Allison assured her. ‘I promise we won’t tell anyone.’ She even put a comforting hand on Kate’s arm. ‘Anything we can do to help.’

‘Thank you. I knew I could count on you.’ Kate said even as she started to think about just what she needed to do next.

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Derek parked in front of the house and turned to Stiles.

‘You go in.’ he said. ‘I need to go somewhere.’ He could smell the hurt but Stiles didn’t fight him.

‘Will you be back?’ he asked and Derek sighed.

‘I will.’ He meant it but he needed to not be there for a while. This house with its worn in kindness and promise of pack needed to be protected and that could only happen if he had people who can help him do that. Before it was that he had no-one apart from Laura and while she’s gone, he has Stiles and Noah and Deaton and he means to make use of this. It had been so long since someone had loved him enough to defend him so openly and Derek knew there was nothing he wouldn’t do to protect the Stiles. He placed one hand at the side of his neck and and Stiles met his eyes, clearly concerned.

‘I’m not going to do anything dangerous.’ He watched Stiles relax. ‘I’m going to talk to Deaton. He needs to know about this. If Kate now knows that I’m here, it’s only a matter of time before she makes a move and I want to be ready and I want to protect you.’ He rubbed his thumb along the sharp cut of Stiles’ cheekbone. ‘You said you weren’t going to let her hurt me? Well, the same goes for you. I’ll never let her get anywhere near you if I can help it.’

‘What can Deaton do?’ Stiles asked. ‘He’s not a cop. We should tell my dad rather.’

‘Deaton has other ways we can protect ourselves.’ Derek told him. ‘And I know how hunters operate. They have weapons that can take us down. We have to be prepared.’ He let Stiles go. ‘Go get some sleep. I’ll be back in a couple of hours, I promise.’

‘Okay.’ Stiles leaned in quickly and kissed him, soft and so heartfelt that Derek wanted to grab him and never let go. He watched him all the way into the house, tracking his heartbeat until the light went on upstairs, then turned the Camaro back on and drove towards town.

Deaton’s lights were still on when he got there and he didn’t bother knocking when he went in to find the vet in the back room.

‘You should lock your doors.’ he said and Deaton snorted. He had a book laid out on the table in front of him and Derek recognises the language as Aramaic.
‘I have some ideas.’ he offered. ‘About how to track our mystery alpha.’ He looked up and then tilted his head in question. ‘What happened?’

‘The fire.’ Derek said. ‘You know who started it?’

‘I know your sister was convinced it was a conspiracy and not faulty wiring.’ Deaton replied. ‘I know that Noah Stilinski is busy building a case for that as well.’

‘It was Kate Argent.’ Derek told him. ‘I know because I’m the one that inadvertently helped her. She approached me under subterfuge and I gave her everything she needed to destroy my family.’ He felt sick to his stomach but telling Deaton helped, like poison draining from an infection. He waited for Deaton’s reaction but the vet’s black eyes were completely calm and he smelled neutral.

‘I always thought there was something. I admit I never suspected that.’ He didn’t ask Derek to elaborate and for that he was grateful. ‘Why are you telling me this now?’

‘We ran into her tonight.’ Derek said. ‘She saw me with Stiles so it’s highly likely she’ll put two and two together and realise the person the alpha bit is him. I need something to keep him safe.’

‘She’ll be using hunter weapons.’ Deaton frowned. ‘Do you have any countermeasures?’

‘No.’ Derek shook his head. ‘Just what I am.’

‘Have you told him about your weaknesses?’ Deaton turned around and opened a glass fronted cabinet behind him.

‘Yeah.’ Derek watched carefully. ‘I need to train him properly. I’m going to take him to the preserve tomorrow. Start teaching him how to fight.’

‘Also work on his senses.’ Deaton said, coming back with a couple of small brown glass bottles. ‘He’s smarter than you even though he’s not as strong so use that too.’ He set the bottles down. ‘These are wolfsbane extracts, but you know that if you get hit by a hunter bullet…’

‘I need one to counteract the wolfsbane.’ Derek nodded. ‘What are these ones?’

‘They’re anaesthetics and painkillers.’ Deaton explained. ‘I have some dried as well which you can use for inebriation but I think maybe it’s best to keep those out of Stiles’ hands.’

That pulled a wry smile out of Derek, remembering how he and Laura used to sneak the wolfsbane treated alcohol his parents, aunts and uncles had drunk.

‘I’m betting a drunk Stiles would be even louder than normal.’ he said and Deaton smiled. It’s barely a twitch of his mouth but Derek knows it’s meant well.

‘How is he?’ he asked and Derek shrugged.

‘Things are okay.’ he said, skirting around what had happened since the full moon.

‘How did he react tonight?’ Deaton asked and Derek thought about how Stiles held his hand tight enough to have bruised if he’d been human.

‘He was protective.’ The words alone made him feel wanted like he hadn’t since he had a pack.

‘He would be.’ Deaton said. ‘He’s young though and probably impulsive. You need to make sure he doesn’t take unnecessary risks. Both of you need to stay safe.’ He placed something else on the counter and Derek stared at the objects.
‘Um.’ He swallowed noisily, ears going red. ‘That’s not what I expected.’

‘It will be inevitable, Derek.’ Deaton said. And you know what could happen.’ He nodded at the rings lying on the table. ‘I had those made for when Peter was going to be mated. Then it all fell through and they’ve been sitting gathering dust ever since.’ He raised his eyebrows at Derek. ‘It doesn’t hurt to be prepared. I’m also assuming that once the alpha has been taken care of, you’ll want Stiles to take the pack sign.’

Derek found himself nodding. Deaton made a considering noise.

‘Come and see me when he’s ready.’ he said. ‘I know that you’re staying with them at the moment. Noah would benefit from having some wards around the house, just in case. I’ll speak to him about it tomorrow.’ He leaned on his hands. ‘Are you going straight home?’

Derek nodded and swept the bottles up, putting them in his pocket.

‘Good.’ Deaton folded his arms. ‘I can’t help but feel we have a fight brewing.’

‘Yeah.’ Derek replied. ‘Thanks.’

‘Anytime.’ Deaton replied. He didn’t see him out.

In the parking lot Derek took a second to breathe in deeply. He still had the stink of Kate’s perfume in his nose, making him feel nauseous with the associated memories. It was no surprise that he preferred men now, free from the recollections of what she had done to him.

A noise came from off to his left and he froze, turning his head to look behind him. There was nothing there and he eventually chalked it up to paranoia, getting in the Camaro and leaving even as the shadow that was watching him melted back into the side of the building.

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‘You know they close at half past eleven.’ Jackson grumbled and Lydia rolled her eyes at him. They were way past curfew but she wasn’t particularly worried. Her parents and Jackson’s were not really bothered about where they were most of the time and so they went for dinner before going to the video store.

‘Well then you better get your ass inside and go get the movie.’ She studied her mouth in the visor mirror and wiped away a barely discernable smudge.

‘I told you, I don’t want to watch the Notebook.’ Jackson’s sulk had only gotten worse since they left the bowling alley and Lydia had had enough.

‘It’s that or you take me home.’ she hissed. ‘And right now, that’s looking like my best option.’ She narrowed her eyes at him and he huffed but eventually relented, knowing if he didn’t that he would be getting nothing out of her. In fact, she was quite tempted to deny him anyway for his petulance. She watched him storm over to the store, enjoying her little victory. Jackson was very easy to keep wrapped around her finger, although she tried not to push him too far.

Lydia started to get impatient after what felt like ages had passed. Jackson hadn’t reappeared and she knew it didn’t take that long for him to get the movie she wanted so she sighed and opened her door. He was going to catch hell for making her get out the car, but as she went into the store something prickled up her spine.

It was quiet, nobody in sight, and Lydia felt the first trickle of panic as she started moving down an aisle.
‘Jackson?’ She got to the end by the open area where the cash desk was and her eyes widened because she could see two legs sticking out from another aisle, the cheap light brown carpet around them stained a deep red. Not only that but Jackson was on the ground with something crouched over him that looked like it had come out of some demonic nightmare. It was huge and misshapen, black skin and coarse hair making it look not quite like an animal. It had Jackson pinned on his stomach, the claws of one huge hand driven into the back of his neck and when it looked up at her, maw dripping and eyes glowing red, Lydia couldn’t even scream she was so shocked by what couldn’t possibly be real and yet was right in front of her.

The creature snarls and tears it claws from Jackson’s neck and then it’s stalking towards her and she wants to run but she’s frozen in place. She digs her nails into her hands as the thing gets close enough for her to feel it’s hot breath on her face and hear it drawing in deep sniffing breaths and then it’s nose, cold and wet like a dog’s, is under her sweater and teeth sink into her side and she falls, down and down into black.

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Noah got the call just as he was finishing off a sneaky burger and hoping like hell that his son’s new super senses wouldn’t pick it up when he got back. It was the first time he was chancing it but the events of the past week and his hellish schedule entitled him to a little bit of comfort food. The dispatcher calling in gave him the code and Noah’s blood ran cold when he heard that there was another casualty.

He floored it, tearing through the streets with his lights flashing and sirens blaring until he got to the video store parking lot. The ambulance service had beaten him there and there were already two deputies on scene. Graeme, who was the one closest to him, came over to the car, her face pale. ‘It’s another attack.’ she told him. ‘The victim is in pieces. It’s the worst thing I’ve ever seen.’ It was clear that she was very shaken and Noah knew it was going to be another endless night.

‘Shit.’ He started walking towards the door. ‘What else?’

‘We got two witnesses.’ Graeme nodded towards the ambulance. ‘But they’re both in shock so the EMT is busy checking them over. I’ve already got dispatch to call their parents.’

‘Statements?’ Noah asked and she shook her head.

‘The Whittamore boy says something jumped him from behind and Lydia Martin is not making any sense at all. She said it was some kind of animal but she couldn’t say what it was.’

‘Okay.’ Noah laid a hand on her arm. ‘I want you to deal with the parents when they get there. Those kids will need to speak to us again later.’

Graeme walked off, and Noah continued into the store, drawing his service weapon as a precaution. There was no sound at all except for a flickering light overhead and it completely unnerved him. He walked down the aisle and when he got to the end he inhaled sharply.

The dead man was a mess of blood and guts, exposed ribs sticking out and glistening. The stink of blood was so strong that Noah had to breathe through his mouth until he acclimated, screwing his face up in abhorrence at what he was seeing. He has no doubt that he was looking at the man from his list, even before he crouched to check the bloodstained name badge on what was left of the man’s chest. He looked around for CCTV and spotted one on the corner over the cash desk and rays that it was working.
He could really use a break on this.

***************

In Stiles’ room, Derek lay on his back and stared at the ceiling. Stiles was on his side, one arm draped over him and his head on Derek’s shoulder. They hadn’t spoken since he got back, apart from Derek showing him the bottles from Deaton and a brief explanation as to what they were.

Derek turned his head to look at him, gently running his fingertips along Stiles’ arm and getting momentarily lost in his warm amber eyes. If he’d had this all those years before, he wouldn’t have looked twice at Paige or Kate, not for a second. Stiles was watching him in turn, his face uncharacteristically serious as he breathed steadily. Every now and then he moved just enough to nose at Derek’s face and then he settled back down again and Derek smiled at him.

The howl took them both by surprise and they sat bolt upright. Derek instantly moved his arms around Stiles protectively, holding him close.

‘He’s looking for me.’ Stiles sounded scared and when Derek looked away from the window he saw that his eyes were glowing gold.

‘He can’t hurt you here.’ he said. ‘I’ve got you.’ He nuzzled at Stiles’ neck, feeling the bond between them. ‘Just hold onto me.’

‘Okay.’ Stiles leaned into him and they lay back down, legs tangled. The howl came again, plaintive and calling out to both of them. Derek tried to tune it out but it was difficult.

‘He sounds so sad.’ Stiles murmured. ‘I almost feel sorry for him.’

‘He’s insane.’ Derek replied, absently scratching through Stiles’ hair. ‘We can’t help him. Putting him down is the kindest thing to do.’

‘Why though?’ Stiles asked. ‘How did he get like that?’

‘Sometimes wolves go mad when they lose everything.’ Derek said. ‘He might have lost his mate or his pack. That would drive anyone crazy.’

‘Not you though.’ Stiles moved up onto one elbow and looked at him. ‘You seem pretty sane to me.’

Derek met his eyes and knew that Stiles could see right into him. It was simultaneously the scariest and the most incredible thing he’d ever experienced.

‘But I’m broken.’ he whispered. ‘You know that.’

‘Maybe.’ Stiles nudged his nose with his own. ‘But I’m not exactly the most stable person either and I know what it’s like to lose someone.’ His face was completely open. ‘Maybe we can fix each other?’

Derek nodded and pulled him close, kissing him softly.

‘I’d like that.’ he whispered.

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It took well over three hours for the coroner to take the body away and the forensic techs to bag up all the evidence, by which time the owner of the store had been and gone. His statement was very brief. The deceased had come to work for him three months earlier. Yes he knew about his criminal
record but the guy had kept his head down and complied with the terms of his parole. No, he’d never had any trouble with wild animals lurking in his store and eating his staff.

The two kids had been dispatched to the station for their parents to collect after a final check up and Graeme had gone with them to see of she could get anything more coherent. Noah didn’t need it though to know that this was their alpha again. He picked up the phone and called Derek’s cell.

Derek picked up after the first ring.

‘Noah?’ He was on alert, his voice sharp.

‘The alpha’s killed a video store clerk.’ Noah said. ‘I hate to ask you but could you come down and have...well have a sniff around.’ He felt stupid for saying it but it wasn’t like he wasn’t right.

‘Okay.’ There was the sound of Derek moving and then Stiles’ voice. He was obviously arguing with Derek and then the phone was wrestled away.

‘Dad?’ He sounded worried and Noah sighed.

‘What time did Lydia and Jackson go home?’ he asked and Stiles made an alarmed noise.

‘The same time we did.’ he said. ‘Dad? Are they okay?’

‘No injuries, thank God.’ Noah looked around to make sure he was out of earshot. ‘I thought you and Derek should know.’

‘Fuck.’ Stiles blurted out. ‘Did they see it?’ There was the very loud sound of Derek swearing in the background and Noah was impressed by the boys’ creativity.

‘They saw something, enough for Lydia to think it’s our mystery Beast of Beacon Hills.’ he said and Stiles consulted Derek again.

‘I can ask her.’ he offered. ‘I’ll do it when she’s at school tomorrow, maybe get some more information.’

‘All right.’ Noah said. ‘Send Derek over and I’ll see you later. And that means Derek, not you. You are to stay right where you are, you hear me?’

‘As if.’ Stiles snorted and hung up on him, leaving Noah swearing at the stubbornness of his only child.

‘Dammit, Stiles.’ he muttered and went back to his crime scene.

************

‘No.’ Derek was trying to be decisive but it was very difficult when the person he was trying to argue with was having none of it. Stiles even had his shoes on already and when Derek shoved him on the bed, Stiles just growled at him and got back up again.

‘Dude, you are not leaving me home alone.’ He grabbed his hoodie. ‘So shut the fuck up so we can go and do the sleuthing.’

‘I don’t think your father would appreciate you calling it the sleuthing. Not at all.’ Derek pointed out, grabbing his jacket and keys but Stiles was already out the room and charging down the stairs, making him jog to catch up.
They bickered the whole drive over and Derek parked a couple of streets down so as not to draw attention. He lead Stiles not to the front, but to the rear of the adjacent line of shops and around the back to where the alleyway runs. Stiles followed and Derek would swear that he was humming something that sounds suspiciously like the Mission Impossible theme. He stopped and glared at him and got a grin. Derek shook his head at him and then surveyed the building for a way up. He found it in the form of a fire escape ladder that didn’t quite reach down past the first storey and backed up to give himself space before taking a running jump and catching the lowest rung in his hand and hauling himself up.

He got himself settled half way up and held a hand down. To his surprise, Stiles gave him a smug look and then he was doing the same thing, jumping easily to catch the ladder and pull himself up with little effort. Derek took this in stride and climbed, getting to the rooftop and watching Stiles climb over after him.

‘So what was that?’ he asked and Stiles cackled.

‘What? I climb Scott’s roof all the time. I know I look like I could probably kill myself if I attempted anything remotely athletic a lot of the time, but this shit I got.’ His dark eyes were glowing faintly and Derek raised his eyebrows at him. Stiles was clearly tapping into the wolf which showed a level of control that was remarkable considering it was largely subconscious. A thought formed in his mind about what they would be doing later in the day.

He lead the way across the rooftops until they got to the alleyway between the building they were on and the video store. He leaped across the gap, landing gracefully and then beckoning for Stiles. His jump was a little more flailing but he landed solidly and Derek was pleased. He could hear the sound of Noah’s team below, see the flashing lights, and he trotted to the edge with Stiles following to look down at the roof.

‘Ew.’ His nose wrinkled. ‘It used blood?’ The coppery scent was strong enough to almost conceal the stink of the alpha underneath it.

‘Yup.’ Derek looked out over the edge. ‘You see what the pattern is?’ He caught sight of Noah and winced because the sheriff was standing with a man who looks like one of the parents and who was yelling at him, right up in his face.

‘It’s a spiral.’ Stiles was next to him and his reaction when he saw the man instantly put him on alert. ‘Fuck, that’s Jackson’s equally assholeish father. He’s the ADA and he acts like my dad is his personal employee.’ He snarled softly and Derek eyed him, fascinated by how instinctive Stiles’ was when he forgot to be human. It got worse as Stiles heard the way Whittamore was berating his father and Derek smelled the tension and anger emanating from him, enough that he reached for Stiles’ wrist to ground him. He relaxed a little and they listened in until Whittamore waved a finger under Noah’s nose and then stormed off. Noah waited until he was out of earshot and then muttered the word pompous little prick under his breath, making Stiles bark a short laugh and then clap both hands over his mouth. It was obviously loud enough for Noah to pick up and he looked up towards the roof, seeing them and glaring at Stiles for disobeying him. He gestured to the alleyway and Derek nodded, taking Stiles’ arm.

He chose a spot close to the alleyway entrance and dropped down. It was a good fifteen feet, but he landed soundlessly. Noah was already coming into the shadows when Stiles did the same and his astonishment at the fact that his son had just leaped from the top of a building was almost comical.

‘Jesus Christ.’ He had one hand pressed over his heart. ‘That’s the shit that will kill me, not a goddamn burger.’ Stiles just snorted and dusted himself off. ‘So?’
‘Definitely the alpha.’ Derek said. ‘He’s drawn a spiral on the roof.’

‘Who was it?’ Stiles was peering out the alleyway and Noah huffed and dragged him back into the shadows by his hoodie.

‘Our good friend Arsonist Number One.’ he said. ‘It’s pretty clear that this alpha is taking people out one by one. The question is who will be next?’

‘Shit.’ Stiles’ smile was wicked. ‘Does that mean a new Chemistry teacher might be in my future?’

‘You wish.’ Noah said. ‘I need to get someone on him and try and find the other two as well. If I can get one of them to give something up, I can throw all three of them in jail and hopefully get them in front of the DA before everyone’s too dead to testify against Kate.’ He looked at Derek. ‘Speaking of, I need you to lie low for a few more days. Whittamore was making noises about getting in touch with the FBI over this. He hasn’t got a leg to stand on, but I’d rather not take the chance.’

‘I can do that.’ Derek said. ‘I’m taking Stiles to the Preserve later today. We’re going to work on his self-defense skills.’

‘Good.’ Noah nodded his approval. ‘You know how to shoot, Derek?’

‘No, sir.’ Derek frowned. ‘I never needed to.’ He lifted a hand. ‘Kind of got built in weapons.’

‘Well, I think it would be a good idea for you to learn.’ Noah glanced at Stiles. ‘You two are coming into do some range time this week. If we can get a handle on the ammo then we can get you kitted out. Stiles already has his certification and carry permit, but I’d feel better knowing you do too.’

‘It’s a good idea, dude.’ Stiles said to Derek. ‘We should probably use every advantage we have.’

‘Okay.’ Noah looked back towards the alley. ‘I’m going to be here all night and probably most of tomorrow. I’ll check in when I can.’ He gave stiles a quick hug and then squeezed Derek’s shoulder. ‘You boys get your asses home and call me if anything comes up.’ He strode back out the alleyway and Stiles face did that complicated thing where he was battling his feelings.

‘I hate that.’ he whispered. ‘And that asshole Whittamore just treats him like shit.’

‘Explains a lot about Jackson though.’ Derek moved next him, watching Noah talking to two deputies. He looked at Stiles, the sharp profile with his upturned nose highlighted by the police lights. ‘It also explains a lot about you. You dad is a good person and a good sheriff. A lot of people wouldn’t have been close to being understanding about all this shit. You should be proud of him.’

‘I am.’ Stiles said, all protective ferocity. His eyes were flickering again when he looked at Derek. ‘No matter what anyone ever says about him, he’s been good to me and he’s always done the best he could.’ His hand found Derek’s. ‘I’m sorry I’ll never get to meet yours.’

‘Me too.’ Derek nuzzled the top of his head, the not quite buzz cut making his nose itch.

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In her bathroom, Lydia winced as she looked at the bite that marred the perfect white skin of her hip. It wasn’t hurting anymore and had stopped bleeding almost instantly when the thing had licked it. There were four distinct punctures interspersed with smaller notches from the creature’s incisors and there was a brief sting as she dragged the cotton ball soaked in disinfectant over it.

Lydia had no idea why she hadn’t said anything about being bitten. Jackson had been groggy when
he’d finally come out of the trance-like state to find her slumped against the shelving unit. The wounds from the creature’s claws had sealed up and he didn’t even seem aware of what had happened so she’d kept her mouth shut and told the EMT nothing. Then she’d been taken to the station and collected by her parents and brought home, questioning everything she knew and her own sanity into the bargain.

‘Lydia? Honey are you okay?’ Natalie’s voice came from her room and Lydia quickly tugged down the top of her pajamas as her mother came to the bathroom door and peered in. ‘I thought you’d need something to help you sleep.’ She handed Lydia a couple of small blue tablets and then smoothed her hand over her hair. ‘Your father and I are worried about you. That was a terrible thing to see.’

‘I’ll be fine.’ Lydia reached for her tooth mug and filled it. ‘I’ll take these and go to sleep. Maybe not go in tomorrow.’

‘Of course.’ Natalie replied. She pressed a kiss to Lydia’s temple. ‘Night sweetheart. Sleep well.’

Lydia watched her go in the mirror and then fixed on her reflection. She spent a few moments taping a square of gauze over the bite before flushing the pills with a look of distaste on her face. She went back into the room and considered that a couple of weeks ago she might have broken down but now she was a lot more open to what had happened. All the weird shit that had been going on with Stiles, who was nowhere near as sneaky as he thought he was, had presented her with an interesting little puzzle that she’d been pondering since the events at her party. The man who’d come to replace the door the next day had informed her that he was impressed that someone had taken it down and that, combined with everything else, had gotten her thinking.

The thing she’d seen in the video store hadn’t been her imagination and it hadn’t been a mountain lion or any other kind of wild animal. It’s glowing red eyes had looked at her with intelligence and she knew that being bitten was going to turn out badly for her.

Her laptop whirred softly as Lydia booted up, her eyes tracking the words as she entered them into the search bar, inhaling sharply when she saw the search results come up. She started reading, knowing that none of this should be real but also that she believed her own eyes and trusted herself to not be crazy. The deeper she got, the more things started to make a horrible sort of sense as the tiny clues and misdirections and things that simply didn’t make sense all fell into place.

Lydia eventually slammed her laptop shut with a determined look on her face, then picked up her cell and scrolled to a number that no-one knows she had. She tapped out a message and sent it, knowing that she needed answers and she was going to do whatever it took to get them.

_We need to talk. Come see me. Do NOT tell anyone. Bring your boyfriend._

Message sent, Lydia got under her comforter and settled a hand over the gauze as she contemplated just how her life was going to change.
Control

Chapter by HaleHathNoFury (My_Trex_has_fleas), My_Trex_has_fleas

Chapter Summary

Time to start getting a handle on things.

Stiles was groggy the next morning when he woke up. He was in his own bed and sprawled out, the sound of his cell ringing making him lift his head and growl in its direction.

‘Answer your goddamn phone already!’ Derek yelled from his own room. He sounded grouchy as hell, but considering they were both running on very little sleep, it was to be expected.

‘Shut up, sourwolf!’ he yelled back, grinning as Derek growled while he scrabbled for his phone and checked the number. It was not one he recognised so he was cautious as he answered it. ‘Hello?’

‘Are you ignoring my message on purpose?’ The voice was snippy and it took a second for Stiles to realise who it was.

‘Lydia?’ He sat up and frowned. ‘Why the hell are you calling me?’

‘Obviously you haven’t even read the message.’ Her voice was cutting. ‘I need you to come over. Now.’ She hung up on him and Stiles stared at his phone’s screen in bemusement. He flicked through to his messages, eyes widening as he read the one that could only be from her.

‘What did she want?’ Derek was leaning in his doorway, black hair a mess and his green eyes narrowed against the sunlight streaming through Stiles’ window.

‘For us to go over there.’ Stiles got up, stretching and relishing the way his body ached in a very pleasant way. ‘Guess she wants to talk about last night.’

‘Great. Another problem child I have to deal with.’ Derek’s sarcasm could cut steel but his eyes are twinkling and Stiles grinned and launched a pillow at him. Derek batted it away easily and then he was right there in Stiles’ space, nosing at him and rumbling happily. ‘You okay?’

‘I’m good.’ Stiles linked his arms around Derek’s neck. ‘I should be asking you that after last night.’

‘I’m dealing with it.’ Stiles linked his arms around Derek’s neck. ‘I should be asking you that after last night.’ He’d been worried, especially when Derek had refused to share his bed citing a desperate need to sleep. He looked into his eyes and listened to his heartbeat, thankful to see and feel nothing but calm through their bond.

‘I’m dealing with it.’ Derek told him and Stiles knew he’s telling the truth. It comforted him no end. ‘Get ready and we can go grab something to eat on the way to Lydia’s. I’m assuming she’s not going to let us get away until she has what she wants.’

‘It’s like you know her already.’ he cackled and then yelped indignantly when Derek got him around the waist and threw him on the bed, chuckling as he watched Stiles flail and then hightailing it out the room before he could get revenge.

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Noah got home at about eight, nearly falling out of the cruiser in exhaustion. He had about an hour to have a shower, get into a fresh uniform and give his son hell for not listening to him so he unlocked the front door and staggered in, heading upstairs and peering in at Stiles’ door. His son was half dressed, digging through a dresser drawer in search of a t-shirt, and Noah noticed with some surprise that he was looking considerably broader in the chest. The muscles in his arms and shoulders were also more defined, rangy and lean and startling him a little. Stiles glances back over his shoulder at Noah and grinned.

‘Hey Dad.’ He pulled an obnoxiously bright blue t-shirt over his head and Noah winced when he sees it was his stud muffin one.

‘Hey yourself.’ he said. ‘I’m just looking in to check you’re both okay and grab some sleep if I can.’ He watched Stiles rub his eyes.

‘You catch the bad guy?’ He sounded like he used to when he was little and Noah’s heart ached at how much he’d had to grow over the years.

‘Not yet.’ He leaned against the doorframe and yawned. ‘The surveillance is a bust. Both cameras were out. The owner hasn’t had them operational since they went down last year. He says they’re just for show now, do the job without him having to pay for their upkeep so we got nothing from that. The statements from Jackson and Lydia are vague at best, so I’m back to knowing what the hell is going on and being able to prove exactly jack shit of it.’ The bathroom door opening made him turn to see Derek coming out in his boxers, hair wet from the shower. Noah noted that his physique was considerably more impressive than Stiles’ and mused as to whether that’s because he was born a wolf.

Derek looked at him as he scratches at his stubble and then tilts his head. Noah stifled a smile and wondered if Stiles would pick up the same mannerism.

‘You’re going to have to go through the others.’ he said and Noah nodded.

‘Yeah.’ He straightened up. ‘What time are you going out?’

‘Now.’ Stiles was off the bed, laces tied. ‘We’re going out for coffee.’ He gave Noah an affectionate shoulder bump and then hurtled downstairs, giving Noah the chance to raise an eyebrow at Derek.

‘He’s being particularly evasive this morning.’ he said and Derek’s ears went red. ‘I am surprised at how early he’s awake. Anything I should know about?.’

‘I can’t say.’ he mumbled and Noah wanted to laugh at how earnest he was. ‘But if it turns out to be important we’ll tell you. Stiles seems to think we’re on to something and I can’t say no to him so he’s dragging me out.’

‘It’s those goddamn Bambi eyes.’ Noah chuckled. ‘I can’t tell you how many bedtimes were missed because of them. Claudia was the same, and Stiles is nothing if not her son.’ He gently rapped the door frame with his knuckles. ‘Just don’t let him push you around. He’s a bossy little sonofabitch with absolutely no sense of self-preservation. I’m counting on you to be the adult here and keep his ass out of trouble.’

‘Yeah, I’ve realised that.’ Derek replied. ‘I’ll do my best.’

‘Good.’ Noah waved him off. ‘I want to be kept in the loop.’ He looked over his shoulder as Stiles galloped back up the stairs, pulling on a flannel shirt and skidding on the floorboards as he got to them. He had his cell in one hand and a very excited look on his face.
'Come on already.' He waved the phone under Derek’s nose. ‘You know she’ll kick our asses if we keep her waiting.’

‘Who will kick your ass?’ Noah asked and Stiles looked a bit shifty but one glare from Noah got him to cave.

‘Lydia.’ he said. ‘She asked us to come over.’

‘Really?’ Noah frowned. ‘I thought you were going to wait until school to talk to her.’

‘No, Dad.’ Stiles jabbed at the screen. ‘She messaged me last night and then called to bust my balls when I didn’t answer her this morning. I didn’t even know she had my number. She wants to talk about last night.’

‘Now isn’t that interesting.’ Noah narrowed his eyes at him. ‘You are of course going to take copious notes and report back to me when you’re done. Understood?’

‘Fine.’ Stiles huffed, grabbing Derek by the arm and dragging him after him. ‘We’ll see you later.’

‘Bye Noah.’ Derek’s voice came from the stairs as he was physically dragged away and Noah grinned, going into his room where the promise of a hot shower and a soft bed called to him like a siren.

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They grabbed coffee and doughnuts on the way, steadily eating their way through a good dozen before they got to Lydia’s house. Her parents’ cars were gone and it took a few minutes for her to answer the door. When she did, it was in sweats and a pink hoodie, her face free of make-up and her hair in a messy knot on top of her head. She looked so unlike herself that Stiles just gaped at her and she rolled her eyes at him before grabbing his arm and hauling him in through the front door. Derek followed, surreptitiously sniffing the air and then frowning at her.

‘Something happened.’ he said and Stiles copied his action realising that Lydia smelled like wintergreen, the scent so strong it made his nose itch.

‘No shit, something happened.’ Lydia put her hands on her hips. ‘I have questions.’

‘Crap.’ Stiles took a step back. ‘This is trap. Derek, we should definitely run for it.’

‘Not a chance, Stilinski.’ Lydia hissed. ‘I want to know just what the fuck that thing was that bit me last night. All the shit I’ve looked up tells me it was not a mountain lion, which would make a hell of a lot of sense considering what all the crazy shit around here. Not only that, but you’ve been acting weirder than your normal freak self.’ She started ticking things off on her fingers. ‘There was that thing with the woods and then all of a sudden you’ve got super strength, this amazing new sporting prowess you’re demonstrating and you’re going nuts on the full moon. I know what this all adds up to.’ She glanced at Derek. ‘I can’t quite figure you into the equation, but I know you’re involved. There are way too many things happening to be coincidence and I want in.’

Stiles looked at Derek but he was wearing his super poker face and had his arms folded.

‘What exactly are you getting at?’ he asked and Stiles winced because Lydia’s eyes went all flinty and he knew she was in a mood to possibly maim both of them, their wolfy powers be damned.

‘I’m not stupid.’ Lydia snapped. ‘I’m even smarter than your boy toy over there so don’t try that deflection bullshit with me. I’m very good at putting things together and the same word keeps
coming up whichever way I do it.’

‘And what word is that?’ God, Derek was almost as terrifying as she was, his green eyes hard as chips of jade, and Stiles wanted to hide in a closet somewhere until they’d duked it out. He watched Lydia’s unpainted mouth curve in a knowing smile, her eyes not leaving Derek’s face.

‘Werewolf.’ she said and Stiles’ heart jumped. He saw Derek’s nostrils flare ever so slightly and knew he was angry so he jumped in to try and rescue the situation.

‘You know that sounds ridiculous, right?’ He could hear the frantic edge to his words but he kept talking anyway. ‘Because everyone knows werewolves aren’t real and so what you’re saying can’t be right. We’re just two normal dudes, okay maybe not exactly completely normal but definitely human. That’s all we are, three totally normal humans having a conversation…’ He trailed off with a nervous laugh and then realised that they are both staring at him. Lydia had one coppery eyebrow arched at him and Derek actually facepalmed.

‘For fuck’s sake, Stiles.’ he muttered then looked up at Lydia. ‘Fine, you want to know? Yeah, we’re werewolves. Stiles got turned into one when the alpha bit him and I can smell that you got bit too, but you’re not turned. I can smell that your bite hasn’t healed.’ He took a step forward and to her credit, Lydia didn’t even flinch. Derek raised his own formidable eyebrows at her and now Stiles could smell it too, the coppery tang of blood.

Lydia seemed to be weighing things up and then lifted the side of her hoodie. There was a square of gauze taped to her side and it was spotted with bloodstains.

‘What is an alpha?’ she asked while Derek leaned in a little closer, peering at the bandage.

‘The leader of a wolf pack.’ he replied. ‘But this one is insane. It has no pack so I think it’s trying to make one.’ He looked at her. ‘Does it hurt?’

‘Not really.’ Lydia lowered her shirt. ‘That’s not normal either, is it?’

‘No.’ Derek told her. ‘There are two results of a bite - your turn or you die.’

‘How would I know?’ Lydia asked and Derek huffed.

‘You’d be dead by now.’ Something crossed his face and Stiles smelled an acrid note creep into his scent and knew he’s thinking about Paige. ‘It doesn’t take very long.’

‘So if I’m not a werewolf and I’m not dead, then what am I?’ Lydia demanded and her voice was shaking ever so slightly. ‘Because none of this makes any sense.’

‘I honestly don’t have a clue.’ Derek replied and his heart stayed steady. That surprised Stiles but he kept his mouth shut. ‘I don’t know what to tell you. Do you have anything supernatural in your family.’

The shriek of laughter from Lydia had a hysterical edge to it.

‘No!’ She was vehement. ‘We’re just normal people, maybe a little dysfunctional but definitely not… just no.’

‘Then I can’t help you.’ Derek said and shrugged. He looked at Stiles. ‘We need to take her to Deaton.’

‘Who’s that?’ Lydia asked, sharp with suspicion.
‘He’s kind of an expert.’ Stiles rubbed the back of his neck. ‘He might know what the hell is happening to you.’

‘I don’t want anyone to know about this.’ Lydia hissed.

‘Don’t worry, he’s very discreet.’ Stiles tried hard not to burst into hysterical laughter. This was getting too close to home. ‘Was Jackson bitten too?’

‘No.’ Lydia shook her head. ‘But when I went into the video store, that thing had its claws in the back of his neck. It was kind of holding him there, but after it ran off the holes just closed up by themselves.’

That obviously meant something to Derek judging by the sharp intake of breath.

‘What about you?’ he asked. ‘Did it attack you?’

‘No.’ Lydia sounded confused for the first time since they started talking. ‘It didn’t. It kind of walked over to me, looking at me. I could see it was thinking. Then it sniffed me and it gets kind of hazy after that. When it let me go, it licked me. I remember that. Like it was trying to clean up after itself.’

‘That’s an alpha instinct.’ Derek put his hands on his hips, his face troubled. He looked at Stiles and Stiles instinctively raised a hand to his neck, remembering the soft warm glide of Derek’s tongue over the marks he’d left.

‘It bit her on the side. Like me.’ he said and Derek nodded.

‘Pack placement.’ He caught Stiles’ eye. ‘The other is only for certain things.’ He was being deliberately vague, but Stiles didn’t miss the way that Lydia was watching them.

‘So now what?’ she asked. ‘Do we go see this mysterious Deaton?’

‘He’s not mysterious, but he can be kind of annoying.’ Derek snorted. ‘And no. Right now, we have no idea what is going on so it’s probably best if you stay home and keep quiet. We’ll tell Deaton what’s happened and then he can get back to us if he finds anything out.’

‘So I’m just supposed to sit here?’ Lydia’s eyes were sparkling angrily again. ‘No. I’ll go see him myself if I have to.’

‘Fine.’ Derek huffed. ‘Then go get dressed and we’ll take you there. But I can tell you now he’ll say the same thing.’

‘Then I’ll wait while he does.’ Lydia countered and stalked off in the direction of her room. Stiles waited until she was gone and then gave Derek a quizzical look.

‘Think he’ll know what she is?’ he asked.

‘Maybe.’ Derek said. ‘She’s not human, that much I can smell. Clever trick with the wintergreen. I’ll bet it’s all you’re getting.’

Stiles nodded and scratched at his nose.

‘Told you she’s smart.’ he replied. ‘You think the alpha bit her on purpose?’

‘Maybe?’ Derek shook his head. ‘We’re missing something here. Why didn’t the alpha bite Jackson as well. He’s stronger than Lydia so he’d make a better target.’
’Unless he gets off on smart.’ Stiles pointed out. ‘I mean he bit me and her. Maybe that’s the connection.’

’Maybe it is.’ Derek’s expression changed and his green eyes were intent. ‘But if he wanted a strong pack, he’d be picking more imposing people. People he could use as fighters.’

’Dude.’ Stiles snorted. ‘That is like the opposite of me and Lydia.’

’But like you said, you’re smart.’ Derek countered. ‘Which make this alpha even more dangerous.’

’Great.’ Stiles sighed as Lydia comes back, now dressed and made up.

’Shall we?’ she said and swept past them. Stiles and Derek exchanged looks and followed.

She made Stiles sit in the back, after a single glare prompted him to rush to open the door for her. He got in behind, grumbling and settles in between the seats as Derek got in the driver’s side.

’Deaton.’ He was on his phone. ‘I’m bringing someone over. Yeah, it’s to do with last night. I don’t know. It’s nothing I’ve seen before.’ He listened and then nodded once. ‘We’ll be right there.’

The drive to Deaton’s was done in silence and when they get there, Lydia frowned.

’Deaton as in Doctor Deaton?’ she asked and Stiles meets Derek’s eyes in the rear view mirror. ‘This is where I bring Prada. What does he have to do with this? I thought you said he was an expert?’

’Books and covers, Lydia.’ Derek replied and got out the car. The waiting room was thankfully empty and he wasted no time, going through to the back to where Deaton was turning to greet them as they approached.

’Miss Martin?’ He looked surprised. ‘I had no idea that you were one of the people concerned in last night’s attack.’ His black eyes zoned in on her side. ‘You were bitten.’

’Yes.’ Lydia replied without hesitation. ‘But I’m not like Stiles.’

’No.’ Deaton’s mouth curved up and Stiles couldn’t decide if it was reassuring or creepy. ‘You are something else entirely.’ He looked at Derek and Stiles. ‘Thank you gentlemen, I’ll take it from here.’

That put them both on the back foot. Derek started to protest and Deaton held up a hand.

’I need to talk to Lydia first. Then if she decides that she’s comfortable with other people knowing, she can tell you. Until then, you can both go do something else. Maybe some training would be good.’ His pointed look made Derek growl but he complied, one hand going to Stiles’ shoulder as he steered him out.

’Dude.’ Stiles wriggled but Derek’s hold was like iron. ‘We should totally eavesdrop.’

’No.’ Derek muttered. ‘He’s right. Lydia deserves privacy for what he’s going to tell her. He obviously knows what’s up. Didn’t you see the way he looked at her?’

’What would he know though?’ Stiles frowned. ‘I get he’s an emissary but that’s all right?’

’It’s not just that.’ Derek replied. ‘Deaton can recognise magic and I’m betting that’s exactly what he felt. I could smell it in the car, when she was much closer. There’s magic around her but I don’t know what it is.’
Stiles’ eyes went wide.

‘Magic?’ He was breathless with excitement. ‘Like actual Harry Potter kind of shit?’

‘Nothing so exciting.’ Derek deadpanned at him and Stiles growled in reply. ‘Now get in the car.’

‘Why?’ He leaned on the roof. ‘Where are we going?’

‘You heard Deaton.’ There was a flash of teeth that didn’t reassure him at all. ‘Training.’

**********

In the back room of the clinic, Deaton looked at Lydia intently as he makes them tea, handing her a mug of what smelled like chamomile.

‘This is not what I expected.’ he said and a chill went up her spine.

‘You know what happened to me?’ she asked.

‘Supernatural creatures are immune to the bite of a werewolf.’ Deaton explained. ‘That is why you didn’t turn.’

‘But I’m not supernatural.’ Lydia protested. ‘I’m just me.’

‘No, you’re not.’ Deaton went to a shelf and took out a book. ‘I always thought there was something about you, but I could never quite put my finger on it. It seems that whatever powers you have, they have been lying dormant. The alpha’s bite will have brought them to the surface and now we need to find out just what you are.’

Lydia looked at the book, frowning at the lettering on the spine that has faded almost to illegibility.

‘That’s Latin.’ she said and Deaton nodded.

‘Do you read it?’ he asked and for a moment Lydia hesitated before realising that here she didn’t have to hide.

‘I do.’ she replied and saw a gleam of approval in his dark eyes.

‘Then this will go a lot easier.’ he placed the book on the table and took a seat opposite her. ‘Shall we begin?’

**********

Derek parked at the Hale house and looked through the windscreen at the shell of the house he grew up in. It didn’t hurt in the same way even though it still ached. When he inhaled Stiles’ scent, it ebbed enough to be manageable. He got out, his eyes automatically drawn to the mound of earth with the purple blossoms around its edges drawing a line of brilliant colour in the winter palette. Stiles came to stand next to him, one hand curling around his bicep in a comforting gesture.

‘You okay?’ he asked and Derek leaned over to nuzzle behind his ear.

‘Yeah.’ He stepped back. ‘Okay, let’s get started.’ He moved away back to the car as he stripped off his jacket and shirt in practised movements. Stiles followed, looking bemused.

‘What are you doing?’ he asked and Derek hopped on one foot as he got rid of his sneakers as well, socks balled up in the toe of one before he tossed them in the car.
‘We’re going running.’ He nodded at Stiles’ ratty converse. ‘You need to be barefoot.’ That gets an appalled look, especially when he extended his toe claws.

‘But I have soft feet.’ Stiles protested. ‘And the ground is cold. And to be honest, those freak me the fuck out.’ He was staring at Derek’s feet with undisguised horror.

‘Just fucking do it.’ Derek ordered. ‘Trust me. They’ll help you dig in.’

‘Trust me, he says.’ Stiles muttered, prying off his sneakers and giving Derek a filthy look. ‘What kind of asshole runs around barefoot in winter? I am not taking my shirt off. You can do that GQ model shit all by yourself.’

‘Fine.’ Derek snarked back. ‘When you completely overheat, be it on your head.’ He waited for Stiles to throw his shoes in before locking the car and watched as he shifts from one foot to the other before taking a step forward, rolling his head until his neck cracks and letting his eyes bleed to blue as his fangs descended.

Stiles squeaked and took a step back.

‘Derek.’ His eyes were narrowed. ‘What the fuck are you doing?’

‘You have to the count of three.’ Derek growled, gleeful on the inside at how Stiles’ honey-brown eyes widened, beta gold flickering around the edges.

‘No.’ He stumbled back, nearly falling on his ass. ‘You’re being a childish asshole.’

Derek snarled happily and went full beta shift, baring his teeth and smelling how Stiles’ scent flooded with a mixture of panic and excitement.

‘One.’ He took another deliberate step. ‘You better start running because when I catch you, I’m going to kick your ass.’

‘Fuck.’ Stiles wheeled around, momentarily losing his balance and scrambling to get his feet back under him.

‘Two.’ Derek smiled, his predatory instincts kicking in. Whether it was for feeding or fucking, wolves loved to chase. ‘Best move that skinny little ass of yours, Stiles.’ He curled his fingers, claws out.

‘Shit, shit, shit…’ Stiles was off, racing through the trees with a yowl that would be better suited to some sort of feline and Derek couldn’t stop himself from laughing. He waited and listened to the sound of his mate skidding on dead leaves, then started jogging after him.

‘Three.’ he breathed and started running, his body stretching and moving fluidly. It was glorious and he threw himself onto all fours, tracking Stiles by scent and sound into the preserve.

**********

‘Here.’ Deaton was looking at another book. ‘I think I may have found something.’ He handed it to Lydia and she looked at the illustration. ‘Does this sound familiar at all?’

She read the description and shook her head.

‘No.’ she sighed. ‘To be honest I don’t even feel that different. Just sore from the bite and weirded out by the fact that I now know that not only werewolves exist but that Stiles is one.’
‘Well, he had no real choice in that.’ Deaton replied. ‘And there are far more things out there. Werewolves are only the tip of the iceberg.’ He looked at her, considering. ‘May I ask what you intend to do with this new found information?’

‘Absolutely nothing.’ Lydia replied. ‘I wanted to know, but you can bet I won’t be telling anyone. The last thing I want is to end up in Eichen House like my grandmother.’

That got Deaton’s attention and he sat up straight.

‘Your grandmother was in Eichen House?’ he asked and Lydia looked away. It wasn’t a memory that she enjoyed recalling.

‘She used to read to me.’ she said. ‘The Little Mermaid. I always wanted to be Ariel because she was the only Disney princess with red hair.’

‘May I ask why she was committed?’ Deaton asked and Lydia chewed on her bottom lip before answering.

‘I always thought it was because she blamed herself for Maddy’s death.’ she said, then realised she needed to clarify. ‘Maddy was my other grandmother. She and Nan Lorraine got married after my grandfather died. They were together for a long time and then Maddy died while they were on vacation at our lake house.’ Her feelings, usually so carefully controlled, frayed a little at the edges as she spoke. ‘Nana Lorraine never forgave herself for it. She had a premonition that Maddy would die but she didn’t believe it and then it happened and I guess the guilt and the strain just got too much. She got really obsessive towards the end and I remember my dad talking about her hearing voices so she was committed. My parents acted like she was dead after that and I never got to see her again. She died in Eichen House.’ She studied her perfectly manicured nails and then looked up when Deaton didn’t reply. His face, however, was speaking volumes.

‘You said she had a premonition of death?’ he asked eventually. ‘What do you mean by obsessive?’

‘She worked for IBM.’ Lydia replied. ‘She started a project, something to do with using computers to hear sounds beyond the normal spectrum. I don’t really know, my parents tried to shelter me as much as possible from it all.’ She looked at him, curiosity raising it’s head. ‘Why?’

‘I think I may have something.’ Deaton replied and flipped through his book, finally setting it down in front of her. Lydia studied the illustration, a watercolour of a woman in a white shift, her face contorted as she screamed. The name at the top of the page was not unfamiliar but she had never believed in any of these things and she scoffed.

‘You can’t be serious?’ She reached out but stopped just short of touching the picture. ‘That’s what you think I am?’

‘No, Lydia.’ Deaton’s voice was gentle. ‘That’s what I’m sure you are.’

**********

Stiles ran and ran. He was amazed at how effortless it was, especially after a lifetime of suicides exhausting him to the point where his legs burned and he couldn’t breathe. Now he floated over the ground, his earlier clumsiness gone in the face of how fast he actually was. It was incredible and he tuned out everything around him but the pounding of his blood through his veins and the quick high pitched breathes he took as he flew through the trees.

Derek was stronger than him, but he was definitely faster, outpacing him easily. Even the attempts by Derek to psych him out by swerving and changing direction haven’t resulted in him being caught
yet, although he’d had to double take at the sight of Derek down on all fours.

He caught a glimpse of him off to the left and put on a little extra speed, laughing breathlessly as he swung out wide, losing Derek behind him. He could hear him, breathing just as hard and growling a little when Stiles eluded him.

The chasm came up on him unexpectedly. This part of the preserve was deeper than he’d ever been and Stiles found himself either having to take the jump or go tumbling down to the bottom so he did, throwing himself forward and landing hard. He was off balance, rolling with the momentum until he was back on his feet and then Derek’s full weight slammed into him. All the wind was knocked out of him and he lay there wheezing as Derek got up, shifting back and grinning at him, waiting until Stiles could finally raise both hands and flip him off. Derek laughed and held out a hand, pulling him to his feet so Stiles could double over, hands on his knees.

‘Asshole.’ he panted and Derek smirked at him.

‘You work on instinct alone at the moment.’ he said. ‘You need to learn control.’ He moved to stand next to him. ‘Try to shift.’

‘I can’t.’ Stiles shook his head. ‘I’m trying to freaking breathe here.’

‘When hunters come for you, they don’t care if you’re compromised or distracted.’ Derek was suddenly serious. ‘You need to get out of your head. Every time you’ve shifted has been in response to an emotional state. You need to learn to get past that and make the transition at will.’ He shifted effortlessly into beta form and backed with not even a flinch. ‘You try.’

‘Shit.’ Stiles muttered and tried to focus. It was like looking at one of those stupid magic pictures, the feeling of the wolf under his skin slipping away just as he grasped it. It was incredibly frustrating and that, coupled with how hot and sweaty he was and the burn in his thighs, made him growl.

‘That’s instinct coming out.’ Derek crouched to look at him. ‘Okay, let’s try only part of the shift. Eyes first.’ He nodded at Stiles and Stiles eased up on trying to cling to the feeling inside him. He could feel warm encouragement through their bond and let that guide him, Derek’s pleased smile tells him he had been successful as he flashed his eyes in turn.

‘This okay?’ Stiles asked and Derek held up a hand. Stiles watched him unsheathe his claws with a flick of his fingers.

‘Try.’ he instructed and Stiles straightened up. He gave Derek’s claws a curious once over and then peered at his own fingertips. He tried to get them to come out but it was even trickier and he huffed in annoyance when nothing happened. He was about to give up when Derek lunged at him and, yep, there they are. Like Derek’s, they were razor sharp and shaded to brown where they grew from his nail bed. He turned his hand this way and that, examining them more closely than he had before. They looked razor sharp and he wanted to test them out, wondering if they would be like those knives on the shopping channel that could cut through metal.

‘Still instinct.’ Derek took his wrist, his hand warm on Stiles’ skin. ‘Look.’ He held up his other hand, the claws retracting and then sliding back out again. ‘It has to be something you don’t struggle to do. Your shift needs to be part of you, but part that you control. Lack of control means shifting when you don’t want to and that’s the quickest way to get found out.’

Stiles looked at him, feeling the sadness prickling at the edges of their bond.

‘Who taught you this?’ he asked and Derek sighed, blue eyes shifting back to green.
‘My parents.’ he replied. ‘My pack. We all learn when we’re pretty young that we need to control ourselves. We start shifting when we’re still toddlers but it’s purely reactionary. We only start to control it when we’re older. That’s why we don’t go to mainstream schools.’

‘I bet it’s cute though.’ Stiles couldn’t help smiling. ‘Toddler werewolves?’

‘Yeah.’ Now Derek’s mouth was curving upwards. ‘It is.’ He turned Stiles’ hand over, claws tracing lightly over his palm. ‘I always had trouble with control. It wasn’t until after the fire that I really got the focus to cut myself off from everything. Laura never did, she was the exact opposite. If anything she felt things more deeply, appreciated everything more. I couldn’t bring myself to do that, not knowing that I was responsible.’ he lets go and steps back. ‘I’m probably the worst person to teach you but I’m all you got right now.’

His green eyes were downcast, his face guarded as he glanced up at Stiles through his lashes. It went straight through Stiles like a lance. He darted forward, arms around Derek’s neck as he kissed him hard, knocking him a step backwards. Derek growled at him, then his hands were at Stiles’ waist and he was holding on, turning it deep in seconds until both of them were breathing hard through their noses as Stiles let Derek in and fought back as hard as he was being given. When they broke apart, Derek’s eyes were blue again and his lip was hooked up over one fang. Stiles grinned, feeling their bond between them grow taut with anticipation.

‘So does being a wolf mean we can do it outside?’ he asked and Derek snorted, amused at him. His hands were sliding lower, coming to rest on the curve of Stiles’ ass. He tilted his head and leaned back in, hot breath ghosting over Stiles’ mouth.

‘You have a one track mind.’ he breathed and Stiles ran his hands up Derek’s bare arms and over his chest, feeling the muscles contract under his ministrations. He rubbed his thumbs over dusky nipples, his cock hardening steadily as Derek kept growling at him softly.

‘Teenager.’ he murmured back, looking up at him and seeing his own eyes reflecting gold in Derek’s. ‘I’m perpetually horny.’ He bit at his lip, making small circles with his thumbs and admiring how readily Derek’s body responded. ‘And I can’t help but notice that you’re not stopping me.’

That’s because I don’t want to.’ Derek came in closer and Stiles breathing caught as he felt Derek’s tongue tracing along his lower lip where he’d been biting before driving back into his mouth. There was a heave and he was in Derek’s arms and carried until his back hits a tree behind him still kissing frantically. Derek’s cock was a hard line against his own and Stiles wrapped his legs around him, ankles locking at the base of Derek’s spine. He sunk the fingers of one hand into Derek’s thick hair, angling so that their mouths were sealed together and just let go, both of them biting and licking at each other with no finesse at all.

Derek took his weight easily, thrusting up against him with the same graceful movement he used to run and Stiles whined into his open mouth. The friction of denim and cock was good, almost too good, and he was barely hanging on, wanting to feel everything that Derek gave him, and when Derek pulled back to bite at his neck Stiles lost it. He arched up against him, his cry loud enough to set the birds in the tree overhead flying as he came, bucking uncontrollably. Derek pinned him to the tree, his own movements discordant as he chased after Stiles, shuddering through his orgasm like it was killing him and Stiles could feel it, bright white and rippling through their bond. The feedback from himself and Derek got mixed up together and it drew everything out until they were both incoherent.

They stared at each other, eyes glowing and smiling like idiots. Stiles could hear how Derek’s heart was triple thudding in time with his own and he took one hand away from his neck, resting it on that perfect sculpted chest.
‘That was good.’ he whispered and Derek smiled at him.

‘It’s good with you.’ he whispered and that makes Stiles’ heart nearly jump right out of his chest. ‘It makes it worth waiting for.’ He gently let Stiles down, both of them grimacing at the feeling of come in their underwear.

‘We could have probably timed this better.’ Stiles snickered and Derek shoved him and then reeled him in so they were pressed together again.

‘I’m supposed to be teaching you.’ he says but his eyes are fixed on Stiles’ mouth. ‘And all I can think of is how I want to lick you clean.’

‘Fuck.’ It fell out of Stiles’ mouth without him even thinking. ‘Okay, that sounds stupidly hot.’

‘So you’d let me?’ Derek was nuzzling at his neck, rubbing his face against Stiles’ skin. ‘I want to, if you’ll let me.’

‘Go for it, big guy.’ Stiles was not turning down an offer like that and Derek backed him up against the tree again before dropping to his knees. He managed to make it look almost elegant but then his hands were at Stiles’ jeans, undoing them and tugging them down and taking Stiles boxers with them. The air was cool on his semen wet skin but that only lasted a second before Derek’s warm tongue licked a path through the mess and Stiles threw one hand up against the tree, claws out and shredding the bark and shuddering as Derek’s tongue traces a line up his happy trail from his cock. The heat thrumming through their bond was almost overwhelming.

‘So.’ he gasped as Derek curled his tongue around the shaft, getting hard again in what must have been record time. ‘This werewolf stamina thing?’

Derek hummed in acknowledgement but didn’t stop licking and Stiles stuck one hand back in his hair, holding on a little tighter than he probably should but fuck it. It wasn’t every day that he got dry humped into an amazing orgasm only to have it followed up with what would hopefully turn into a spectacular blowjob. Sure, Derek was taking the no penetrative sex thing seriously, but there’s still a lot of options at their disposal.

Derek was nothing but thorough, licking every trace of come away, but halfway through Stiles was completely hard again and he wanted more, tugging on Derek’s hair and hoping he got the hint. There was a low rumble of laughter from Derek and one broad hand slid under his shirt, pressing him against the tree. Derek’s hand was warm, his claws gently pricking into Stiles’ skin.

‘So many new kinks.’ he moaned and Derek laughed, his eyes perfectly clear when he looked up at him, one hand lazily stroking up and down. He lapped at the head of Stiles’ cock like a cat, and Stiles is wrecked. He wanted to look away but he couldn’t, trapped by those amazing eyes that are fixed on him.

‘You taste really good.’ Derek’s voice was rough and he nuzzled at the base of Stiles’ cock, inhaling deeply. ‘And you smell even better.’

‘Yeah?’ Stiles whined, digging his claws into the tree as far as he could to hold himself upright. His fangs were out and he was lisping but he didn’t care because Derek took him in all the way, throat contracting around Stiles like he did this every day and there was heat in his eyes, the electric blue flickering in and out. Stiles watched him, wetting his lips as he made a decision.

‘I want to do this to you too.’ he murmured. Derek pulled off in a slow slide, hand back and working him.
‘You want to suck my cock, Stiles? Put that mouth of yours to good use?’ He snarled softly, his own control slipping.

‘Holy shit.’ Stiles had to grit his teeth. He had a terrible weakness for dirty talk. ‘Yes, I want to suck your fucking cock. Like now.’

‘Later.’ Derek laughed and his head went back down, all focus as he went to town on Stiles’ dick. It didn’t take long for Stiles to get close to coming again, but this time Derek held him there. It was like walking a knife’s edge, every breath strained as he thrashed against the tree, Derek’s hold on him tightening as his head moved faster. He was rumbling deep in his chest and it vibrated all the way up Stiles’ cock until he thumped his head back against the tree with a sharp cry, coming in Derek’s mouth and feeling him swallow around him. It was even more intense than the first time, the feelings ricocheting between them heightening everything, and Stiles slumped back against the tree, completely breathless as Derek pulled off and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

‘You okay?’ he asked, eyes sparkling, and Stiles slid down the tree trunk onto his ass so they are more or less face to face.

‘You’re very good at that.’ he managed and Derek smiled.

‘The bond gives me feedback on what you like.’ he said. ‘It lets me read you.’

‘To be honest, the mere fact that you want to blow me is enough.’ Stiles waved a hand at him. ‘Okay, your turn. Come at me, dude.’

‘Don’t call me dude.’ Derek said but he gets to his feet, undoing his belt and jeans and getting his cock out. He was hard as a rock, wet from when he came before and clearly worked up. Stiles stared unashamedly, dying to know what he tasted like. He should have found this gross, but his nose was almost twitching as he inhaled greedily.

‘How do you want to do this?’ he asked. ‘I don’t think my legs are working.’ Then he had a brain wave and glanced up. ‘You could fuck my mouth if you want?’ That is clearly not what Derek was expecting, but the look on his face was unmistakable, even without the sudden flood of want through the bond and the reek of arousal in the air.

‘Can I?’ he asked, almost disbelieving, and Stiles snorted a laugh.

‘Seriously?’ he asked. ‘I’d let you put it anyway you fucking wanted right now. Actually I’d let you put it anywhere anytime you wanted.’ He made weak grabby hands at him. ‘You underestimate just how fucking into you I am. Even though you’re a sarcastic asshole who drives me nuts.’

‘Because I’m a sarcastic asshole who drives you nuts.’ Derek countered, but there’s no disguising how much he wanted this and Stiles got himself a little more comfortable and beckoned him closer. Derek leaned over him, one hand braced against the tree and the other holding himself steady.

‘Stop me anytime if it’s too much.’ he said. ‘And don’t be overambitious.’

‘Fuck that shit.’ Stiles grinned. ‘Now stick your cock in my mouth Derek.’

‘Christ.’ Derek growled. ‘You’re going to be the death of me.’

Stiles was nose to cock with him and he focused on what was about to happen. Derek’s smell was deep and earthy and he was so wet, pre-come running down the side of his cock. Stiles put his hand on him, feeling steely hardness under velvety soft skin. He breathed in deeply, letting it wash over him and then tentatively flicked out with his tongue, just catching the tip of Derek’s cock. It doesn’t
taste anything like he expected it too. He knew what he tasted like but Derek was stronger and with an animal note that he found he liked. Derek guided himself, wetting Stiles mouth and then nudging his cock against his lips.

‘Go slow.’ His voice was breathy and soft. ‘And don’t fucking bite me.’

‘Got it.’ Stiles said and opened his mouth for him to slide in. It was a little awkward at first and he had to focus on breathing through his nose so he didn’t choke, but the feeling it gave him negated all that and he hooked his fingers into the loops of Derek’s jeans and pulled him closer. Derek’s skin tasted really good and he completely got why some people (Danny) rhapsodised about sucking cock like it was the best thing on earth.

‘You good?’ Derek asked and Stiles moaned around him, heat flashing through his chest. Derek started to move, little thrusts that drove him in and out slowly and carefully. It wasn’t at all overwhelming and gave Stiles the chance to experiment a little. He sucked on the next pull out and Derek made a strangled sound and there was a brief fall of bark because he was obviously shredding the tree just like Stiles did. That went straight to Stiles’ head and he got braver, using his tongue the way Derek had and holding on tighter, pulling Derek in with more force.

‘Fuck, Stiles.’ Derek was panting hard. ‘You need to let go.’

Stiles was feeling particularly stubborn so he just sucked harder and Derek threw back his head, his roar shattering the silence. Come flooded Stiles’ mouth and he pulled off and spitting out what he could. There was a lot and Derek was still coming, shaking hard with both hands raking his claws down the tree. He was growling, desperate and thick with need, and Stiles took hold him him, hand getting sticky as he stroked him through the last of it.

When Derek finally quietened they look at each other, both of them a mess of come and saliva and flushed with exertion. Stiles was the first to break, laughter bubbling up inside him. A month ago, he was just another high school loser with a crush on the most popular girl in school, warming the bench and watching his life go by. Now he was a werewolf with a burning hot boyfriend who he’d just blown for the first time in the woods in broad daylight and it was crazier than anything he could have dreamed up for himself.

‘I think you’ve finally lost it.’ Derek remarked, sarcasm back in place as he stripped off his jeans and briefs. He used them to give himself a cursory clean and handed them to Stiles, who pulled a face and used the dry side to do the same.

‘I think you just face fucked my brains out.’ He said with a smug grin. ‘Help me up.’ His knees were weak. legs wobbling like a newborn deer. Derek held him up under the arms and peered at him, still gloriously naked.

‘You need me to carry you back to the car?’ He was smiling, the bastard, and Stiles made an ineffectual swipe at him, trying to growl and sounding like a kitten which only made Derek laugh in his face. ‘Okay, that’s just pathetic.’

‘Says you.’ Stiles retorted and then nearly fell over when Derek set him on his feet. ‘Damn, next time we need to have a flat surface available.

‘Agreed.’ Derek looked thoughtful. ‘Shift for me.’

Stiles didn’t even think about it, shifting effortlessly and saw Derek’s eyebrows trying to escape off the top of his head.
‘What?’ he asked. ‘It’s easy when there’s nothing in my head.’

‘Yeah.’ Derek up his jeans. ‘Maybe I’ve been looking at this wrong. Come on, we’ll go slow back to the car. You can try and track our way back.’

‘I’m not a sniffer dog, Derek.’ Stiles protests. ‘And I hate to break it to you buddy, but you’re going to need to put your pants back on.’

‘Nah.’ Derek sounded almost goofily happy. He threw the jeans to Stiles and in between that moment and the next, he was standing on four paws and looking up at Stiles, pink tongue lolling out the side of his mouth. He gave Stiles a happy yip and bounced in a circle around him, tail wagging.

‘Okay that’s cuter than it should be.’ Stiles laughed and started walking.

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‘How do you feel?’ Deaton asked and Lydia cracks an eye open at him.

‘The same as I did ten minutes ago.’ she says. She raised her eyebrows at him and he glared back in kind.

‘Hmmm.’ he said and went back to his book.

Lydia rolled her eyes at him and went back to meditating.

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The walk back was considerably more relaxed and Stiles started to appreciate his new senses as he sniffed the air. Derek was off in the bushes to his left somewhere, having heard something and gone to chase it. He was a lot more comfortable out here and Stiles had been watching in fascination. He didn’t feel quite the same urges, but then he’d only been a werewolf for a hot minute. This was Derek’s territory after all and it made sense that he behaved like this out here in the preserve.

There was the sound of small paws scampering over leaves and then screeching as Derek treed a squirrel. Stiles laughed and jogged through the brush to find him standing at the base of a tall pine, forepaws braced against the trunk and looking up at his potential prey with his tail wagging furiously. He saw Stiles and whined plaintively. He went over and scratched through the thick fur behind Derek’s ears and squinted up at the squirrel, dying a little on the inside at how cute it was to see his big bad wolf acting like a puppy.

‘Guess he was too fast for you, huh sourwolf?’ He looked down and saw green eyes glaring at him. Even in his fur, Derek was judgy as hell. He snorted and then backed off, cocking his leg and pissing rather aggressively on the tree. Stiles burst out laughing and carried on walking, Derek’s paws soundless as he jogged alongside after a parting growl at the squirrel.

By the time they got back to the house, Stiles was in love with what he’d seen, heard and smelled. It was calming in a way all his medication had never managed to be. Derek shifted back as they got to the porch, rising up on his hind legs and fur melting away. Stiles could hear his bones rearranging before he rolled his shoulders a few times and stretched, canines still on display as he yawned expansively. It was getting on for late afternoon judging from the angle of the sun and Stiles was a little surprised to glance at his phone and realise they’d been out in the woods for close on four hours. He redressed quickly, barely lacing his sneakers.

Derek was looking up at the house, his face neutral although Stiles could smell his unease and went to stand next to him, handing him his jeans. He breathed in and caught the stink of old fire, ash and
blood seeped into the wood and it turns his stomach. He could only imagine what it was like for Derek.

‘Why do you come back here?’ he asks and Derek shrugged as he pulled on his jeans.

‘It’s my home, Stiles. I can’t stay away from it.’ His mouth turned down. ‘It used to be beautiful. You should have seen it.’ His sadness was palpable, humming through their bond, and Stiles moved to rest his cheek against his bare shoulder and Derek leaned into him. He almost missed the sound of cars, but raised his head when Derek tensed, eyes trained on the trees behind them.

‘Get in the house.’ he growled and Stiles backed up as the cars got louder.

‘What is it?’ he asked and Derek bared his teeth.

‘Hunters.’ He moved in front of Stiles, shoving him at the porch. ‘Get in and go upstairs. I want you to stay the fuck out of sight, you got that? I don’t want them to find you.’

They stumbled through the front door together and Stiles ran up the rickety staircase, taking refuge in a room off to the right. He could hear Derek moving around and then there was silence as the car pulled up and stopped outside the house followed by the sounds of people getting out.

‘Well his car’s here.’ It was a man he didn’t recognise but then he heard a voice that chilled him.

‘He’s inside. Dogs always hide in their dens.’ Stiles listened to the click of Kate’s boot-heel as she ascended the porch steps. It made him indescribably angry and he strained his ears, but Derek was making no sound at all.

The front door creaked as the hunters entered. To another human they would make no noise, but Stiles could track their breathing and their heartbeats as they fanned out in the entrance.

‘He told us to wait.’ It was the same one who had spoken outside.

‘So I’ve been reminded - to death.’ Kate sounded annoyed.

‘It means we can’t kill him.’ The second man was younger.

‘Doesn’t mean we can’t say hello.’ Kate was moving around slowly, but with confidence.

‘Doesn’t look like anyone’s home.’ the younger man said, sounding unsure. Stiles held his breath and then heard Kate call out.

‘Derek.’ Her voice was inviting, almost as if she was visiting a lover and not stalking her prey. ‘I know you’re in here. Come out and play, sweetheart.’

‘Maybe he’s out back.’ one of the hunters said. ‘Burying a bone in the yard.’ His amusement made Stiles grit his teeth and dig his claws into his palms, struggling to hold onto his control.

‘Really?’ Kate laughed ‘A dog joke? Is that the best you got? If we’re trying to provoke him, there are better things to say.’

‘Like what?’ Now the hunter sounded sulky.

‘Like too bad your sister bit it before she had her first litter.’ Kate’s voices was raised to carry. ‘Too bad she howled like a bitch when we cut her in half.’ She laughed and Stiles frowned. He knew that the hunters didn’t kill Laura so why Kate was taking the credit was something to think about.
He stilled as he heard them split up, Kate moving through to the left, one up the stairs and one behind the staircase and towards the back of the house. He could smell a horrible pungent scent that got right up his nose and made it burn but before he could wonder what it might be, there was a resounding crash and Derek roaring in fury. Gunfire went off, but it was obviously wide and Stiles snuck a look around the corner in time to see all three hunters converging in the room to the left. The sounds of fighting intensified before the younger man flew through the air back into the hallway, skidding along the floor when he landed in a heap.

‘Fucking get him!’ Kate yelled and there was more gunfire before Derek howled in pain followed by a thump that Stiles knew was him collapsing to the ground before a brilliant surge of pain went through him, setting his very teeth on edge.

‘Aww.’ Kate was gloating. ‘This one grew up in all the right places. I don’t know whether to kill it or lick it.’

That was the final straw. Stiles wolfed out and leaped over the landing. He landed in a defensive crouch, snarling at the interlopers when he saw Derek on the floor writhing in agony while Kate stood over him with a taser in her hand. It was police issue or something pretty damn close and Stiles knew how powerful those were. Thankfully his entrance had startled them both and he managed to duck past the older hunter (thank you lacrosse training) and knocked Kate right off her feet into the wall behind her.

‘Stiles, get the fuck out.’ Derek groaned but Stiles ignored him in favour of grabbing him and hauling him up bodily so he could throw them both out the shattered window at the back. What remained explodes in fragments of glass and splinters where the frame collapsed and they hit the ground hard. He rolled to take as much of the impact as he could and then scrambled to his feet, running on adrenaline as he dragged Derek up and behind him. He got them as far as the treeline before the first shot went off and Derek jolted as he was hit, one of the bullets finding their mark, but he didn’t stop and they were soon out of sight. Kate came out the other side of the house, running around the porch swearing a blue streak.

‘I’ll be back for you, Derek!’ she yelled. ‘Your bitch too. I’m going to make him bleed in front of you!’ She fired off another round into the air.

‘Fucking bitch.’ Stiles wanted to shred her face. ‘What the fuck did you ever see in her?’

To his alarm, Derek didn’t even respond and when Stiles looked at him he saw that he was pasty white and sweating profusely. There were dark tendrils leaching their way from the bullet wound on his shoulder where he had been hit by the round Kate had fired at him. The blood leaking from the hole was black and smelled like the same pungent herby scent the hunters gave off and Stiles knew it was bad.

‘Fuck.’ He stopped to pull off his flannel and press it to the wound. ‘Derek?’

‘It’s wolfsbane.’ Derek growled. ‘I need to get to Deaton. Now.’
Deaton heard the sound of a car tearing into the parking lot outside and immediately went on alert, knowing that Lydia had long since gone home with some books and guidance on what to expect. He was in the front reception when the door flew open and Stiles came in, half carrying and half dragging Derek. The werewolf looked barely alive, his skin a horrible greyish white and sweating so profusely Deaton could smell him, a sickly herbal smell combined with the stink of necrosis that he instantly recognised.

‘Get him in the back.’ he ordered and Stiles didn’t even stop to speak, just kept going until he got Derek into the examination room and physically heaved him onto the steel examination table. Derek’s breathing was laboured, his pupils dilated from the effect of the wolfsbane that Deaton knew was the cause of his condition. He went to look at him, seeing black blood staining the shoulder of Derek’s shirt, and waved a hand at him.

‘Get it off.’ he told Stiles and watched as the boy unsheathed his claws and ripped it off. Derek was so far gone he didn’t even protest and Deaton sucked the air in through his teeth when he saw the bullet hole in his shoulder. It was black and weeping, the edges feathery from where it was trying to close and being unable to. Stiles watched him examine it and whined low in his throat.

‘Who was it?’ Deaton asked and he growled, eyes flashing gold in distress.

‘Fucking Kate Argent.’ he replied. ‘She ambushed us at her house with two of her goons.’

‘That is a very unwelcome development.’ Deaton said, looking at Derek. ‘I won’t have the kind of wolfsbane she has, even if I could identify it. We’ll need a round from the weapon she used.’ He turned to Stiles. ‘Without it, Derek will die.’

Stiles whined unhappily and shifted on his feet.

‘How?’ he asked and he looked every bit the sixteen year old he was.

‘We’ll need to get it direct from the source.’ Deaton told him. ‘Is there any way you can get into their house?’

‘No.’ Stiles chewed on a nail. ‘But Scott’s going there for dinner.’

‘Then he needs to do it.’ Deaton grabbed some antiseptic and a cloth, emptying some out and dabbing at the injury. Derek hissed in pain and his own claws popped out and scrabbled at the table. ‘Go and tell him he needs to do this. You can’t risk further exposure, not after what’s happened. You don’t know what she may have said to justify attacking you and Derek.’

Stiles didn’t need to be told twice, bolting out the door and soon Deaton heard the car starting up again and the tires squealing as Stiles tore off.
‘Fuck.’ Derek muttered from the table. ‘I’m going to kill the little shit when he gets back if he’s torn the tread off.’

Deaton chuckled in spite of himself. He’d always appreciated the Hales gallows humour. It was clear where Derek got it from. Talia had been able to have him in stitches with her dry observations and for the first time in years, Deaton felt a tug on his carefully managed emotions. He laid a gentle hand on Derek’s shoulder.

‘I think that’s the least of your problems.’ he said and Derek’s face scrunches up in pain as he started to shiver uncontrollably.

‘She told me she’d make him bleed in front of me.’ He sounded utterly broken. ‘She’ll kill Stiles if she gets a chance. You have to call his dad.’

Deaton heaved a sigh.

‘I’ll do that now.’ he said. ‘Can you hang on?’

‘I’ll get right on that.’ Derek muttered and promptly passed out.

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Stiles drove with flagrant disregard for speed limits and his own safety. He got to Scott’s house in what must be record time and practically fell out the Camaro. He ran to the front door, hammering frantically, and when Scott opened the door he lurched through, panting like he’d run a race. He could feel the waves of panic inside him threatening to break free and Scott grabbed him by the upper arms.

‘Jesus Stiles, breathe!’ He slammed the door shut and dragged him into the living room. ‘What the hell happened?’

‘I need to tell you something.’ Stiles gritted out. ‘And I need you to believe me and not ask any questions.’ He looked at him, pleading. ‘Tell me you’ll do that. Tell me you’ll be my friend and help me.’

‘You know I will.’ Scott was emphatic. ‘What the fuck is going on?’

‘The hunters that tried to kill me.’ Stiles locked eyes with him, willing Scott to believe what he said next. ‘It’s Allison’s family. Her dad is the one that shot me. Her aunt is one too and she caught me and Derek at the Hale house and she shot him with wolfsbane and if we don’t find a bullet then he’s going to fucking die, Scott!’ The reality of the situation hit him like a slap in the face and he was wheezing for breath as his stomach churned and he slid down until he was on the ground, everything closing in on him.

‘Fuck.’ Scott was next to him. ‘Look at me, Stiles. You have to breathe, okay. In and out, with me.’ He started breathing slowly and Stiles tried to match him, eventually managing to get a handle on his panic and getting enough air in to push him back. He looked at him and saw nothing but confusion on Scott’s face.

‘Say something.’ he choked and Scott’s face fell.

‘You’re wrong.’ He was frowning. ‘It can’t be her family. Allison wouldn’t be part of something like that. She’s the best person I know.’

Stiles had to grit his teeth and resist the urge to slap him. Scott could be as stubborn as the day is long
and just as blind sometimes.

‘Believe me, I wish it wasn’t true,’ he said. ‘But it is. Her family are hunters. They hunt werewolves. Kate’s the one that killed Derek’s family and now she’s trying to get the one that got away.’ He shook his head. ‘I know you think Allison is basically perfect and I honestly don’t think she knows about any of this, but the rest of them are in it up to their fucking eyes!’

‘How do you know this?’ Scott protested. ‘You know how you get, when you think you’re onto something. This could all be in your head.’

‘Yeah?’ Now Stiles was angry. He knew he was shifting because Scott immediately recoiled from him and scuttled back. ‘Then why don’t you call my dad and ask him. He’ll tell you it’s true. We’ve been working on this because it’s all fucking connected, the alpha and the Argents and Derek and who murdered Laura.’

He watched that sink in and then Scott’s shoulders slumped.

‘What do you need me to do?’ he asked and Stiles breathed a sigh of relief.

‘I need you to tell me exactly what you’ve told Allison,’ he says. ‘She might have let something slip, even accidentally. And I need you to go to dinner tonight and try and find a bullet.’

‘A bullet?’ Now Scott’s back to confused. ‘Why?’

‘Because the wolfsbane that’s poisoning Derek can only be counteracted by the same kind,’ Stiles explained. ‘It’ll be one of Kates. I bet she carries her gun everywhere with her so all you need to do is slip away for a few minutes, find her room and look for it.’

Scott was quiet. He was also looking extremely uncomfortable and Stiles realised that maybe something was finally sinking in.

‘I didn’t tell Allison,’ he finally said. ‘But she suspects something. I told you how she got mad when I wouldn’t explain what happened at Lydia’s.’ His face was stricken. ‘If I tell her what’s going on, she’s going to hate me. She’ll know I lied.’

‘You’re not going to tell her,’ Stiles growled and was momentarily taken aback by how much like a wolf he sounded. ‘You can’t. You don’t get it, Scott. Her fucking aunt shot Derek, she tried to kill him and she also threatened to kill me.’ He glared at Scott, willing him to be on his side and felt almost sick when Scott avoided his eyes.

‘All right,’ he finally said. ‘I’ll help you.’

Stiles felt relief swamp him and yet he was still hurt, unbelievably so, by Scott’s reluctance. He stepped back and shoved his hands in his pockets, claws pricking his palms.

‘Just get it okay. I’m not kidding about him dying,’ he looked away, perilously close to tears because it was hitting him hard and he’d starting to realise that he’d be lost if that happened. He didn’t know how this had come to pass, but he knew that he couldn’t lose Derek now, not when he was the one that Stiles needed. Maybe even the one that Stiles was falling in love with.

Scott didn’t say anything else. He just ducked his head and Stiles took that as his signal to get the fuck out of there and back to Derek. He stopped briefly at the door, turning to give him one last look, and then he was out the door and running back down to the Camaro. Once he was in the car he scrabbled for his phone and called his dad. Time to get some backup.
The phone rang once and Noah answered. To Stiles surprise he didn’t greet him, just started talking.

‘I’m on my way kid. Deaton just called me and told me what happened.’ he said and the reassurance in his voice made Stiles want to cry but there’s also anger there, running underneath his seemingly calm demeanour. ‘I have to tell you though, I’m about ready to drive over to the Argents and abuse my authority.’

‘It won’t help.’ Stiles started the Camaro. ‘I’ve just spoken to Scott. He said he’s going to help.’ He was trying to hide the shake in his voice, but his father isn’t a cop for nothing.

‘What’s wrong?’ he demanded. ‘Besides the obvious.’

‘I think he’s chosen her.’ Stiles’ voice drops to a whisper. ‘He didn’t want to believe me. I practically had to beg him to help.’

‘Shit.’ Noah said. ‘I’m sorry as hell, kid. Look just get back to Deaton’s. I’ll meet you there. Don’t do anything stupid, okay?’

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It took forever.

Stiles paced, nails in his mouth while Derek slumped in one of Deaton’s chairs. Noah and he were in the back office and if Stiles concentrated he could make out their voices easily enough but right at that moment, Derek occupied his entire focus.

‘Can you stop?’ Derek sounded rough as hell. His skin was even paler now and sheened with sweat, his green eyes glassy with pain. The wolfsbane was making a steady track through his veins, the spidery black fingers far too close to his heart for Stiles’ comfort. He whined and walks over, crouching down so he could put his hands on Derek’s thighs.

‘What can I do?’ he asked and Derek heaved a sigh.

‘If I show you will you stop pacing?’ he asked and Stiles nodded. ‘Give me your hand. You got to promise to stop when I tell you to, okay?’

Stiles glared at him, but he’d learned in these past weeks that Derek was every bit as stubborn and pretty much unmovable when it came to things he didn’t want to give ground on.

‘Okay.’ he agreed. ‘Now show me.’

‘You have to feel for it.’ Derek shifted and his face creased in pain. ‘Use the bond but don’t hang on too tightly. Too much and you can hurt yourself.’

Stiles leaned in, nuzzling at Derek’s cheek. The bond between them was stretched tight with pain and fear (most of that from his side and he surmised that Derek was purposely hiding his so Stiles didn’t freak out any further) and he reaches out for it, scared to do anything that will hurt Derek further. He had to grit his teeth because it started to hurt like a motherfucker and he looked down at where black lines were pulsing up his arm, then had to let go because it got too much and he felt like he was about to puke from the pain.

‘Fuck, sorry.’ he hissed and Derek shook his head.

‘You did good.’ he murmured and it was true, he already had some colour back. ‘Now sit down before you fall down.’
Stiles flopped to the floor, leaning his head against Derek’s knee. He was light headed and wondered just how bad it must be for Derek.

‘Did it help?’ he asked and felt Derek’s fingers brush through his hair.

‘Yeah.’ The bond was still tight but Stiles could feel Derek was not as tense as before. They both looked up as Deaton and Noah came back in.

‘You need to call Scott.’ Noah said. ‘It’s been over two hours.’

‘I tried about twenty minutes ago.’ Stiles pointed out. ‘He didn’t fucking answer.’

The adults exchanged a look and Deaton shrugged at Noah.

‘Is there any way you could get in there?’ he asked and Noah grimaced.

‘Not without breaking a couple of laws.’ he replied. ‘Goddammit.’

Stiles looked back over his shoulder at Derek and got the eyebrows. He took out his cell and tried again. To his surprise Scott actually answered this time.

‘Dude.’ He was trying not to sound too harsh, but it still came out sharp. ‘Where the hell have you been?’

‘You don’t understand.’ Scott hissed. ‘Everyone is here and they’re giving me the third degree about me and Allison.’ He sounded mildly horrified and Stiles had to bite his lip from saying something along the lines of well my boyfriend is dying so could you hurry the fuck up?

‘Scott.’ He took a deep breath. ‘I really need you to come through for me, man. I would do this for you.’ The truth is, he would. This and more.

‘I’m trying.’ Scott protested. ‘Look I have to go, Allison’s calling me for dessert.’

‘Wait, Scott…’ Stiles ended up staring at his phone as Scott cut the call. ‘Well, fuck.’

‘Let me guess.’ Derek was as dry as the Sahara behind him. ‘It’s his turn to do the charade.’

Stiles gaped at him and then elbowed him hard in the knee, wincing because Derek’s knees were surprisingly bony.

‘Dessert, actually.’ he snorted and Noah’s face was now identical to the one he’d just made.

‘He does realise the importance of the situation here?’ he asked and Stiles rolled his eyes and then thought that he’d definitely been spending too much time with Derek.

‘You’d think that wouldn’t you?’ He folded his arms and glowered at the floor.

‘Can you at least give him something for the pain?’ Noah asked Deaton and Deaton shook his head as he came over to inspect Derek, ignoring the growl he got.

‘Analgesics and opiates have no effect of werewolf neurological systems.’ he replied. ‘And I can’t give him the wrong type of wolfsbane because it will only make things works. He has to ride this out until Scott gets here.’

‘If he gets here.’ Stiles muttered. ‘He’s being a real asshole.’
‘Hey.’ Noah chided him gently. ‘I can’t think this is easy for him either, kiddo. You’re asking him a lot.’

‘I have been his best friend literally since we were five.’ Stiles snapped. ‘He’s supposed to do shit like this for me. He’s supposed to take my side and have my back, not some girl who just waltzed into his life a few weeks ago and whose family are a bunch of psycho killers who burned down a house full of Derek’s family and tried to fucking kill us!’

Then he realised what he said and clammed up because now Noah was looking pretty murderous again and he didn’t really want to have to calm his father down for a second time.

‘I should just go over there and demand they hand it over.’ His hand was already hovering near the butt of his firearm. ‘Fuck it.’

‘Noah.’ Deaton’s voice was deceptively calm. ‘You can’t do that. You have no evidence a crime has been committed and no cause for a search. We can’t take Derek to a hospital for obvious reasons so we just have to wait for Scott to do his part. He’s a good kid, he’ll come through.’

‘So we just wait?’ Stiles kicked out at the floor. ‘Well that fucking sucks.’

‘I’ll make some more tea.’ Deaton said and walked back into his office.

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Scott was sweating bullets.

He had finally managed to make it upstairs, but it had been a hell of an evening. Allison kept giving him the side-eye because he was acting like a terrible spy, her mom scared the fuck out of him and Kate, well Kate was so far off the creepy scale he didn’t even know where to begin. It really said something that Chris was the only one behaving even remotely close to normal.

His phone buzzed and he made a face as he answered it. He could hear how scared Stiles was because he was doing that thing where he was using sarcasm the way some military forces used heavy artillery.

‘Have you found it yet?’ he hissed and Scott winced and held the phone away from his ear for a second before replying.

‘Do you know how hard this is?’ he hissed back. ‘There are like a thousand fucking bullets in this house!’

‘We need one of hers.’ Stiles was insistent. ‘Look she probably keeps everything close to her. Try her fucking room.’

‘I can’t go through her room.’ Scott was scandalised at the suggestion.

‘Dude, Derek just puked black shit all over the floor.’ Stiles snapped. ‘Get the fucking thing and get your ass over here.’ There was a new, pleading note in his voice. ‘Please, Scott. He’s going to die if you don’t.’

Scott closed his eyes for a second wishing that he’d never gotten involved in this.

‘Okay.’ he whispered. ‘I’m on it.’ He hung up and then tiptoed down the hall, feeling sure he was going to be busted any second. Thankfully he already knew where Allison’s room was and a process of elimination found him in the room which must be Kate’s because it reeked of her perfume.
There wasn’t not much to look through, but her purse was on the bed so he went through that first, relief washing over him in waves when he found a couple of bullets at the bottom of it. He pocketed them and prayed they were the right ones, then made his escape except that when he came down the stairs, Allison was waiting for him with folded arms and a sceptical expression.

‘What took so long?’ Her voice was low and Scott shrugged, panicking internally.

‘I’m a nervous urinator.’ he protested and then wanted to die a little. Still, she seemed to buy this and grabbed his hand.

‘Coffee.’ she said and Scott had to pull back a little.

‘Actually I kind of have to go.’ he told her. Allison frowned but truthfully, Scott had had enough of the evening and her dad looking like he wanted to murder him and her mom giving him disapproving looks.

‘Okay.’ she said. ‘I guess I’ll see you at school then.’

They got to the front door and suddenly Victoria materialised out of nowhere, a thin smile on her face.

‘Are you leaving already, Scott?’ she asked, even though it was clear that she was pleased with this development. Scott wasn’t not so dense that he couldn’t hear the relief behind the faux disappointment.

‘I should be back before curfew.’ he explained and Chris came up behind his wife.

‘Sensible thinking.’ he said but his smile was chilly. ‘We wouldn’t want anything to happen to you. What with all the wild animal attacks around here.’

Scott’s heart was pounding so hard that they could probably all hear it and desperately hoped that they’ll think it was because of him and Allison. She was now at his side, holding his arm and giving her parents death glares.

‘Hang on.’ That was Kate’s voice and she appeared just as suddenly as Victoria had and Scott frowned. Stiles might be onto something. She certainly looked like she was about to eat him up like some sort of after dinner mint and he sweated as discreetly as he could.

‘What’s wrong?’ Chris looked at her and Scott would swear that there was something in the way his voice lilited, like imminent death for him.

‘I was just upstairs and someone’s been in my purse.’ Kate’s blue eyes were now as hard as diamond chips and Scott wanted to just dissolve into the floor under that unforgiving gaze. ‘You wouldn’t happen to know anything about that, would you Scott?’

‘Um.’ He was panicking now and cursing Stiles in his head for dragging him into this. ‘No?’

‘See, it’s just that you were upstairs while we were all down here and I can’t help but put two and two together and come up with you snooping in my things.’ Kate had her head tilted and a weird little smile on her face and Scott wanted to hurl and then bolt out the front door.

To his amazement, it was Allison who saved him.

‘That was me actually.’ Her head was up, chin lifted defiantly. ‘I went in your purse.’
‘Honey, why?’ Victoria still had her eyes fixed on him and then Allison sighed and dipped her fingers into her jeans pocket and came out with a condom held between them.

‘Oh.’ Kate said and it’s clear that this was the last thing she had expected.

‘So if we’re done embarrassing my boyfriend, I’d like to say goodbye to him.’ Allison was holding her ground and Scott wanted to kiss her face off because she was amazing.

‘Of course. Goodnight Scott.’ Chris looked supremely uncomfortable but he took Victoria’s elbow and steered her back into the living room, the two of them hissing at each other as they disappeared from sight. Kate, however, didn’t seem so easily thwarted.

‘Just remember our conversation, Ally.’ She smiled again and now it was predatory and Scott got the shivers. ‘Goodnight Scott. And just remember that if you hurt my niece, they’ll never find your body.’ With that little bombshell, she turned and followed her brother and sister-in-law.

Scott finally breathed out when he turned to open the door, but Allison’s hand on his arm stopped him.

‘Outside, now.’ she hissed and he let her open the door and shove him through it. They got to the road and Scott’s bike and she put her hands on her hips and fixed him with a look that said that she was not letting him get away without an explanation.

‘Tell me.’ Her dark eyes were sparkling angrily. ‘I want to know just what the hell you took from Kate’s purse.’

‘Fuck.’ Scott looked back at the house. ‘How much trouble will you get in if you come with me?’ He knows what Stiles had said but this was just going to have to be okay.

‘I can swing it.’ Allison’s face was determined. ‘Are you going to tell me?’

‘I’ll show you.’ Scott said. ‘But you have to promise to say nothing. Stiles will kill me if you do.’

‘I knew something was up with him.’ Allison looked vindicated. ‘And I have a shitload to tell you about just what a bad person Derek fucking Hale is.’

Scott frowned. That wasn’t what he was expecting. He knew he wasn’t the sharpest knife in the drawer, he’d be the first to admit that, but even he knew that Stiles’ story has been more than corroborated by finding the bullets in Kate’s purse and the general sense of creepy that pervaded dinner.

‘Will you come with me?’ he asked and Allison nodded.

‘Go down the street and make sure you’re out of sight.’ she told him. ‘Give me twenty minutes and I’ll be here.’

Scott watched her go back inside, grimacing because he knows that Stiles was going to kick his ass for taking so long. He rode down to the end of the street, well out of sight of the Argent house and stopped to wait. It felt like time dragged on forever but soon enough he heard footsteps and Allison came out of the dark and then hopped on the back of his bike.

‘I snuck out the window.’ Her smile was blinding, arms going around his waist and holding on.

‘Start pedalling McCall.’

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The sound of the clinic’s door opening prompted Stiles to raise his head and he looked across at Deaton, who had his eyebrows raised in query from where he was standing next to the chair, having just cleaned up Derek’s wound again. Noah went to the door of the examination room, hand straying to his service weapon, and Stiles had to stifle a hysterical giggle at how crazy this whole situation was. He got a low growl from Derek and felt him trying to reassure him through the bond, latching onto it.

That is until Scott walked in with Allison Argent and then all hell broke loose.

Derek was on his feet in a second, wolfed out and snarling, and Stiles had to throw himself at him to stop him from taking Allison’s arms off. He could feel the anger and fear in Derek, knew that he was running on pure instinct but the look of sheer terror on Allison’s face was enough for him to throw him back, tackling him to the ground and sitting on him to restrain him while he yelled at his best friend.

‘What the fuck, Scott!’ He caught his father making frantic throat-cutting gestures at him and knows he was also wolfing out, his control fractured and barely holding together in the face of what Derek’s feeling were screaming at him. Allison felt like a threat and his every instinct was telling him to protect his family and his potential mate.

‘I’m sorry!’ Scott protested and hid behind Noah, dragging Allison with him. ‘I know you didn’t want me to tell her, but she knew something was wrong and you know what a shit liar I am!’

‘So you brought her here?’ Stiles had never been so close to hitting him in his life. ‘How fucking stupid can you be?’ He had to shift his weight because, even half-dead from wolfsbane poisoning, Derek was strong as fuck and desperate to throw him off. ‘Why don’t you just fucking shoot him yourself!’

‘Stiles!’ Noah had to yell to make himself heard. ‘Enough!’ He grabbed Scott’s arm, completely ignoring the gaping Allison. ‘Did you get it?’

‘Here.’ Scott scrabbled at his pocket and got out a bullet, and then froze as he got a good look at Derek. ‘Holy shit, he looks terrible.’

‘Because the wolfsbane in his system is killing him, Scott.’ Deaton sounded so reasonable that Stiles wanted to bite him but it seemed to do the trick because Scott did in fact calm down. ‘Now go to that drawer and get the lighter, some pliers and bring the bullet here.’ It wasn’t a request and Scott obeyed instantly.

‘Miss Argent.’ Noah had a gentle hand on her arm. ‘Maybe it would be best if we go in the back for a second. ‘I’m sure you have questions.’ He was in sheriff mode and Stiles was eternally grateful that he had such a cool-headed father. Allison didn’t even question him, still too shocked by what she was seeing to even protest, even when Scott skidded on the easy-clean floor and handed the lighter and bullet to Deaton. Deaton accepted them and nodded at the table.

‘Get him back up there.’ he ordered and Stiles did, grunting with effort as he got Derek up. Now that Allison was out the room, he had slumped back down and he was a bitch to get to his feet but Stiles was running off wolfy adrenaline so he hauled him up and lifted him right off his feet so he was sitting on the edge of the table. Scott was watching as Deaton worked the end of the bullet off and tapped out a purplish black powder onto the steel surface and then lit it. It ignited from the gunpowder and flared, purple smoke trailing up and making Stiles bare his fangs. Deaton scraped the residue off the table into his hand and looked at him.

‘Hold him tightly, this is going to hurt.’ he said and before Stiles could protest, he was slamming the
sticky substance against the wound in Derek’s shoulder. Derek roared, making the windows rattle with the force of it, and Stiles had to throw both arms around him to keep him still. It worked though, and he stared, fascinated as the black lines retreated across Derek’s skin and the bullet hole fizzed and sealed up. He looked up at Derek’s face, seeing the colour come back and feeling an overwhelming sense of relief when all the black lines on his skin finally disappeared.

‘Stiles.’ Derek was croaky and exhausted but Stiles smiled at him, so close to tears that he had to squeeze his eyes shut as he lets Derek hold him as close as they could both get to each other.

‘You’re okay.’ he whispered into Derek’s bare shoulder, inhaling his scent that was now free of any trace of injury. ‘You’re going to be fine.’

‘Thanks to some timely intervention.’ Deaton gave Scott one of his half-smiles. ‘Thank you Mr McCall.’

‘It’s okay.’ Scott was clearly at a loss for words, his brown eyes huge, and Stiles knew from experience that this is his friend having an epiphany. He looked at him and now Scott’s face was sheepish. ‘I didn’t know it was that bad.’

He let Derek go and turned, leaning back when Derek’s arm came around him because he wasn’t not ready to let him go yet.

‘I owe you one, man.’ He smiled his gratitude and felt it bounce back from Derek’s side, along with a prod in the ribs.

‘We owe you one.’ Derek amended and that got a return smile from Scott. ‘Thank you.’

‘No problem.’ He was all sunshine again. ‘Look, about Allison…’

‘I understand.’ Derek shook his head. ‘Maybe she needs to know.’

‘Really?’ Stiles wheeled around. ‘Telling the hunter’s kid is a move that you think is going to be in any way a good thing?’

‘Maybe it’s time to stop hiding.’ Derek told him, pulling Stiles in to nuzzle at his face. Apparently near death experiences make him touchy-feely but Stiles wasn’t going to deny the need to touch and scent and reassure himself that Derek was okay so he gave in and let Derek bury his nose in his neck, doing the same to him.

‘Fine.’ he muttered. ‘You two assholes can do what the fuck you want.’

‘He has a point.’ Deaton said. ‘And maybe this conversation will give us some answers.’

‘Answers to what?’ Allison was voice is shaken, and when they turn to look at her standing in the doorway Stiles could see that the shock had been in no way mitigated by whatever his father had said to her. He could smell salt and apprehension and realised that she was crying. Behind her, Noah put a hand on her shoulder.

‘Alan, I think we might need some of that chamomile tea of yours.’ he said. ‘I think we all need to have a long talk.’

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A half hour later and Allison’s phone was ringing off the hook, she was still crying and Stiles felt like shit. That was partly because of the home truths that were coming out into the light and partly
because of Derek and the pain he was still enduring, the guilt that nearly crippled him and which was enough to make Stiles want to howl.

Allison had put up an argument at first until Noah had brought out the evidence, had shown her just what her family had done. It was clear she had no clue as to what the real family business was, but Deaton had also told her plenty and shown her books that talked about hunters and their legacy. He did go to great lengths to impress on her that her father was a honourable man who to his knowledge had never gone against the code and that settled her somewhat, although Stiles felt compelled to point out that Chris had been the one to shoot him. That had gotten him a glare from Noah and he’d kept quiet after that. Deaton had eventually given her and Derek the back room to talk it out and Stiles wasn’t supposed to be eavesdropping. He’d followed Derek in, still in protective mode until Deaton had pretty much dragged him out by the scruff of the neck so it wasn’t not like he had a choice but even so he could hear what was being said and it was making him antsy.

‘Crap.’ Noah looked at Allison’s phone which was lying on the table. ‘What the hell am I supposed to do with that?’

‘Ask her dad about how he feels that his daughter ran off to go help a werewolf?’ Stiles couldn’t stop the sarcasm from leaching out of him and next to him Scott looked miserable.

‘They’ll never let her go out with me now.’ he grumbled and Noah raised a stern eyebrow at them and then answered the call, sharing a look with Stiles that spoke volumes as to his opinion of Scott’s priorities.

‘Mr Argent.’ He injected as much authority as he can into his voice. ‘This is Sheriff Stilinski. Yes, I’m aware this is your daughter’s phone but I have just caught her breaking curfew with Scott McCall and my son and I’m holding onto it until we get her home and you can decide what to do with her for sneaking out.’

Stiles gave him an outraged look and Noah winks at him.

‘I couldn’t agree more.’ he said. ‘But they’re all safe so I’ll drop her off soon. You’re welcome.’ He hung up and grinned. ‘You’re all going to be grounded for a thousand years.’

‘Hey!’ Stiles was more than a little peeved, and he narrowed his eyes at Scott. ‘I’m not the dumbass that brought her here.’

‘I think that the inclusion of Miss Argent is not a bad idea at all.’ Deaton interjected. He gestured at the doorway to the back. ‘It’s going to be hard for her to hear but she needs to hear it nonetheless.’

Stiles winced and a little whine escaped him so Noah came over, arm around his shoulders.

‘He’ll be okay, kiddo.’ he murmured into Stiles’ hair, the warmth and calm he exuded soothing Stiles’ frayed nerves. ‘But you might need to be there for him after this.’

‘So you know pretty much everything.’ Scott said and now his face was scrunched up again, although this time it was in thought. ‘You think I could tell my mom?’ He looked hopefully at Deaton and got a shrug.

‘That would be up to Stiles and Derek.’ he replied

‘It’s not a bad idea.’ Noah mused. ‘Having someone at the hospital in the know would be incredibly useful and if you’re involved I would feel better about not having to lie to her.’ He was giving Scott
a pointed look before glancing down at Stiles. ‘What do you think?’

Stiles thought about Melissa and her kind eyes and gentle hands and the way she had always made him feel safe and cared for.

‘I think it’s a good idea.’ he replied.

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Derek hadn’t felt this raw since the fire.

It was harder than he ever thought it would be but as much as he was angry and hurt and grieving he knew that he was not the only one feeling like this. He saw the way Allison’s face had crumpled in the light of what Noah’s police files contained. She’d looked at the evidence and now she was listening to what he said, tears pouring down her face.

‘But why?’ Her voice was barely a whisper.

‘Because of what I am.’ Derek’s throat was hoarse, his body still weak from the wolfsbane. ‘Your family have hunted my kind since the seventeenth century, but until Kate I never thought hunters would kill so freely.’ He folded his hands, hiding where his claws were pricking his palms and drawing blood. It was taking all his self-control to keep from shifting. ‘She killed everyone I loved. My parents. My little sister. My grandparents. Aunts, uncles, cousins. Everyone.’

The pain caught in his chest as he remembered their faces, the sound of the house when they were all alive and his biggest worry was Laura being an asshole and stealing his flannel shirts and Cora jumping on his back every five minutes and demanding he carry her everywhere. He wanted it back, but he would never get it back and now he’d lost other his sister too and he was stuck in a place he’d never wanted to step foot in again.

‘I don’t know what to say to you.’ Allison was shaking her head. ‘Kate said that you two were involved, that you were violent towards her.’

Derek snorted, the very nature of the accusation cutting him to the quick.

‘I never hurt her.’ he muttered. ‘I was sixteen. I was your age.’ He looked up and saw fresh tears. ‘I was a kid and she took advantage of that and used it against me.’

‘I get that.’ Allison wrung her hands. ‘I just can’t…’ Her shoulders started to shake and Derek felt horrible in spite of the fact that he was the wronged party. It was the same feeling he had had at the bowling alley. She was only a kid who should never have been caught up in this but now she was here and she was going to have to grow up quickly.

‘I don’t expect you to believe me.’ He kept his head down, not wanting to scare her any more than she already was. ‘But everything Noah told you is true. Everything I’ve said is true.’

‘Do you…’ Allison’s face crumpled. ‘You think they hurt your sister?’

‘No.’ Derek shook his head. ‘That was the alpha.’ He’d only given her the briefest of explanations and he didn’t want to have to tell Allison that her aunt had cut Laura in half after she was dead.

‘I didn’t realise this was why we moved.’ Allison wiped at her tears. ‘They just said we were going to the place my dad grew up. That it would be a change.’ Her face fell again. ‘I didn’t know it was for this.’
Derek didn’t know what to do. He hadn’t been capable of really empathising with people for a long time, and it was only been recently that he’d started trusting people again. He hesitated and then decided to take a chance.

‘We need your help.’ he said and Allison looked at him. ‘Your dad is after the alpha. Unfortunately, he’s also after me and Stiles. You can throw him off, make him look somewhere else while we deal with this.’

‘Or I could tell him.’ Allison offered. ‘He could help you.’

‘But then he’d probably tell...her.’ Derek had to grit out the word. ‘And you can’t trust her not to hurt us. Look what she did to me. What she would have done to Stiles. I get you think he could help, but we can’t take that chance.’

‘What can I do?’ Allison whispered and Derek thought about what they needed.

‘Firstly, you need to get some of the ammunition they use for werewolves,’ he said. ‘We need to give Noah enough that he’s armed against the alpha and also have some on hand in case they shoot me or Stiles again.’

‘I could help you too, even of they can’t.’ Allison replied. ‘I know how to hunt. I can take care of myself, certainly better than Scott can and right now you seem like you could use me.’

‘No. We need you to stay as far away from this as possible. If you got hurt, it would just be an excuse for them to come after us.’ Derek’s mouth twisted. ‘Not that they need one, but still. It would be better of you just kept yourself and Scott safe.’

‘Guys?’ Stiles was leaning around the doorframe. ‘I hate to break this up but Allison’s dad just called.’ He gave her a sympathetic look. ‘He knows you snuck out and he sounded pissed.’

‘Great.’ Allison huffed. ‘This has been a seriously shitty night.’

‘You’re not wrong there.’ Derek muttered and then their eyes met.

‘I’m sorry.’ Allison said and her heart beat steadily over the words. ‘For what my family has done to yours. I don’t know what else to say.’

Derek didn’t reply, struck by her sincerity. He just nodded and she walked past him and out the doorway, leaving him alone with Stiles. He came forward, arms going around Derek like it was second nature and Derek leaned into him and held on tightly.

‘I’m okay.’ He turned his head, inhaling Stiles’ smell.

‘Liar.’ Stiles replies. ‘I would have kicked her ass for you.’

The choked off laugh came out of him completely unbidden and Derek couldn’t believe that he was even able to laugh about this. It was a mark of just how far he seemed to have come.

‘She took it a lot better than I expected.’ He pulled back and heaved a sigh. ‘This is all so fucked.’

‘No shit.’ Stiles made a face. ‘Dad’s going to take her and Scott home. You feel okay to get the fuck out of here?’

Derek lifted a hand, resting it against Stiles’ cheek and staring into those beautiful warm eyes. He leans in and kisses him, hearing Stiles’ breathing catch and his heart speed up.
‘Thank you.’ He nosed at him gently. ‘You’re pretty damn amazing, you know that?’

It was very gratifying to see Stiles go pink at the compliment. He ducked his head and shifted his weight as pleasure flooded his scent, suddenly back to being an awkward teenager, and it just made Derek want him even more.

‘You would have done it for me.’ He glanced up. ‘We’re a team now right? I save you and you save me.’

‘Damn straight.’ Derek said and snorted when Stiles raises his eyebrows at him. ‘Okay, maybe that was a poor choice of words.’

‘You think, sourwolf?’ Stiles grinned and kissed him again.

*********

Allison was lost in her head all the way back from the clinic.

Noah dropped Scott off first and he squeezed her hand before he got out the car and retrieved his bike from the back of the cruiser. Noah watched him go inside before he pulled away and then it was just the two of them.

‘Are you going to be all right?’ he asked and she heard nothing but concern.

‘I don’t know.’ she replied. ‘I...this is all...no.’ She didn’t want to cry again but it hurt so much. She felt like an idiot and at the same time her heart was screaming at her that this couldn’t be true, that Kate would never have done something like that.

‘Look, for what it’s worth I didn’t know anything about this until a couple of weeks ago.’ Noah said, eyes on the road. ‘Not about werewolves or how Stiles got bit or any of it. I’ve had to go through one hell of a learning curve and so will you.’ He sighed. ‘For what it’s worth, I never ever thought the Hale house fire was just what the reports said it was. I’m just sorry that you’re caught in the middle. It’s never easy when we find out our families are not who they say they are.’

‘I don’t know what to say to them.’ Allison chewed on one of her nails, a habit she hadn’t had since she was a child. ‘How do I pretend that I don’t know.’

‘You have to.’ Noah was stern. ‘This is important, Allison. People could get seriously hurt. Hell, people are already being killed. I need you to be sensible and stay out of this. You and Scott. I don’t know about your father, but your aunt is a dangerous woman and she could just as easily turn that on you.’

‘She wouldn’t.’ Allison protested, but it was weak and she was startled to realise she really wasn’t so sure anymore that it was the truth.

‘Just be careful.’ Noah pulled up outside her house and stopped the cruiser. ‘Do you want me to come inside with you, talk to your dad?’

‘No.’ Allison looked up and saw the front door open. ‘Looks like he’s coming to talk to you.’

Sure enough, Chris Argent was striding down towards the cruiser, looking equal parts stricken and furious.

‘Yeah, it sure looks that way.’ Noah gave her a reassuring smile. ‘It’s going to be okay.’
‘No, it’s not.’ Allison felt tears pricking her eyelids again. ‘Nothing is going to be okay ever again.’ She took a deep breath and opened her door. Chris was standing there waiting for her and he leaned in to look at Noah.

‘Sheriff.’ His blue eyes were hard. ‘Thank you for bringing her back. I’m sorry she caused so much trouble.’

‘No trouble.’ Noah said easily and Allison wondered how he could be so calm. ‘I have one myself, so I know how it goes.’

‘Dad…’ Allison started but Chris cut her off.

‘Get in the house, Allison.’ There’s no doubt about it, he was absolutely livid. ‘I’ll talk to you when you get inside.’ His next words were for Noah. ‘Don’t worry, Sheriff. This will not be happening again.’

‘Yeah, well don’t be too hard on her.’ Noah was smiling but it didn’t quite reach his eyes. ‘Kids do things without thinking of the consequences. Although in my experience, it’s rare for their actions to have truly serious ramifications. Unlike adults, who know what they are doing and do it anyway for their own ends.’ The implication was not lost on Allison and she looked at her father carefully and she was rewarded with a microexpression that she’d come to learn, a little twitch of the mouth that she recognised.

Her father was feeling guilty.

She got out and Chris gave Noah a curt nod and shut the door. The cruiser pulled away and he turned to her, his mouth set in an angry line.

‘What the hell were you doing?’ he asked and she had no answer, so she went with what made sense.

‘I wanted to spend some time with Scott without you and Mom and Kate breathing down our necks,’ she shot back, knowing she was going to get grounded anyway so she might as well go out fighting. ‘You were all horrible to him tonight and I wanted to tell him that it doesn’t matter if you don’t like him.’ She folded her arms and Chris pressed his lips together and then sighed.

‘It’s not that we don’t like him.’ he replied. ‘But you barely know this boy and there’s all kinds of things going on right now that…’ He stopped himself and Allison knows that he was about to say something he shouldn’t have.

‘Like what?’ she challenged. ‘The wild animal attacks?’

‘That’s part of it.’ Chris admitted. ‘But there are other things too, things you’re not ready to know yet.’ He nodded at the house. ‘Go inside. You’re grounded until further notice and no sneaking off to see Scott. I’ll be taking you to school and picking you up and you’ll be forfeiting going out on your birthday.’

Allison accepted her punishment in silence. She knew what she was doing when she went out the window, but now it was underlined by a determination to get to the bottom of everything she’d been told and being at home would just make it that much easier.

Inside, Victoria gave her her patented disappointed mother look as Allison went upstairs and then she heard the murmur of their voices. She wondered briefly if they were talking about Scott and went into her room, closing the door behind her. She sent him a quick text to say she was home and got a reply in seconds. Then she started plotting as she got ready for bed.
A few minutes later there was a knock and the sound of her door opening. Allison froze and Kate’s voice drifted into the bathroom.

‘Hey.’ She sounded like she was trying to be soothing. ‘You okay?’

Allison steeled herself and came out of the bathroom, giving her best attempt at a smile. She looked at Kate, all her admiration for her independent strong aunt tainted by what she’d discovered, and tried to act like nothing was wrong.

‘Yeah.’ she replied, pulling her brush through her hair. ‘I’m grounded but it was totally worth it. And I’ll still see Scott at school on Monday.’ She didn’t want to look at Kate but forced herself to. ‘I’ll be fine.’

‘Well, I feel kind of bad for bringing that all up.’ Kate said and she sounded so sympathetic, so sincere and it tore at Allison’s heart. ‘So I decided to give you your birthday present early.’ She held out a small velvet bag. Allison took it from her and dropped the brush on the bed, now curious. The bag looked worn and it was heavy. She opened it and tipped the contents onto her palm.

What she saw made her sick to her stomach and she had to really try hard to stop herself from crying as she turned over the heavy silver pendant, thumb rubbing over the same wolf design that Noah had shown her at the clinic, the design on the necklace that Derek’s sister had a drawing of and which had been worn the person that had burned down Derek’s home and killed his family.

‘It’s a family heirloom.’ Kate was saying. ‘My dad gave it me when I came of age and now I’m giving it to you.’ She reached out and tucks a strand of hair behind Allison’s ear. ‘Don’t tell your dad though. He thinks you’re too young to start learning about our family’s history, but if you are interested you should start by looking us up. It’s quite a story.’ Her smile was proud.

‘Thank you.’ Allison said, smiling while inside she was falling to pieces.

‘You’re welcome, sweetheart.’ Kate leaned in and kissed her on the forehead. ‘Now go to bed and have sweet dreams.’

Allison watched her go and then sat down on the edge of her bed and let the tears fall down her cheeks as she clutched the necklace in her hands.

***********

‘This is starting to become a habit.’ Noah grumbled as he walked over to the table. He had three mugs in his hands and Stiles wasn’t even going to protest the whipped cream canister under his arm, not when they’d just had another near death experience and could quite possibly go out the next day.

‘It’s kind of a normal day for me.’ Derek offered and both Stilinskis glared at him.

‘Shut up, asshole.’ Stiles wasn’t above kicking him in the shin, so he did. ‘Everyone already knows your life is total car wreck.’

‘Fuck.’ Noah wasn’t even trying anymore. ‘I am starting to think seriously about packing us all up and getting the hell out of town. What kind of a place is this turning into when people take goddam pot shots at my kids.’

Stiles choked on his hot chocolate at that and got thumped on the back by Derek until he was able to talk again.

‘You just said kids.’ he pointed out. ‘Plural.’
‘Yeah?’ Noah had a funny little grin on his face. ‘What the hell would you call him then? And, no
offence Derek, but it’s not like he’s got anybody else looking out for him so it might as well be me.’

‘None taken. But now we have an insider. At the least I think she’ll get you the ammunition you
need.’ Derek said, smiling into his hot chocolate. Stiles couldn’t help but notice he had two extra
marshmallows. He was starting to very strongly suspect favouritism.

‘That’s if we can trust her.’ he grumbled, still eyeing the froth on the top of Derek’s mug.

‘She didn’t lie to me.’ Derek replied. ‘Not once. She had no idea about her aunt or her dad and she’s
upset. This is a lot for someone to find out.’ He sighed and leaned back in his seat. ‘But now we
need to be really careful. I should leave, go back to the motel. Having me here is too dangerous.’

‘Fuck that noise!’ Stiles snorted. ‘You are not going anywhere.’ He looked at Noah, giving him his
best pleading face and Noah nodded.

‘I agree with Stiles.’ he said. ‘If anything, it means you shouldn’t be going anywhere alone. That will
make it harder for Kate to get to you.’

‘I can’t just sit around the house all day.’ Derek protested and Noah smirked. This time it was smug
and remarkably similar to the face that Stiles made when he was being particularly diabolical.

‘You’re not.’ he said. ‘You’re coming with me Monday morning to the station and starting a work
placement. We’ll say you’re interested in becoming a deputy. That way nobody will question it and
the Argents won’t be able to get within a foot of you.’

‘That’s actually kind of brilliant.’ Stiles was grinning. He didn’t always acknowledge just how
sneaky his father can be, but he was having a proud kid moment over it.

‘I know.’ Noah smiled and put more whipped cream on his hot chocolate.
Chapter Summary

The alpha is getting bolder...

Noah sipped his coffee and listened to the sound of his offspring thumping around upstairs. Across from him, Derek was dressed in a blue button down and clean jeans with his hair neatly brushed. He actually looked like a completely different person and Noah smiled to himself.

‘Stiles.’ He didn’t bother shouting, knowing that his son could hear him perfectly with his newly acquired wolf ears. ‘You’re going to be late.’

‘Shit, shit, shit…’ Stiles came galloping down the stairs moments later, flinging himself bodily into the kitchen and stealing Derek’s piece of toast from his plate before grabbing an apple and planting a kiss on his cheek. ‘Later.’

Noah watched him exit in a flail of limbs and winced as the front door slammed. Derek looked completely lost for words, his ears going a charming shade of red and with his other piece of toast still in his mouth.

‘So that’s new.’ Noah remarked. ‘The goodbye kiss thing?’

‘I didn’t tell him to.’ Derek protested with his mouth still full.

‘Oh I know.’ Noah smiled. ‘Stiles has got it bad. So do you, I think.’

‘Stiles is special.’ Derek ducked his head, the blush now travelling down his neck. Noah sighed and lamented the fact that Claudia wasn’t there to see it. She would have found the kid a delight. He may have been a werewolf but those bunny teeth and the way his green eyes went wide when Stiles teased him were more awkward than threatening.

‘Yeah, very special.’ He folded the newspaper and drained his cup of coffee. ‘Now go brush your teeth so we can go.’

‘Yes sir.’ Derek replied and Noah stifled a chuckle. Yeah, the kid was far too adorable for his own good. Christ knew what he saw in a delinquent like Stiles.

*********

Lydia stood and looked at the front doors of the school, steeling herself for the inevitable tidal wave of gossip and whispering that she was no doubt going to encounter. She lifted her chin, tossed her hair over her shoulder and plastered on her most brilliant smile and then went up the stairs.

As expected, it started the second she set foot in the corridor, people watching her and being far more blatant than they usually were in the way they whispered. Then again murder and assault were infrequent enough in Beacon Hills to warrant some serious interest, especially after it had been revealed that the video store clerk had died the same way that Meyers had. Her and Jackson had
been kept out of the official news report, only briefly referred to as witnesses, but news travelled fast and it was clear that even sequestering herself over the weekend, supernatural realisations aside, had in no way allowed things to blow over.

She strode through the crowds, ignoring everyone in her path until she got to her locker and saw Alison. She was taking her books out so her face was hidden, but Lydia’s practised eye spotted the tell-tale signs of someone who was not happy at all and when Allison looked up her face was pale and her brown eyes red-rimmed.

‘Hi.’ Lydia stopped next to her, frowning at her bedraggled appearance. ‘You look like shit.’

Allison let out a choked off laugh that sounded like it wanted to be a sob instead.

‘Yeah.’ She gave Lydia a watery smile. ‘You could say that I didn’t have the best weekend.’

‘How about that.’ Lydia smiled back, although there was no humour in it. ‘Me neither.’

‘I’m sorry I didn’t call you.’ Allison said, ducking her head as she tried to avoid Lydia’s eyes. ‘I only found out it was you on Saturday night and then I was kind of dealing with something. Are you okay?’

‘Not really.’ Lydia replied. ‘Are you?’

‘No.’ Allison said and closed her locker, leaning her forehead against it. ‘I feel like everything I know is wrong and my entire world got blown to shit and on top of that it’s my birthday and I’ve been grounded for the next twenty-years.’

‘Now that I can relate to. Well...not the grounding part.’ Lydia said and took her arm. ‘Come on, we need to talk and then we’re going to figure out how to give you the best birthday ever.’

************

‘The whole day, Stiles.’ Scott sounded panicked, his dark eyes huge and sad. ‘She wouldn’t even reply to my texts. I think her parents took her phone away.’

‘Dude.’ Stiles dragged him down the corridor to a quieter corner. ‘She just found out her entire family are a bunch of crazy ass people that murder families wholesale and probably got grounded forever. I would be freaked out too.’ He sighed when Scott’s face crumpled. ‘Look, I’m sure it’s not personal. Give her a couple of days to chill out and let her come to you.’

‘You’re just saying that because your boyfriend lives with you.’ Scott muttered and Stiles wanted to hit him up the back of the head.

‘Yeah. And your girlfriend’s psycho aunt shot him on Saturday and almost fucking killed him.’ he hissed. ‘She would have killed me too. I fail to see how Allison’s hurt feelings are more important than the fact that your best friend since first grade almost had a bullet in his ass.’

‘I guess.’ Scott was still sullen, but Stiles knew him well enough to know he was also feeling guilty. ‘Is Derek okay?’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles muttered and herded him to homeroom, thinking about the previous day. They had spent the whole of Sunday lazing around the house, partly because Noah had told them not to move their asses from the sofa and partly to let Derek fully recover from the wolfsbane poisoning. It had been good, just being together binge watching Netflix and eating takeout that Derek bought using an actual credit card (Stiles had stolen his wallet and cackled his way through the contents until he’d
found the picture of Derek’s family). They had gone upstairs early, Derek crashing out on Stiles’ bed while he surfed the net and looked up everything on wolfsbane and pestered Deaton.

‘Hello boys.’ Lydia’s voice behind them stopped them in their tracks and Stiles turned to see her and Allison standing there, rolling his eyes at the way Scott’s heartbeat picked up.

‘Hi.’ He grabbed Scott’s arm and held him in place so he didn’t throw himself at her. ‘So, crazy weekend huh?’

‘Yeah, we’re going to be talking about that.’ Lydia’s eyes were glittering with intent. ‘Do you know it’s Allison’s birthday today?’

‘What?’ Scott looked distraught. ‘You didn’t say anything.’

‘I normally don’t.’ Allison was flat. ‘It’s not like I’m usually in one place long enough to make friends to celebrate it with.’

‘Well, that’s a downer.’ Stiles said, nerves eradicating what little filter he had.

‘Shut up, Stiles.’ Lydia said, sounding remarkably like Derek. ‘So here’s how things are going to go. We’re all skipping school and going to Greenville. I have my dad’s credit card and a serious need for retail therapy seeing as how things really went to shit this weekend.’

‘We can’t skip.’ Stiles protested. ‘It’s the parent-teacher conference tonight.’

‘Actually I think that’s a great idea.’ Scott beamed at Allison. ‘I can get you a birthday present.’

‘No.’ Stiles flailed at him. ‘This is a terrible idea.’

‘Too late and you’re outvoted anyway.’ Lydia replied, lowering her voice. ‘Seeing as you’re going to spill everything.’

‘Crap.’ Stiles looked from her to Allison. ‘Guess you two have talked, huh?’

‘Get with the program Stiles.’ Lydia instructed, swanning past them with Allison’s arm linked through hers. ‘Maybe while we’re there we can find some clothes for you that don’t include plaid.’

‘Hey! Plaid never goes out of style!’ Stiles yelled after them and then rounded on Scott. ‘See what happened there? Now they think they’re the boss of us.’

‘Allison can be the boss of me all she wants.’ Scott replied, practically floating in their wake. Stiles watched him follow and growled in frustration.

‘Fuck my life.’ he muttered and jogged to catch up.

**********

Noah stopped the cruiser outside the Argent residence. He knew that Chris Argent ran his arms business from home, having seen the permits for weapons storage cross his desk when they’d come to town. Now he knew the implication of that he was livid, but it also provided a useful excuse to turn up at their house, an order for an official inspection of their premises in his hands. He’d wisely left Derek at the mercy of the day shift although seeing the kid’s expression when confronted with a group of bemused smiles had made him feel a little bad for ditching him.

He got out the car, taking a deep breath and putting on his most professional demeanour as he approached the house. Only the black SUV registered to Chris was in the drive and he knocked one
and waited for the sound of someone coming to the door. It opened and Noah gave Chris a more thorough onceover than he had on Saturday night. He had spent enough years in the army to recognise someone with a military bearing and wondered just what kind of training hunters underwent.

‘Good morning, Mr Argent.’ he said. ‘I was wondering if I could come in?’ He handed over the notice and watch Chris read it. He finally stepped back, his eyes assessing Noah as he gave him a thin smile.

‘Of course, Sheriff.’ he replied. ‘We have nothing to hide here.’

***********

‘Shit.’ Stiles checked his rearview mirror. ‘We’re going to get our asses busted if our folks find out.’

‘She looks so sad.’ Scott was completely focused on Lydia’s car in front of them. ‘I’m going to get her the best present I can find.’

‘Yeah, sure whatever.’ Stiles grumbled. ‘Let’s all collectively lose our minds, why don’t we?’ His cell buzzed and he picked it up and read the message.

ARE YOU INSANE? GET YOUR ASS BACK HERE NOW!!!!

‘Fuck.’ He winced. Derek was stuck doing filing at the station. Noah had already texted to say that the entire staff was smitten with him. ‘I’m in so much shit.’

‘Looks like you’re just as whipped as I am.’ Scott’s smile was sly. Stiles gave him the finger and kept driving as angrily as he could in protest.

***********

‘Seems like everything’s in order.’ Noah ticked off the final item on his checklist, feeling smug as hell when Chris’ eyelid flickered minutely.

‘Good.’ His blue eyes were like ice chips. ‘I am happy to hear that.’

‘Yes.’ Noah decided to push the boat out a little. ‘You can’t be too careful, not with these animal attacks going on. Especially having a kid you need to protect.’

Chris’ face shifted the tiniest bit and Noah knew he’d hit a sore spot.

‘She’s a sensible girl.’ he replied. ‘Saturday night notwithstanding.’

‘Kids will be kids.’ Noah said, putting on his best sage police officer voice. ‘Which is also why I decided to come see you.’

‘Oh?’ Chris was now wary.

‘Yes. Scott mentioned to Stiles that you’re a keen hunter.’ Noah said and internally punched the air when he got the eye flicker again. He had years of interrogation to fall back on, something that he was prepared to abuse if it meant keeping his family safe. ‘I was wondering if you would be interested in assisting the Sheriff’s department. Kind of like a community service if you will.’

‘What kind of service?’ Chris asked and Noah gave him a brilliant smile.

‘Helping me catch a wild animal, of course.’ he replied, completely delighted when Chris’s eyes
narrowed at him. He was going to very much enjoy this conversation.

‘This is stupid.’ Stiles grumbled, dragging his feet. They were in Macy’s looking for something that Scott could buy for Allison. ‘We’re not even having the talk. We’re avoiding having the talk. We could have done that back home, without skipping school or giving Derek any reason to disembowel me.’

‘Would he really do that?’ Scott’s face was all scrunched up. ‘I mean, seriously?’

‘No, you asshole.’ Stiles snorted and picked up a bottle of perfume, wrinkling his nose at the pungent scent. ‘Probably not.’

‘How about this one?’ Scott sprayed something in his face and Stiles sneezed violently.

‘Douchebag.’ He shook his head, trying to get the smell out of his nose.

‘No good?’ Scott asked and started going through the other testers.

‘So are we going to actually talk about it?’ Allison asked, watching Lydia trawl through a rack of skirts and dresses like a pro.

‘When we’re ready.’ she replied, taking out a mini kilt and holding it up against Allison speculatively. ‘But on our terms.’

‘Okay.’ Allison sighed. ‘So, banshee?’

‘That’s what Doctor Deaton said.’ Lydia replied. ‘And all my research seems to indicate that he’s correct.’

‘Jesus.’ Allison slumped against a mirror. ‘How is this happening to me? On Friday I was a normal girl with a cute boyfriend and a school that I was actually starting to like and someone that I could see being my best friend. Now I’m the daughter of a family of werewolf hunters, my aunt turns out to be a mass murderer and the supernatural all exists.’

‘Wait.’ Lydia turned to her. ‘Go back a step. Your aunt is a mass murderer?’

‘Yeah.’ Allison’s eyes filled with tears. ‘She killed the Hales.’

‘Fuck.’ The bluntness of Lydia’s reply was testament to her shock. ‘Okay I didn’t know that.’

‘She shot Derek on Saturday.’ Allison said. ‘Sheriff Stilinski told me all about it. These murders are all linked together because the people the alpha is killing are her accomplices.’ Her voice dropped. ‘Derek could have died.’

‘But he didn’t.’ Lydia replied. ‘And that’s because of your quick thinking.’ She sighed. ‘Okay so we need to come up with a game plan for all of this. And under no circumstances is Jackson to be involved. He’s way too volatile for this.’

‘Okay.’ Allison chewed on her lower lip. ‘I want to talk to my dad about this, but I just haven’t been able to find what I want to say.’

‘Hey.’ Lydia moved to put her hand on her arm. ‘You’ve just had a huge shift in your reality. You’re
allowed to not be sure about what to say. But it might be a good idea.’

‘Are you going to tell your parents?’ Allison asked.

‘Hell, no.’ Lydia replied. ‘I can’t trust them to not go overboard or to not believe me. I’m keeping this quiet for the time being.’ She pursed her lips. ‘You know what we need? Winter formal dresses. It’s in three weeks and it’s never too early to start looking.’

***********

‘Wild animals?’ Noah was impressed by Chris’ nonchalance. ‘Sheriff, is this a joke?’

‘You can cut the act, Chris,’ he replied. ‘I know you’ve been prowling around the preserve with enough hardware to take out an elephant or five.’

Chris stayed quiet, but Noah could almost see the wheels turning.

‘How?’ he asked and Noah grinned.

‘How do you think?’ he replied and Chris frowned.

‘I’ve been concerned,’ he said. ‘These deaths are unsettling for everyone in this town and the sooner the animal responsible is taken care of, the better everyone will be sleeping.’

Noah nodded in agreement.

‘Of course,’ he replied, wondering just how much Chris knew. Derek had said that he didn’t know that Stiles was the beta and he very much wanted to keep it that way. ‘And taking into account Friday’s events, I think it would be prudent for us to try and find some common ground in this matter.’

‘That would make sense.’ Chris was still being wary of saying too much. ‘I could make some enquiries…’

‘No.’ Noah interjected. ‘The fewer people who know about this, the better. I am aware that you have other people working with you, but I will only be sharing information with you. Is that clear?’ He saw the confusion on Chris’ face and got the distinct impression that he was used to reporting to higher up. ‘I don’t want to put people into a panic.’

‘I understand?’ Chris folded his arms. ‘Although I think it would be better to have further assistance.’

‘Just you.’ Noah replied. He had taken note of Scott’s remarks about Victoria and she seemed like too much of a gamble. ‘Now about Saturday…’

‘What about Saturday?’ Chris asked, his eyes sharp, and it occurred to Noah that he didn’t know about what Kate had been up to and the run in with Derek and Stiles. He decided to keep that to himself as well.

‘There was a report of shots up at the old Hale house,’ he said. ‘I am sure that I don’t need to remind you about discharging your weapons on public land especially in the middle of the afternoon.’ He decided to take a chance. ‘I’m assuming that wasn’t you.’

‘No.’ Chris replied. ‘I was home all day. Allison and Victoria will corroborate that.’

‘So no idea who it could have been then?’ Noah pressed and Chris mouth formed a thin line.
'Sorry.' He seemed to be working things out and Noah let him run with it.

'Well, if you come across anything let me know.' he said and moved towards the front door. ‘I appreciate your cooperation.’

‘ Anything to help the authorities.’ Chris replied, but Noah gleefully noted that it was through gritted teeth.

Chris let him out and he all but skipped down the steps, happy to have stirred things up. It was always the best way to get information. In the cruiser he jotted down some facts, mainly that Chris apparently wasn’t in the know about all his sister’s activities and that he was clearly feeding things back to his father. Noah also made a note to do some digging on Gerard Argent and see what he could find.

He glanced at the Argent house, pretending not to notice the shadow at the window that was clearly watching him and chuckled as he put the car in gear and pulled off.

************

‘How about this?’ Allison asked, holding up a dress. Lydia studied it for a second and then shook her head.

‘Not really your colour.’ Her eyes narrowed she as she thought. ‘Hang on, I saw something a few racks back that I think might work.’ She walked off, leaving Allison sighing and flicking listlessly through the clothes in front of her. She picked up a dark green dress and then heard someone tut behind her.

‘No.’ The man was surprisingly handsome in an older guy way, his dark hair slicked back and his blue eyes piercing. ‘That’s not going to do anything for your complexion.’ He gave her a smile and came forward. ‘You’re too pale and that will just wash you out.’

Allison felt a shiver go down her spine, but did not move away as he stepped up to the rack next to her.

‘May I?’ he asked and held out a hand and she found herself giving him hers. He contemplated her hand for a moment and then reached out, picking up a silver mini dress with a bubbled hem and holding it up. ‘I think this would be much better.’ He handed it to her and Allison gave him a small smile.

‘Thank you.’ she replied, ever mindful of her manners.

‘You’re welcome.’ he replied and tilted his head. ‘You’re an Argent.’

That caught Allison completely off guard.

‘I…’ She frowned. ‘Do I know you?’

‘No.’ The man smiled and it was predatory, making all her instincts scream at her to get away. ‘But I know your father.’

‘Oh?’ She took a step back, liberating her hand. ‘I can say hi if you like.’

‘No need.’ The man replied and then glanced over her shoulder. ‘Your friend is coming back.’

Allison glanced over her shoulder and sure enough Lydia was making her way back with several
dresses. She looked quizzical and Allison turned back to the man, only to find he’d all but disappeared.

‘Who was that?’ Lydia asked when she got to her and Allison frowned, her mind racing.

‘I don’t know.’ she replied. ‘But I’m going to find out.’

*********

Stiles was shuffling behind Scott through the handbag department when he felt it. The shiver down his spine was enough to stop him in his tracks, just before he caught a whiff of the same acrid scent he knew from the woods.

‘Fuck…’ He immediately caught up with Scott and took his arm. ‘Dude. He’s here.’

‘Who?’ Scott’s sneakers squeaked across the floor as Stiles dragged him along.

‘The alpha.’ Stiles hissed. He felt like a dog with it’s hackles up, wanting nothing more than to snarl and get the hell out of there. A ping of apprehension came through the bond, followed by overwhelming concern and two seconds later his cell rang.

‘Stiles.’ Derek’s voice was tight with worry. ‘Where are you?’

‘In the Macy’s at Greenville.’ Stiles replied, looking around frantically. ‘He’s totally here, dude.’

‘Okay, listen to me carefully.’ Derek replied. ‘Stay where you are. Go find the cafe and sit down and do not fucking move from there. Are the girls with you?’

‘No, but Scott’s calling them now.’ Stiles replied, watching Scott lift his cell to his ear.

‘Tell them to meet you there.’ Derek instructed. ‘He won’t attack you in broad daylight in the middle of a store. I’ll be there as quick as I can.’

‘Okay.’ Stiles replied. ‘Just be careful, okay?’

‘I will.’ Derek said and then hung up.

*********

Derek swept through the station, pulling his jacket on as he stormed past the front desk and slamming right into Noah as he was coming in.

‘Whoa Nelly.’ he said, catching Derek’s upper arms and steadying him. ‘Where’s the fire, kid?’

‘Stiles skipped school and went to Greenville with Scott, Lydia and Allison.’ Derek told him and then lowered his voice. ‘The alpha followed them.’

‘Shit.’ Noah looked around briefly. ‘Okay, I’m coming with you. We can call for backup if we need it.’ He looked past Derek and called Tara as she was coming from the back. ‘Tara, I need to go out on a call and I’m taking Derek for a ride along.’

‘Sure thing, boss.’ she replied and Noah tugged on Derek’s sleeve. They got out the station and into the cruiser.

‘What are we going into?’ he asked and Derek glowered, his mind already racing with all sorts of awful possibilities.
‘The alpha won’t attack them directly,’ he said. ‘I told Stiles to take the others and get to the cafe, stay somewhere public.’

‘Good thinking.’ Noah peeled out of the lot, tyres squealing. He sped down the road and Derek surreptitiously did up his seatbelt. His potential mate’s father was proving to be the likely source of Stiles’ own brand of recklessness.

‘If he’s walking around, that means he’s human right?’ Noah asked. ‘Or at least human looking.’

‘Yeah.’ Derek replied. ‘He’ll only be in his alpha form where it won’t be seen.’

‘What’s an alpha form?’ Noah asked and Derek chewed on a nail, a habit he’d grown out of when he was still a teenager. It seemed like he was reverting.

‘When Stiles and I shift, that’s called a beta form,’ he explained. ‘I can also do a full shift, which looks like an actual wolf. It’s rare, something the Hales can do but not every wolf does.’

‘An actual wolf?’ Noah’s eyebrows went up. ‘Now that’s something I’d like to see.’

‘I can show you later.’ Derek offered. ‘It’s new. Laura could do it, but I’ve only been able to recently.’

‘How recently?’ Noah asked and Derek blushed. He definitely didn’t want to say that meeting Stiles and realising their mate potential had clearly been the thing that had kicked it off as he now felt balanced enough to control it.

‘A few weeks ago,’ he said, apologising mentally for the white lie. ‘But the alpha form is something completely different. It’s like our wolf form, but on steroids.’

‘Damn.’ Noah blew out a deep breath. ‘This just gets better and better.’

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‘Oh my God!’ Stiles was aghast. ‘Dude!’

‘I know.’ Allison had her head in both hands. ‘He said he knew my dad.’

‘That was definitely him.’ Stiles shook his head. ‘It can’t be anyone else.’

‘So he just walks up to Allison and does what?’ Lydia sounded unconvinced. ‘Threatens her by giving her unsolicited fashion advice?’

‘He wasn’t so much threatening as just really creepy.’ Allison told them. Scott made an angry noise and took her hand.

‘And it makes sense that if he’s an alpha werewolf, he knows about the Argents seeing as killing his kind is their stock and trade.’ Stiles retorted and then flinched at the hurt on Allison’s face. ‘Sorry dude but it’s true.’

‘I know.’ Her voice was almost a whisper. ‘That’s what they do apparently.’

‘Okay enough of this.’ Lydia snapped. ‘If we’re coming out of this alive, we need to stick together.’

‘What do you mean?’ Scott asked and she huffed.

‘I mean that now there’s more of us so we need to get organised.’ she replied. ‘Stiles’ dad’s got the
official side of things covered, but we can help. In fact, I think we should be doing everything we can to catch this guy.’

‘I second that.’ Stiles raised his hand. ‘Seeing as it’s my ass he’s after.’

‘Mine too.’ Lydia said. ‘If what you’re saying about being in his pack is right.’

‘Except you’re not a wolf.’ Stiles said. ‘In fact, what the hell are you exactly?’

‘A banshee.’ Lydia rolled her eyes at him. ‘Deaton told me and it makes sense. He thinks my grandmother was one too and that makes us immune to the bite.’

‘Great.’ Stiles snorted. ‘So a couple of werewolves, a banshee and the daughter of a prominent hunter family. We sound like a half assed version of Scooby fucking Doo.’

‘At least you’re something.’ Scott was disconsolate. ‘I’m just the human asshole with asthma.’

‘I’ll trade.’ Lydia sniped at him. ‘Trust me, getting bitten by a freaking monster was not on my agenda for sophomore year.’

‘Seconded.’ Stiles grumbled.

‘So what do we do?’ Scott asked. ‘I mean we’re not really equipped for this.’

‘Um...that’s not exactly true.’ Allison looked sheepish. ‘I’m actually trained in archery and target shooting.’ When they all looked at her, she shrugged. ‘What? Maybe they’ve been like secretly training me. That kind of makes sense.’

‘Okay Hawkeye.’ Stiles couldn’t help grinning. ‘So how good are you?’

‘Like Olympic level?’ Allison said and her heartbeat was steady, making his mouth fall open in surprise.

‘Wow.’ Scott had a serious case of heart-eyes. ‘That is so badass. My girlfriend is badass.’

‘What about you though?’ Stiles asked Lydia. ‘What can banshees do?’

‘That depends on the source.’ Lydia replied. ‘But predicting death seems to be part of the territory.’

‘Okay, that’s also creepy.’ Allison said. ‘How?’

Lydia opened her mouth to answer and then frowned.

‘I’m not exactly sure, but obviously the scream has to do with it.’ she said.

They all sat in silence and contemplated, then Stiles’ head shot up. His nostrils flared and he was on his feet in a second, almost racing across the cafe to throw himself at an equally stressed Derek, who caught him and buried his nose in Stiles’ neck.

‘You okay?’ he asked and Stiles growled softly in reply. He felt safe in Derek’s arms but when he looked over his shoulder and saw his father, he whined.

‘Crap.’ It was muffled by Derek’s shoulder.

‘Crap is right.’ Noah was giving him a stern look before turning his attention to the table. ‘Well, well it looks like the gang’s all here. Would you all mind telling me why you’re not in school?’
'It was her idea.’ Scott pointed at Lydia and she glared at him.

‘Traitor.’ she hissed and he slumped down on his side of the booth.

‘I think you should all count yourselves very lucky that it’s me that caught you.’ Noah told them. ‘Allison, you’re already in a lot of trouble with your parents. And as for you two, you’re lucky I’m not reporting you to the school myself.’ He shook his head at them. ‘Scott? I trust you to keep this miscreant out of trouble. You’re supposed to be the sensible one.’

‘I’m sorry.’ Scott’s hung his head. ‘It’s just that it’s Allison’s birthday and she’s feeling so sad and I just wanted her to be happy.’

‘Christ.’ Noah rolled his eyes. ‘Come on, you’re all getting your asses back to school.’

**********

Chris heard the sound of the front door opening and went into the front room. Kate was taking off her jacket and he folded his arms and waited for her to see him.

‘Hey, big bro.’ Her smile was disarming as always but Chris knew her far too well. She was pissed and had been since Saturday. Now he had an inkling as to why.

‘What were you doing in the preserve on Saturday?’ he asked and her one eyebrow went up.

‘Well, hello to you to.’ Her blue eyes were cold. ‘I had a great day, thanks for asking.’

‘Cut the bullshit, Kate.’ Chris said. ‘I know you were shooting the hell out of something, so what was it?’

‘You know what I’ve always admired about you, Christopher?’ Kate came up to him, her mouth quirking. ‘Nothing.’

‘You’ve been told to back off.’ Chris didn’t budge. ‘Don’t make me put you on a leash.’

Kate laughed, sharp like broken glass.

‘You couldn’t even if you wanted to.’ she told him. ‘There’s a reason why Dad never gives you the important jobs. You just don’t have the stones to get your hands dirty.’ Her smile turned contemplative. ‘Maybe it’s time to bring Allison into the fold? Maybe she’ll have more stomach for it?’

‘Absolutely not!’ Chris was getting angrier by the second. ‘You know that Victoria and I agreed not until she graduates.’

‘Come on, Chris.’ Kate shook her head, still smiling. ‘She’s a smart girl and she’s starting to rebel against this draconian authority thing you’ve got going. She’s going to find out eventually and how pissed is she going to be when she finds out you’ve been hiding this all these years. Now’s the perfect opportunity. She’s an attractive kid. Maybe she could help me catch the Hale whelp?’

The Hale kid is out of bounds.’ Chris turned as she walked past him. ‘He hasn’t broken the Code. And you are going to leave my daughter out of this. She’s not some goddamn piece of bait!’

‘God, you and your Code.’ Kate snapped. ‘It’s pathetic. Hale’s a rabid fucking dog. It’s only a matter of time before he does something and I’m going to be there to put him down when he does.’

She smiled again and Chris was chilled by the cruelty in it. ‘Werewolves are nothing but animals,
especially the dogs. I heard he’s been sniffing around the school. It wouldn’t surprise me if he’s looking for some unsuspecting girl to take advantage of, and you better hope that it’s not Allison. Maybe then, you’ll finally wise up and realise that they should all be cut in half like I did with his bitch sister.’

Chris felt his stomach twist. He hadn’t been comfortable with Kate’s methods for a long time, and the revelation that she’d found the Hale girl and cut her in half had made him feel sick. He hadn’t even known Kate was in town at that time, not until she’d told him. He’d always wondered about the Hales and their untimely demise. Part of him wanted to ask questions, but he knew what he’d been told to do so many years before and it wasn’t something he’d wanted to think of happening again, especially knowing about Kate’s predilections.

Sometimes it was better to just not know.

**********

Noah stopped the car and got out, moving around to stand and supervise while his son and Lydia parked and the guilty parties got out and shuffled towards him, well maybe not all of them. Lydia swept past with her nose in the air and Noah sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose.

‘In you go. Stiles, I’ll see you at home later. No diversions, you hear me?’ he ordered and they went after her, Stiles giving Derek a sad little look over his shoulder. Noah waited until they were inside and went back to the cruiser. He got back in and slumped in his seat, head on the steering wheel.

‘Has he always been like that?’ Derek asked and Noah snorted.

‘Since he was fucking born.’ he replied and straightened up. ‘But I was exactly the same and there was a fifty-fifty chance when he was born that he’d take after me so I wasn’t that surprised. He’s always been …’

‘Amazing.’ Derek finished for him and gave Noah a shy smile, bunny teeth just showing. ‘He’s pretty damn amazing. I mean, he’s taken to being a wolf like he was born one, he’s so protective of you and me and he’s so smart. I think he’d run rings around both of us.’

‘Yeah.’ Noah returned his smile and squeezed his shoulder. ‘Good thing there’s two of us now to wrangle the little shit.’

‘So now what?’ Derek asked. ‘I mean the fact that the alpha was there at the mall means that he’s functioning like a normal person. At least during the day.’

‘I’ll check with the store, see if they’ve got security footage from that department.’ Noah replied. ‘Hopefully we’ll catch a break.’ He started the cruiser. ‘I also went to see Chris Argent this morning.’

‘Oh.’ Derek’s voice went flat.

‘I don’t think he has any idea of what Kate did on Saturday.’ Noah told him and Derek frowned.

‘How could he not?’ he asked.

‘When Kate was here that first time, were any of the other Argents with her?’ Noah asked and Derek shook his head.

‘She wasn’t even using her real name.’ he said. ‘I only found out after that she was an Argent.’ His brows drew down and he fidgeted with the sleeves of his jacket. ‘She used to call me. Taunt me
about what she’d done.’ He looked out the window. ‘She sent me pictures of the house from just after, told me how she’d watched it go up in flames and how my family was screaming inside to get out.’

‘Jesus, kid.’ Noah was horrified. ‘What did you do?’

‘Laura got rid of our phones.’ Derek shrugged, his mouth turned down. ‘She was always worried about hunters finding us.’ He huffed. ‘Probably should have kept it huh?’

‘It would have made this easier, not going to lie about that.’ Noah pulled out of the lot. ‘But shit happens and we’ll just have to do this the old fashioned way.’

‘So you think Kate is working alone?’ Derek asked, and Noah had to bite his lip at how expressive the kid’s damn eyebrows were. It was like talking to a retriever.

‘Not necessarily. Those two she was with, would you be able to pick them out?’ he asked and Derek nodded.

‘Get me close enough to smell them and I will be.’ he said.

‘So damn useful.’ Noah muttered. ‘I’m going to change your mind about joining up. The world’s got plenty of translators.’

‘If I was working for you, I just might.’ There was that shy smile again.

‘I’m going to hold you to that, Derek.’ Noah laughed and took the turn.

************

Stiles grumbled the rest of the way through his day, driving straight home as promised after dropping off Scott. Allison was under house arrest so Victoria had picked her up and he was pretty sure that if she’d been able, she would have gotten out the car and given him and Scott several death threats. He went inside, slamming the door and listening for movement.

‘Guys?’ He looked up the stairs. ‘Anybody home?’ He listened but there was nothing so he went into the kitchen and opened the fridge, humming to himself as he surveyed the contents. Since Derek had more or less taken over the grocery shopping, there was considerably more variety than before. Stiles could cook, had learned through mostly trial and error, but he wasn’t a food snob. Derek, on the other hand, went in for organic and farm quality and he was pretty sure that he and Noah hadn’t eaten as well as they had in the past week, at least not since his mom had died. He was putting together a mammoth sandwich when his phone rang and he answered it and then balanced it between his ear and his shoulder.

‘Yo, Scotty.’ He squeezed an extra dollop of mayo on the top splice and then added more ham. ‘What’s up?’

‘My mom wanted to know if I could come over tonight.’ Scott replied. ‘Seeing as how she’s got to the parents’ thing and she doesn’t want me to be alone.’

‘Sure.’ Stiles replied. ‘You still owe me a COD marathon.’

‘Does Derek play?’ Scott asked and Stiles made a considering face.

‘You know, I don’t think that’s actually something we’ve talked about.’ He grinned. ‘Bring your controller, just in case.’
'Did you get in trouble?’ Scott asked and Stiles picked up his plate, carrying it to the table.

’I don’t know.’ he said. ’Dad’s not home yet. Neither is Derek. Guess he’s got him working pretty hard.’

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’Oh my God.’ Noah said through a full mouth. ’This is incredible.’

’I know.’ Derek replied. He took another huge bite of the donut he was holding. There was a mixed half dozen in the box between them, courtesy of a small downtown bakery that the Hales had frequented. He’d come to realise that a great many of his formative experiences had to do with food, and while it hurt it also made him want to laugh at the association of wolves and eating.

’We can’t tell Stiles.’ Noah stated. ’He’d kick my ass and I’d lose any moral high ground I have.’

’He’ll be able to smell it.’ Derek grinned. ’Sorry.’

’Shit.’ Noah wiped his hands on a paper napkin. ’We should be heading back. I need to shower and change before I go to the school.’ He snorted. ’I wonder what fresh horrors await me.’

’Isn’t Stiles a good student though?’ Derek asked and he nodded.

’An incredible student. He’s going to be in line with a 4.0 GPA by the end of the semester. It’s his way of doing things that can be unusual.’ His smile was all pride.

’I’ll bet.’ Derek took the last cream filled donut and looked at him. ’I was a pretty good student. It’s kind of what saved me. Laura was adamant that I’d graduate and I threw myself into my school work. It’s how I got to college early.’

’You had to grow up awfully fast.’ Noah was sympathetic.

’I just wish I’d taken time to try and get her to slow down.’ Derek replied. ’She wasn’t around a lot and when I graduated I went to New York and she kind of drifted in and out of my life.’

’You both had a shitty lot to deal with.’ Noah sighed. ’The fact that you’re still here and fighting is incredible, Derek. I know how hard it is to lose someone and that was just one person. I don’t know how you did it losing everybody. Any sane person would have broken a long time ago.’

’Guess that says something about my sanity then.’ Derek’s smile was grim and he put the donut back, no longer hungry. ’I took a lot of what she did for granted. I was angry with her for hanging onto this, for not letting it go when all I wanted to do was forget. Maybe if I’d trusted her enough to tell her what had really happened, she’d still be alive.’

’No.’ Noah said. ’That’s bullshit. You were dealing with something terrible that happened to you, that still affects you now. Her death is not your fault. Your family’s aren’t either.’

Derek regarded him.

’Why is it so easy to talk to you?’ he eventually asked. ’I haven’t been able to talk to anyone about this. But you and Stiles, I don’t know…it’s like you just get me to start talking and then I can’t shut up.’

’Family secret, kid.’ Noah chuckled and stole the cream filled donut.

***********
Allison walked into her bedroom and shut the door. She’d given her mother the silent treatment all the way home and Victoria had coldly informed her that her dinner was in the kitchen and that if she was to set a foot outside the house while she and her father were at the parents’ evening, then she would be grounded until she was ready to go to college. Allison hadn’t objected. Kate was also out, doing God knew what and with her parents gone that meant that she could do some A grade snooping. Her dad kept things locked up pretty tight, but Allison was no fool and knew where he hid the spare keys. She was also pretty sure she could bust the combination locks on the safes downstairs. Obviously the things she wanted to find would not be out in plain sight. She did some homework while she was waiting for them to leave, and when her dad stuck his head in her door she waved him off with a dimpled smile and a promise to stay put.

She listened carefully for the sound of the SUV pulling out of the drive and went to the window, watching her parents’ tail-lights disappearing down the road before she started her investigation. Kate’s room was first and she started in the closet.

It was like finding treasure.

Kate was apparently not particularly worried about being discovered, if her tendency to leave shit in her pockets was any indication. Allison found what looked like Mace in one, but the puff of purple vapour that came from it when she used it in the bathroom certainly wasn’t standard issue. There were more bullets and a packet of crushed purple flowers, a folding knife that had a silvery gleam to the blade.

Allison put everything back as she’d found it and then went to the bottom of the closet where Kate’s suitcase was. There was nothing out of the ordinary there, not until her fingers ran along a seam and felt something hard. She probed the edges of the stiff fabric and worked out a length of thin gold chain, delicately cast. A pendant dangled from it when she held it up, a finely made triple spiral that twirled and caught the light as she studied it. Allison felt a shiver go down her spine and she pocketed the necklace, hoping that Kate wouldn’t notice it had gone missing. She wanted to show it to the Sheriff, see if he could give her any more information.

There was nothing else apart from Kate’s things and Allison shut the door behind her and went back to her room. She didn’t have her cell or laptop so she decided to catch up on school work, sitting at her desk with her music on low. It took a while to realise that there was another noise underneath the melody and she glanced towards the window.

The red gleam in the dark was gone in the blink of an eye, but it was enough to have her on her feet and looking out, her heart pounding. All she saw was the front yard and the streetlamp, then the lights of Kate’s car pulling in. She parked, but just as she shut off the engine Allison caught a glimpse of something large and moving on all fours melting into the trees on the other side of the road. She stood there, eyes fixed on the shadows until Kate’s voice came up the stairs and eventually she opened Allison’s door.

‘Hi sweetie.’ She smiled and Allison composed herself, turning around with an answering smile fixed on her face.

‘Hi.’ She moved back to her desk. ‘How was your day?’

‘Good.’ Kate looked pleased with herself.

‘Oh?’ Allison kept her tone light. ‘Why?’

‘Let’s just say that a little project I’m working on got a green light.’ Kate replied. Her eyes were sparkling with glee. ‘If you don’t tell your dad, I might let you see.’
Allison knew an opportunity when she was presented with one, and she had just offered to help so she gave Kate her brightest and most eager smile, even as the stolen necklace burned a hole in her pocket.

‘I can be discreet.’ she said back playfully and Kate laughed.

‘Watch this space.’ she replied and winked at Allison. ‘It’s going to set this little provincial town on fire.’

**********

It turned out that inviting Derek to play games with them was a critical error.

‘How?’ Stiles was outraged as he was blown away for what felt like the hundredth time.

‘You seem to think I was living under a rock.’ Derek kicked him for good measure. ‘I did actually own a Playstation before the fire.’ He snickered as he rounded a corner and capped Scott in the head.

‘I give up.’ Scott threw up both hands. ‘I can’t. Every time I spawn he blows my ass away.’ He got to his feet and stretched. ‘I’m hungry.’

‘You’re always hungry.’ Stiles retorted. ‘But yeah, I could eat.’ He looked over at Derek and Derek chuckled his controller to him and got up.

‘You can come help.’ he called over his shoulder and Scott grinned.

‘He’s cooking?’ he asked Stiles and Stiles nodded.

‘He’s actually really good.’ he replied as they padded in after Derek on socked feet. He was at the fridge and a couple of peppers came sailing over the open door, smacking them both in the face.

‘Asshole.’ Stiles snorted, picking his up off the floor and taking the other from Scott. ‘You want me to chop these?’

‘No, I want you to set them on fire and juggle them.’ Derek said with a perfectly straight face and this time Scott chuckled.

‘You know, you two are kind of perfect for each other.’ he observed with wicked grin. ‘You’re both dicks.’

‘Fuck you.’ Stiles waved his middle finger at him and dug around for knife in the cutlery drawer. Derek was already working on a white sauce.

‘Don’t get comfortable.’ he told Scott. ‘You’re on salad duty.’

‘Man.’ Scott whined. ‘If I wanted to do chores I would have stayed at home.’

‘You want to eat, you help.’ Derek glared at him. ‘House rule.’

‘Since when do you make house rules?’ Scott grumbled, but he went to the fridge and started taking things out.

‘Since I’m the one feeding your ass.’ Derek replied and then frowned. ‘I’ll make extra and you can take some home for your mom too.’

‘Really?’ Now Scott was all smiles. ‘Thanks, dude.’
‘Christ.’ Derek shook his head. ‘You both do the goddamn puppy eyes.’

‘Maybe you can use the lasagne to soften the werewolf blow.’ Stiles said, munching on a couple of pieces of pepper. He caught Derek’s look of disapproval and growled at him playfully.

‘Actually I’m totally going to leave it to your dad.’ Scott said. ‘I think it’ll be better coming from him.’ He brightened. ‘Maybe he could bring her round here tonight and we could all tell her together?’

‘Good plan.’ Stiles grabbed his phone from his pocket and fired off a message.

**********

Noah’s cell buzzed and he took it out his jacket pocket.

So consensus is you should bring Melissa round here and we can tell her about u know what. Sourwolf’s making lasagne

Noah huffed and gave Melissa a discreet look. She was sitting waiting with him and some of the other parents, her foot jiggling with anxiety. Noah knew she was worried about Scott’s academic performance. He was not as academically gifted as Stiles and struggled, something Noah knew preyed on Melissa’s mind.

‘Hey.’ He smiled at her when she turned to him. ‘It’ll be okay. He’s a great kid. I bet they have nothing but good things to say about him.’

‘I hope so.’ Melissa replied. ‘I always think about how hard it is for him. I mean I’m not home a lot and I can’t be around to help him with a lot of this stuff and I just...’ She trailed off and then gave Noah a small smile. ‘You know what I’m talking about.’

‘Yeah.’ Noah knew all too well. He also knew that she deserved to know the truth about what was going on and decided to take a leap of faith. ‘Look, Stiles said that Derek’s making dinner tonight so would you like to come round after this and have some. He’s a great cook.’

‘Actually that would be great.’ she replied. ‘It was going to be leftover tuna casserole otherwise.’

Not for the first time, Noah was filled with sympathy. While he had never harboured romantic feelings for her, he counted Melissa amongst his closest friends. Her and Claudia had been as thick as thieves and he knew she missed that.

‘It would be our pleasure.’ he told her. ‘I actually have something to run by you as well.’

‘Oh?’ Melissa was curious. ‘What kind of something?’

Noah opened his mouth to reply when the door to the classroom they were waiting at opened and a couple came out. He shut his mouth, keeping his face neutral as he recognised the Whittemores.

‘Noah.’ David’s voice was strained.

‘David.’ he replied and they moved past, clearly not wanting to linger. Melissa waited until they had rounded the corner and then nudged him.

‘Could be worse.’ she said with a cheeky grin and he chuckled until Bobby Finstock stuck his head out the door and summoned him.

**********
Across town, another Whittemore stood in the bathroom, back to the mirror and neck craned so he could look at the back of his neck. The marks were almost undetectable, very slightly raised when Jackson ran his fingers over the now unbroken skin. The whole thing felt like it had been nothing but a dream and he certainly remembered very little apart from the feeling of claws embedded in his nape, the pain making him black out.

He turned to look at his reflection, his eyes meeting those of his double in the mirror. Saturday had been a trying day. His parents had fussed over him until he’d snapped at them and he’d spent all of Sunday hidden in his room. Lydia was also being elusive and he’d hardly seen her at school, apart from lunch when she’d been sitting with Allison and had waved him off with an irritated look. To make matters worse, he’d been short tempered and snappish to the point where even Danny had told him to get his head out of his ass.

Jackson huffed and went to turn the shower on, hoping it would relax him enough to get some sleep. He’d been plagued by bad dreams since it had happened, flashes of red eyes and the feeling of hot foul breath on the back of his neck waking him in a cold sweat. He hadn’t been able to shake the awful feeling of dread when the misshapen creature who’d attacked him had prowled through his nightmares. He’d been paralysed, watching as it approached him with bared fangs as long as his index finger, strings of drool dripping from its open maw. The worst part were the eyes though, the way they had morphed from something red and glowing to being blue and human and so similar to his own that it had made Jackson wonder if he was going mad.

************

'So Sheriff, let’s talk about your son. Can you just remind me of his name?’ Finstock leaned back in his seat and looked at Noah expectantly.

‘It’s Stiles.’ Noah reminded him, bemused.

‘Really?’ Now Finstock was frowning. ‘I thought Stiles was his last name?’

‘His last name’s Stilinski.’ Noah pointed out, eyebrows raised, and Finstock looked even more confused.

‘You named your kid Stiles Stilinski?’ he asked.

‘No.’ Noah resisted the urge to roll his eyes. ‘That’s just what he likes to be called.’

‘Well, I like to be called cupcake.’ Finstock replied. ‘So what is his first name?’

Noah sighed and leaned across to tap the folder on Finstock’s desk. This was going to be a long night.

************

‘So I have an idea.’ Stiles said and got two very suspicious looks, which were completely unwarranted in his opinion. He huffed and carried on regardless. ‘I think instead of chasing after the alpha we should bring him to us. You know, control the encounter.’

‘Really?’ Derek was all sarcasm. ‘You want us to get the crazy feral werewolf that can’t be reasoned with to come to us. Just how the hell are we going to do that?’

‘Well, we need somewhere we can contain him, so I was thinking the school.’ Stiles pointed out. ‘And you’re right, we’d also need bait. That would be me.’ He gave them his most winning smile and willed them to agree.
‘Uh…’ Scott shot Derek a worried look. ‘You’re not going to let him do that are you?’

‘Nope.’ Derek folded his arms and glared at Stiles. ‘Not a fucking chance.’

‘Oh come on.’ Stiles waved his arms for emphasis. ‘It’s a good plan. We get him inside and we can totally corral him. It’s better than hanging around waiting to be eaten.’

‘I can see about a million things wrong with that idea.’ Derek was giving him the judgemental eyebrows. ‘Not least of which, would be breaking and entering the school.’

‘No see. That’s where Saturday comes in.’ Stiles grinned. ‘We can totally do it after the lacrosse game. We just hide out in the school and nobody’s the wiser.’

‘Jesus fuck. That is the stupidest thing you’ve ever suggested!’ Derek gestured wildly at him and it was so out of character that Stiles started giggling, mirth spilling over when the gestures turned into a deep growl. He got right up in Derek’s face, growling back, and it was on the verge of turning into something else when they were interrupted.

‘I think it might work.’ Scott’s face was creased up in thought. ‘We’ll have him outnumbered and I can probably get us something to knock him out.’ He grinned. ‘We’ve got anaesthetic at the clinic and it’s pretty much the same shit that you can use on people.’

‘Yeah?’ Derek folded his arms and glared at him. ‘And just how do we administer it?’

‘Allison.’ Stiles was smiling broadly. ‘She can shoot and I’ll bet that big scary werewolf hunters have to have something to tranquilise with, right?’

‘No.’ Derek shook his head. ‘No, that is an even worse idea. Chris will turn both of us into goddamn wall trophies if we get Allison hurt.’

‘She’ll totally do it.’ Scott was now on board, also grinning madly. ‘This is going to be so cool.’ He completely ignored Derek’s outraged noise and held up a fist for Stiles to bump. Stiles laughed and obliged, then leaned into Derek’s side.

‘It’ll be fine.’ he said. ‘We have until the weekend to figure this all out. We’ll make the plan foolproof.’

‘Sure we will.’ Derek muttered, but his arm ended up around Stiles’ waist anyway and he counted that as a win.

***************

Noah came out of the meeting with Finstock feeling like he’d spent the past thirty minutes in a parallel universe. He found Melissa in the main reception and she waved at him. Then he saw the couple she was with and his cop’s instincts went on alert, especially taking in Melissa’s expression which told him that she was far from happy

‘Chris… Victoria, this is Noah Stilinski.’ Melissa said when he got to them.

‘We’ve met.’ Chris’ face gave nothing away. ‘Sheriff.’

‘Mr Argent.’ Noah replied and then turned to his wife. She was mildly terrifing, her stern countenance and absolute confidence making him very aware that she was not to be trifled with.
Deaton had told him that hunter families ran along matriarchal lines and he could well believe it.

‘Mrs Argent.’

‘Please.’ She shook his hand. ‘Call me Victoria.’

‘We were just talking about our resident lovebirds.’ Melissa told him. Noah watched the Argents and wondered if they knew just what Allison had gotten herself involved in. He was betting not.

‘Yes.’ Victoria’s smile didn’t reach her eyes. ‘I was expressing a little concern over the potential for distraction. Allison has commitments that she needs to devote a considerable amount of time to.’

‘Well, so does Scott.’ Melissa rebutted. ‘But I don’t think banning them from seeing each other is the answer.’

‘I hardly think that afternoon lacrosse compares with Allison’s archery training.’ Victoria replied, her blue eyes flinty. ‘She should be focusing on that and not on some boy who has her running around the town in the dead of night.’

‘Perhaps if she was allowed to act like a normal teenage girl, she wouldn’t have to act out.’ Melissa bit back and Noah decided it was time to intervene.

‘I think it’s safe to say that all teenagers have their moments when they like to try us as parents.’ he said.

‘Yes, of course.’ Victoria was now giving him a look that he definitely didn’t appreciate. ‘Your son was with them when they snuck out, wasn’t he? Not setting a particularly good example, Sheriff.’

That got under Noah’s skin immediately. There had been times in the past when he’d been a less than model father. He’d drunk to excess in the wake of Claudia’s death, had neglected Stiles and even now he didn’t know where he was half the time so that little barb hit its target perfectly.

‘I think it’s time I got home.’ he replied, giving her his best official smile. ‘I have boys to check up on who have probably eaten me out of house and home.’ He held out an arm to Melissa. ‘One of whom is yours, I believe. Can I walk you to your car, Mel?’

‘Please.’ Melissa took his arm and shot the Argents a final glare. ‘And for the record, our sons may not be perfect, but then again it’s always the parents who expect perfection who end up disappointed.’ With that, she stuck her nose in the air and tugged Noah along with her. He waited until they were out of earshot before raising his eyebrows at her.

‘I guess that wedding plans are not on the horizon.’ he ventured and Melissa snorted, her dark eyes flashing angrily.

‘Do you know that she had the nerve to suggest that Scott was a bad influence on Allison. And that he was subjecting her to quote ‘unwanted sexual advances’. ’ She spat the last words. ‘Mierda puta!’

‘Damn.’ Noah grinned. ‘You really don’t like her.’

‘Or him.’ Melissa snorted again. ‘He’s an arrogant asshole. And Christ knows I can spot one when I see one.’

Noah agreed and they progressed down the lot to where Melissa’s car was. There were still some people milling around, but the far end was almost empty. They were about twenty feet from the car when he felt a prickle go down his spine and looked to the side, catching a glimpse of something in the shadows off the right. He stopped and Melissa frowned from where she’d been jolted by his
sudden action.

‘Noah?’ She followed his eyes and then gasped when there was a flare of red in the dark.

‘Shit.’ Noah moved in front of her instantly. ‘Mel, I want you to do exactly as I say.’

‘What is it?’ Her voice was shaking and Noah watched the red gleam coalesce into two distinct points. There was a low growl, deep and menacing, and he gently pushed her away in the direction of the school.

‘When I say go, you hightail it back to the school and call the station.’ he told her, unholstering the concealed carry firearm he always had with him.

‘I’m not leaving you!’ Melissa was shrill with fear but also standing her ground and Noah felt something claw at him. There was a reason she and Claudia had been best friends.

‘Please.’ he hissed. ‘I don’t know if I can hold it off and you need to get your ass out of here.’ The growling was louder and he tracked the misshapen shadow between the trees. ‘Go!’

Melissa took off like a shot, running quickly back the way they had come. Noah didn’t look behind him, keeping his eyes fixed on the alpha as it shifted and moved between the cars.

‘Come on asshole.’ He kept his voice low, knowing full well it could hear him. ‘You want my kid, you’re going to have to go through me.’

The growling hitched in a sickening parody of laughter and Noah braced himself, his weapon level and sighted.

‘You think I’m joking?’ he asked. ‘Try me.’

He did not expect a reply and when the rasping growl formed into words, it completely threw him.

‘He’s mine now. It’s only a matter of time before he betrays you.’ It was like someone speaking who’d had a cheese grater taken to their voice box. Noah watched as the shadow shifted to two feet and then he caught a glimpse of what looked remarkably like a person, beta shifted in the same way he’d seen Derek and Stiles do.

‘See, that’s the thing.’ He kept himself as calm as possible. ‘Stilinskis are loyal and Stiles is a stubborn little shit. You’re going to find that more difficult than you think.’

‘Not once I destroy you and his anchor.’ the alpha snarled. He was still standing in the shadows so Noah couldn’t see his face too clearly, just those red eyes. ‘Then he’ll come crawling.’

‘We’ll see about that.’ Noah held his ground. ‘So why don’t you just turn yourself in and I’ll make sure the Argents don’t put you down like an animal.’

The alpha chuckled, but it was choked.

‘The Argents are the whole reason I’m doing this.’ he replied. ‘You know that, don’t you Sheriff?’

‘Yeah.’ Noah said. ‘But I also know that due process is a thing and we can get her put away but right now I can’t do shit while you’re killing off all my potential witnesses.’

‘It wouldn’t matter.’ The alpha shifted angrily. ‘They would just pay off everyone involved, just like they did last time. It won’t mean a goddamn thing.’
'I can promise that as long as I’m running the show, it will.’ Noah wanted to get through to whoever this man was. ‘I promise that I will make sure of it.’

‘Until you become inconvenient and they get rid of you too.’ The alpha hissed. ‘And then your son will be next.’

Noah was about to reply when he heard the sound of footsteps behind him.

‘Sheriff, get out the way.’ Chris was behind him. The alpha laughed again but he also moved back, dropping down to all fours again. ‘You have no idea what you’re dealing with.’

‘So you can shoot him?’ Noah didn’t budge. ‘I’m the law here, Chris. So why don’t you just help me instead of trying to kill our alpha friend here.’

Chris came up short at that, shock clearly visible on his face, and the alpha started laughing again.

‘Oh yes, Mr Argent.’ His voice was low, almost a purr. ‘Our good sheriff is very well aware of what I am and what you are. I suggest you ask him how though, it’s a fascinating story.’

‘How do you know who I am?’ Chris demanded, coming to stand next to Noah, gun still raised.

‘Oh, Christopher.’ The voice was even softer now, but there was an edge to it that spoke of a deep seated hatred. ‘Don’t you know me?’

‘No…” Chris breathed the word, and the devastation Noah heard brought up any number of questions. ‘You can’t be…it’s impossible.’

‘Turns out nothing is impossible.’ the alpha snarled and then he leapt to attack, a massive mass of fury and claws that had them both unloading their weapons even as he flew overhead and landed on a car behind them, his bulk caving in the roof.

Noah kept firing until he heard the click of an empty magazine and he lowered his weapon, watching the alpha leap from car to car until it made the other side of the lot and disappeared into the trees. He lowered his gun and turned to see Chris standing there, white faced and breathing hard in distress.

‘I’m guessing you two know each other.’ He didn’t bother keeping the sarcasm from his voice.

‘Stay out of this Sheriff.’ Chris said and holstered his weapon. ‘You have no idea what you’ll be getting into.’

‘See, that’s where you’re wrong.’ Noah bit back. ‘This isn’t my first encounter with that thing and I very much doubt it will be the last.’ He fixed Chris with a stern look. ‘And I know that whatever he’s after, it involves your family and it’s very very personal.’

Chris’ face shut down completely.

‘I have no idea what you’re talking about.’ he said, holstering his weapon and walking away.

Noah watched him go and then took out his cell to confirm the disturbance. He reported everything to dispatch and prepared himself for another long night. Then he called Stiles and explained that he would need to be at the school a little longer. Finally he called Deaton.

‘Alan.’ He stared into the dark where the alpha had disappeared. ‘I need you down here. Something very interesting has happened.’
Tuesday bought serious faces. Stiles had just closed his locker to find Allison standing behind it and he jumped.

‘Jesus.’ He pressed a hand over his heart. ‘Does everyone have a compulsive need to sneak up on me?’

Allison frowned.

‘I thought you had…’ She glanced around them and lowered her voice. ‘You know, super senses?’

‘I do.’ Stiles grumbled. ‘But right now I’m a little stressed out.’ He’d not been able to sleep very well, not after finding out that his dad had encountered the alpha stalking the high school. It had taken a long time for him to settle after Noah had finally gotten home and even Derek’s scent hadn’t helped. He’d eventually crawled into Noah’s bed around four and his father had sighed and let him scent him, knowing Stiles wouldn’t get any sleep otherwise. Breakfast had been equally tense, and his anxiety had gone through the roof when he’d watched the two of them leave for the station. He’d been hit in the face by the alpha’s scent as soon as he’d arrived at school, tracking it across the parking lot to the trees at the back.

Allison moved so she was blocking them from view and reached into her jacket. Her face was perfectly neutral and Stiles wished she could teach Scott some of her ability to stay cool when lying. He’d been a mess when Melissa had come to get him but thankfully Stiles had managed to play it off as too much sugar. Obviously any plans to tell her the truth had been scuppered by the alpha’s impromptu appearance.

‘So.’ Allison handed him a plastic zip lock bag. ‘I found something last night.’

Stiles took it and looked at the necklace inside. The moment he clocked the gold triskelion, his blood ran cold and he knew who it had probably belonged to.

‘Where did you get this?’ he hissed and her demeanor changed to one of anger.

‘It was hidden in Kate’s suitcase.’ She shrugged. ‘I figure at this point we can’t rule anything out so I thought you could give it to your dad. See if he can get anything from it.’

‘I doubt it.’ Stiles said. ‘Maybe. I’ll ask him.’ He looked at her intently. ‘Do you know the alpha was at the school last night?’

‘My dad said something about a mountain lion.’ Allison pulled a face. ‘I put two and two together.’

‘It went after my dad.’ Stiles said softly. ‘Scott’s mom too.’
‘Shit.’ Allison leaned against the locker, and then looked determined. ‘Okay, we have to do something.’

‘Funny you should say that.’ Stiles replied, slamming the door closed. ‘Because I have an idea.’

*********

Lydia sat down, lost in thought. Her parents had told her about the disturbance at the school and she had read the fear on her face. There had been talk about taking her away to Europe for the spring break but of course that had just devolved into an argument and she’d not even been able to ask them what her teachers had said about her. It grated that they never seemed to hold any ambitions for her apart from being Jackson’s support act. They knew nothing about her love of numbers, the way she coveted a Field’s Medal more than any number of designer shoes. Only her grandmother had understood, had cupped her face and told Lydia that she was brilliant and that her brain made her more special than anyone else. Now she had an inkling as to why and wondered why Nana Maddy had never even hinted at something like this in her heritage. Then again, if she had worried that Lydia might end up in Eichen House like she had, maybe she had thought it was best to hide it.

‘Hey.’ Jackson’s voice broke her out of her thoughts. ‘Where the hell have you been?’

She looked at him and suddenly everything seemed so inconsequential. Being popular and beautiful and on the arm of the most coveted boy at Beacon Hills High School meant nothing to her.

‘I’ve been here.’ she replied, arching an eyebrow at him. ‘Right in front of your nose.’

‘Don’t be smart.’ Jackson retorted. ‘You’ve been avoiding me and yesterday you took off and then spent the rest of the day hanging out with Allison.’ His snarky tone did not endear him to Lydia at all and she sat up straight and glared at him.

‘It was her birthday.’ she hissed at him. ‘And if you weren’t such a self-absorbed asshole, you would realise that I have actual friends and that my life does not revolve around you.’

‘Oh yeah?’ Jackson’s voice was now doing that squeaky thing it did when he was really pissed. ‘Well how about you figure out that as your boyfriend, I’m more important than Allison fucking Argent and those goddamn weirdos she hangs out with.’ His lip curled in an unpleasant little sneer. ‘Especially that asshole Stilinski, who just wants to get into your pants.’

‘Not really.’ Lydia shot back. ‘In case you hadn’t noticed, he and Derek are together.’

‘Like hell.’ Jackson immediately looked shifty. ‘I know shit about them. They’re not normal Lydia.’

Lydia looked at him, assessing the potential threat. She knew there had been something that had gone on and now she was betting that maybe Jackson was more in the know about what she’d discovered than she’d anticipated.

‘Leave it.’ she said, making it quite clear from her tone that this was an order. The look of betrayal on his face would have been laughable if the situation wasn’t so serious.

‘You know.’ His whole face scrunched up in anger. ‘How the hell do you know?’

‘It doesn’t matter.’ Lydia hissed. ‘Just keep your damn mouth shut. There’s shit going on that you don’t understand and believe me, you really don’t want to get involved in this.’

‘Lydia!’ Jackson was outraged, struggling to keep his voice down. ‘You can’t be serious.’ He looked
around the room and then back at her. ‘They’re...monsters.’ The last word was a harsh whisper. Lydia took a deep breath and steeled herself for what she was about to do.

‘If you say anything or try to fuck them over in any way, we are done.’ She watched it sink in and then Jackson’s face changed. The hurt that she saw was gone in an instant though, replaced by a cold calculating anger.

‘Fine.’ he snapped. ‘You want to pick those losers over me, you go right ahead. Guess you’re finding someone else to take you to the Winter formal.’ He gathered his things and got up, storming across to a seat on the other side and ignoring the looks he got from the other people in the room before they all turned and looked at Lydia. She blew out a frustrated breath and counted down as she calmed herself. She had more important things to worry about than Jackson’s temper tantrums and all it did was substantiate her view that he needed to be kept as far from this as possible.

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Stiles checked his cell and shifted. He and Allison were still waiting for Scott and he was starting to worry in light of all that had been happening. Thankfully he came in just before they rang the bell for homeroom but he looked pale and shaky and Stiles could smell the lingering medicinal scent that indicated he’d used his inhaler recently.

‘Hey.’ He fell into step on one side with Allison on the other. ‘You okay?’

‘No.’ Scott muttered. ‘Stupid asthma attack this morning. I think it’s the stress. Mom freaked and kept me home until she was happy to let me go.’

‘Okay that’s it.’ Stiles waved a hand at them. ‘This has to fucking stop.’ He could hear he was being a little strident but the truth was that he’d been badly shaken by the previous night and now Scott coming in looking like death warmed up was the final straw. ‘We’re catching this asshole.’

‘What?’ Allison’s brows knitted together. ‘When did you decide this?’

‘Last night.’ Scott told her. ‘But we were planning to do it on Saturday.’ He gave Stiles a quizzical look and Stiles shook his head vehemently.

‘I think that’s not going to be soon enough.’ he said. ‘Look, we’ll meet in the library during the study period. Scott and I have a plan but we’ll need your help Allison.’

Allison considered for all of a second before she nodded, her brown eyes filled with determination.

‘I’m in.’ she said and held her hand out. Stiles and Scott grinned at each other and attempted a clumsy three way fist bump.

‘So now all we need is to tell Lydia.’ Stiles said as they jogged to homeroom. ‘She’s definitely going to want in as well, and I suppose we need to get Derek on side too.’

‘You mean he doesn’t want to catch the alpha?’ Allison asked and he shook his head.

‘No, he does. He just thinks that we’re...how did he put it?’ He looked at Scott.

‘I think ‘a couple of reckless dumbasses who wouldn’t know life threatening peril it it bit us on the ass’ was what he said.’ Scott’s dark eyes were sparkling with mischief. ‘What he doesn’t know is that we’re like the most epic double act ever.’

‘Even if one of us almost died this morning.’ Stiles cautioned. ‘Maybe you should take it easy today.’
‘Don’t.’ Scott’s face fell immediately. ‘Mom’s already called Finstock to tell him I’m out for the week. She’s gone into worry overdrive after last night.’

‘Dude.’ Stiles patted his shoulder in sympathy as they walked into the classroom. ‘That sucks.’ Lydia was already seated and she pursed her baby pink lips and jerked her head at the seat next to her, the one normally occupied by Jackson. When Allison stepped forward, she shook her head and gave Stiles a pointed look and he shrugged at Scott and went over to sit next to her, not missing the murderous look thrown his way by Jackson from where he’d clearly been banished to the window.

‘Hi.’ he ventured and Lydia scribbled something furiously on a scrap of paper from her notebook and handed it to him.

We need to talk.

Stiles wrote down library study hall and handed it back to her. Lydia read it and nodded in acknowledgement and then turned back as the teacher started calling attendance.

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Derek glanced over from where he was busy inputting data to Noah’s office, tuning in to what he was saying on the phone. He wasn’t above eavesdropping when he felt like it, and he had caught Stiles’ anxiety that morning and if he was being truthful, he was just as worried. Noah may not be a wolf, but he was acting leader of what Derek was already thinking of as his new pack and his job as a beta was to look out for him. It was what he was being trained to do when his family was alive. As the second oldest, he would have automatically assumed the position of his sister’s right hand and so he felt the same drive to keep an eye on his new alpha figure.

Noah was deep in discussion with someone trying to track down phone records for his family from the year that the fire had happened. He’d told Derek that it was likely to be a dead end, but that they would try nonetheless and he appreciated Noah’s honesty and his willingness to help. For the first time since the fire it felt like he could start to let go of some of the anger of the injustice he’d felt at how little he and Laura had received. He knew that it was partly because they had been young and scared and had just run off without so much as a backwards glance, but he was surprised to find out that he was resentful of the fact that no-one had reached out to them. It had all been locked away behind the guilt he’d felt over his part in the deaths of his family, but now that Derek was starting to work through things he was opening a lot of closed boxes in his head and his heart. That was why when he heard the door of the station open and looked up and saw Deaton coming in, he growled on instinct. Deaton raised an eyebrow at him as he approached, having seemingly heard it even though Derek had kept it low.

‘Derek.’ He gave him one of his very neutral smiles. ‘You’re looking better than the last time I saw you.’

‘What are you doing here?’ Derek asked and Deaton looked at where Noah was hanging up the call and beckoning to them both.

‘You’re about to find out.’ he replied as Noah opened the door to his office.

‘Alan, hi.’ He held the door open. ‘Come on in. Derek, you too.’

His curiosity piqued, Derek got up and followed Deaton in, leaning against the window sill as Noah closed the door and retook his seat. Deaton took the one opposite the desk and crossed one leg over the other.
'Any luck?' Noah asked him and Derek wondered just what they had been investigating.
'Some.' Deaton replied. 'Do you want to fill Derek in before we start?'

'Yeah.' Noah turned to Derek. 'There has been a development.'

Derek had suspected as much. Noah had been cagey the night before about what had happened and Derek had known that the account he’d given him and Stiles had had some gaps in it. Stiles had been too overwrought to pick it up, but there had been a distinct stutter in Noah’s heartbeat when he’d given them the details.

'What kind of development?' he asked and Noah sighed.

'Chris Argent knows that I know about the alpha.' he said and Derek’s eyes widened.

'What?' He didn’t know what else to say, his natural instinct screaming at him to get the hell out of there.

'It’s okay, Derek.' Deaton said. ‘I get the feeling that Chris is probably feeling a lot more thrown by this than we are.’ He gave Noah a look. ‘Especially after what happened.’

'What the hell happened?' Derek was curt. ‘Did he threaten you?’

'No.' Noah replied. ‘But the alpha said some things to him that made me realise that there’s another angle at play here.’

'He spoke?' Derek was even more confused now. ‘What did he say?’

'Well, he identified Chris by name and I got the distinct impression that they definitely know each other.' Noah said. ‘So I asked Alan to reach out and try to find out if there are any other packs that have had run ins with the Argents that would be holding a grudge strong enough to bring them here.’

'Unfortunately, it turns out that the Argents have been rather busy.' Deaton told him. ‘There are numerous packs that have been attacked by them, all above board as far as the Hunter’s Council is concerned.’ His mouth twisted. ‘But of course they’d say that. However, I haven’t got any names of any alphas that might have gone feral and are currently on a vendetta.’

'Which doesn’t mean there aren’t any.' Derek replied. ‘Just that we don’t know who they might be.’

'Exactly.' Noah said. ‘But now we know that this is more than a little personal. The way the alpha spoke to Chris tells me that there is a lot of history there. So we think it might be a good idea to try and dig up some past history and the logical place to start would be when the Argents were here last.’

'But that was ages ago.' Derek frowned. ‘I wasn’t even born then.’

'No you weren’t.’ Deaton said. ‘In fact, neither was Laura. Your parents had only just gotten together and wouldn’t be mated until the following year.’

'Chris left Beacon Hills in senior year.' Noah said. ‘I can’t ever remember him coming back after that so whatever this was happened in that interim. Alan is going to try and make a list of the packs concerned and we’re going to see if they’ll talk to us.’

‘It’ll be difficult.’ Derek frowned. ‘If they’ve had problems with hunters, there’s very little chance they’ll talk to you. Either of you.’
‘We know.’ Noah leaned forward, blue eyes sharp. ‘That’s where you come in.’

‘Me?’ Derek asked. ‘You think they’ll talk to me?’

‘The Hale pack held a lot of weight before the fire.’ Deaton said. ‘Talia was a powerful alpha with a lot of connections and a lot of allies. Your name will still get you into places we can’t go and hopefully start a conversation about this.’

Derek opened his mouth to protest. He wasn’t anywhere close to being able to just start talking to other wolves. In New York, he’d checked in with the local alphas as minimally as he could without presenting a threat, but it had been a very long time since he’d actually been around another pack. As if reading his mind, Deaton gave him a reassuring smile.

‘You wouldn’t be alone.’ he said. ‘I’m doing the groundwork, but I’ll need to use your name. As the last remaining Hale pack member who can hold talks of this kind, do I have your permission?’

‘Yes.’ Derek nodded. ‘If you think it will help.’

‘It’s a start.’ Noah replied, but Derek could tell he was pleased. ‘Now Alan has told me that there were no other dealings with the Argents while they were here. Apparently Mathilda and Talia kept their truce and it was when Mathilda died that Gerard stepped up his persecution tactics.’

‘Mathilda?’ Derek asked and Deaton nodded.

‘Gerard’s wife.’ he replied. ‘She was the matriarch until she died twelve years ago. It wasn’t anything sinister, just a very normal stroke. But it was enough to throw the Argent clan into disarray and Gerard actually took over everything. That in itself wasn’t unusual because Kate was only twenty-two at the time. What was unusual is that he’s never relinquished power. The packs I have spoken to have very little to say about her that’s not extremely derogatory. She’s unstable at best and psychotic at worst.’

‘Christ.’ Noah looked ill. ‘That means when her and Derek…’

‘She was twenty-eight and a fully fledged hunter.’ Deaton replied. ‘Not only that, but Derek is definitely not the first boy she’s done this to. She has form.’

Derek heard the words but there was a fuzziness in his head as he tried to work through them. He’d never known the details, just that Kate had been beautiful and confident and paid attention to him like he was the most special person in the room. For a heartbroken boy lost in the middle of a large pack she’d been so completely alluring that he’d not given their age difference a single thought. He’d thrown himself in head first, believing everything she’d told him and ignoring every instinct that had told him she wasn’t safe. Now he knew just how stupid he’d been, that he’d been chosen and stalked like prey and that it was something she’d done to others as well.

He only realised that he was hyperventilating, fangs and claws out in panic, when he hit the floor of the office and Noah was suddenly kneeling in front of him.

‘Jesus, kid.’ He had one hand on the back of Derek’s neck and the other against his shoulder, keeping him in place. ‘You’re okay, you’re safe. Just breathe with me.’ Behind him, Deaton was closing the blind on the door.

Derek shook his head, not daring to even look Noah in the eye. He was so ashamed, so completely broken by the knowledge that he’d been used and had betrayed his family slamming into him with the force of a freight train. He dug his claws into his palms, the pain as they pierced his skin doing nothing to ground them. He could hear himself whining, high-pitched and distressed, and Noah
swore profusely.

‘I’m going to kill her.’ he muttered. ‘Fuck due process. If I get my hands on that murdering bitch, I’m shooting first and asking questions later.’

Derek looked up at that and the fierce determination on Noah’s face was so much like Stiles that he felt all the panic drain away. Here was someone who would protect him, like Laura had done and he whimpered and let his head fall against Noah’s shoulder. Noah made a broken sound and moved the hand on his shoulder to around his back, his arm pulling Derek in against him and holding him fast.

‘You’re going to be okay, son.’ His voice was low and gentle. ‘Nobody’s going to hurt you again. I promise.’

Derek breathed in his scent - gun oil and cordite and strength. It was not his mother’s scent nor his father’s but it was good nonetheless and after not having this comfort for so long, he let go to bring his bloody hands up to hold on tightly to Noah’s shirt as he shook with all his suppressed emotions finally coming out. The tears were excruciating when they finally came and then Derek just couldn’t stop, his breath coming ragged and heartbroken as he cried for the first time in years. He cried for his pack, his family. He cried for his mother and father and Cora, for Laura who’d had to grow up too fast and who’d become cold and distant because of it and finally he cried for himself and the boy who’d been too trusting and now was lost in his own pain.

Noah didn’t let go. Instead, he only held Derek closer and murmured soft words to him while he stroked the back of Derek’s head with one hand and Derek melted into it, not even noticing when Deaton left the room and closed the door behind him.

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The sadness hit Stiles while he was in English. It felt like a running head first into a wall of emotion, all of it so powerful that he felt nauseous.

He stumbled to his feet, ignoring the teacher’s protests as he staggered from the room. He barely made it to the bathroom before it got the better of him and he stumbled into the nearest cubicle and brought up everything in his stomach. He was still retching a moment later when he heard the sound of footsteps and then Scott was behind him, one hand rubbing his back soothingly.

‘Shit, dude.’ He sounded worried out of his mind. ‘What the fuck?’

‘I’m okay.’ Stiles rasped, spitting the residual vomit in his mouth into the toilet. He slumped back against the door frame and panted with effort. ‘It’s not me anyway.’

‘Huh?’ Scott looked confused.

‘It’s Derek.’ Stiles gave him a weak smile. ‘So we’re kind of emotionally connected.’

‘Fuck.’ Scott’s eyes went wide. ‘Like you can feel what he feels.’

‘Sort of?’ Stiles shook his head and held out a hand. ‘Help me up.’

Scott got to his feet and hauled him up, steering him to the sink so he could rinse out his mouth. He was busy drying it off with a paper towel when the door opened and Harris looked in. He’d obviously been sent by their teacher to check on them and he looked less than pleased.

‘Mr Stilinski.’ He was almost sneering. ‘Just can’t help disturbing whatever class you’re in I see.’

Stiles saw red. Harris was one of the people involved in what had happened and before he knew it,
he was racing towards the door with his eyes flashing and his fangs dropping before he could help himself. Harris squawked and fell back onto his ass in the corridor before Stiles was hauled back by Scott who’d managed to get both arms around him and shield him from Harris’ view.

‘Fuck, Stiles!’ He was frantic. ‘Dude, chill!’ It was thankfully enough to snap Stiles out if it and he shook his head, the shift fading away before he raised his head to glare at the shell-shocked man in front of him.

‘You!’ He pointed a threatening finger at Harris and felt deeply satisfied when he shrunk back from him, fear all over his face. ‘You’re going to get what’s coming to you.’ He growled the last words and then Scott was dragging him away and back down the corridor. He could hear Harris shouting threats of suspension behind them but Scott wouldn’t let him go until they were outside the classroom. Only then did the full weight of what he’d just done hit him and he groaned and hid his face in his hands.

‘Christ.’ he muttered. ‘Please tell me I didn’t just try to eat Harris?’

‘I hate to say it, but I think you are completely and utterly boned.’ Scott replied.

‘Great.’ Stiles thumped his head back against the lockers behind him. ‘Just what I fucking need.

‘Stiles?’ It was Miss Marshall, her face full of concern as she looked out the doorway at them. ‘Are you all right? I sent Scott to find you but…’ She trailed off as the PA system sounded, a sternly voiced instruction for Stiles to head immediately to the principal’s office.

‘Oh man.’ Stiles shook his head and looked at Scott mournfully. ‘I am so fucked.’

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Noah handed the mug of tea to Derek and sat on the edge of his desk, watching as Derek took a tentative sip.

‘Tea okay?’ he asked, more to set Derek at ease than anything else. The kid looked terrible, his eyes red rimmed and his breath still coming in little hiccups. Noah knew what deeply suppressed grief looked like, had experienced it himself enough times to know how hard it was to let go like Derek had just done. On the other hand, he was very glad he had. Holding on to the kind of pain Derek obviously was was never healthy and the fact that he’d felt safe enough to show Noah that side of him was very encouraging.

‘It’s okay.’ Derek’s voice was rough. ‘Thank you.’

‘No problem.’ Noah said. He was about to reach out and put a hand on Derek’s shoulder when his cell rang and he frowned. When he looked at it, he saw the number was the school and answered it. He was expecting it to be about the incident the night before, but instead he got an earful that had him reeling.

‘You must be mistaken.’ he replied. ‘Stiles would never harm a teacher or threaten them with violence.’ His protests fell on deaf ears and when he heard the name of the accusing party, Noah became furious. ‘Oh yeah? Well you tell Mr Harris that I will be there soon so he can accuse my son to my face.’

He hung up and then yelled in frustration and anger, only stopping when he saw Derek’s look of wide-eyed shock.

‘Sorry, kid.’ He scrubbed a hand over his face. ‘Stiles just got himself suspended for the week.
Apparently he made violent threats against Harris and that sniveling little asshole is insisting that the principal get him off school property as soon as possible.’

‘What?’ Derek was astounded. ‘He wouldn’t do that. I mean, he’s a sarcastic little shit but he would never say something like that unless...oh shit.’ He went pale.

Noah frowned, but he was already grabbing his keys and his jacket.

‘Whatever it is, tell me later.’ he said. ‘Let’s go get my wayward son, shall we?’

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On the other side of town, Chris opened the door to the attic and slipped inside. The space was already dusty and motes spiraled through the air as he moved past boxes and storage bins. Victoria and Allison never came up here, so it was the perfect place to keep things he didn’t want anyone to find.

The trunk in the corner was a relic. It had belonged to his great-great grandmother, herself a legendary hunter that had terrorised wolf packs across Europe before emigrating to America. It was still filled with obscure texts and rare strains of dried wolfsbane, artifacts from his family’s history. He knelt and unlocked it, the key grating from a lang disuse, and then opened the trunk. The floral scent was still strong and Chris removed the tray at the top and set it aside before feeling along the lining for what he was looking for.

High school had been the one time in his life when he’d been relatively happy. He’d stayed at Beacon Hills High for the duration of his education, right up until his father had discovered just what he’d been doing. Back then he’d still been tempered by Chris’ mother, and when she’d found out she’d been furious but she had recognised that no violation of the Code had occurred so the best thing would be to cut their losses and run. It had foiled Gerard’s plan and had put Chris in a position where his father’s favour would never be given in punishment for his failure. It had also opened a position for Kate to become the new favourite and she’d basked in Gerard’s attention and learned every dirty little trick he’d taught her and invented a few of her own along with them.

The pictures had been taken at a house party on a cheap disposable camera but the fact that they had been hidden from the light meant that the colours were still vibrant. He smiled to himself at the clothing he was wearing, the way his hair was still blond instead of silver, before he looked at the boy next to him.

Peter’s smile was brilliant, only slightly obscured by the lens flare that hid his eyes. Even still, Chris remembered them - so intensely blue it had been like looking right into the summer sky. His face was smooth, his skin tanned and Chris ran his thumb over the face of the boy who would become the rogue alpha he was hunting.

‘It will be easy.’ Gerard’s assurance was practiced, tripping off the tongue as smooth as silk. ‘You just need to get him to trust you. Make friends with the boy.’

‘Mom’s not going to like this.’ Chris was feeling horribly unsettled. ‘It’s going against the Code.’

‘What your mother doesn’t realise is that we are fighting a war, Chris.’ Gerard put his hand on Chris’ shoulder and squeezed hard enough to make him wince. ‘You’re eighteen now, a man. You need to prove that you are worthy of your title as an Argent hunter.’

Chris stared into his eyes and folded, just like he always did.

‘All right.’ he whispered. ‘I’ll do it.’
Falling in love hadn’t been part of the plan.

Peter had been a sophomore at the school. It had been difficult to engineer a meeting and every attempt had failed until one afternoon when Christ had finally given up and gone to the library to study for a history test and literally run into him. The books they were carrying had gone all over the floor and he’d knelt down without seeing who they belonged to until he’d heard a soft mocking laugh and lifted his head to look into those incredible eyes.

‘You know.’ Peter was smiling and it made Chris’ heart thump out of time. ‘If you wanted to get my attention, there are better ways.’

‘I’ve been trying to get your attention for weeks.’ Chris snapped without thinking and Peter laughed, bright and sharp as the knife Chris always carried.

‘Well, now you’ve got it what are you planning on doing with it?’ he ask, his eyes sparkling wickedly, and just like that Chris was lost.

Peter had been his first in all the ways it mattered, and Chris had loved him with a blinding passion that had left him careless until his father found out that the little scheme he’d hatched had gone so badly awry that he’d been forced to tell Mathilda about it, dressing it up like Peter had seduced Chris when really it had been meant to be the other way around. They’d left and Chris had never forgiven himself. Victoria had been an arranged marriage to cement an alliance with another hunter family and he’d been a faithful husband, even if he’d never actually loved her.

He still remembered when he’d heard about the Hales and how he’d been physically sick at the glee in their voices when they’d talked about it. Gerard had never forgiven his betrayal and he’d rubbed every painful detail in Chris’ face, especially the fact that Peter Hale was in a coma and barely clinging to life.

If only he knew that this was no longer the case.

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Stiles was slumped on a seat outside the principal’s office when they arrived. Noah said nothing, just rubbed a gentle hand over Stiles’ short hair, then put his fighting face on and went into the office without preamble. Derek sighed and went to sit next to Stiles. He rested his hand palm up on his knee and Stiles took it without hesitation, his head coming to rest on Derek’s shoulder. They sat in silence until the raised voices started, Noah sounding like an avenging angel, and Stiles huffed softly.

‘Harris is such a dick.’ he muttered, rubbing his face against Derek’s arm and Derek huffed in turn.

‘Some things never change.’ he replied. ‘You wolf out at him?’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles sounded and smelled utterly miserable. ‘I really fucked up.’

‘It’s okay.’ Derek nosed at his hair. ‘It was my fault. I kind of lost it earlier and I didn’t even think about buffering what I was feeling.’

‘No.’ Stiles tilted his head, brown eyes warm with affection. ‘I think you probably needed that.’

‘Your dad was with me.’ Derek told him. ‘He was pretty great.’

‘Of course he is.’ Stiles’ small smile was proud. ‘He’s my dad.’

The voices in the principal’s office grew louder and they both winced.
‘So I got suspended.’ Stiles said and Derek couldn’t help it. The choked out laugh was out before he could stop it.

‘I heard.’ He looked back at Stiles and then grinned. ‘Did he shit himself?’

‘Oh my God.’ Stiles smiled back. ‘He was shaking, dude.’

‘Don’t call me dude.’ Derek said and kissed him on the nose.

They broke apart as the door flew open and Noah came storming out.

‘Come on, you two.’ He glared at where Harris and the principal were peering out the door after him. ‘Let’s get you home.’ The look he cast back at the two observers could have stripped paint. ‘This is not the end of this. The school board will be hearing just what kind of people you have employed here that feel it’s necessary to harass students, particularly ones who have been taken ill.’ His blue eyes were narrowed dangerously. ‘You’re on very thin ice Mr Harris.’

Harris went visibly pale and ducked back into the office but Noah didn’t pursue the argument. He herded Stiles and Derek in front of him until they were far enough to be out of earshot. Then he stopped and put his hands on Stiles’ shoulders, giving him a concerned look.

‘You okay?’ he asked and Stiles nodded.

‘I am now.’ he replied.

‘Good.’ Noah looked between them. ‘So it’s obviously not a huge coincidence that Derek freaked out and not twenty minutes later I get a call telling me you’ve done the same, is it?’

‘No.’ Stiles looked sheepish. He looked at Derek and Derek knew they would have to come clean.

‘Not here.’ he said. ‘I promise we’ll tell you, just not here.’

‘Alright.’ Noah said. ‘Let’s go home.’

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When it got to ten minutes before the end of the period and Stiles had still not come back, Scott knew shit had gone down.

He looked at Allison and Lydia, trying to communicate as best he could with just his face but all he got was a couple of bemused looks so he resorted to mouthing words at them until Miss Marshall turned and gave him a pointed look. A few minutes later, the principal came to the door and she went to speak to him. Scott wished he also had werewolf senses and could hear what was being said, but he got his answer soon enough when Miss Marshall’s eyebrows almost escaped into her hairline.

‘Oh fuck.’ he whispered to himself, knowing that that was probably the worst sign ever.

Miss Marshall said nothing, but the look she gave him was enough and Scott shrunk down in his seat. Thankfully the bell for the end of period went and he almost fell out his seat in his rush to get to Allison and Lydia as everyone shuffled out, including a very sulky Jackson.

‘Oh for Christ’s sake.’ Allison rolled her eyes. ‘You don’t have to spell it out.’ She looked at Lydia.
‘Well, this isn’t good.’

‘Miss Marshall.’ Lydia used her intimidation voice, the one that had even teachers hopping. ‘What happened to Stiles?’

‘Mr Stilinski has been suspended for the rest of the week.’ Miss Marshall didn’t sound happy at all. ‘I’m sorry, that’s all I can say.’ She collected her things and left and they all looked at each other.

‘Okay.’ Lydia was brisk. ‘This changes nothing. I move we have an emergency alpha meeting at Stiles’ house after school.’

‘Seconded.’ Allison chimed and put up her hand.

‘Thirded.’ Scott agreed, hand also in the air. ‘So we’re doing this?’

‘Fuck yeah, we’re doing this.’ Lydia was insistent. ‘Personally I have no desire to hang around and wait for that thing to come back and finish me off.’

‘Cool.’ Allison said and then looked at her quizzically. ‘Why was Jackson sitting at the window by the way?’

‘So it turns out that he might be superfluous to requirement.’ Lydia said. ‘I also might have told him that I’d dump his ass if he didn’t keep his nose out of my business.’

‘Wow.’ Scott grinned at her. ‘You are so scary.’

‘Yes, I am.’ Lydia said primly and flicked her hair over her shoulder. ‘But I’m also a perfectionist so we need to have a plan that will work exactly.’ She smiled at them. ‘We’re still going to the library and you’re going to tell us exactly what Stiles and you talked about and then I’m going to fix all the shit and make your plan about a thousand times better.’

‘Okay.’ Scott said. ‘I defer to your superior planning skills.’

Students for the next class started filing in so they left, splitting up and heading off to their other classes but not before giving each other a conspiratorial smile.

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‘This isn’t home.’ Stiles grumbled. He had been consigned to the passenger seat, Derek declaring him to overwrought to drive when his claws had come out in the parking lot upon seeing Harris scuttle away to his car. Apparently, Noah’s stern words had seen him put on his own administrative leave.

‘I never said we were going directly home.’ Noah’s voice came through the speakerphone. ‘And I think we could all use something in the line of comfort food.’

‘He has a point.’ Derek said and pulled up behind the cruiser in line to the drive through. Stiles made an annoyed noise and folded his arms in defiance, squawking in outrage when they heard Noah order a double-double large combo.

‘Now you’re just abusing the system.’ he snapped and Noah chuckled on the other side.

‘Son, you just got suspended from school.’ he replied. ‘I’d choose my next words very carefully, if I were you.’

‘Like you never got sent home.’ Stiles huffed, shoulder almost up around his ears. ‘I know what you
used to be like. Babcia and I actually do talk.’

‘You leave her out of this.’ Noah chuckled on his side. ‘Your grandmother has an awful memory.’

Stiles snorted.

‘Yeah? I dare you to tell her that when she comes for Purim.’ he retorted and Noah burst into a full bellied laugh.

‘I’m not crazy, Stiles.’ he replied. ‘Fine, I’ll give you a pass this time. Harris has always been a miserable little snot and now I know what he did, I’m inclined to give him absolutely zero passes. Thank you, you are an angel of the culinary arts.’ This last was to the young woman passing him his bag of food and Stiles rolled his eyes and hung up. They moved to the window, Derek having already ordered and paid while they were arguing and the smell of grease, fries and American cheese were enough to have him almost slobbering over the bags when Derek passed them to him. He pulled out the lot, following Noah en route to the Stilinski house and gave Stiles a sidelong look.

‘Your grandmother?’ he asked and Stiles nodded.

‘Yeah, on my dad’s side.’ he replied. ‘She lives in Florida in a retirement community and spends her days playing mah jong and pinching the poolboy’s ass. She’s great.’ He smiled and then his face fell. ‘Shit, sorry.’

Derek didn’t need to ask what for.

‘It’s okay.’ He swallowed down the lump in his throat. ‘It’s been kind of a weird day but I actually feel better.’

‘Good.’ Stiles sighed. ‘I’m kind of wiped after that. You’re carrying some major league angst there, big guy. Not that I blame you, but it’s got to be exhausting.’

‘It is.’ Derek had never admitted out loud how much it took out of him, the anger and guilt and pain that he simply endured because it was all he could do.

‘Guess that’s why you’re so cranky, huh?’ Stiles was looking at him with such empathy it made Derek’s heart ache a little. ‘I was like that after Mom died. I just couldn’t deal a lot of the time, didn’t sleep because I was all over the place. I know what it feels like.’ His heartbeat was completely steady and Derek reached out for his hand, the movement purely instinctual in a way that he hadn’t allowed in so very long and Stiles weaved their fingers together.

‘I know you do.’ he replied. ‘It’s why I feel comfortable with you. You get it.’

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‘Okay.’ Lydia was twirling a pencil in her fingers. ‘So, the way I see it we should do this tonight.’

‘What?’ Scott was staring at her with wide puppy eyes. ‘I can’t get the stuff we need by tonight?’

‘You’re going to have to.’ Lydia informed him and then looked at Allison. They were at the table right at the back of the library, hidden by the stacks. ‘What about you?’

‘I can do it.’ Allison said, all confidence. ‘I didn’t have a look last night, but they’re all out tonight. Something about dinner with old friends.’ She snorted. ‘Of course, now I know it could mean anything.’

‘What about Stiles though?’ Scott asked. ‘He’s going to be grounded for sure.’
‘Maybe so, but the Sheriff is working night shift.’ Lydia said. ‘I called the dispatch while you were at lunch. That means the boys are all alone and while they might take that to mean they can get into each other’s pants, I have other plans for them.’

‘Can I just ask why you’re so into this?’ Scott looked bewildered. ‘I mean…you’re like the last person I would have expected to be this invested.’

‘That thing BIT me!’ Lydia hissed at him. ‘It woke up whatever the hell stupid supernatural thing I have lying dormant! If I don’t get into the Ivy League college of my choice because I’m too busy turning into a hag, there is going to be hell to pay!’ She glared at him. ‘And so help me, you are going to help us!’

‘Fine!’ Scott threw up his hands. ‘Whatever.’ He folded his arms and glowered at her.

‘Okay, so what do we do about the school?’ Allison asked.

‘Leave that to me.’ Lydia said. ‘I know where the master keys are kept in the admin office. I’ll just grab them before we leave today.’

‘You can do that?’ Scott was amazed and she gave him a look that she hoped transmitted just how close he was to having his ass kicked by her Choos.

‘I’m an honours student with a spotless conduct record, Scott.’ she replied. ‘I can do pretty much whatever I want. I get the keys, then we meet her once the school’s closed and get the alpha to come to us. The question is, how?’

‘Well, that part’s easy.’ Scott said. ‘Wolves communicate using howls and I think we’ve all heard those the last few nights. Maybe Stiles and Derek can call to it.’

‘That’ll work.’ Allison smiled. ‘That’s really clever, Scott.’

‘I want to be a vet.’ He smiled in such an adorably bashful way that Lydia forgave him for his earlier idiocy. ‘I know all kinds of things about animals.’

‘Okay so they what, just go up on the roof and howl?’ Allison asked and Lydia nodded.

‘Then we get it inside the school and lead it to the storage cages down in the basement.’ she said. ‘Once it’s in, we can tranquilise it, lock it up and call the Sheriff so he and Deaton can take it away or do whatever they want to do with it.’

‘Okay so how do we get it into the basement?’ Scott asked.

‘That’s easy.’ Lydia smiled. ‘We use Stiles as bait.’

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Lunch was consumed and Noah sat opposite them at the kitchen table.

‘Right.’ He had his no-nonsense face on. ‘Spit it out boys.’

‘Spit what out?’ Stiles was fidgeting like crazy and Derek wanted nothing more than to put a restraining hand on his thigh but he knew that probably wouldn’t go down to well considering that they needed to explain to Noah that they were emotionally bonded, even if the mating claim hadn’t been physically consummated. He had known they would eventually have to broach the subject and the fact that Stiles had gotten suspended from school precisely because Derek’s emotional overload
 had been too much to handle was just the catalyst.

‘Kid, you are about this far…’ Noah started, holding his thumb and forefinger an inch apart but Derek decided to tear off the metaphorical band-aid.

‘So we haven’t been entirely honest with you.’ he said and Stiles squeaked loudly next to him, falling silent when Noah glared.

‘Kid, I got that already.’ he replied, leaning his elbows on his knees. ‘What I want to know is what the hell is going on with you two. What happened today goes beyond just being in a relationship.’

‘Fine.’ Stiles huffed. ‘But you have to promise not to freak out.’

‘I think I’ve been pretty reasonable so far.’ Noah raised an eyebrow at him. ‘So don’t treat me like an idiot, Stiles.’

‘I’m not it’s just…’ Stiles’ face fell. ‘I don’t want Derek to leave.’

‘Why would he?’ Noah was frowning.

Derek opened his mouth to explain but of course Stiles jumped in with both feet.

‘We got accidentally bonded during my first full moon and now we kind of have a hotline into each other’s feelings.’ he blurted and Derek heaved a sigh of immense frustration and put his face in his hands.

‘Jesus fuck, Stiles.’ he muttered. ‘Use your fucking filter.’

‘That’s it?’ Noah looked oddly relieved. ‘No weird werewolf sex thing going on?’

‘Ew, Dad no!’ Stiles flailed on the sofa and this time Derek did restrain him for fear of getting smacked in the face. ‘We just feel what the other one is feeling.’

‘It’s more than that though.’ Derek could feel his face heating up and wished like hell he didn’t have to say anything. The mating talk had been awkward enough with his parents and after Paige and Kate he’d pretty much dismissed it all as bullshit anyway. ‘Stiles and I are...well...you could call it compatibility.’ He shrugged. ‘Werewolves have a way of finding someone. It’s not predestined or anything, and it’s only as long as we both want it. But yeah, Stiles and I are kind of meant to be. Sort of.’

‘Oh my God.’ Noah pinched the bridge of his nose. ‘So what, like you’ll be…’ He made a gesture that was clearly meant to prompt further explanation.

‘Mates?’ Stiles was almost wincing as he said it, his face scrunching up. ‘I mean that’s kind of what Deaton said.’

‘Deaton knows about this?’ Noah sounded outraged. ‘He didn’t fill me in on this little part of the equation.’

‘That’s because we haven’t…’ Now Derek really wanted to fall through the floor and his ears burned red hot. Next to him Stiles rolled his eyes.

‘What he’s trying to say is that we haven’t done the do.’ He snorted. ‘I’m still as virginal as fuck and my pants remain sadly unplundered.’

‘Christ.’ Noah waved a hand at them. ‘Enough. The technicalities of werewolf mating are not
something I want to hear right now.’ He got up and scrubbed a hand down his face. ‘I have to go back to work. You are on house arrest.’ He jabbed a finger at Stiles. ‘And you get to keep his ass out of trouble.’ This was for Derek and was accompanied by a look of severe parental expectation that reminded Derek so much of Talia it hurt a little.

‘Got it.’ Stiles gave him a jaunty salute, but Derek heard the skip in his heartbeat and knew the little shit had no intention of behaving. His suspicions were confirmed when Noah left the house to return to the station and Stiles waited all of five minutes after he’d gone and then dragged Derek upstairs and into his room.

‘Shoes off.’ he ordered and Derek complied far more meekly than he expected. He knew it was indicative of how wiped out he was and decided that a very long nap was in order. Stiles herded him onto the bed and crawled on next to him, sneakers hitting the floor and his head hitting the pillow. Derek curled around him, nose in the back of his neck as his breathing slowed and regulated and Stiles relaxed against him.

‘You okay?’ he whispered and Derek murmured assent against his neck.

‘I am now.’ His voice was a soft growl and Stiles smiled so Derek rather aggressively snuggled in behind him, knees fitted in behind his own and one arm around his waist. They lay quietly and Stiles moved around to get comfortable. On the nightstand, his phone buzzed and he reached for it. Derek listened to him read the text, from Scott or Lydia no doubt, and knew he was grinning at what is said. Stiles sent some messages back, his scent warming with satisfaction. He growled happily at the final message, the wolfish mannerism now second nature to him, and Derek rumbled softly in reply even though he was half asleep, the growl emanating from deep inside his chest. Stiles hadn’t quite managed that yet, his own growls still throaty and high pitched in comparison. He wriggled enough that he could turn over, nose now pressed against Derek’s.

‘Hey.’ he whispered. ‘You asleep?’

‘Yes.’ Derek grumbled, eyebrows knitting together in clear exasperation. ‘So shut up.’

‘So I was wondering about howling.’ Stiles persisted, prodding at Derek’s scratchy cheek with one finger. ‘Is it like with real wolves?’

‘Pretty much.’ Derek didn’t even open his eyes. ‘Can I sleep now?’

‘So how far does it carry?’ Stiles asked. ‘I mean could the alpha hear us if we howled for him?’

‘Yeah.’ Derek sighed like an Inquisition martyr. ‘It carries. My pack could call each other from all over town.’

‘Cool.’ Stiles breathed and Derek opened his eyes, now on the alert.

‘What are you up to?’ he asked and Stiles immediately went for denial.

‘Nothing.’ he protested but the lie was so blatant Derek didn’t need to be a wolf to hear it.

‘No.’ He closed his eyes again and could almost hear the pout being directed at him.

‘You don’t even know what it is.’ Stiles countered. ‘You can’t veto something when you don’t know what it is.’

‘Your phone’s been going nuts since you left the school.’ Derek opened his eyes again and narrowed them at him. ‘It doesn’t take a genius to figure out you dumbasses are up to something.’
Stiles was at a loss. He was clearly used to running rings around Scott in terms of sneakiness and his surprise at Derek figuring him out the way he did was both gratifying but also made him feel understood in a way he hadn’t been for a very long time. He and his siblings had tended towards conspiring against the other cubs in the pack, even if they had bickered all the time, and one upmanship had been the name of the game. Laura had been the brightest of them and now he thought about it, that was the thing that he appreciated about Stiles the most, that razor sharp mind that could wreak serious havoc if he put his mind to it.

‘So I’m guessing that I won’t be able to convince you that this is a really good plan?’ he asked and now Derek growled at him.

‘Worst than the harebrained scheme you came up with for Saturday?’ he asked.

‘No.’ Stiles said. ‘It is in fact the exact same scheme, just moved up a little in light of the fact that the alpha is now stalking my dad. Oh, and Lydia’s now involved.’

‘Oh.’ Derek’s felt relieved. ‘In that case, it can only be better. I trust her ability to assess risks a lot more than yours.’

‘Ha ha.’ Stiles deadpanned. ‘You’re a real comedian, you know that?’

‘I try.’ Derek pulled him in and cuddled him mercilessly until something jabbed him in the hip.

‘Oh.’ Stiles sat up. ‘I completely forgot about this after all the shit with Harris.’ He dug in his pocket and then his scent changed completely, anxiety bleeding in. ‘Although I don’t know if I should show you. I mean, you’ve kind of been through the ringer today already.’

‘So what’s one more thing.’ Derek tried to make light of it, but his stomach was lurching unpleasantly. ‘What is it?’

Stiles handed him a plastic zip lock bag. Derek took it and when he saw what was inside, he felt like he was suddenly unable to breathe. He stared at the necklace that Laura had been given for her eighteenth birthday, a mark of her being the future alpha, and he tightened his fist around it until the edges of the pendant cut through the plastic.

‘It was Laura’s wasn’t it?’ Stiles asked and he nodded. ‘Shit, I’m so sorry.’

‘Where…?’ Derek felt like he was choking.

‘Allison found it in Kate’s things.’ Stiles eyes flickered like a faulty light and he smelled angry. ‘She must have taken it when…you know. I’m going to give it to my dad, see if he can get it processed.’

‘It won’t be admissible.’ Derek wanted to curl back in on himself. ‘Not if she took it.’

‘We can get around that.’ Stiles told him. ‘At the least you have it back. She shouldn’t have taken that.’

‘There’s a lot of things she shouldn’t have taken.’ Derek said, thinking about what Deaton had said earlier.

‘All the more reason for us to stop her murdering ass.’ Stiles growled. ‘But we need to get the alpha out the way first. So are we in?’

Derek looked at him, all fire and reckless bravado and felt something inside him respond. He’d been like that once upon a time and he missed the boy who’d thrown caution to the wind, who’d laughed
when he’d put a glitter bomb in Laura’s drawers that had earned him screeches and a pummeling that had managed to bruise him for a few hours, who’d tormented his cousins with stink bombs made from wintergreen and garlic and who’d helped Cora set up an elaborate bucket chain that had saturated Peter not once but four times.

‘Fine,’ he said and smiled at the way Stiles’ face lit up. ‘But we’ll need to be careful.’

‘Dude, so careful.’ Stiles promised. ‘Oh, and you need to teach me how to howl.’
Scott turned up at seven with a grin, a bottle of Immobilon and expectations of food. Thankfully, Stiles had anticipated this and made stir fry in industrial quantities. Lydia was next, dressed in jeans and combat boots that looked like they cost more than his dad made in a month. She had her hair tied up and a determined look on her face and Derek let her in and then exchanged looks with Stiles over her head. Allison had to sneak out the house so she was only coming after she could skip out without anyone noticing.

They ate and Lydia laid out the plan. Stiles was honestly surprised at the amount of thought she’d put into it, happily agreeing to his role and getting more than a little excited at the thought of them actually catching the alpha.

“So what exactly is that stuff?” he asked, nodding at the small brown bottle.

“It works by tranquilising and paralysing the animal.” Scott was all business as he explained how they would be drugging the alpha. He had another bottle filled with blue liquid and Derek nodded at it.

“So what’s that?” he asked and Scott looked a little less confident.

“That’s the revivor.” he replied. “We have to give it to him to wake him up.”

“Is it going to work?” Stiles asked him. “I mean with the super healing?”

“It should.” Derek shrugged. “I honestly have no idea.”

“Well, it seems to me that werewolf healing is simply an incredibly speeded up cellular renewal and that would go hand in hand with improved metabolism.” Lydia pointed out. “Which would explain why you can’t get drunk. Granted this is very strong, but I don’t think we can bet on it having a particularly long lasting effect. I think the revivor is probably not going to be necessary, but it was a good thought.” She smiled encouragingly at Scott and he beamed back at her.

“So what’s the deal with wolfsbane?” Stiles was now fascinated. He’d always factored Lydia’s formidable intelligence into his appreciation of her.

“I’ve been doing some reading.” Lydia replied. “And I think it’s an allergen that provokes a serious and often fatal reaction. Of course that doesn’t explain anything but I figure that werewolves have to have a little bit of magic.”

Makes sense.’ Derek conceded. “Okay, I have one change to all this. I think it should be me and not Stiles that brings the alpha in.”

“No.” Stiles snorted. “He’s not after you.”
‘No he’s not, but I’m a challenge to him.’ Derek said. ‘You’re basically mine now.’ He then realised what he’d just said and sweetness saturated his scent making Stiles grin.

‘Or you can work together.’ Lydia pursed her lips. ‘So one of you can lure him and the other one can herd him the way we want him to go.’

‘That’s good too.’ Stiles nodded. ‘And you’d be better at predicting what he’s going to do and then you can also indulge those wolfy protective instincts you have at the same time.’

‘The cage is a good idea.’ Derek folded his arms. ‘But we’re going to need something to make sure he’s incapacitated. If the anaesthetic is going to wear off quickly, we should shock him. The electricity will force him to shift back and then we can hand him over to Noah.’

‘So, taser?’ Lydia asked and he nodded so she took her phone out and tapped out a quick message.

‘Wouldn’t it be easier to get one from the station?’ Stiles asked her and she smiled.

‘Allison may have broken into her dad’s weapons store.’ she said. ‘She’s got something that is just perfect.’

‘Better than a taser?’ Stiles laughed. ‘Man, that is one crazy family.’

‘Hunters.’ Derek huffed.

‘Hey.’ Scott sounded hurt. ‘Allison’s not crazy.’

‘For Christ’s sake, Scott.’ Lydia said. ‘We’re not talking about Allison.’

‘Yeah.’ Derek said and what he said next blew Stiles away. ‘She’s okay.’

‘That’s pretty big.’ He looked at him intently.

‘Well, maybe it’s time for us to put everything aside.’ Derek replied. ‘I don’t want to fight with anyone anymore. I don’t want to keep looking over my shoulder. I just want my life back.’

‘Damn.’ Stiles smiled at him. ‘That’s some serious personal growth, Sourwolf.’

Derek growled and flashed a hint of fang at him but he smelled pleased. Stiles was about to go over and rub his face on him when the doorbell went and they all looked at each other.

‘That’s Allison.’ Scott said and took off for the door. Stiles moved across to Derek, sliding his hand into his.

‘I’m proud of you.’ he said it softly. Derek didn’t reply, just stood a little straighter as Allison and Scott came back. She was all in black, wearing jeans and boots like Lydia, and she was carrying a rigid plastic case in each hand, one distinctly crossbow shaped. There was also a backpack that Scott had thrown over his shoulder.

‘Hi.’ Her voice was steady but her dark eyes were trained on Derek. He was looking right back at her and the tension in the kitchen ratcheted up. Stiles glanced at Lydia and she gave him a small shrug.

‘Hi.’ Derek replied and behind Allison Scott seemed to be holding his breath. Stiles could smell the conflicted scent Derek was giving out but then Derek’s stance eased and he let his hands drop to his sides. He walked to Allison and her chin went up in defiance if anything he might say to her, but all he did was take the cases from her hands and put them on the table. Stiles found himself blowing out
a deep breath and then he caught Scott’s eye and then Lydia’s and they all smiled at each other.

‘So.’ Derek turned to where Allison was now standing next to him. ‘You want to explain what this all is?’

‘Sure.’ She looked like a massive weight had been lifted off her shoulders. ‘I bought the dart gun my dad has and my crossbow. I thought that we might need it as well.’ She beckoned to Scott and took the backpack from him, unzipping it and taking out what looked like a chunky plastic handgun. Stiles recognised it immediately and reached for it but she smacked his hand away and gave him a stern look.

‘What?’ he protested. ‘I know how to use one.’

‘This is not a normal taser, Stiles.’ she admonished. ‘I don’t know where my dad gets these, but it’s way over the legal limit. If this shocked you, it could put you into immediate cardiac arrest.’

‘Unlikely.’ Derek countered but his face was equally stern when he met Stiles’ eyes. ‘But it would knock your legs out from under you and it would make it impossible for you to shift and vulnerable. That’s why hunters use them. If you ever get faced down by one of these, you run.’

‘Oh.’ Allison gave him a sheepish look. ‘Yeah, I guess you’re right.’

‘You’ll be using it?’ Derek took it from her, handling it carefully and then putting it back in the case.

‘Yes.’ Allison nodded and then put a hand on the case that contained the dart gun. ‘After I’ve shot him with this.’ She looked at Scott. ‘You’ll need to give me the Immobilin and I can load it up.’

‘Okay.’ Scott’s eyes were wide.

‘So have you got the keys?’ Allison had turned to Lydia and Lydia dug in her jacket pocket and took them out.

‘I also have the code for the alarm.’ she replied. ‘It’ll be safer if we use the back door. You can get into position and Derek and Stiles can go up on the roof to call the alpha.’

‘What about me and Scott?’ Lydia asked and Derek and Allison shared a glance.

‘You both need to be safe.’ Derek said. ‘Once we know the alpha is coming for us, you’ll get to the basement and lock yourselves inside one of the other storage cages. You need to be somewhere he can’t attack you.’

‘But someone needs to call the Sheriff and there’s no signal down there.’ Lydia replied. ‘And he’ll be after me as well. I think we should stick together.’

Derek considered and then looked at Stiles.

‘What do you think?’ he asked and Stiles frowned.

‘I can call my dad.’ he said. ‘I agree with Derek that you two need to be safe.’ He looked at Scott. ‘Especially after this morning.’

‘What happened this morning?’ Derek looked at Scott.

‘Asthma attack.’ Scott muttered. ‘But I’m okay now.’

‘Yeah, but I’m not taking any chances with you.’ Allison said and put her hand on his arm. ‘You
need to stay as far from this as possible. We can’t chance you getting hurt.’

Scott gave in pretty quickly under her concerned gaze and agreed. Stiles couldn’t help feeling a twinge at how easily he’d agreed for her but it was balanced by knowing that Scott would be out of it.

‘Okay.’ Lydia nodded. ‘We’ll lock ourselves in the cage and wait it out.’

‘Good.’ Derek was leaning with both hands on the table. He took a deep breath and straightened up. ‘Let’s go catch us an alpha.

***********

Down the street, the dark car was hidden by the shadows. Jackson had parked far enough away that he couldn’t be seen but close enough that he had a clear view of the Stilinski house.

He knew Lydia was up to something. He knew that the way Derek Hale’s eyes had glowed at him in the locker room wasn’t normal, that he and now Stilinski were something other than human. He knew that they were connected to the thing from the video shop, all he had to do was prove how and figure out why the hell Lydia had thrown her lot in with them.

There seemed to be something happening because Lydia had left her house dressed like he’d never seen her, her stride confident and her entire posture screaming that special brand of determination that usually saw him giving into her more often than not. He’d been sitting outside her house for a while, his parents not really caring where he’d gone. He’d followed her car all the way to Stilinski’s house, where she’d parked behind the flashy Camaro that Hale drove, and then she’d gone inside and Jackson had been furious, jealousy and anger toxic in his belly.

McCall’s bike had already been outside, leaning against the porch so some kind of gathering was in session. About an hour after she’d arrived, Allison Argent had arrived on foot looking furtive. She’d gone in too and Jackson had contemplated sneaking up on the house to try and get a look at what they were doing. He was still debating the merits of that plan when the light on the porch went out, along with the house lights. Moments later the front door opened and five shadowy figures left the house. Two went to the Camaro, the other three to Lydia’s car.

Jackson slumped in his seat when the headlights went on and watched first the Camaro and then Lydia’s car pull out and drive down the road. He waited until the tail lights were just starting to disappear and then he started the Porsche and followed them, his mind racing as to where they might be headed.

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Stiles looked at Lydia’s headlights behind them. Next to him, Derek was all focus with both hands on the steering wheel.

‘Do you think this will work?’ he asked and got a sigh.

‘I hope so.’ Derek’s eyes were eerily pale where the light from the streetlamps was hitting them. ‘But I think we have a better chance than anyone else. As much as what the alpha is doing is wrong, I can’t say that I want the Argents getting to him first. He has enough control to take human form so he could be reasoned with. Either way, we need to deal with him as a person and not an animal. If we can’t, we’re no better than the hunters.’ His jaw clenched and his face went tight when he spoke again. ‘We’d be no better than her.’

Stiles was quiet, contemplating what might happen to the alpha if the Argents did catch him. He had
a feeling he really didn’t want to know.

They drove the rest of the way in silence, coming around the back of the school and choosing a spot in the shadows. Lydia pulled in next to them and they all got out, congregating around Lydia’s trunk as Scott unloaded the supplies. She led them to the back door of the school and unlocked it. Derek pulled it open and waved them all through while Lydia went to the alarm panel and then made a surprised noise when she found it disabled.

‘Maybe they forgot?’ Allison said as Derek closed the door behind them.

‘Maybe.’ Lydia didn’t look convinced.

‘Okay.’ Allison said. ‘So we’re leaving this one unlocked?’

‘That way this is the only access.’ Stiles told her. ‘The alpha will have to come through here. Then it’s up to us to lead him down the corridor, through the cafeteria and out towards the gym. From there it’s a straight run to the basement. I’m going to be waiting for him when he comes in and Derek will be behind him. Hopefully between the two of us we can get him there.’ He looked back at Derek and got a nod.

‘Alright.’ Lydia said. ‘Let’s get you on the roof.’

‘We’ll stay here and keep watch.’ Allison said and Scott nodded and moved to her side. He gave Stiles a fist bump.

‘Stay safe bro.’ he said and Stiles smiled and squeezed his shoulder.

‘Back at you, buddy.’ he replied. ‘Listen to Allison and don’t fucking die.’

Scott pulled a face but Stiles just grinned at him and fell into step beside Lydia and Derek followed up behind them.

‘Once you’re up there, you’re on your own.’ she said. ‘I’ll go back down and make sure Scott and I are out the way and that Allison’s in position. It’s up to you both to make sure he gets down the stairs.’

‘Got it.’ Derek said, his face back in the focused zone.

‘We can totally manage that.’ Stiles was starting to bounce, adrenaline coursing through his veins. Working together like this was one so much better than doing things on their own and he was grateful that his friends had stepped up like they had.

They made their way through the darkened building. Coming out the cafeteria on the other side, Derek suddenly stopped. It took Stiles everything he had not to giggle out loud because it reminded him so strongly of the dogs in Up when they heard a squirrel.

‘What’s wrong?’ he whispered and Derek pulled him to the side and flattened himself against the wall. Lydia followed suit and a few moments later, they heard the sound of a door opening and footsteps. Whoever it was was whistling. Stiles caught the scents of bleach and urinal cakes and looked at Derek.

‘Janitor?’ he mouthed and Derek nodded. They waited unto the sounds faded away and then moved.

‘That explains the alarm.’ Lydia whispered. ‘He should have been finished ages ago.’
‘So what’s he doing here?’ Derek asked.

‘I’m tempted to say something funny about polishing but I don’t want you to rip my throat out.’ Stiles snickered, leaning into him. They were in the far corridor that lead to the roof access and Lydia unlocked the door for them with her stolen keys.

‘Are you sure you’re going to be okay going back by yourself?’ Derek asked.

‘I’ll be fine.’ Lydia replied. ‘I’ll go back and get Allison and Scott and we can all go down together. The alpha’s not going to show up right away. I also have this.’ She waved the taser at them. Allison had given it to her for protection until she got back to them.

‘Okay, be careful.’ Derek opened the door and started up the stairs. Stiles looked at her in all kinds of admiration.

‘You know I used to think you were amazing.’ he said. ‘Now I know you are, but for completely different reasons.’

‘Thank you.’ Lydia replied, and her smile was genuine. ‘And don’t worry, this is going to work. With you and me being the brains of this operation, nothing can go wrong.’

‘Well, I’m flattered that you think I’m as clever as you are.’ Stiles grinned and she snorted.

‘Please.’ she replied, already moving back down the hall. ‘You’re the only person that can appreciate my genius to its fullest extent.’

Stiles stifled his laugh as she rounded the corner and then followed Derek up the stairs that led to the roof. He went through the fire door at the top and found him standing and looking out over the rear parking lot towards the woods.

‘So we’re doing this?’ Stiles asked as he came to stand beside him. It was clear, only a week until full moon again, and he lifted his head and scented the night air.

‘We’ve got a clear view from here.’ Derek replied. ‘I worry that he might know what we’re trying to do. It’s clear he’s lucid enough to stalk you.’

‘Yeah, but there’s five of us and only one of him.’ Stiles pointed out. ‘Those are pretty good odds.’ He rolled his shoulder and neck and then shoved Derek’s shoulder. ‘So, can we get started?’

‘Okay.’ Derek turned to him. ‘It’s probably going to take a couple of tries to get it right. You ready?’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles shifted, the change coming easily now. Derek had taken him through the rudimentaries but he hadn’t been able to really let go at the house for fear of alerting everyone in the neighbourhood. Next to him, Derek stood and watched him, his eyes now glowing blue. He didn’t shift completely, although he’d said that it would make it easier for Stiles’ first time.

‘Just let it out.’ he said, fangs just visible.

Stiles took a deep breath and then tipped his head back. He tried, he really did, but the sound that he made was more of an squawk than a howl. Next to him, Derek made a weird choking sound as he tried not to laugh.

‘Hey.’ Stiles was mildly offended. ‘I’m trying here.’

‘I know.’ Derek’s shoulders were shaking and when he looked up his smile was all sharp teeth. ‘It’s
just...well you sound like a cub.’ His face was soft. ‘It’s cute.’

‘Blow me.’ Stiles muttered and flipped him off. ‘I haven’t had twenty odd years to get good at this.’

‘Fine.’ Derek stepped up next to him. ‘I’ll do it first and then you can try and copy me.’

Stiles watched him take a deep breath and lift his head, chest filling before he let out a noise that reminded Stiles not so much of wolves as lions on those Discovery Channel docs Derek loved to watch. It was deafening, reverberating through the night air and making his blood race in his veins. It sounded like a challenge, but it also sounded like a siren song to him. He stared openly, his whole body responding to what he’d just heard.

‘Damn.’ he murmured. ‘That’s so fucking hot.’

Derek’s nostrils flared as he scented him and his grin was cocky.

‘Later.’ he replied. ‘After we catch an alpha. Your turn.’ He can to stand behind Stiles, hands on his ribs. ‘Inhale deeply and then just push it all out. And loosen up, you’re too tight.’

‘That’s what she said.’ Stiles quipped. He took another breath, the warmth of Derek’s broad hands seeping through his t-shirt. He inhaled until it felt like his lungs would burst and then he did what Derek had said and just let it out. The volume of the roar he produced completely surprised him. It went on and on and he felt Derek smiling against the back of his neck.

‘That’s it.’ he said when Stiles stopped, the sound dying away. ‘You’re a natural.’ He let go and moved to stand back next to him. ‘You want to try together?’

‘Hell yeah.’ Stiles was all smiles and this time when he howled, Derek joined in and their combined voices carried right through the night.

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Downstairs, Lydia stopped dead at the sound of the howls. A shiver ran down her spine and she got the oddest urge to go and join them. Screaming from the rooftop seemed like a fine idea after the week she’d had so far.

‘Wow.’ Scott looked very impressed. ‘That is freaking loud.’

‘It’ll definitely call the alpha in.’ Allison had her head cocked. ‘It’ll carry for miles. The last time I was in Europe, we heard wolves howling and that was nothing like this.’

They were so busy listening that Lydia almost missed the movement out of the corner of her eye and suddenly saw that Allison was all business, the crossbow held at the ready.

‘That can’t be the alpha.’ Scott had seen it too and was standing behind her, his dark eyes wide and fearful. ‘It’s too soon.’

‘You two go.’ Allison hissed. ‘I’ll check it out.’

‘Not a chance. Lydia hissed back. ‘We are not splitting up. Nothing good ever happens to people that split up.’

‘Okay.’ Allison huffed. ‘Then make sure you stay behind me.’ She started to move down the corridor from where they had come, her steps soundless. Lydia had to admit she was very impressed by how stealthy she was being, something that could not be said for Scott as he shuffled along next
to her.

She could now hear it, the sound of someone in the corridors. The echoing of their footsteps was not as light as their own, and their sneakers were squeaking on the floor. Allison got to the corner in front of them, holding back and then peering around the corner before leaping out and tackling whoever was on the other side. There was a very familiar yell and Lydia’s eyes went wide as she recognised it. She bolted around the corner after Allison with Scott hot on her heels and found Allison standing there over a prone figure, crossbow aimed right at their face. It was only when Lydia moved past her that she got confirmation of the intruder’s identity.

‘Jackson?’ She was aghast. ‘What the hell are you doing here?’

‘I could ask you the same thing.’ Jackson was angry. ‘With them of all people? And why the hell does Allison look like she’s about to shoot me with a crossbow?’

‘Guys?’ Scott interjected. ‘Maybe we should keep our voices down?’

‘Fuck that shit.’ Jackson was scrambling to his feet. ‘I want an explanation, Lydia. What the fuck is going on?’

‘Hey!’ The voice from the end of the corridor shut them all up and they turned as one to see the school janitor Lydia had heard earlier at the end of the line of lockers. ‘What are you kids doing here?’

‘Crap.’ Lydia grabbed Jackson’s hand and tugged hard. ‘We have to get out of here?’ To her extreme annoyance, Jackson yanked his hand from her grip.

‘Stay right there!’ The janitor was moving towards them at speed.

‘Scott.’ Allison waved her crossbow at him. ‘Go, find them!’ She didn’t have to say anything else before Scott was hightailing it down the corridor, heading to the roof staircase. She turned back and as she did, Lydia noticed a dark shadow melting into view behind the janitor and her heart almost stopped when she realised what it was.

‘Look out!’ she yelled but it was too late. The janitor was caught completely off guard and he was being lifted off his feet before he could even reply, impaled on the alpha’s claws at it stepped into the light filtering in through the windows. His scream died out, his dying gurgle sickening to hear as he was hurled down the corridor towards them, sliding on a slick trail of his own blood until he came to rest only a few feet from them.

The alpha lifted his head, red eyes gleaming in the dark, and roared loud enough to rattle the locker doors.

‘Fuck, fuck, fuck…’ Allison was on the move, grabbing Lydia’s hand and dragging her along. Jackson finally got with the program and sprinted after them, not even bothering to yell as they raced away from the alpha. It was in pursuit, the odd uneven sound of it running on all fours hammering in Lydia’s ears. It sounded like it was about to mow them down any second and they turned another corner and ran smack into Derek and Stiles. They were ready to attack, both of them shifted. Lydia had only a second to take in their distorted faces, fangs and claws bared and their eyes glowing blue and gold.

‘Go!’ Derek growled, crouching in readiness as the alpha rounded the corner and saw them. It snarled a challenge and he roared back. Stiles took them in, his face creasing up in confusion when he saw Jackson and then changing entirely.
'Where’s Scott?’ he looked utterly terrified.

‘I sent him to find you!’ Allison was at Derek’s back, crossbow leveled at the alpha. She fired and it batted the quarrel away as easily as if it was a fly. Stiles wheeled around to face Lydia and Jackson.

‘Find him!’ he pleaded and then turned back, issuing his own roaring challenge and stepping into line beside Derek.

‘Come on.’ Lydia started running and Jackson followed her, both of them sprinting away from the sound of roaring and the sound of something very large and heavy being thrown into the lockers.

‘Holy shit!’ Jackson panted beside her. ‘I fucking knew it. I told you they were monsters!’

‘ Shut up, Jackson!’ Lydia wanted to slap him but she also knew that she needed to find Scott. Running around the school by himself was going to be the quickest way for him to get himself killed.

**********

Derek rolled to his feet, shaking his head to clear the ringing from his ears. The lockers he’d hit were dented beyond repair, some of the doors hanging off their hinges.

The alpha was furious, swiping at the equally manic ball of teenage werewolf clinging to its back. Derek had to give Stiles points for enthusiasm even if his technique still sucked. He made a mental note to get on that when they were done and jumped right back into the fray. He managed to get a good solid blow in, turning the alpha enough for Allison to shoot and he heard the alpha snarl when the quarrel found its mark. It shook itself violently and they both went flying this time, Stiles landing on top of them as they slid across the floor and hit the wall.

‘What they fuck do they use to polish these goddamn floors?’ Derek grunted, shoving Stiles off of him and nearly toppling over again when Stiles grabbed at him to haul himself to his feet.

‘Not sure.’ he wheezed. ‘But you really know how to show a boy a good time.’

‘Jokes?’ Derek was appalled. ‘Now?!!’

‘Best time.’ Stiles growled and Derek knew that the little shit was actually having fun, catching Derek’s eye and winking at him before making a mad dash at the alpha.

‘You asshole.’ He followed, but the alpha seemed to realise that being outnumbered was not a good idea and it turned tail and stormed down the corridor.

‘Fuck!’ Allison dropped the crossbow and grabbed the dart gun from where it was slung across her back. ‘I think we need to try something else.’

‘No shit.’ Derek grumbled and started running after the alpha, neatly hurdling the dead janitor and then rolling his eyes when he heard the strident squeal of Stiles skidding on the blood trail and then swearing profusely.

**********

‘I can’t hear anything.’ Jackson was peering through the window of the science lab. Lydia barely spared him a glance as she grabbed what she needed from the supply closet.

‘That’s probably a good sign.’ she replied and started uncapping bottles. ‘Come here and help me!’

‘Fuck.’ Jackson came to the workbench. ‘I mean, fucking werewolves? That’s what the fuck this is?
I guess that explains how a spaz like Stilinski managed to get so good. Imagine what would happen if someone who could actually play got bitten.’

‘Nothing good is what I’m thinking.’ Lydia measured out ethanol into three Erlenmeyer flasks and then opened the jar of phosphorous, using the tongs she’d taken from the drawer to fish pieces out and drop them in, stoppering the flasks with rubber corks.

‘What the hell are you making?’ Jackson asked, looking completely bemused.

‘Molotov cocktails.’ Lydia shoved two into his hands. ‘Let’s hope your throwing arm is in good shape.’

**********

Scott was breathing hard and trying to control his panic so it didn’t tip over into a full blown asthma attack.

He had heard the yelling and roars echoing through the school and knew that wherever Stiles and Derek were, it was probably the safest place to be. He took a shallow breath and moved to do a quick check around the corner to his right. It proved to be empty and he felt a rush of relief, stepping into a pool of light from the window. There was no sound now, only his own harsh breathing and he jogged along as fast as he dared with his chest still tightening. He stopped halfway down to take out his inhaler, taking a couple of quick blasts and feeling it ease enough to get his breath back. He pushed off from the lockers and started walking again, trying to be as quiet as possible and not noticing the gleam of red in the shadows at the end he’d just come from.

**********

‘Anything?’ Allison asked. Stiles looked into the dark, his werewolf sight allowing him to distinguish things much easier. He saw nothing and looked back at where Derek was busy winding a strip of her scarf around her upper arm where the alpha’s claws had caught her during the scuffle.

‘No.’ He came back to them. ‘I need to find Scott.’

‘We all need to find Scott.’ Allison replied and then gave Derek a small smile when he tied off the makeshift bandage. ‘Thank you.’

‘You’re welcome.’ he rumbled. ‘You’re pretty good with that thing.’

‘I guess I learned something useful being in my family after all.’ Allison said, her normally floral scent tinged with bitterness. ‘At least you’re letting me help.’

‘Don’t sell yourself short.’ Derek said and that was more than a little surprising but Stiles kept his mouth shut. ‘Your family are renowned as hunters. It makes sense that you’d be very skilled.’

Allison looked like she was about to reply, when they heard something that made Stiles’ blood run cold. The scream died away and he met Derek’s eyes, saw how Allison’s face crumpled in terror and feel his own stomach twist.

‘Scott…’ he breathed and then they were all running like the devil was after them.

**********

Jackson skidded round the corner, nearly dropping the flasks when he saw the massive shape standing in the corridor, it’s head down. Just in front of it, McCall was on his stomach trying to crawl
away. He lifted his head and Jackson could see that he was hurt, blood drooling from his mouth in black strings.

‘Oh my God!’ Lydia came to a stop next him and the alpha’s head lifted immediately, fixing its red eyes on her. That was enough to spur Jackson into action and he yelled and hurled one of the flasks through the air. It landed just between McCall and the alpha, the phosphorus igniting the alcohol inside as it shattered on the floor, sending up a burst of white flame. The alpha roared and tried to turn around but just as it did, the others appeared at the other end and it snarled in impotent fury before leaping right through the window in a shower of glass.

‘Scott!’ Allison ran towards McCall, leaping over the line of flame and falling to her knees next to him, hauling him over into his back and gasping when she saw the dark sticky patch at his side. Hale was next and he helped her lay McCall out and lifted his shirt, his expression one of shock and also fear. Stilinski was at his back, his bottom lip trembling as he came to kneel by McCall’s head, taking his hand.

‘Hey buddy.’ He sounded close to tears. ‘What the hell happened? You were supposed to stay out of trouble.’

‘I tried.’ McCall rasped. ‘I had to use my inhaler and then he got me.’ He coughed weakly and even Jackson could tell it wasn’t good. He felt Lydia brush past him and then she was issuing orders like a drill sergeant.

‘We need to get him out of here now.’ she ordered. ‘Derek?’

‘I got him.’ Stilinski didn’t let Hale put so much as a hand on McCall. Instead the runty little asshole wedged his arms under McCall and deadlifted him off the ground in a show of strength that had Jackson staring.

‘What about the fire?’ Allison asked and as if on cue, the sprinkler system kicked in and started drenching them while the fire alarm blared.

‘Guess that takes care of that.’ Hale deadpanned through the noise and Lydia snorted, her mouth quirking.

‘Looks like you’ve got another one to look after.’ she said and Hale frowned.

‘If he makes it.’ he replied and herded Stilinski away the the way they had come. Allison followed them, casting a last concerned look at Lydia before she turned the corner. Lydia came back to him, taking the other flask.

‘Come on, Jackson.’ she said. ‘We need to leave.’

‘Are you going to tell me what the hell all of this is?’ he asked and she bit her lip and nodded.

‘As much as is mine to tell.’ she replied and that just raised more questions than answers.

************

Deaton had been looking forward to an evening of reading since the weekend. He hadn’t expected to get caught up in all of this again, not since he’d hung up his emissary’s colours after the deaths of the Hales. Now it seemed he was falling right back in again head first and it was oddly exhilarating.

He settled into his armchair, smooth jazz coming from his speakers and a glass of single malt at his elbow as he opened the tome on werewolf pack law that he’d brought down from the attic. If Derek
was planning on staying in Beacon Hills, the old land claims would have to be reinstated and Deaton knew he owed it to the only remaining member of the Hale pack still cognisant to represent him. After the pack was re-established then Hale could pick another emissary to take his place but he would have to do for the time being.

He was just going over a section on mating contracts (contrary to what the boys thought, Deaton knew a strong bond when he saw one and knew that this was not going to just go away) when his doorbell rang. He got up, setting the book and the glass aside before going to the door. As a precaution, he reached for the vial of mountain ash he had to hand on the console table next to the front door and then peered through the peephole. What he saw had him scrabbling to open the door in a second.

‘What happened?’ he asked as Derek charged through the door, holding it open for Stiles to pile in after him, his arms full of Deaton’s assistant, who had one bloody hand in the grip of Allison Argent.

‘The alpha.’ Derek growled. ‘What else?’

‘On the couch.’ Deaton directed Stiles and helped him ease a groaning Scott onto the seat. He could immediately see that Scott had been bitten, the side of his sweatshirt drenched in blood. He lifted it and noted the deep imprints of the alpha’s teeth and looked at Derek in question.

‘It’s already taking.’ Derek said. ‘I can smell it.’

‘Well, it could still stand to be cleaned.’ Deaton said and looked at Allison, pale and worried as she stood behind the couch. ‘Miss Argent, if you could please go to the kitchen. There’s a first aid kit under the sink and some soda in the fridge. I’ll need both of those.’

‘Why the soda?’ Stiles asked, kneeling at Scott’s head with his eyes flickering like a broken light. He was clearly distressed but it eased when Derek moved to put a hand on his shoulder and Deaton allowed himself a moment of satisfaction at calling their situation correctly.

‘Sugar will help.’ He looked at Derek. ‘Could you…?’

‘Of course.’ Derek reached past Stiles for Scott’s hand and a second later his veins ran black. Scott let out a deep breath, his skin pale and clammy.

‘Am I going to be a werewolf?’ he asked in a small voice and Deaton gave him a reassuring smile.

‘I’m afraid so, Scott.’ he replied. ‘But it’s far better than the alternative. It means you’re not going to die.’

‘Oh good.’ Scott said and promptly passed out.

***********

Jackson pulled up outside Lydia’s house. She had given Allison her keys and allowed Jackson to bring her home so she could talk to him. It wasn’t going as well as she’d hoped.

‘I’m not going to promise anything.’ he spat. ‘Not something like this.’

‘You can’t say anything.’ Lydia replied. ‘Look, this isn’t a game. It’s real and people get hurt.’ She sighed, struggling to keep her temper in check. ‘Scott could have died tonight because you came blundering in without a clue.’

‘I wouldn’t have come looking for you if you hadn’t lied to me.’ Jackson snapped. ‘This is your
‘No, it’s not.’ Lydia replied. ‘And stalking me, following me around like this? It’s just going to piss me off and then I’m going to want nothing to do with you.’

‘I get it.’ Jackson sneered. ‘You’d rather hang out with that bunch of losers.’

‘You really need to get some help with this insecurity thing you’ve got going on.’ Lydia bit back. ‘And they might be losers, but now I’m just like them so I guess that makes me one too.’

‘I don’t understand?’ Jackson sounded whiny. ‘You’re saying you’re some weird ass thing out of a book. Do you know how crazy that sounds?’

‘No crazier than werewolves existing.’ Lydia folded her arms. ‘It’s what I am, Jackson. It’s what my grandmother was.’

‘Or this Deaton guy is lying to you and taking you for a ride.’ Jackson waved a hand around.

‘You saw all of it!’ Lydia yelled. ‘You wanted to know and I’ve told you! You don’t get to make trouble anymore because you think I’m hiding things. I don’t care if you believe any of this but I’m in it now and I want to help.’ She fell back in her seat. ‘I have to help. And if you’re not going to be there with me then we can’t be together anymore.’

Jackson went completely silent and then his face changed and Lydia knew right then it was over. She sighed and opened her door, getting out and walking to her front door, not looking back once even when the Porsche took off up the road, tires screeching. It was only once she was safely inside her room that she let herself curl up on her bed and cry.

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Stiles sat leaning against the couch, watching Scott breathe as he held onto his hand. He had fallen into a more relaxed state not too long ago. Deaton had cleaned the bites and Derek had taken his pain again, then handed over to Stiles. There wasn’t much pain left to take but it still made him feel groggy and tired.

Derek was in Deaton’s armchair, head tipped back and eyes closed. Stiles knew he was dozing, could hear the steady beat of his heart. Deaton had taken Allison home and promised to stop in at the school where the police were more than likely in attendance. Stiles sighed, knowing that he was going to get it when his dad found out.

‘Hey.’ Derek’s voice was soft. ‘It’s okay.’

‘I can’t believe that this happened.’ Stiles muttered. ‘We had it all planned out. Nobody was supposed to get hurt.’

‘Yeah well, shit happens sometimes.’ Derek got up and came over to him, sitting down on the floor behind him, one arm coming around to pull Stiles against his chest. He was warm and solid and his scent filled Stiles’ nose, calming him. He leaned back into Derek’s arms and Derek growled softly in his ear.

‘So now there’s two of us.’ Stiles tried to sound offhand but his voice cracked.

‘At least he won’t have asthma anymore.’ Derek said. ‘I know how you worry about that.’

‘I think being a werewolf might be a little bit more dangerous.’ Stiles said and then let out a choked
laugh. ‘Shit. The Argents really aren’t going to like him now.’

‘We’ll work around that.’ Derek told him. ‘Our next objective is making sure he doesn’t freak out too badly and get him through the full moon. Thank fuck we have a place to go.’

‘Are you going to lock us up?’ Stiles glanced back at him over his shoulder.

‘I’ll have to, but it won’t be as bad as last time for you.’ Derek tightened his arms around him. ‘Our bond is much stronger and you’re anchored properly now. He’s connected to you, so that will reduce the effects. He will need an anchor though.’

‘Stiles thought about the way Allison had fought for them and the way she’d held Scott’s hand before Deaton had made her go home.

‘I think he may already have one.’ he said and Derek made a face.

‘They stink of affection.’ he grumbled. ‘It’s disgusting.’

‘Yeah?’ Stiles gave him a small smile. ‘Worse than me?’

‘I like it when you smell like that.’ Derek buried his nose in Stiles’ neck. ‘I could, however, happily live the rest of my life without having to smell every time Scott gets a hard on, which is almost as often as you do.’

‘Teenager.’ Stiles said and nosed at him. ‘Thank you for looking after my asshole friends.’

‘Thank you for looking after me.’ Derek replied. ‘You and your dad, you’re…’ He trailed off but his green eyes were full of emotion and Stiles could almost smell his sincerity.

‘We’re good.’ he said. ‘And now we have someone else to add to our pack.’

Derek’s mouth quirked and his scent suffused with happiness.

‘Say that again.’ he whispered.

‘Pack.’ Stiles felt his heart thud. ‘Our pack.’ He leaned in and Derek met him halfway, the kiss gentle but no less intense for that.

The sound of someone clearing their throat broke them apart. Stiles looked towards the doorway and winced.

‘Hi Dad.’ He wanted to fall through the floor but he couldn’t so he settled for squirming. Behind him, he could tell Derek was doing the same with both of them now reeking of nerves. It was good to know his father had the same effect on him so Stiles didn’t have to suffer alone.

‘So here’s the thing.’ Noah’s eyes were blazing and he was angrier than Stiles could remember seeing him. ‘I distinctly remember telling you that you were not to leave the house. Now my question is just how the hell you interpreted that as going to the school, trying to catch the alpha by yourselves and setting the goddamn place on fire, not to mention property damage and letting your best friend get his ass bitten! The only reason nobody is on that is because we also have a very dead janitor and it looks the same as our last two murders!’

Stiles tried to think of an argument, but his protests all died on his lips. Instead he hung his head, face burning in shame for having disappointed his dad so badly he could smell it coming off of him in waves.
‘I’m sorry.’ He couldn’t even look at him.

‘It’s not his fault.’ Derek said and it shocked Stiles to hear him say anything at all. ‘We were all in on it.’ He got to his feet and held out a hand to Stiles. ‘I could have stopped them but I didn’t, so I’m just as culpable.’

‘I’m well aware of that.’ Noah said. ‘And don’t think you’re getting off either, Derek. I’m very disappointed in you for going along with this.’

‘I know.’ Derek looked like his tail would definitely be between his legs if he were in his wolf form. ‘But the intentions were good.’

‘They can’t be anything that warranted both of you ignoring me and putting yourself in danger like that.’ Noah admonished. ‘You could have both been seriously hurt.’

That right there was too much and Stiles snapped his head up and glared at his father.

‘What about you?’ he demanded. ‘You’re right we did disobey you but it’s because I know that that thing is out there just waiting to hurt you and there’s not a goddamn thing I can do about it because it’s your job to protect everyone in this stupid town and you’d walk right into it without even thinking and I don’t want that to happen so I just did what I thought I needed to.’ He ran his hands through his hair in frustration. ‘I can heal now Dad but you can’t so just let me fucking protect you because if you die…’ He couldn’t stop the shaking of his voice. ‘You’re my dad and if I lose you then I’m all alone.’ He tried to breathe, his diatribe leaving him distressed and tearful.

The effect was immediate and Noah’s face fell.

‘Oh God, Stiles.’ He looked every bit as distressed. ‘Come here.’

Stiles threw himself forward into his waiting arms and held on tightly. Behind him he heard Derek shift on his feet and then saw Deaton coming in to his front hall over Noah’s shoulder. He gave Derek a look and Derek moved past them, following Deaton into what was presumably the kitchen before he closed his eyes and breathed in Noah’s scent.

‘Please don’t die.’ he whispered.

‘I’m trying not to, Mischief.’ The old nickname was whispered in his ear. ‘But you have to promise me you’re not going to be so reckless. Because you’re all I’ve got left too.’ Stiles felt him smile against his cheek. ‘You and that hopeless idiot Deaton’s got in his kitchen.’

‘Derek’s not hopeless.’ Stiles protested. ‘But he might be an idiot.’

‘He certainly is where you’re concerned.’ Now there was an amused note sneaking into Noah’s scent. ‘And don’t even try and tell me any of this was his idea.’

‘It was mostly Lydia’s.’ Stiles confessed. ‘But I might have helped with the details. It would have worked too, but Jackson followed us and he messed things up and then the alpha was there and he killed the janitor.’ He started shaking, the vision of the man being impaled in deadly claws hard to get rid of.

‘Yeah, it wasn’t pretty.’ Noah let him go and cupped Stiles’ face. ‘You’re all right though?’

‘I’m fine.’ Stiles assured him. ‘It clawed Allison’s arm but Deaton stitched it up and it’ll be easy enough to hide. I think Jackson nearly shit himself a few times. And Scott…’ He trailed off and looked back at his best friend, still slumbering on the couch.
‘How the hell does he do that?’ Noah asked, frowning at the sleeping boy.

‘I honestly don’t know.’ Stiles replied and then turned back to Noah. ‘You know I don’t do this to piss you off right? I just want to help.’

‘I know, that’s half the goddamn problem.’ Noah said. ‘You’ve always been too plucky for your own good.’

‘I get it from you and Mom.’ Stiles gave him a hesitant smile. ‘And you’ll be pleased to hear Derek totally had my back.’

‘I am pleased.’ Noah said and moved his hands to Stiles’ shoulders. ‘So what happened? I want every last detail and don’t even think about leaving anything out.’

Stiles glanced over Noah’s shoulder and saw Deaton standing there.

‘I agree.’ he said. ‘But may I suggest we leave Scott to sleep off his impending transformation and have some coffee while you do that.’

‘Sure.’ Now Noah’s smile was sharp. ‘And you can fill me in on how werewolf mates work, seeing that apparently you already know about the potential between my son and the young man in your kitchen.’

‘Ah.’ Deaton’s normally serene smile faltered. ‘Yes, that would probably be a good idea. If it’s any consolation though, I do have a bottle of Irish whiskey which might ease that particular conversation.’

‘Excellent. Make mine a double.’ Noah gave Stiles a gentle shove in the direction of the kitchen. ‘I think I’ve earned it after today.’

‘Yes, I can’t imagine that it’s going to get any easier though.’ Deaton replied, leading them into the kitchen. It was surprisingly homey and Derek was at the counter, making the coffee. He gave Noah a sheepish look and then his eyebrows nearly flew off his face when Noah went around the table and gave him the same treatment as Stiles. His face showed his utter astonishment and Stiles knew that he was fighting his instincts. Then his face softened and he returned the hug. Deaton went to grab the whiskey from the cupboard and Noah let Derek go.

‘You need to learn how to say no to that manipulative little asshole.’ he said, all fondness when he glanced at Stiles.

‘I can’t.’ Derek confessed. ‘It’s an illness.’

‘Don’t I know it.’ Noah muttered and accepted his coffee, now heavily doctored judging from the steam coming off it. ‘So guess we now have no choice in telling Melissa. She’s bound to notice when Scott starts growing mutton chops and howling at the moon.’

‘I wonder if he’ll have eyebrows?’ Stiles mused, taking his own coffee from Derek.

‘Still not funny, Stiles.’ Derek growled and Stiles kicked him under the table.

‘What?’ He sipped his coffee. ‘I have mine.’

‘You also have an amazing propensity for getting into trouble.’ Noah said and turned to Deaton. ‘So what can we expect?’
‘Well, he’s going to struggle with his first full moon.’ Deaton replied. ‘I do have facilities to keep him locked up, but it’ll be much harder than with Stiles. His bond with Derek keeps him from being connected to the alpha. It’s one of the reasons I encouraged it. Werewolves need an anchor to help them retain their humanity as well. Scott will need one soon. Even with that though, he’ll still be susceptible to the pull.’

‘So this thing between these two idiots isn’t just hormones?’ Noah asked and Deaton chuckled.

‘I’m assuming you’ve found out enough to have some idea.’ he said and Noah nodded.

‘I figured something was up when Derek had his little breakdown and Stiles got whammied enough by it to get suspended.’ he said.

‘Oh my.’ Deaton raised an eyebrow at them both. ‘You have been busy today, gentlemen. And in answer to your question Noah, mating bonds are very serious. Derek and Stiles are not fully bonded yet though.’

‘So I have been informed.’ Noah coughed delicately. ‘Apparently that requires...physical interaction.’

‘Oh God.’ Stiles let his head thunk on the table. ‘Do we really need to have the sex talk now?’

‘I think it’s a very fitting punishment.’ Noah told him, ignoring the whine that Stiles inadvertently let out. ‘So what do I need to know?’

‘What do you want to know?’ Deaton asked in turn. ‘I can tell you that they have shared a preliminary bite, which was what set the bond in place. Now they are connected at an emotional level so they share their moods and feelings. It’s not quite telepathy but that’s not a bad analogy. If these were simpler times, Derek would be courting Stiles with gifts to prove his worth as he is the elder of the two. Stiles would either accept these or reject them depending on whether he wanted to pursue the relationship. You as Stiles’ parent would also be courted by Derek’s family.’ He looked a little sad. ‘Unfortunately, that is not the case here.’

‘No.’ Noah said. ‘And how long would this go on for.’

‘A year normally.’ Derek looked wistful. ‘That’s how long my parents courted for. Then there would be an official mating on the first full moon after.’ His hands were wrapped around his mug and he sounded impossibly sad.

‘The mating ritual is performed by the elder’s pack emissary.’ Deaton continued. ‘It’s remarkably similar to handfasting rituals. Rings and vows are exchanged and then the newly mated pair shift and go on their first run together. The rest of the pack members would have an outdoor reception and await the return of the pair while eating and drinking.’

‘Drinking?’ Noah looked confused. ‘I thought werewolves can’t get drunk.’

‘There’s ways around that.’ Deaton said. ‘However all this is moot. Stiles has expressed an interest in returning to human once this is done.’

‘So humans can’t mate with werewolves?’ Noah asked.

‘No they can.’ Derek interjected. ‘I had humans in my pack. Most do.’ He was blushing and Stiles could smell his embarrassment. ‘They would just need to be in the know about certain things.’

‘You mean besides the whole werewolf thing?’ he quipped and Derek’s blush intensified.
‘I believe Derek is referring to things of a more intimate nature.’ Deaton stated. ‘Tell me Stiles, what do you know about knotting?’

Stiles’ nearly choked on his own tongue. Next to him Noah had just taken a large gulp of coffee, which he promptly spewed all over the table and then started coughing furiously. Deaton cheerily thumped him on the back and Derek looked like he was trying to slide under the table, his ears scarlet.

‘Please tell me that’s not a thing.’ Scott sounded appalled and they all wheeled around to see him standing in the doorway, hair sticking up on one side and a horrified look on his face.

‘I’m afraid so, Scott.’ Deaton said and Scott’s face twisted into an expression that could not even be catalogued.

‘I’m going to have a giant bump on my dick?’ he whined. ‘Allison’s never going to want to have sex with me ever again.’

‘Scott, for the love of God shut the fuck up.’ Stiles put his head in his hands, completely mortified by the direction the conversation had taken. A thought then occurred to him and he looked accusingly at Derek. ‘You never said anything!’

‘What he’s trying to say is that it only occurs in penetrative sexual intercourse.’ Deaton was horribly matter-of-fact. ‘Oral sex and mutual masturbation won’t trigger it.’

‘Oh Jesus Christ on a bicycle.’ Noah croaked. ‘I think I need more whiskey.’

‘But…but…’ Scott looked distraught. ‘You mean the next time we do it, I’m going to get stuck inside Allison?’

‘For at least thirty minutes and possibly up to an hour.’ Deaton replied. ‘I would suggest that you inform her of this fact if you’re going to be indulging. I would also recommend an alternative form of birth control. Regular condoms are not going to be of any use to you.’

‘Ew.’ Scott came to the table and sat down.

‘At least there’s no danger of STDs.’ Stiles told him and patted his shoulder when he folded his arms and hid his face in them. ‘See, always an upside.’

‘I hate you.’ Scott muttered from inside his arms. ‘The only reason I’m not kicking your ass is that you’ve also got a deformed dick now.’

‘Yeah but no asthma either.’ Stiles said. ‘You’re totally going to kick ass on Saturday too.’

‘Actually no.’ Noah had recovered and was now free pouring whiskey into his mug like it was St Patrick’s Day. ‘The school’s been closed until Monday so the investigation can take place and they can clean up.’ He looked at Stiles. ‘Who made the Molotov cocktails, by the way? That was pretty ingenious and also raises a lot of troubling questions.’

‘It was Lydia.’ Derek answered. ‘She also got us in.’

‘I suppose I should be thankful she’s on our side.’ Noah shook his head. ‘She’s a truly terrifying young lady.’
‘Yes she is.’ Deaton said. ‘And she’s only going to get stronger.’

‘What do you mean stronger?’ Noah asked and Stiles and Derek exchanged looks.

‘She’s not human either.’ Scott was forlorn inside his arms. ‘And now neither am I.’

‘Goddammit.’ Noah threw back the remains of his coffee and went for straight whiskey. ‘What next? Unicorns?’

‘I don’t think those exist.’ Stiles offered and then noticed that both Derek and Deaton were looking shifty. ‘Oh, come on!’

‘You know I used to think the worst was you dropping out of high school or becoming a teenage dad.’ Noah told him. ‘Now I kind of miss that possibility.’

‘If I may.’ Deaton said. ‘You can’t go anywhere until that’s worked through your system Noah, so how about I take this opportune moment to fill everyone in on what to expect now we have a new werewolf.’

Scott said nothing, just gave him a thumbs up. Noah considered and then sighed in resignation.

‘Hit me.’ he said and Stiles groaned.

‘Oh God.’ Derek had his face in one hand. ‘Can I go back to New York?’

‘No!’ Stiles glared at him. ‘If I have to suffer this, so do you Mr Knot Ever Getting Near Me With That Thing Again.’ He definitely felt the capitalisation was warranted.

‘Oh ha fucking ha.’ Derek sniped at him. ‘Can I just remind you that this was your idea, Mr I Never Fucking Listen?’

‘Can I just remind you that I hate your face!’ Stiles hissed back.

‘That makes no sense at all.’ Derek growled at him and then stopped when Noah suddenly started laughing in exasperation.

‘I can’t believe that I am hearing this.’ He looked at Deaton. ‘How are you still sane?’

‘Practice.’ Deaton replied and sipped his coffee.

If anyone wants to come yell meta with me you can find me on my regular blog at darkhawkflying or my Sterek blog halehathnofury :DDDD
Scott woke up with a start and sat bolt upright. He was in the bed in the Stilinski’s spare room, the stink of male body odour thick in his nose. He didn’t know why but it unsettled him so he tried not to breathe deeply, rubbing the sleep from his eyes as he thought back to the night before and then all the previous events came back in a rush. He was out of bed in a second, dashing down the corridor past Stiles’ room and doing a double take through the open door at seeing him and Derek tangled up on his bed, still mostly dressed in the same clothing they had been wearing the night before. Even as he stood there, Stiles lifted his head, eyes bleary as he blinked at Scott.

‘Hey Scotty.’ He wriggled out from under Derek’s arm and Derek snuffled in his sleep and turned over, taking up the extra space when Stiles got up. ‘How are you feeling?’

‘I’m not sure.’ Scott wrinkled his nose. ‘Your spare room stinks like Derek.’

‘Well, he usually sleeps there.’ Stiles yawned as he came over. ‘You remember everything?’

‘Most of it.’ Scott replied. ‘The bit with the alpha is hazy.’

‘Derek says that’s normal.’ Stiles rucked his shirt up and scratched at the line of hair below his navel. ‘Let’s go have a look at it.’

They went to the bathroom and Scott took his shirt off so Stiles could peel away the gauze and examine the bite. The tooth marks were still very clear, rimmed in dried blood but no longer even weeping. Scott ghosted his fingertips over them, wincing even though there was no pain at all.

‘They look good.’ Stiles breathed in deeply, nostrils flaring. ‘And you smell fine, healthy even.’

‘That was so freaky.’ Scott frowned. ‘And everything feels like it’s... I don’t know... it’s like I’m not really myself?’

‘I felt like that too.’ Stiles said. ‘How are your senses? Obviously the smell is kicking in. Can you smell anything else?’

Scott tried breathing in deeply like Stiles had and was amazed to find that he could distinguish all kinds of things.

You’ve still got gum in your back pocket.’ he said. ‘Mint mojito.’

Stiles smiled, looking immensely pleased.

‘That’s great.’ he enthused. ‘Anything else? Try listening.’

Scott did and then inhaled in surprise when he could actually hear the sheriff mumbling in his sleep.
‘Okay that’s really creepy.’ He pulled a face. ‘I can hear your heartbeat dude, like clear as day.’ He turned to look at himself in the mirror. ‘What else is going to change?’

‘A lot.’ Derek’s voice came from the doorway and they turned to look at him. He was in just his jeans, one bare foot resting on the other and his hair sticking up all over the place. Stiles’ heart immediately started thumping hard and his scent changed, the usual combination of his natural smell and the lingering traces of sweat and hormones that Scott figured was natural for teenage boys subsumed by something honeyed and happy. He smiled at Derek and went to him, falling into his waiting arms and letting Derek kiss him full on the mouth.

‘Ew.’ Scott definitely didn’t want to see the way their mouths lingered or to smell the answering wave of pheromones from Derek. His happy scent was stronger and more fragrant, almost like the cedar wood chest Scott’s mom kept at the foot of her bed.

‘Get used to it.’ Stiles was still staring adoringly at Derek, who had one possessive arm around him with his hand resting lightly on Stiles’ backside. ‘You’re one of us now.’

Deaton wished he had had called in to say that he would be out sick. He was exhausted and he made a mental note to schedule some vacation time. There were a couple of vets from around town who could take over his workload for a week or two and he had a feeling that the alpha was going to only ramp things up after his attack on the school.

He was busy preparing for his first appointment when he heard the front door bell go. His receptionist wasn’t in yet, but the door was open in case anyone was going to drop in before work as some of his clients did. There was a prickle at the back of his neck and he didn’t turn around at the sound of footsteps. Instead he reached for a small jar on the shelf in front of him and then straightened up at the sound of the man behind him clearing his throat.

‘You can put the ash away, Deaton.’ Chris Argent’s voice sounded as tired as he felt. ‘I’m just here to talk.’

‘The last I heard, the Argents preferred action to negotiation.’ Deaton replied and turned around. ‘The Sheriff has found out some interesting details pertaining to the Hale fire that directly implicate your family.’

‘I knew he was onto something.’ Chris’ face was haggard. ‘What exactly does he know?’

‘That’s not really my place to tell you.’ Deaton folded his arms. ‘You know my position.’

‘I know that you are supposed to be retired.’ Chris said. ‘But it seems that you’re back working for the Hale kid.’

‘Derek’s been through hell and back.’ Deaton replied. ‘And I was helping his sister before then. I have a great deal to atone for, as do certain members of your family.’

‘Not just them.’ Chris sighed heavily and leaned on the table. ‘The alpha is Peter Hale.’

Deaton hid his astonishment.

‘Peter Hale is in a comatose state in Beacon Hills Memorial’s long term care facility.’ he replied. ‘He can’t be the alpha.’
‘I was there the other night when he was at the school.’ Chris said. ‘He spoke to me. It’s him.’

‘If that is the case, then he killed his own niece.’ Deaton shook his head. ‘The Peter Hale I knew was a brilliant manipulative man with a very strong sense of self-preservation but he would have never killed one of his own pack.’

‘I’m not saying I know why he would have done it.’ Chris shook his head. ‘Just that it’s him. I should have said something to the Sheriff at the time but I was a little shocked by that particular revelation.’

‘So why tell me?’ Deaton asked. ‘If you know who he is, why not simply deal with the problem. He’s broken the Code. You are in your rights to put him down.’ He frowned. ‘In fact, I would think that would be your first objective.’

‘Because…’ Chris looked like he was having a real moment of crisis and Deaton was dumbfounded to see the hunter look so unsure. ‘Because I owe him.’

‘What could you possibly owe him?’ he asked. ‘He’s a werewolf. You’re a Hunter.’

‘Maybe so.’ Chris said and now his mouth quirked in a humourless smile. ‘But once upon a time, we were much more than that to each other.’

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Noah came downstairs to find three boys in his kitchen eating him out of house and home. Not for the first time since this all started, he was immensely grateful for Derek’s contribution to the household finances in the form of groceries. He would never have been able to keep up otherwise.

‘Good morning.’ He shuffled across the room and accepted a mug of coffee from Derek. ‘That was one hell of a night. How’s everyone holding up?’

‘I can smell things I never wanted to smell in the first place.’ Scott grumbled with his mouth full of scrambled eggs. ‘It’s so gross.’

‘Yeah, I thank myself for small mercies.’ Noah took a sip and let out a happy sigh. Derek was an emotional mess but he made a damn good cup of coffee.

‘The bite’s healing well.’ the werewolf in question said. His green eyes were still sleepy and Noah could appreciate that. He wasn’t feeling up to par himself and was looking forward to grabbing some food and going back to bed for a couple of hours until he needed to go and check out the school.

‘Yeah, and he smells like us now.’ Stiles looked like a hamster hoarding nuts, so intent was he on shoveling food into his face. ‘You’re the odd one out, Dad.’

‘Maybe so, but at least I’m not going to be eating anyone anytime soon.’ Noah sat down and smiled at Derek when he handed him a full plate. ‘Thanks, son.’

‘See.’ Stiles muttered at Scott. ‘He totally loves him more than me now.’

‘Because I don’t give him grey hair.’ Derek retorted and sat down next to him, leaning over and planting a kiss on the top of Stile’s head. Stiles stuck his tongue out at him in retaliation.

‘So what’s the plan for today?’ he asked and Noah narrowed his eyes at him.

‘You are staying here and looking after Scott.’ he said. ‘I called Melissa last night after we got home
and told her that he was staying here. She’s working nights for the rest of this week and she was more than happy to have him somewhere he wouldn’t be alone. It also means that she’ll be coming over this afternoon to talk about the situation. At the moment she just thinks it’s a strategy meeting for how we can keep you boys safe, but we are telling her today.’ He gave them all a brilliant smile. ‘I suggest you three come up with a prepared speech while I’m gone.’

‘Oh crap.’ Scott was pale. ‘You’re going to tell her about me too?’

‘I think that’s wise.’ Noah said. ‘Now you’ve been bitten, you’re at the same risk as Stiles.’

‘More.’ Derek said and looked concerned. ‘He doesn’t have a bond to keep him tethered or an anchor to make sure he doesn’t lose control.’

‘Shit yeah.’ Stiles looked at Scott. ‘Dude, you’re going to have to find one.’

‘What the hell’s an anchor?’ Scott asked, his face contorted into a look of bemusement. ‘Isn’t that for ships?’

‘It’s also for werewolves.’ Noah replied. ‘Especially teenage werewolves.’

‘It’s like a bad horror flick.’ Stiles snickered. ‘Although we kicked the alpha’s ass last night.’

‘No.’ Derek said. ‘Lydia’s chemistry experiment kicked its ass. Scott got bitten and you and I nearly got our throats ripped out.’

‘Derek.’ Stiles hissed at him. ‘Not in front of the law enforcement.’ He jerked his head at Noah and Derek shook his head at him.

‘No.’ he replied. ‘I’m not doing this unless we tell him everything. You saw what happened last night. The more support we have, the better.’

‘He’s right.’ Scott said. ‘I don’t want to go up against that thing by ourselves again.’

‘Fine.’ Stiles grumbled, looking belligerent. ‘But I get to veto anything that could get you killed.’

‘Likewise.’ Noah said. ‘Just because you’ve got super healing, doesn’t mean I want you to go off half-cocked after this thing.’

‘That sounds reasonable.’ Derek said and then nudged Stiles in the side. ‘Doesn’t it?’

‘I guess.’ Stiles glared at Noah, but he just gave it straight back.

‘Good.’ he said. ‘I’m going to grab a few more hours sleep and then I’ll be back on shift. I want you three to figure out how in the hell we might be able to track this thing. If he’s running around Beacon Hills looking normal enough for nobody to notice him, that means he probably has somewhere to stay. You can start by checking out all the motels. Call them and give them the official line about checking out anybody that’s suspicious or acting in an unusual way. You can use my name, but don’t go overboard.’

‘Yes!’ Stiles looked delighted to be given license. Noah knew that if he didn’t, his son would just take matters into his own hands anyway, exactly how he had done the night before.

‘In the meantime Derek, you can get a head start in helping Scott to get himself under control.’ Noah said and Derek nodded.

‘Of course.’ he replied. ‘That’s probably the best thing we can do right now. We can go out into the
yard, but I promise we’ll stay close to the house.’

‘Good.’ Noah said and went back to his breakfast. At least his son’s guilty conscience meant he was getting bacon on a regular basis again.

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‘It was my father who suggested it.’ Chris sounded like he felt sick to his stomach. ‘Wasn’t it?’

‘Well, I think that the fact that he set you up to get information out of Peter in the same way certainly suggests that.’ Deaton felt sympathetic to the man. He looked terrible, as well might anyone who’d just found out that their sister had seduced a teenage boy for information and then used it to murder an entire family. ‘Apparently your failure to comply warranted a second attempt and it would seem that Kate had no qualms about the evil of her actions.’

‘She’s never been right.’ Chris murmured. ‘Not since we were little.’ He seemed to struggling to keep control of himself and Deaton sighed.

‘I knew a little of your situation but not that it was you who was involved.’ he confessed. ‘Peter came to the pack emissary and told him that he had found his mate. I was still a trainee then but I remember how happy he was. He asked questions about courting and the rituals he’d need to follow. I think it’s safe to say that he loved you very much.’

‘I know.’ Chris said. ‘And I loved him. I wanted to tell him so many times about what I was and then when he revealed himself to me, it felt like the perfect time to do that but I was a coward. So I went home and told my father that I was compromised and couldn’t go through with the plan. He was furious and then of course my mother found out and she was horrified that it had even happened. She was the one that moved us. I didn’t even get a chance to say goodbye.’

‘It explains a lot.’ Deaton said. ‘I never knew at the time what was happening, just that something bad had happened and that Peter’s mate had rejected him after finding out he was a wolf although he never revealed exactly what had transpired or who you were. I know that Anna and Seb didn’t know about you two, that much was clear from the conversations they had with my mentor. It also explains why Peter withdrew and became so angry. Even in later years, he was still harbouring that anger. It worried Talia a great deal.’

‘He never found anyone else?’ Chris looked like he had been gutted.

‘No.’ Deaton told him. ‘Never.’

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Stiles was bored. Scott was crashed out on the couch again, sleeping the change away with every sign of contentment. Allison’s mother had relented enough for her to have a visitor and Lydia had called them as soon as she’d stepped foot in the Argent house. The report was that Kate was out and so was Chris. Victoria was keeping a close eye on them although Allison’s breakout had avoided detection.

He got up from the floor where he was gaming by himself and listened carefully. Derek was down in the basement doing laundry and Stiles tracked him for a few moments. He could hear him humming to himself and smiled. He felt strangely relaxed. All the talking the night before had made him more aware of just how deep the connection between him and Derek was becoming and he’d be lying if the talk about knotting hadn’t made his ears prick up and his cock harden at the very thought. He got up and wandered through to the kitchen, going to the basement door and closing it behind him before
padding down the stairs. The light on it’s thin cord didn’t so much light the space as make it less dim, but his enhanced sight compensated for that easily.

Derek was loading his bedsheets into the machine. Apparently he didn’t really appreciate the scent of Scott lingering on them and had decided to take the opportunity to get some housekeeping in as well. It also meant that he was bent over, denim strained tight across his ass, and Stiles took the chance to do some unapologetic ogling. The past few days had been crazy to say the least and he felt like he needed to get rid of a little tension. He sauntered across, noting with a grin the way Derek’s shoulders stiffened a little as he went on alert.

‘Stiles.’ His tone was warning. ‘Cut it out.’

‘What?’ Stiles went for innocent, batting his eyelashes at him. ‘I’m not doing anything.’

‘Like hell.’ Derek straightened up, nostrils flaring. ‘You smell like a walking erection.’

‘That’s a good thing though, right?’ Stiles gave him his most winning smile and moved to box him in against the washing machine, fingers curling through the loops of Derek’s jeans. Derek looked back at him, his gaze steady although there was no disguising the scent of his interest now bleeding out of his skin.

‘Scott’s upstairs.’ he rumbled, but it was soft and practically begging Stiles to ignore it.

‘Scott’s sleeping.’ he replied, stepping right into Derek’s space. ‘And he sleeps like the dead. He won’t even know what we’re doing.’

‘No?’ The corner of Derek’s mouth curled in a knowing smirk. ‘And just what would we be doing?’ His hands were on Stiles’ hips now, fingers sliding under his t-shirt and around to rest just under the waistband of his jeans, the touch scorching his skin. His pale eyes were fixed on Stiles’ mouth and his look was heated, making Stiles’ heart pick up pace and his breathing catch as a wave of arousal shot through his chest.

‘Fuck…’ He couldn’t look away. ‘Anything. Anything you want.’

‘Yeah?’ Derek leaned in, nosing at the side of his neck. ‘You think I don’t know how hot you got last night thinking about being knotted?’

‘Shit.’ Stiles let his eyes fall closed at the first brush of Derek’s tongue against his pulse point. ‘You’re so lucky my dad was there otherwise we might had had an accident.’

Derek’s laugh was deep and warm and went straight through him.

‘I’ve never done it.’ he murmured.

That surprised Stiles and he leaned back to look at him.

‘No?’ He didn’t want to state the obvious but Derek just shrugged.

‘It’s triggered when you come inside someone.’ he explained. ‘Kate never let me do that, said it would hurt her too much. She always made me pull out before. And when I was in New York, I guess I just never wanted to so I did the same thing.’

‘You’ve never come inside someone?’ Stiles’ knew his eyebrows were right in his hairline but he was well and truly flabbergasted. ‘Is that all because of her? I mean, I get you’re probably carrying shit about that from before so…’ He waved his hands at Derek. ‘Just tell me what you feel and I’ll try
‘Okay.’ Derek was smiling at him. ‘Look just because I was traumatised by Kate doesn’t mean that I got turned off sex, just that I decided that I couldn’t put myself out there in the same way. I haven’t ever trusted anyone enough to do that with them. Everyone else I’ve been with, I’ve been very careful to control the situation and I didn’t exactly get around. There were a few people, some one night things, but nobody that I felt like I could have something with. You’re the first person since her that has made me feel like this.’

‘Damn.’ Stiles could hardly restrain himself. ‘Me? You feel like that about me?’

‘My parents always said it would just hit me one day.’ Derek ran the backs of his fingers along Stiles’ cheekbone. ‘Said that mates complete you, make you who you’re supposed to be. I feel like that about you and even if things change, I wouldn’t want to let you go.’

‘You’re not going to lose me.’ Stiles caught his hand and turned to kiss the inside of his wrist, then rubbed his face along the soft skin to scent him. He caught the soft growl from Derek and the kiss changed to a bite, his fangs just skimming Derek’s skin.

‘I know.’ Derek’s eyes were starting to flicker, the electric blue like small flames at the edges of his iris. ‘Just like I’m not letting go of you now I’ve got you.’

Stiles turned back as he leaned in, accepting the kiss and shivering when Derek caught him under the thighs and hauled him onto the washing machine, moving between his legs until they were pressed together from the hip up. He whined and Derek’s hands came up to cradle the back of his head, his tongue easing Stiles’ mouth open and then dragging through it. Stiles mimicked his action, easing his hands under Derek’s shirt and tugging on it until Derek broke away and let him pull it over his head before tossing it over his shoulder.

‘What do you want?’ he breathed in Stiles’ ear. ‘You want my hands? My mouth?’ His teeth scraped lightly at Stiles’ neck. ‘Tell me.’

Stiles’ imagination went into overdrive. He’d always had a healthy libido and his masturbatory habits were not hampered by a lack of curiosity. They hadn’t had many opportunities to do much apart from their time in the woods and he had so many ideas.

‘I know you don’t want to do everything. But I had an idea about your fingers in me.’ He heard Derek gasp, the hands in his hair tightening to the edge of pain. ‘Maybe while you use your mouth?’

At first he thought the growling was a rejection and then his nose was flooded with the sharp scent of Derek’s arousal and he realised that it was because Derek was stupidly turned on. When he pulled back to look at him, the blue was out in full force as were Derek’s fangs. That immediately had the same effect on him and his own eyes flashed in reply.

‘Wow.’ He couldn’t stop smiling. ‘Guess that’s what gets you hot, huh?’

‘Your everything gets me hot.’ Derek growled and started yanking at Stiles’ t-shirt. ‘Get this off now.’

There was a brief struggle to get the t-shirt off and then his jeans undone but Stiles wriggled enough that soon he was kicking them off one ankle and then Derek was shoving him back against wall and leaning over, his tongue drawing a hot wet trail up Stiles’ stomach and making his abdominals contract at the almost electric sensation of it. He hooked both ankles over Derek’s shoulders and braced himself, growling when Derek chewed delicately on his ribs and then lapped at one nipple,
the broad flat of his tongue leaving behind skin that pebbled in the air.

‘This is nuts.’ he gritted out. ‘How the fuck does that feel so good?’

Derek’s laugh vibrated along his skin and he moved across, licking at the other nipple and then getting it between his teeth. It was enough to make Stiles’ cock jump, his boxers so damp he could smell himself. He let Derek play, his breathing coming hard and fast with every touch of Derek’s tongue and his hips making little thrusts up against him on instinct. The roughness of Derek’s jeans gave him enough friction and he dug his nails into Derek’s shoulders. Derek snarled at him, eyes flashing when he lifted his head. He started to move back down and Stiles threw his head back, panting when Derek got to the waistband of his boxers and got them between his teeth to drag them down and off until his cock was freed enough to fall back against his stomach. He was so hard it was an almost physical ache and when Derek nosed along the underside of his cock he grumbled.

‘Stop fucking teasing.’ It was getting very difficult to talk around his fangs so he tugged on Derek's hair for emphasis.

‘Stop fucking wriggling.’ Derek retorted and dragged his tongue up the shaft until he could mouth at the head. Stiles made a very undignified sound and let Derek wrestle his boxers completely off, his legs falling open in a wanton display. He lost control, shifting and clawing at Derek’s skin, the coppery scent of blood hitting his nose. Derek was rumbling a deep continuous purr, his own face shifted and his tongue doing unspeakable things to the head of Stiles’ cock. His claws were out as well, but his control was far better so they were only dimpling Stiles’ skin.

Stiles thrashed around happily for a bit and then nearly fell off the washing machine when Derek ducked his head and fell to his knees, his tongue bypassing the base of Stiles’ cock and travelling south. It was mind-blowing, something right out of Stiles’ most pornographic fantasies and the noise he made was strangled when Derek got down far enough that he was breathing hot air over his entrance, the pad of his thumb circling lightly.

‘You want this?’ he asked barely even human anymore, and Stiles nodded vigorously and shoved his head back down. Derek wasted no time, getting right in and licking at him, hands curled around Stiles’ thighs and holding him open. It felt so good, lying exposed and naked and helpless to do anything but take it and Stiles abandoned himself to it, one hand braced against the wall and the other tangled in Derek’s hair.

‘Oh God...fuck...fuck…’ He dug his claws in, feeling the drywall start to give as Derek growled against him and eased the tip of his tongue inside him. He pushed back into Derek’s mouth and reached for himself, only to have his hand shoved away and a warning growl fill the air between them.

‘No.’ Derek’s face was shifted back, but his eyes were still blue. ‘You wanted my mouth on you.’

Stiles nodded, feeling so wrung out he couldn’t even string together words. His stomach was wet with his own precome, shiny trails of it sticking in the hair on his stomach. Derek moved back over him, licking it off and then coming up to kiss him. His mouth tasted musky and Stiles grabbed at him, holding him close.

‘I want you.’ he whined. ‘I want you in me.’

‘Okay.’ Derek lifted his head and smiled at him, a wicked edge to the slant of his mouth as he shoved Stiles’ legs wide and then spat on him.

‘Oh fuck me…’ Stiles whined, mind nearly shutting down from how hot it was. Derek laughed and
did it again, forefinger sliding through the saliva on Stiles’ skin and then easing in. It went in easy, penetration like this being no stranger to Stiles’ nighttime explorations. It was different though, Derek’s finger thicker than his own and Stiles arched up off the washing machine when Derek got it all the way in and twisted it, panting harshly as he worked him.

‘The way you fucking smell.’ He leaned in and licked at the head of Stiles’ cock. ‘Makes me want to knot you right here.’

‘Christ.’ Stiles made grabby hands at him. ‘Put your fucking mouth back on my cock before I bite you.’

‘So bite me.’ Derek grinned but he did as he was told and this time he took Stiles all the way in. He kept looking at him, eyes intent as he bobbed his head and Stiles was transfixed by the slide of his cock in and out of Derek’s mouth. That was until Derek smirked at him and moved his hand just so and Stiles howled when lightning shot up his spine and knocked his orgasm right out of him without any warning at all, thighs clamping down around Derek’s head and his claws going right through the wall as he came down his throat. His whole body was nearly vibrating out of his skin as the aftershocks lit him up from the inside and Derek had eased off his prostate. He got to his feet, scrabbling with clawed hands at his own jeans. Stiles could only lie and watch through hooded eyes as he got his cock out, moaning at the sight of it. Derek was thicker than he was down there too, all blood flushed skin and the thick smell of his arousal lighting up Stiles’ senses as Derek leaned over him on one hand, the other wrapping around his cock and stroking hard and fast. He panted with fangs bared until he came after only a handful of strokes all over Stiles stomach and cock, his own roar loud enough to rattle the basement window.

Stiles lay there breathing their combined scents in and smiling like an idiot. Over him, Derek’s head was low, his harsh breathing finally slowing until he could look up at Stiles, the blue replaced by his usual pale sea eyes. He matched Stiles’ smile, almost glowing he was so content.

‘You have sex hair.’ Stiles announced, then started laughing. ‘Holy fuck, dude. That was off the charts hot.’

‘No shit.’ Derek was still out of breath. ‘I think I came my brains out my dick.’ He glanced around and then snagged a towel from top of the dryer next to them. Stiles watched him clean himself off and tuck himself back in and then got the towel in his face. He did the same, wincing at the oversensitivity of his cock as he mopped up their combined come from his skin. Derek waited and then helped him sit up, both of them leaning on each other until Stiles had enough strength in his legs to get down and scout around for his clothes.

The front bell rang just as they made their way back upstairs. Scott was coming out of the living room and he took one look at them and made a disgusted face.

‘Really?’ he whined. ‘Dude, my mom’s at the door.’

‘Shit.’ Stiles gave him a panicked look. ‘Stall her and we’ll go wash up.’ He grabbed Derek’s hand and dragged him after him up the stairs, snickering at Scott’s mutters about perverts and sex maniacs while he went to go answer the door.

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Noah was about to wrap up at the school when Tara came over to him.

‘There’s someone here asking for you, boss.’ she said and Noah frowned and looked over her shoulder. He saw Deaton standing behind the barrier they had set up and went over to him, leaving
Tara to take over. As he got closer, he saw that Deaton looked anxious and immediately knew something was wrong.

‘Alan?’ He beckoned to him to move along to the cruiser to give them some privacy. ‘What’s wrong.’

Deaton said nothing until they were at the car and then he put a hand on Noah’s forearm.

‘How sure are you that you could help eliminate the alpha?’ he asked. ‘Knowing now that he’s able to take human form. Could you shoot someone in that condition? More importantly are you willing to out yourself in a dangerous situation to do so?’

‘I was in the Gulf War, Alan.’ Noah said. ‘I’ve been a cop for twenty years. I know what it means to shoot someone.’ He gave him a piercing look. ‘You know who it is, don’t you?’

‘I was informed by a concerned party this morning as to his identity, yes.’ Deaton replied. ‘This person has first hand knowledge of this person and recognised him from his voice.’

‘Chris Argent?’ Noah asked. ‘That’s the only person I can think of.’

‘I told him about Kate.’ Deaton said. ‘He wants to help.’

‘Shit.’ Noah glanced over his shoulder. ‘So what do we do?’

‘Well the suspect is somewhere it would be easy enough to check on him.’ Deaton said. ‘I suggest we go and find out.’

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‘You what?’ Melissa’s voice went up to a pitch that made Stiles’ ears ache.

‘We were the ones that were at the school.’ Scott looked at them for support and he and Derek both gave him encouraging nods. ‘Look, I need to tell you something.’

‘Oh no, you don’t young man.’ Melissa was stern. ‘You are going to get your ass in the car and then we’re going home and you’re grounded until I can come up with a way to monitor every move you make.’

Stiles resisted the urge to roll his eyes. It had started out so well, with Melissa being happy simply because they were all safe. Then Scott had blurted out that they’d been responsible for the midnight run on the school and now she looked like she wanted to murder all of them.

‘Mrs McCall.’ Even Derek sounded like he wanted to head for the hills. ‘We really need to tell you what happened.’

‘No!’ Melissa waved a finger in his face. ‘You are the adult here, Derek. I thought you could be trusted to make sure they stay out of trouble.’

‘Mom.’ Scott had his pleading face on. ‘There’s stuff going on that we really need to tell you. Please let us explain.’ His hands were shaking and Stiles just knew he was going to lose it when Derek moved and got a hand on Scott’s arm.

‘I’ll do it.’ he said softly and Scott’s shoulders slumped.

‘Do what?’ Melissa demanded so Derek turned around and showed her.
Chris Argent was waiting for them in the hospital parking lot and Noah gave Deaton a sidelong glance.

‘What the hell are we doing here?’ he asked and Deaton sighed and undid his seatbelt.

‘This is where we’re going to find the alpha.’ he replied and Noah stared at him in surprise.

‘He’s staff?’ he asked and Deaton shook his head.

‘A patient.’ he replied. ‘And a very dangerous man, Noah. Are you sure you’re up to this?’

‘Yes.’ Noah said and opened his door. He got out and Chris walked over to them, his ice blue eyes watchful.

‘Sheriff.’ he said and Noah nodded a greeting. He took the lead, the other two falling into step beside him as they went to the side entrance that he normally used on police business.

‘I sincerely hope you both tell me what the hell is going on soon.’ he said and Chris made a soft noise that sounded like derision.

‘If I knew what the hell was going on I would have taken care of it.’ he replied and Noah noticed that the arrogance from their previous encounters was gone, replaced by something that looked a hell of a lot like the kind of guilt Derek carried like a well worn jacket.

‘Does that count for everything?’ he asked and Chris’ look was sharp.

‘I didn’t know.’ His voice had a raw edge. ‘I suspected a lot of things, but never that.’

‘Even if you suspected, you should have done something.’ Noah was quickly getting angry but he tamped it down as they got to a set of double doors that bore the sign Long Term Care. Suddenly everything clicked and he turned to look at Deaton, his mouth falling open in disbelief. ‘You think it’s him?’

‘No.’ Chris looked like he was steeling himself and that was enough to put Noah on high alert. ‘I know it’s him. I recognised his voice the other night.’

‘But he’s in a coma.’ Noah protested, trying to keep his voice down.

‘You told me you watched Derek recover from being practically disemboweled.’ Deaton pointed out. ‘This is not that far out of the realm of possibility.’

‘Except that he’s been in that state for six years.’ Chris replied as they went through the doors. ‘There’s no reason he shouldn’t have recovered a lot earlier.’

‘Yes that is odd.’ Deaton admitted. He seemed about to say something else when he abruptly stopped and Noah followed his eyes. The smeared trail of red was unmistakable.

‘Shit.’ He went for his weapon immediately and saw that Chris was doing the same.

‘Stay behind me and let me get the first shot in.’ he ordered, the cool confidence now back. ‘I have wolfsbane rounds.’

‘Last time I checked, .45s managed to slow him down just fine.’ Noah said and Chris scoffed at him.
‘It’ll just piss him off,’ he told him. ‘Peter was strong enough when he was just a beta. He’ll be almost unstoppable now. Especially seeing as he has a new beta and one of his old pack to connect to.’

‘Derek and Stiles have nothing to do with him.’ Noah snapped, and then realised what he’d said. He caught the astonishment on Chris’ face and ignored it. ‘They’re not going to be any help to him, I assure you.’

‘Your son is the beta?’ Chris asked and Noah gritted his teeth. He’d just made a fatal error but that would have to wait.

‘Quiet.’ Deaton was holding up a hand. His looked at Noah, his black eyes fearful. ‘He’s here.’

They moved forward and now Noah could see that the blood trail led behind the empty nurse’s station. He went to the desk and peered over, seeing a red-haired woman in a white uniform lying on the floor in a puddle of blood. He did a quick sweep, seeing nothing. Chris was next to him and his face was a picture.

‘I need to call this in.’ Noah said to him, hand going to his radio but Chris grabbed his wrist.

‘Not until we find him.’ he said and Noah moved with him back into the waiting area.

‘I’ll check his room.’ he offered and Chris nodded.

‘I’ll go see if I can find anyone else.’ He was already moving and Noah leaned back over to get a look at the room plan on the wall. He located the one that said Hale and looked at Deaton.

‘I’ll be find.’ Deaton said, answering the unasked question. ‘Be careful, Noah.’

Noah moved down the corridor to his right. The eerie stillness of the ward was broken only by the sound of monitors and ventilators and he was being thoroughly unsettled by it all. He kept his weapon raised, moving quietly until he got to the room he wanted. He went inside, doing a quick sweep with his weapon as he did, but there was nothing but an empty bed. He went to it, pressing a hand to the sheets. They were cold and he knew it was likely that his suspect had vacated them some time before.

He was about to call in when he heard a shout and bolted from the room back towards the waiting area just in time to see a man with dark hair in need of a cut throw himself at Deaton. He was about to yell for Chris when Deaton raised his hand and threw out what looked like a handful of black dust and suddenly the man was bouncing off an invisible barrier like he’d been hit with a shovel. He landed on his feet, nearly toppling over and now Noah could see him clearly. The man’s hair wasn’t quite long enough to obscure the terrible scarring on the right side of his face or the way his eyes flashed red.

‘Very clever, Alan.’ he snarled. ‘You came prepared as usual. Pity you weren’t so capable when you let the Argent bitch burn my family alive!’

‘Peter.’ Deaton was remarkably calm considering his position. Noah was completely fascinated by the odd shimmer around him and made a mental note to find out what the hell that was. ‘You need to listen to me. This is not the way.’

‘No.’ Peter started to circle him. ‘I waited, Alan. I waited for you to come and help me but you didn’t because you were wallowing in your guilt. You and Talia were always preaching about cooperation and tolerance and I despised you for being weak. I was right. Look at what you allowed to happen.’
‘I didn’t know about Kate.’ Deaton said, his voice still perfectly even. ‘If I had, I would have stopped her. You know that.’

‘Bullshit!’ Peter roared and Noah flattened himself against the pillar behind him. ‘What kind of emissary fails his pack like that? What kind of emissary lets his pack linger in hospital for six years? What kind of emissary lets two goddamn kids run off on their own?’

‘What kind of wolf kills one of his own pack to take her power?’ Deaton countered and now his face was hard, the edge to his words positively dangerous and Noah felt a odd sensation that made the hairs on the back of his neck stand up. It felt like the air before a thunderstorm. ‘I was wrong, I admit that. And you’re right, I did fail the Hale pack. By all rights, I should have died right along with them. But that does not excuse this vendetta that you are on or the fact that you killed your Alpha.’

‘She wasn’t my fucking Alpha.’ Peter growled. ‘She took Derek and left me here to rot!’

‘She was a child, Peter.’ Deaton said. ‘She came back to try and fix things but you murdered her before she could have a chance.’

‘She abandoned me!’ Peter roared. ‘Talia would have died before she left me behind. She did die trying to save us!’

‘I know.’ Deaton’s face gave nothing away, but Noah could hear the strain in his voice. ‘But getting revenge is not going to bring them back. You also gave a boy an unsanctioned bite, Peter. The Council would be well within their rights to have you dealt with, regardless of the murders.’

‘It’s probably better that way.’ Peter rumbled. ‘And when I’m done, you can hand me over to them if you can catch me. But I am not going to rest until every fucking Argent in dead in the ground.’

The vehemence in his voice made Noah shiver and he moved to see if he could get a clear shot. That was when he saw Chris step out from behind another pillar, gun raised.

‘Peter.’ He seemed as calm as Deaton, but Noah’s professional eye spotted the slight tremor of his hands. ‘Alan’s right. You can’t keep going like this. You’re going to give me no choice.’

Peter’s smirk when he turned to look at him was truly terrifying. He tilted his head and breathed in deeply, nostrils flaring in the way that Noah now recognised as scenting. Derek and Stiles did it frequently but it was still odd seeing the mannerism on someone else.

‘You’d know all about not giving someone choices,’ he growled. ‘Wouldn’t you, sweetheart? You certainly didn’t give me one when you left.’

‘I know.’ Chris advanced slowly. ‘And I am always going to hate myself for what I did to you. But I promise that I had no idea that Gerard was going to make Kate to the same thing.’

Peter’s eyebrows knitted for just a moment and then it was like the clouds clearing.

‘Of course.’ He sagged a little. ‘I could smell someone on him when he’d come back from sneaking around, but I could never place it. But she smelled like you, didn’t she? That Argent stink that gets under your skin and rips it from your flesh piece by piece. She was clever though, used perfume that smelled like pepper and cloves. Chewed cinnamon gum. All to eradicate her own scent.’

‘She was always smarter than me.’ Chris said. ‘For what it’s worth, I am truly sorry.’

‘Liar.’ Peter hissed. ‘You left me, Chris. I gave you everything and you fucking left and let you family take everything I loved away.’
‘I did.’ Chris agreed. ‘I was a coward. But right now, I need to protect my family and those you turned.’

Peter’s eyes glittered.

‘Yes, I felt the little whelp I bit last night wake up this morning.’ His mouth curled in a cruel smile. ‘And Alan can’t mate this one off to break my bond with him.’

If Chris was surprised by that he said nothing.

‘You need to the boys alone, Peter.’ Deaton said. ‘They are innocent in all of this.’

‘They stopped being innocent the second they tried to burn me alive.’ Peter stated. His eyes narrowed as he looked at Chris. ‘Including your lovely daughter, Chris.’

‘You leave her out of this.’ Noah heard Chris’ voice turn angry. ‘She’s not a hunter.’

‘No, but she will be when she comes of age and then what?’ Peter replied sweetly. ‘The others are already involved - the banshee and that beautifully insecure Whittemore boy. The good vet’s apprentice. All of them helping my nephew and his new attachment.’ He smiled and turned in Noah’s direction. ‘Isn’t that so, Sheriff? You can come out now, join the party.’

Noah cursed under his breath and stepped out, gun raised and pointed right at Peter’s face.

‘Our kids are not fair game, Mr Hale.’ he said. ‘So I suggest that you come quietly with us and we can sort out this mess.’

‘Oh really?’ Peter raised an eyebrow at him and Noah knew where Derek’s bitchy streak came from. ‘I assume you read the police report, Sheriff? Kate Argent burned three children that night, all of them under three. I can still remember them screaming. There was no mercy shown to them.’

‘I know.’ Noah said. ‘But Kate is going to pay for her crimes. I promised you that and what’s more important, I promised Derek that.’ He moved to he, Chris and Deaton formed a triangular barrier around Peter. ‘But I need you to work with me.’

‘How about I don’t.’ Peter replied and then all hell broke loose and he leaped, shifting in the air. There was a tearing sound as the seams of his clothing split and gunshots as Chris fired. Noah dropped to one knee, firing as well but Peter moved faster than anything he’d ever seen and his massive shape landed on the other side of the bank of chairs and seconds later there was the sound of breaking glass.

‘Shit!’ Chris was bolting after him and Noah followed down the corridor only to find a shattered window and no sign of Peter. He stood looking at it for a moment, breathing hard from the adrenaline and then chuckled when he noticed the similarity to the scene at the school.

‘He certainly likes to make an exit, doesn’t he?’ he asked and next to him, Chris snorted.

‘I think his middle name might actually be Drama.’ he replied and then caught Noah’s eye. ‘I think you and I may both have some explaining to do.’

‘Yeah.’ Noah sighed. ‘I think so.’

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‘Mom?’ Scott knocked tentatively at the door. His whole face was a picture of worry and the special
It was kind of panic only a teenager who knew they were in severe trouble could manage. ‘Can you open the door.’

From inside the downstairs bathroom came a torrent of furious Spanish that made him and Derek wince.

‘I’m guessing that’s a no.’ Stiles asked from his seat on the bottom step. Telling Melissa was proving to be a whole lot more difficult than they’d expected. True, it probably didn’t help that Derek had just shifted without warning, only to have Melissa scream in his face and hurl her handbag at him. Her fear had triggered Scott and he’d transformed as well and then Stiles had lost it too because two panicky werewolves and one terrified human seemed to make him emotionally overwrought. Melissa had responded by scrambling over the back of the couch and locking herself in said bathroom where she was refusing to come out.

‘Mom, please?’ Scott scratched pathetically at the door. ‘You can come out. We’re all human now.’

‘Oh for fuck’s sake.’ Derek muttered and stomped back into the kitchen. His clear embarrassment and guilt at having frightened Melissa was curdled around him like a cloud. Stiles did feel bad though because his first instinct had been to yell at Derek for his lack of social skills and tact and that had just sent Derek into a world class sulk, so he’d gone to bake.

Stiles sighed and got up, going to slide down the door and sit next to Scott.

‘We’re sorry.’ he said, and heard Melissa huff from inside. ‘We didn’t meant to scare you.’ He took one look at Scott’s stricken face and decided that he needed to pull out the big guns. ‘And Scott’s really really frightened right now. I think he needs you.’

‘Don’t you try that with with me Stiles.’ Melissa snapped. ‘You’ve all been lying to me.’

‘Not lying exactly.’ Stiles countered. That got Derek to look around the kitchen door with an expression of pure disbelief on his face at Stiles’ blatant attempt to divert blame. Stiles glared at him and they had a spirited eyebrow argument for ten seconds before Derek huffed and went back into the kitchen where he continued banging things around and making stuff that smelled amazing.

‘Really?’ No-one could beat Melissa for sarcasm when she got going. ‘Because I think lying is not telling someone - especially your mother, Scott - the truth. Just how would you define lying?’

‘Um...reclining your body in a horizontal position?’ Stiles replied and heard Derek actually facepalm in the kitchen, while next to him Scott was making frantic hand gestures to abort mission.

‘Your father is going to hear about this.’ Melissa missed. ‘You and Scott are going to grounded until the next goddamn ice age.’

‘Yeah, about that.’ Stiles made a face. ‘He already knows.’ He didn’t need to be fluent in Spanish to recognise that the next angry outburst was not complimentary and entirely aimed at him.

‘Stiles!’ Derek was back around the door, his eyes glowing angrily. ‘Stop. Fucking. Helping.’

‘At least I’m trying.’ Stiles growled back. ‘You’re just stress baking!’

‘Cooking is calming!’ Derek snarled and disappeared again.

‘Mama?’ Scott had his face pressed against the door. ‘Please open the door? I promise I’ll never be bad again.’
'Bullshit.' Stiles coughed into his fist and boy, Scott’s death glare was about as effective as being smacked in the face by a kitten. He idly wondered if he’d get better at it now that he was a werewolf.

‘I hate you.’ Scott hissed. ‘This is all your fault.’

‘Dude, no.’ Stiles hissed back. ‘Maybe the initial foray into the preserve was admittedly not a great idea, but the rest of this shitshow is a shared effort.’

‘You should have just listened to me and stayed home that night.’ Scott muttered. ‘I told you not to go out.’

‘Yeah and I told you not to go wandering off last night.’ Stiles retorted. ‘Also can I just point out that fighting about it isn’t going to fucking help.’ He looked up as Derek came back around the corner with a steaming mug and what looked suspiciously like chocolate chip cookies. He got to the door and gave it a gentle kick.

‘Melissa.’ He sounded tired and Stiles felt like all he wanted to do was drag Derek to his bed and hide him away from everybody. ‘I would really appreciate it if you came out. These two idiots are driving me crazy and you’re probably the only person who’d be able to keep me sane right now.’

‘Dude that’s never going to work.’ Stiles scoffed and then was amazed to hear a snort of laughter from inside. There was the sound of Melissa moving and finally the door was unlocked and cracked open. She regarded the cookies and tea that Derek was holding out to her.

‘Peace offering,’ he said. ‘And I will tell you absolutely anything you want to know.’

Melissa looked at him steadily. She was still a bit weepy, but her ferocity was now shining through. She reached out and took a cookie, making an appreciative noise when she bit into it.

‘These are good,’ she said around a mouthful and Derek smiled. It wasn’t his smirky one either, but that beautiful genuine smile that made Stiles’ heart just about stop.

‘My dad’s recipe,’ he replied. ‘He always used to make them when there was a crisis.’

‘It’s kind of hard to reconcile what I saw,’ Melissa said and he frowned.

‘I know.’ He shrugged. ‘But it’s what I am and what they both are now and so we all just have to go with it.’

‘Werewolves though?’ Melissa asked. ‘I think I might have preferred it if you were in some sort of cult.’

‘We kind of are,’ Stiles said it without thinking and Derek growled at him. ‘Sorry. I’ll stop helping.’

Melissa eased the door open a little more and peered out at all of them.

‘I want full disclosure,’ she said. ‘And more cookies.’

Derek beamed at her, a sight that was far more disturbing than anything Stiles had seen so far, and held out the plate.

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Noah shut the door and closed the blinds. He didn’t want anyone disturbing them and he went around his desk and sat down. The latest murder at the hospital had proven to be one Jennifer Conway, a nurse specialising in long term palliative care and one of those taking care of Peter Hale,
who’d been reported as a missing person of interest. Noah wouldn’t like to give odds on how quickly this was going to get out and the entire department had been sworn to secrecy. The last thing he wanted was a general panic at the thought of a crazed murdering lunatic (And the immature part of himself couldn’t resist a chuckle at that. Stiles would have been proud.) who was quite capable of killing anyone he chose.

Chris was in one chair, his hand folded against his mouth. Noah knew a man having a moral crisis when he saw one and didn’t want to press too hard. It was clear that Chris had a strong sense of loyalty to his family and the news about Kate had obviously thrown him very badly. Deaton had explained that he’d given Chris everything he had in terms of supporting evidence and so Noah had conceded and done the same when they got back to the station. He’d watched Chris go white with anger and shame, seen how his hands had shaken as he’d read all the information that Noah had collated. It had been very similar to the reaction that Allison had had, but Noah decided against telling him just how much she knew. It would no doubt come up once Chris got back home. He had clearly not been aware that his daughter had been running around like the Green Arrow the night before.

‘Now what?’ Deaton asked. He was leaning against the wall, arms folded.

‘Forensics are at the hospital, we’ve got an APB out on Peter and all hands from three states over are aware of what’s going down in case he decides to cross state lines.’ Noah replied.

‘He won’t.’ Chris stated from behind his hand. ‘His fight is here.’ He huffed a humourless laugh. ‘Wolves are very territorial and the fact that he’s an alpha now will make him even more likely to get dug in and protect it.’ He looked up at Noah. ‘Your son is the werewolf I found in the Preserve.’

‘Yes.’ Noah replied. ‘The one you shot.’

‘Shit.’ Chris looked shamefaced for a second. ‘I didn’t know he was that young.’

‘Would it make a difference?’ Noah asked. ‘Peter did have a point about what your sister did.’

‘It does to me.’ Chris snapped. ‘I follow the Code. We don’t harm any wolves that are peaceful and live in accordance with their treaty agreements.’

‘Except your father.’ Deaton pointed out. ‘Who tried to get you to seduce Peter for information and then succeeded in getting Kate to do the same to Derek. Only that time it worked and she was able to kill almost an entire pack.’

Chris had no reply to that and Noah decided to try a different tack.

‘Look.’ He met Chris’ eyes with a steady gaze. ‘We’re both parents. I know it’s a lot to take in, but we are on the same side here. We both want to protect them. The thing is, Derek Hale hasn’t got anyone to protect him anymore. If what Alan has said is correct, Peter killed Laura Hale for her alpha powers. She was the last real family that boy had so now I have to step up and look after him too.’ He leaned forward and fixed Chris with his sternest look. ‘And I am not going to let anyone, hunter or otherwise, hurt him.’

‘Your son.’ Chris replied, not batting an eye. ‘Peter bit him but he also said that Alan allowed a bond.’

‘Yes.’ Deaton replied. ‘Stiles and Derek have a preliminary mating bond.’

Chris made a noise that sounded just a little too disgusted for Noah’s taste and he bristled.

‘You better get used to it, Argent.’ He said. ‘Because Scott McCall is the other boy was bitten last
night and it’s taken pretty darn well by all accounts.’

‘Scott McCall.’ Chris now looked outraged. ‘But he’s…’

‘Allison’s boyfriend.’ Noah finished for him. ‘I know. He’s also the son of a woman who counts as
pretty much my best friend in the world so if you even think about looking at him wrong, it’s not
going to go well for you. I’m not even going to mention what might happen if you so much as sniff
around Stiles. I’m a very professional man, but I’m not above doing something illegal if it means
keeping my family safe.’

Chris looked like he was about to protest and then slumped down in his seat.

‘I understand.’ he said and then stood up. ‘I have a lot to consider. I need to think about all of this
and in the meantime, I’ll keep quiet and help you try and catch him.’

‘You do that.’ Noah said and watched as he walked out the office without so much as a backwards
glance.

‘I don’t envy him.’ Deaton said. ‘He’s got a great many demons to fight.’

‘Yeah.’ Noah looked at the vet, considering. ‘What did you do back there. That thing that stopped
Peter Hale.’

‘It’s mountain ash.’ Deaton replied. ‘I’m a druid - a practitioner of what some people might call
magic.’

‘No shit.’ Noah grinned. ‘So what, you can pull rabbits out of hats?’

‘Nothing so entertaining.’ Deaton took the seat Chris had vacated. ‘Part of my work as an emissary
was protection. Mountain ash is a barrier against the supernatural. I can also put up and maintain
wards, do some minor spellwork. I wasn’t the most gifted student but I did well enough for the Hales
to take me on when my mentor retired. My younger sister actually still works as an emissary for
another pack, although we haven’t spoken in a while.’

‘So it’s a family thing?’ Noah asked. ‘Or can anyone learn?’

‘No.’ Deaton frowned. ‘You usually need an inclination towards magic in order to begin to learn. It
can come from hereditary lines or sometimes it just erupt spontaneously. Some people have what we
refer to as a spark. That is a natural talent that often proves to be the most powerful of all.’

‘What about Lydia?’ Noah asked.

‘Lydia Martin is a bansidhe or banshee.’ Deaton explained. ‘Her powers are inherent in the female
line of her family as it turns out. I’m just surprised she’s taken so long to manifest. I will be training
her in what I know. She’s already showing great interest in her subject and would make an excellent
emissary.’

‘Magic, werewolves, banshees…’ Noah sighed and leaned his chin on his hand. ‘What the hell else is
there.’

‘So much more.’ Deaton replied. ‘I must say though that you are handling this with remarkable
pragmatism.’

‘That’s only because I’m screaming on the inside.’ Noah grinned and then jumped as the phone rang.
He answered it and listened, putting it back down and getting up. ‘I have to go.’
‘Of course.’ Deaton got up as well. ‘May I suggest we are all especially cautious. Especially seeing as Peter is now on the run.’

‘Don’t have to tell me twice.’ Noah said, herding him out the office. ‘Now I just have to come up with a way to tell Derek that his uncle is not only awake and talking but was the one who killed his sister and is running rampant biting everyone who crosses his path.’
By Friday Noah had to concede that he was being nothing but a giant chicken.

There was not a single sign of Peter Hale and the hospital had been advised to keep his disappearance quiet. Derek’s name wasn’t on the next of kin contact anyway, which helped. Deaton had taken over that side of things and the long term care facility was now under the impression that he had been taken by whoever had killed the nurse. Granted, Noah felt as guilty as hell for doing it, but he wanted to make sure things weren’t being leaked to the press. It had been hard enough getting hauled over the coals by the mayor and the city council for not catching whoever was responsible for the deaths and Noah could see his job being put on the line.

Chris had been by the station, ostensibly to liaise about supplying them with weapons as part of his business. Once in Noah’s office he’d presented him with a box of ammunition and the significant look which told Noah that the bullets he’d just been given were of the werewolf killing variety. He’d said nothing about Kate or how he was feeling regarding the revelations of Wednesday but he had been subdued and Noah knew he was still processing.

He looked at the list of people in front of him. Laura Hale was chronologically the first and that meant that Peter had been awake for far longer than anyone had known. A background check into the nurse had shown her to be fully qualified, but oddly she’d been employed only a month after the Hale fire. Prior to that she had been in Texas and that had been the very same place the Argents had moved to after they had left Beacon Hills. Then there was Garrison Meyers, the insurance agent for the fire. Then the video store clerk, the janitor at the school and back to the nurse. A knock on the door had him looking up and he saw Stiles peering through the glass pane at him. He held up a brown paper bag and Noah beckoned him in.

‘Hey.’ Stiles said as he came in. He looked concerned as he out the bag and a cardboard sleeve holding two coffees down on the desk. ‘I brought you breakfast seeing as you didn’t make it home last night.’

‘The mayor’s office wants this cleared up.’ Noah leaned back in his chair and breathed in the heavenly smell of what turned out to be muffins when he opened the bag.

‘Banana and blueberry, courtesy of the sourwolf.’ Stiles said. ‘He’s still kind of freaked about the whole Scott thing. They’re at the house. Derek’s trying to teach him some control before Saturday. Thank fuck the lacrosse game got cancelled. I can’t imagine how much that would suck if he went all grr in the middle of it.’ He grinned and took one of the muffins and started breaking it into pieces. Noah hid a small smile. Claudia had done the exact same thing.

‘No.’ he said and helped himself to one as well. ‘I need to talk to Alan, find out just what you are planning for that.’
‘No need.’ Stiles said. ‘He’ll do the same thing he did with me, just lock me up and let him howl it out.’

‘I wish you’d told me.’ Noah sighed. ‘I could have helped you through the first time.’ To his surprise, Stiles went red.

‘Probably not a good idea.’ He didn’t meet Noah’s eyes. ‘It got kind of x-rated.’

‘Stiles.’ Noah admonished. ‘You said nothing was going on.’

‘Nothing like that.’ Stiles hedged. ‘But not nothing like that either.’ He waved his hands around in protest. ‘Look you wanted full disclosure so you’re getting it.’

‘Fine.’ Noah stifled an involuntary moan as he ate his first mouthful of muffin. ‘Damn.’

‘I know, right?’ Stiles mouth was, predictably, already full. ‘He’s really good. Apparently it’s what he did for money in New York while he was at college. That and the translating gig.’

‘Why doesn’t he just use his insurance money?’ Noah asked. ‘I checked the settlements. If I didn’t know you better, I’d call you a gold digger.’

‘How much?’ Stiles had an intrigued look on his face. ‘Like are we talking Lex Luthor rich or Bruce Wayne rich?’

‘Tony Stark rich.’ Noah replied. ‘The insurance is only the start of it. The Hales were incredibly wealthy it turns out and now all of it goes to Peter, seeing as he’s....’ He caught himself before he said anything else but it was too late.

‘He’s what?’ Stiles narrowed his eyes at him and Noah kicked himself mentally for the slip. ‘Why are you looking into Peter Hale? I mean it’s not like the nurse that got murdered was looking after him and now he’s missing or anything.’

‘How the hell…?’ Noah gave Stiles a furious look. ‘Were you logging in again?’

‘You only have yourself to blame.’ Stiles gave him a lofty look. ‘You said full disclosure and then you went out to the hospital with Chris and the doc. I know because when I tried to call you, Marjorie put me through to Tara and she said you’d left the school with Deaton. So, I called Lydia and she asked Allison to call her dad and he said that he was going to see someone on Elm about a business thing but she could tell he was lying. Also Elm is a block away from the hospital. The next time I call the station Marjorie says that you’re at another disturbance involving a dead nurse and tells me to mind my own business.’

‘And she was right.’ Noah pointed out. ‘But none of that is any evidence of what you just said.’

‘Reading between the lines, Daddio.’ Stiles was smiling and Noah could have sworn his teeth looked unnaturally sharp and thought about what Derek had said about Stiles taking to being a wolf like he was born to it. ‘So I gave you a scenario and you’ve basically confirmed it by admitting that you’re investigating Peter Hale and that look on your face.’

‘Shit.’ Noah slumped in his chair. ‘In that case, here goes. The alpha is Peter Hale.’

He did not expect the face full of coffee he got spewed over him or the frantic choking as Stiles tried to evacuate it from his lungs.

‘Holy shit.’ His eyes were comically wide. ‘You’re shitting me?’
'I am in fact not shitting you, Stiles.' Noah said. ‘And I’ll thank you to keep the language in check while you’re here so we can at least keep a semblance of normal.’

‘Good luck.’ Stiles grumbled. ‘What the hell?’

‘It turns out that he’s not as comatose as we thought.’ Noah told him. ‘In fact, he’s been awake since before Laura got back from New York. Alan is now certain that he was the one that set the dead deer with the revenge sigil as a way to lure her in.’

‘But why?’ Stiles looked aghast. ‘Laura was his family. Why would he kill her?’ Then his face took on a look of absolute horror. ‘Shit. You need to tell Derek.’

‘I know.’ Noah sighed heavily. ‘I’ve been trying to find a way to do it. As for why, again Alan said it was to take her alpha powers. It seems like Peter is so set on revenge that he was willing to do anything to get it.’

‘Oh my God.’ Stiles stuck his nails in his mouth. ‘Does he know about Kate?’

‘He does now.’ Noah said. ‘But this goes back further than that. I can’t give you all the details but this thing with the Argents started long before Derek met Kate, although it is also linked.’

‘This is so messed up.’ Stiles whispered and then winced. ‘Shit.’

‘What?’ Noah asked but Stiles just shook his head and then took out his phone just as it started to ring.

‘Hey.’ His voice was soft and so full of concern that Noah did a double take. He knew that tone, recognised the warmth from when he would have a bad day. He’d see something that struck him right through, a car wreck or a battered spouse that made him angry and bubbling over with emotion and Claudia would run her fingers through his hair and her voice would be same as Stiles’ was now. Whatever Derek said on the other side had him giving Noah a look that told him he had to come clean and he sighed again and pulled himself together.

‘Soon.’ Stiles said and hung up and looked at him. ‘You have to tell him. He’s freaking out even more now ‘cause he could feel me freaking out.’

‘Okay.’ Noah stood up and brushed crumbs off his shirt. ‘Let’s do it.’

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Lydia opened the door and smiled and Allison held out her arm, gentleman style, to her.

‘You feel like a walk in the woods?’ she asked and Lydia smirked at her. They had told their respective mothers they were going shopping, but Lydia had other plans. The night at the school had made her well aware that she needed to be able to take care of herself. Jackson was no longer a certainty and Lydia was more of the self-saving type of princess if she was being honest.

They took the Argent SUV and Lydia wondered how Allison had gotten around her mother, but the fact that it was daylight and they were supposedly engaging in an innocuous activity had probably helped. Allison had laid it on thick about the Winter formal, even if she’d bought the dress that the alpha had suggested. That had made Lydia grin, mostly because of Allison’s eminent practicability. She’d decided that the fashion advice was good, in spite of the dubious origin and Lydia had had to agree. The dress would indeed make Scott’s puppy eyes fall right out of his head when he saw her.

Allison kept a careful eye out, taking them on the road out of town and towards the preserve. Lydia
directed her along one of the lesser used service roads but she kept them clear of the boundary of the Hale’s property. Neither of them wanted to go there and they had no need for what they were planning.

They parked and started to a trek down the hill away from the car and into the trees. Lydia looked around, a shiver going down her spine that had little to with the winter air. Allison was a contrast, her head up and her step confident as they walked into the woods, her bow carrier across her back and a duffle in her other hand. Her dark hair was tied up and Lydia found herself staring at the pale nape of her neck. Allison was wearing her usual perfume, the scent of violets and roses drifting back towards her and Lydia felt a odd pull in her chest.

They got to a clearing and Allison stopped, looking around.

‘This is good.’ she declared. ‘The ground is level.’ She set her bags down and unzipped the duffle. Lydia watched her take out her quiver and other equipment and came to stand next to her.

‘So where do we start?’ she asked and Allison smiled and handed her a black leather shooting glove.

‘We dive right in.’ she replied.

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Stiles cut the engine and waited until the cruiser pulled in next to him before he got out the car. He could feel the dull throb between him and Derek, the concern and fear and low level anxiety that Derek had projected as soon as he’d felt the shockwave of emotion from Stiles. It was getting stronger as well, and he could pick out all the distinct feelings that Derek had and as he approached the door, his zoned in on Derek’s heartbeat, locating it easily inside the house and noting that it was slightly elevated. It was also the only one there and Stiles knew that Derek must have sent Scott home as soon as he’d made the call to him at the station.

The door was open before he even got to the first step of the porch and Derek was standing there, barefoot and oblivious to the cold in his thin cotton henley.

‘What?’ he asked and Stiles looked back over his shoulder to where Noah was standing with a weary look on his face. He felt a twinge of fear at how old his father seemed in that moment and then Noah was moving past him and gently steering Derek back inside.

‘Come on, kid.’ he said. ‘Let’s go inside. We need to talk.’

Derek allowed himself to be propelled back inside and Stiles closed the front door behind them. He followed them to the living room and Noah gestured for Derek to sit down. Derek threw him a quick look, the distress already manifesting in his scent and Stiles moved quickly to sit next to him. It seemed almost unreal how easily he could read Derek now, how much Derek had opened up to him, and he took his hand, locking their fingers and squeezing. His instincts were going crazy, urging him to comfort and protect and he moved in as close as he could, rubbing his cheek against Derek’s shoulder. Derek growled, so low Stiles doubted Noah could even hear it, and the tension in his shoulders seemed to bleed right out of him even as he kept the same perfectly emotionless expression on his face. It did give Stiles an appreciation for his werewolf senses because without them he doubted he would have ever felt the depth of Derek’s feelings or even known they were there in the first place.

‘There’s no easy way to say this.’ Noah started. He was in his armchair, elbows resting on his knees and his blue eyes earnest. His heartbeat was completely steady and Stiles knew that Derek would be listening to it intently, measuring every word Noah said.
'Just say it.' He was looking straight back at Noah. ‘I know there’s something wrong. You’ve smelt off since Wednesday.’ That took Stiles by surprise, but then he was still inexperienced and Derek was much better at parsing out scents than he was.

‘Goddamned lie-detecting werewolves.’ Noah sighed. ‘Okay so, we know who the alpha is.’ His face was creased up in sympathy. ‘Derek, it’s your uncle. He’s the one that killed Laura and has been killing all the people involved in the arson. He’s awake and he’s very definitely dangerous.’

Derek said nothing and Stiles would have thought that he hadn’t heard it it weren’t for the sudden pressure through Derek’s fingers and the way his scent flooded with an almost nauseating burnt note, like hair that was singed but with a sickening decay underneath. It was guilt and rage and pain, so much pain that it made Stiles choke.

‘Derek?’ Noah asked, his face full of worry. ‘Did you hear what I said?’

‘You’re telling the truth.’ It was a whisper. ‘I can hear it.’

‘Yeah.’ Noah said. ‘I’m so fucking sorry, kid.’

Stiles was shaking under the onslaught he was feeling. His wolf was going crazy, wanting to throw its head back and howl out its impossibly deep wrenching grief and run into the woods and never come back and it took a second to realise that it wasn’t him feeling this but Derek. He tried to hold on tightly, but Derek was up from the couch and gone before he could even try to stop him and Noah was yelling and it felt like Stiles was trying to move through molasses.

He finally made it off the couch and into the kitchen, the back door now standing wide open. Derek’s clothes lay in a shredded trail across the yard and Stiles followed them to the back fence.

‘Derek!’ He yelled and yelled but there was no reply and he jumped when Noah put a hand on his shoulder.

‘Let him go.’ he said and Stiles smelled his sadness. ‘He’s dealing with so much.’

‘It hurts though.’ Stiles whined, rubbing at his chest and Christ it did, like he’d had his heart ripped right out of him. ‘God, Dad…’

‘I know.’ Noah pulled at him, wrapping his arms around him. ‘It hurts because you love him.’

Stiles buried his face in his father’s shoulder and knew that it was true.

‘I do.’ It was muffled by Noah’s shirt. ‘I really fucking do.’

‘Jesus kid.’ Noah held him tighter. ‘You never do things the easy way, do you?’

‘You think he’ll be okay?’ Stiles asked and Noah gently disengaged him, taking Stiles face in his hands.

‘I do.’ he said. ‘You know why? Because he’s strong and he’s got you, and believe me when I say that as much as you’re falling for him he’s doing the same for you. He looks at you like I used to look at your mom, and that’s love right there Stiles. He’ll be back, not for himself but for you.’

‘I hope so.’ Stiles said and couldn’t help looking back at the trees behind their house.

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‘I can’t do this.’ Lydia was unbelievably frustrated. Sports had never been her forte and archery was
proving to be the same.

Allison laughed, and it was light and almost happy. It was a good sound and Lydia was pleased to hear it coming from her.

‘Yes you can.’ She came to stand behind Lydia and helped her to lift the bow again, adjusting her grip and the way she notched the arrow. ‘I was terrible the first time I did this too. You’ll get the hang of it.’ She moved back. ‘Try again.’

Lydia sighed and tried to sight the way Allison had shown her. The arrow flew cleanly enough but again she was way off target. The arrow hit the side of the tree trunk where Allison had pinned a paper target, falling into a pile of dead leaves.

‘Dammit.’ She huffed and handed the bow to Allison. ‘I’m just very very bad at this.’

‘No, you’ll get better.’ Allison replied. ‘But I guess we can call it a day.’ She checked her watch. ‘We’ve been out here for two hours already. We should probably go hit the mall and give buy some evidence for our alibi.’

‘Oh thank God.’ Lydia said and smiled. ‘I need a dress for Winter formal.’

‘Who are you going to go with?’ Allison asked and Lydia tossed her head, bravado in her smile.

‘I’m going by myself.’ she declared. ‘Jackson is clearly out of the question and it’s not like I need someone to go with me. Has Scott asked you yet?’

‘No.’ Allison admitted. ‘But it’s not like there’s been a lot of time and with tomorrow being full moon…’ She trailed off. ‘I’m worried about what will happen.’

‘Doctor Deaton will take care of him.’ Lydia assured her, hand on her arm. ‘If he managed to keep Stiles from going nuts he’ll be more than capable of dealing with Scott.’

‘I hope so.’ Allison said. ‘I want to be with him but I’m still on lockdown after dark.’ She looked at Lydia. ‘I wanted to ask if you could do it for me?’

‘What, go see if Scott’s okay?’ Lydia frowned. ‘Sure, if you want me to. Although Stiles and Derek will be with him.’

‘I know.’ Allison took her hand. ‘But I trust you, Lydia. You’re my best friend. I would feel a lot better knowing you were there to look after him.’

‘In that case, of course I will.’ Lydia replied. Above her, thunder rumbled and she looked up into the trees. ‘Guess we really should go.’

‘Yeah.’ Allison was also looking up. ‘I don’t really want to get rained on.’

‘No.’ Lydia felt slightly hysterical laughter bubbling up and quickly stifled it. ‘It’s not like we’d want to get wet or anything.’

It was too late though, she caught Allison’s eye and it all came out. They giggled all the way back to the car and by the time Allison had the engine started, fat drops were hitting the windscreen and blocking out the trees.

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Stiles couldn’t sit still. He was buzzing with borderline panic, pacing back and forth in the vet’s
office while Deaton and Noah conferred about Derek’s sudden transformation and flight response.

The rain was coming down hard and he chewed at his thumbnail, ignoring the brief flash if pain when his teeth drew blood. It healed as fast as he could nibble and it was disgusting but also therapeutic. His father came through the reception and Deaton followed him. He looked tired and Stiles could smell the fatigue on him.

‘I don’t know what to tell you.’ he said. ‘He could be anywhere. Derek spent his entire childhood out in the preserve and he knows it like you’d know your own home. If he needs space and doesn’t want to be found, he won’t be.’

‘We can’t just leave him out there.’ Stiles felt his lip wobble. ‘It’s raining and he’s alone and he needs me.’ He could feel it still, an unrelenting torrent of hurt that made his head ache with it.

‘He’s a wolf, Stiles.’ Deaton said. ‘A little rain isn’t going to hurt him. He’ll come back when he’s ready. He won’t abandon his mate, but I think it’s understandable that he needs some space.’

‘Doctor Deaton’s right.’ Noah reasoned. ‘Look come on, I’ll take you home and if he’s not back by nightfall we’ll start looking for him.’

‘Okay.’ Stiles huffed, letting himself be towed along. Deaton saw them off at the door and they ran to the cruiser, getting in and slamming the doors shut against the rain.

He sat with his nose pressed to the window the whole way back to the house, peering sadly through the window and whining softly. It felt like something heavy was sitting on his chest and when Noah finally pulled into their drive, Stiles didn’t even say anything. He just got out and stumbled to the door, rain mixing with the tears in his eyes as he got his keys out and fumbled it open. He vaguely heard Noah calling to him, but he ignored it and went inside. It felt like when his mom died and he couldn’t breathe, what finally translated into the panic attacks he used to get. He finally managed to get up the stairs, tripping over his own feet and shivering like crazy until he was in his room, slamming the door shut behind him.

Stiles stayed there, leaning his whole weight back against the door. He took a deep shuddering breath and his nose filled with the smell of wet fur and as he came out of his overwrought state he heard the pounding of Derek’s heart. There was also a low whining coming from under the bed and Stiles got to his knees and crawled across the floor until he could look under it. There was a flash of blue and Stiles could make out the hunched shape of what looked like a piteously bedraggled canine.

‘Hey.’ He leaned on his elbows and sighed. ‘I’m glad you came back. We were really worried about you.’

Derek burrowed into himself as much as possible, wrapping his tail around his body and making a soft noise of despair. Stiles reached under the bed, his fingertips brushing wet fur. Underneath that, Derek was shaking but warm and it spread through Stiles’ hand. Even being close was enough to quiet the panic inside him but he could still feel the sadness, like a fog in his head.

Derek watched him warily. His eyes had lost their blue glow and now they were the same mix of green and gold that they were in his human form. He still flinched away when Stiles reached for his face, making himself as small as he could and Stiles knew that would be as good as it got for a while. He remembered despair like this in the days after his mom died and that was so much smaller than what Derek was dealing with.

He lay down and started wriggling, getting a soft growl that sounded interrogative.
‘Well, you’re not coming out.’ he explained, scooting under the bed until Derek’s head was level with his shoulder. ‘So I have to come in. Or under as it were.’ He turned to look at Derek and Derek whined and wriggled as well so his head was on Stiles’ shoulder, his breath blowing hot and damp across Stiles’ cheek. It was heartbreaking seeing him like that so Stiles raised his hand and wedged it between Derek and the bed, rubbing at his ears. The fur there was thick and so soft and he traced the point, half smiling when Derek flicked it away.

‘It’s okay.’ he murmured and Derek wheezed in a distinctly canine way. ‘I’d be freaked out too. I honestly don’t know how the hell you’re even sane at this point. Nobody’s going to judge you for taking a time out.’

Derek grumbled and stuck his very wet nose in Stiles’ ear, making him wince.

‘Look, I know that was a shock. Dad said he doesn’t have all the details, but it’s definitely Peter. I can’t even begin to start with how betrayed you must be feeling, but I also know that all the shit that’s going down is not your fault. I get you’re probably thinking that it is because of what Kate did and Peter landing up in the hospital, but Dad says there’s a lot more than that and that it started way before she even came here.’ He ran his fingers through Derek’s fur and then crinkled his nose. ‘Look, can we at least get out from under the bed. It smells like feet and wet dog under here.’

Derek growled at him but he nudged Stiles shoulder and Stiles took that as a sign that he was willing to move. He manoeuvred himself back out again and Derek crawled on his belly after him. His ears dropped and he looked utterly disconsolate so Stiles put both arms around him and buried his face in Derek’s fur.

‘It’ll be okay, sourwolf.’ he said. ‘This shitshow is going to end eventually and then all the good things.’ He closed his eyes and felt the shift in his arms, Derek’s own coming around him to hold on tight.

‘You can’t know that.’ he whispered into Stiles’ shoulder.

‘No.’ Stiles admitted. ‘But this is something I do know. I’m going to be here regardless, so all the shit that gets thrown at you is going to hit me first.’ He ran a hand down Derek’s shoulder and grimaced at the dust that came off his skin.

Derek snorted. His pale face was also smeared with dirt from under the bed, as well as running through the woods. His mouth quirked down and he gave Stiles a one shouldered shrug.

‘I sometimes wonder if it’s worth it.’ He wouldn’t meet Stiles’ eyes. ‘If it just wouldn’t be better if…’

‘No.’ Stiles was stern ‘Don’t even fucking think that. You are not going to give up. I won’t let you.’ He leaned in, resting his forehead against Derek’s. ‘You can’t.’

‘I don’t want to get you killed.’ Derek said. ‘Everyone I love dies eventually. Or goes crazy apparently and starts killing off half the fucking town as well as…’ He choked on the last word and Stiles tightened his grip on him.

‘Laura’s death is on him, not you.’ He felt anger building up at Derek’s hurt. ‘Just like Kate’s the one that killed your family, not you.’

‘I just want it to stop.’ Derek whispered. ‘I just want to breathe again.’

‘You will.’ Stiles replied, determination making his grit his teeth. ‘I’m going to make sure of it.’

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'What about this one?' Lydia held up a dress and Allison gave it a critical look. It was metallic silk, like the one she’d bought, but in a soft champagne tone with a black velvet waistband.

‘It’s pretty.’ she said.

‘You don’t think it’s too similar to yours?’ Lydia asked.

‘That’s not a bad thing.’ Allison smiled. ‘We’ll make sure we accessorise differently.’

‘I’ll try it on.’ Lydia draped the dress over her arm. ‘So now we know that I’m a failure at archery, what else do you suggest.’

‘The molotovs were a good idea.’ Allison replied. ‘Maybe you should also talk to Deaton about the whole banshee thing. Maybe there’s something you can use there.’

‘Most of my reading is about the prediction of death.’ Lydia huffed. ‘Not exactly proactively trying to prevent it.’

‘Not necessarily.’ Allison shook her head. ‘If you’re predicting it, then that means that you would have a chance to change it.’

‘I suppose.’ Lydia conceded as they got to the fitting room. She chose one at the end and went in while Allison browsed outside. She hung up her coat and purse and inspected the dress. The colour was particularly pretty and she knew it would tone beautifully with her skin and hair.

She undressed efficiently and put the dress on. The fit was perfect, showing off her pale shoulders and a graceful amount of leg. She zipped it up and went to the curtain to call for Allison. But when she pulled it aside, it wasn’t to the shop floor of Macy’s but to the stretch of the lacrosse field at school, the lights from the school casting an eerie glow. The air was frigid and she shivered, rubbing her hands up and down her arms. It didn’t occur to Lydia to try and turn back, something drawing her out across the field, the criss grass crunching under high heels.

She got to the middle and the floodlights went on, blinding her. Lydia threw up a hand and tried to see through the glare. She caught a glimpse of movement and frowned, her eyes tearing up as she tried to focus enough to see who was approaching her. The figure moved with purpose and confidence, quick enough that he was almost within sight when she saw his eyes flash alpha red and she opened her mouth and screamed.

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‘You are to tell no-one about this.’ Derek growled and Stiles grinned.

‘Dude, no judging.’ He leaned back against the bath and held one hand over his shoulder, feeling Derek’s wet fingers lace through his own. ‘Besides, who doesn’t like bubble baths? Unless it’s just baths that you’re prejudiced against because you know…’

‘I’m not a dog, Stiles.’ Derek muttered, but Stiles felt him sink lower into the hot water. The bubbles were from Stiles’ own secret stash, which he had no embarrassing thoughts about thank you very much. He had very fond memories of childhood bubble baths and the habit had stuck even through his adolescence. Derek had been gross, all wet and muddy from his impromptu run and the dust sticking to him from under the bed so it had been a humanitarian mission to get him into the bath. The only reason he wasn’t in there with Derek’s surly ass was because there simply wasn’t any room.

‘What did you do?’ he asked, too intrigued to not ask. ‘You know, before? Were baths a thing or did
you like run away?’

Derek sighed in exasperation.

‘We were like any other family,’ he replied. ‘We did normal things. Mostly.’

‘Oh?’ Stiles turned around. The mountain of bubbles sadly obscured all of Derek’s more interesting
bits but the spiky hair and baleful green gaze was worth it.

‘There was one time…’ Derek started and then managed to almost disappear inside the bubbles. His
next words were mumbled but Stiles caught enough to almost crow in delight.

‘You what?’ He grinned.

‘We were running on a full moon and got skunked.’ Derek huffed. ‘All three of us. My mom was so
mad, she made us stay outside. The only way to get rid of it was to dunk us in the laundry tub. It was
horrible. The hydrogen peroxide goes right up your nose so you can’t smell properly for like a week
afterwards.’

‘I bet that was fun.’ Stiles said and Derek’s face fell a bit.

‘Peter was the one that helped us. He laughed for hours afterwards.’ He sighed deeply and dragged a
hand through his hair. ‘He wasn’t always bad.’

Stiles watched him for a moment and then made an executive decision. He got up and put his hands
on his hips.

‘Okay so I’m not letting you drown yourself in the bath,’ he declared. ‘You’ve got thirty minutes to
wallow, literally, and then I’m coming to get your wolfy ass out.’

‘What are you going to do?’ Derek looked suspicious.

‘I’m going to break out the big guns.’ Stiles said and started towards the door. He stopped when his
phone buzzed and dug it out, his eyes going wide when he read the text from Allison.

‘Oh fuck.’ He looked at Derek, who was now sitting upright, alert and looking back at him
expectantly. ‘Lydia had some sort of seizure at Macy’s and Allison had to call 911. They’re going to
the hospital right now.’

‘Shit.’ Derek said and stood up, causing something of a tidal wave and exposing himself to Stiles’
very appreciative eyes. Fortunately there were still enough bubbles to provide some semblance of
cover as he got out and strode past. ‘We need to go.’

‘Towel!’ Stiles yelled after him, grabbing one and chasing Derek’s bare ass down the passage.

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Scott was about to take a huge bite of his equally huge sandwich (three different layers) when his
phone went off. He grabbed it from the counter and Melissa gave him a quizzical look.

‘Who is it?’ she asked and Scott read the message and then gave her a desperate look.

‘Can I get a ride to the hospital?’ he asked and Melissa grew concerned.

‘What happened?’ she asked and Scott showed her the message. ‘Go get your jacket.’
She grabbed her purse and coat, chasing him out the house and to the car. Scott got in and his face was scrunched up with worry.

‘You think she’ll be okay?’ he asked. Melissa put the car in gear and reversed into the road.

‘Depends on what the seizure was.’ she said. ‘I don’t understand half of what is going on here, but maybe you should text Doctor Deaton and tell him.’

‘That’s actually a really good idea.’ Scott said and immediately started tapping out a message.

Melissa watched him out of the corner of her eye. She had been trying to get her head around everything since she’d fallen over herself when her son had sprouted a very impressive set of sideburns and growled at her, his eyes glowing gold and fangs sticking out of his mouth. Not only that, but Derek and Stiles were the same although Derek’s eyes were blue and not gold.

They’d tried, been as forthcoming as they could, and she’d felt for Derek after he’d hedged around the way his family had died before telling her that it had been Kate Argent. He’d been very uncomfortable, but Melissa was a nurse and a damn good one. She could spot things a mile away and Derek’s defensiveness and his clear unease spoke of deep trauma. That had been confirmed by the conversations she’d had with Noah in the interim and her righteous anger at what had happened to a boy who’d been the same age as her son was now had driven her right into overprotective parent territory. She’d been there pretty much since the incident that had put the nail in the coffin for her marriage, and now in her head she simply catalogued Derek Hale along with Stiles as boys that had no mother and clearly needed one. Noah teased her about them having their own version of the Lost Boys, but it was true enough.

‘I told him.’ Scott said, still typing. ‘Stiles and Derek are on their way too.’

‘Good.’ Melissa replied and kept driving. If there was one good thing that had come out of all this, it was that this odd assortment of people seemed to have really bonded. Scott had spent the morning with Derek learning about how to control himself and what to expect the next evening when it was full moon. Melissa had got the gist of that and was comforted to know that Deaton would be overseeing things, especially as she was working. Derek had talked about Scott needing an anchor and she would bet every penny of her measly savings account that Scott had a certain person with dark hair and killer dimples in mind.

They got the hospital and she dropped him off while she went to park, knowing he wouldn’t wait. She took a spot close to the side door, heeding Noah’s advice that she didn’t want to be too far after what had happened at the school. The fact that the alpha had been stalking them after the parents’ evening made her shiver and not in a good way.

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Stiles charged through the hospital to the waiting room in the emergency department, only stopping when he saw Allison get up from her seat. Derek was right behind him and she met them halfway.

‘What the hell happened?’ he asked and Allison shook her head.

‘I honestly don’t know.’ she told him. ‘One minute she was trying on a dress for the dance and then next she was screaming. By the time I got there, she was on the ground and her eyes were all rolled back and she was seizing.’

‘Shit.’ Stiles threw Derek a worried look. ‘Where is she now?’

‘In there.’ Allison jerked her head at the treatment rooms behind her. ‘I called her mom and she’s on
her way.’ Her face fell and Stiles put a hand on her arm, then lifted his head just as Derek did the same and a moment later Scott came crashing through the doors.

Allison went straight to him and he put his arms around her, looking at Stiles over her shoulder. Stiles shrugged and then noticed that Derek was scenting the air. His face was set and Stiles caught the tension immediately.

‘What?’ he asked and Derek narrowed his eyes at the far side of the waiting room.

‘I’m not sure.’ he replied. ‘But something doesn’t feel right.’

‘So we stay here and make sure nothing happens.’ he replied and Derek shivered once when Stiles took his hand, seeming to shake whatever it was off.

‘Okay.’ he said and sat down. Allison’s phone rang and she moved away from Scott to answer it and he came over to take the seat next to Derek. His tension was even easier to see, manifesting in a fervent leg jiggle. It was most unlike him but Stiles knew he was stressed. He took the seat on Scott’s other side and leaned into him, the contact between their arms comforting.

‘You okay, buddy?’ he asked and Scott made a face.

‘I feel like I need to bite something.’ he confessed and Derek snorted.

‘That’s normal.’ he replied. ‘It’s full moon tomorrow.’

Stiles watched Scott’s leg shae and then out a gentle hand on his knee, stilling him.

‘It sucks, I know.’ he said, keeping his voice low. ‘But you can’t lose it in here.’

‘How the hell did you manage it.’ Scott muttered. ‘Everything’s so freaking loud.’

‘Scott.’ Derek growled. ‘Remember what I said.’

‘Okay.’ Scott breathed in deeply and looked at Allison, adoration all over his face. Stiles grinned and looked past him to Derek.

‘Anchor?’ he asked and Derek pulled a face.

‘Only an idiot would use an Argent for an anchor.’ he said.

‘She’s perfect.’ Scott’s voice was dreamy. ‘And she smells so good.’

‘Yeah yeah.’ Stiles said. ‘We know.’

‘It’s keeping him calm at least.’ Derek sat back and looked at where Allison was pacing back and forth. ‘And she’s got common sense unlike him.’

‘Hey!’ Scott looked affronted. ‘I have common sense.’

‘You really don’t, dude.’ Stiles replied. He saw Allison hang up and then she was walking over, an odd look on her face.

‘That was Jackson.’ she told them. ‘He called me to ask what happened to Lydia.’

‘How the hell did he know?’ Stiles asked and she frowned.
‘No idea.’ she said as he got up so she could sit next to Scott and moved to take the seat on Derek’s other side. ‘It’s kind of weird though. Anyway he’s on his way here.’

‘Well, that’s going to be interesting.’ Derek muttered. ‘Jesus fuck.’

They all sat in silence, brooding on what had happened until Melissa came from behind the reception and headed for them.

‘How is she?’ Allison was on her feet. Melissa gave her a reassuring smile.

‘She’s awake and she’s fine.’ she replied. ‘Her mom got here a little while ago so she’s with her now. They are busy running some routine tests, but from what I’ve seen Lydia’s acting normally.’

‘Oh thank God.’ Allison said. ‘And the seizure?’

‘There’s nothing to say why she had it.’ Melissa glanced around and then folded her arms and gave Derek a pointed look. ‘Is this...something?’

‘I don’t know?’ Derek answered. ‘I don’t really have any experience with what Lydia is. Did someone ask Deaton?’

‘I sent him a message.’ Scott said. ‘But he hasn’t replied yet.’

‘Hmmm.’ Melissa frowned. ‘Well, it’s going to be a while. Maybe you should go home and I’ll let you all know if something changes.’

‘If it’s all the same, could we stay?’ Allison asked. ‘She’s our friend and we’re worried.’

‘Yeah.’ The fact that Derek was speaking surprised Stiles a little. ‘She’s...pack.’

That was the last thing Stiles had expected and he smiled and squeezed Derek’s hand, looking up at Melissa.

‘What he said.’ he added. ‘We’re not leaving here until we know she’s okay.’

‘Alright.’ Melissa conceded. ‘Get hold of your dad, Stiles. Tell him where you are and what’s happened.’ She gave them all a half smile and left them to go back to work.

‘On it.’ Stiles took out his phone and started messaging. As he did he thought about what Derek had said and how right it sounded. They were starting to be what Derek had said, a group that had been pushed together because of this and now becoming more cohesive in ways that superceded anything normal. It gave him a warm feeling, something that he hadn’t realised was missing from his life until he had it.

Scott slumped down in his seat and then looked around.

‘I’m hungry.’ he complained.

‘Come on.’ Allison got up. ‘Let’s go get some coffee and a snack.’ She looked at Stiles. ‘You want something?’

‘Sure, coffee sounds good.’ he replied and Derek fished out a couple of bills from his pocket and handed them to her.

‘Thanks.’ he said and Allison’s smile was small but sincere.
‘What you said about pack.’ she said and the uncertainty in her voice was clear. ‘Does that mean me too?’

Stiles held his breath, looking at how Derek met her eyes without flinching.

‘It does.’ he said. ‘You fight with us, fight for us, it makes you pack.’

‘Good.’ Allison was suddenly fierce. ‘Because I will. Even if it means going against my family.’

‘You don’t need to do that.’ Derek’s face fell. ‘Family is all we have. Even when they do things we can’t explain or forgive.’

Allison frowned and Stiles knew he had to intervene.

‘Can you get me some Reeses?’ he asked and handed Allison a handful of change. She nodded and left, Scott following her like a puppy. Derek waited until they’d left before he spoke again.

‘Guess I really don’t have the high ground anymore.’ His voice was tight.

‘Derek.’ Stiles looked at him. ‘Don’t do that. You know how you said Allison wasn’t responsible for her family. Well, neither are you.’

‘Christ.’ Derek put both hands behind his head, veins standing out on his forearms. ‘We all need so much fucking therapy.’

‘That’s probably not a bad idea.’ Stiles said. ‘Did you ever go?’

‘In New York.’ Derek replied. ‘Laura made me. Didn’t really take too well mostly because of the whole werewolf thing.’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles said. ‘Guess that isn’t something you can really explain to people. Or the whole Kate thing.’

‘Not really.’ Derek leaned forward, his hands twisting together. ‘I think he guessed some of it, but I quit before he could ask. I just thought I’d handle it by myself. Laura was so fucking angry with me and she kept asking why and I couldn’t tell her.’

‘I made it three months.’ Stiles had never told anyone this, not even Scott. ‘I sat under her desk the whole time and just refused to talk. It really worried my dad.’ He bumped Derek’s shoulder with his own. ‘I guess between us we have enough issues to fill like whole year’s worth of psychological journals.’

‘You’re right.’ Derek said and glanced at him. ‘You ever think about going back?’

‘I have.’ Stiles said. ‘Have you?’

‘Yeah.’ Derek leaned into him. ‘But maybe we should.’

‘Maybe.’ Stiles replied and then lifted his head as a wild-eyed Jackson came charging into the waiting room. ‘Oh great, the cavalry just arrived.’

They both watched Jackson nearly fall over himself to get to them. When he did his stopped, panting hard.

‘Where is she?’ he asked and Stiles had to reign his sarcasm in.

‘Still getting tests done.’ he replied. ‘So you’re going to have to wait just like the rest of us.’
'Fuck that shit.' Jackson snapped and resumed his one man crusade to go to the reception desk.

'God he’s an asshole.' Stiles muttered and then realised that Derek was staring at Jackson and scenting very subtly. ‘Oh God, now what?’

‘Can you smell that?’ Derek’s eyes were intense. Stiles frowned and inhaled deeply, realising that the smell was alcoholic.

‘Vodka?’ he whispered and Derek nodded. ‘Why would he be drinking in the middle of the day?’

‘Good question.’ he replied.

They watched as a nurse spoke to Jackson and then he was being taken around the station and through a doorway to the treatment rooms.

‘Now how the hell did that happen?’ Derek asked and Stiles glowered.

‘It helps when your dad is the district attorney, I guess.’ He folded his arms. ‘Douchebag. He’s going to be laughing out the other side of his face when he realises that Lydia’s still pissed as hell at him.’

‘Who’s she still pissed at?’ Allison asked as she came up behind them. Scott was with her, balancing coffee and a mountain of snacks.

‘Jackson’s here.’ Derek accepted his coffee from Scott. ‘They let him in to see her.’

‘Well, that’s not fair.’ Allison looked angry. ‘She won’t want to see him. She even told me this morning that she’s going to the Winter formal by herself because he’s been acting like such an asshole.’

‘Winter formal?’ Derek frowned.

‘Yeah.’ Stiles said. ‘I guess that’s coming up soon.’

‘Stiles, it’s next Saturday.’ Scott said. ‘How did you forget?’

‘Have you seen what’s been going on?’ Stiles glared at him. ‘I’ve been a little distracted.’

‘You should go.’ Derek said. ‘It’s probably the only normal thing you’re going to have this semester.’ His look was meaningful. ‘Normal things like that count more than you think. You can take Lydia.’

‘No.’ Stiles replied. ‘I meant it when I asked if you’d go with me. I’m only going if you’d do that.’

‘You’d want me to go with you?’ Derek looked adorably bemused for a moment. ‘Am I even allowed?’

‘Sure.’ Allison said. ‘Danny’s bringing his boyfriend.’ She gave Scott a shy smile. ‘And I’m taking mine if he wants to go with me.’

Scott’s whole face lit up like a Christmas tree.

‘Of course I do.’ he replied and then it was all handholding and nuzzling.

‘That’s so gross.’ Stiles said, but they completely ignored him. He turned to Derek. ‘So what about it, big guy. You want to buy me a tacky corsage and feel me up in the back of the Camaro?’
‘You’re so fucking weird.’ Derek looked like he was trying not to smile. ‘Do I have to dance?’

‘No.’ Stiles smiled at him. ‘You can sit and brood in the shadows.’

‘Good.’ Derek said and sipped his coffee.

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Lydia leaned back against the pillows and sighed. Her head still pounded, in spite of the pain killers they had given her once they’d been satisfied that she wasn’t in danger, and she was very out of sorts.

‘Your father will be here soon.’ Natalie said from her place at the side of the bed. ‘Then we can get you home.’ She’d been happy enough with the doctor’s explanation that Lydia was probably suffering a delayed reaction to the stress of the attack, but Lydia knew better. She also knew that whatever she had seen in her vision/hallucination/whatever the hell it was, it wasn’t anything good. Neither was the urge to scream that she had to keep suppressing.

‘I’m thirsty.’ she said, wanting to just have a moment of quiet before her father arrived and the two of them started to rip into each other. ‘Could you get me a soda? Diet.’

‘You’ve got water…’ Natalie started but Lydia just gave her her patented demanding look, the one that got her everything she wanted, and Natalie folded like a lawn chair. She leaned over and kissed Lydia on the forehead. ‘Of course, sweetheart. I’ll be right back.’

Lydia watched her go and then reached for her cell. She was just about to text Allison when she heard a sound and looked up. Her astonishment at seeing Jackson was only intensified by the distraught look on his face.

‘Jackson?’ She sat up and put the phone aside. ‘What are you doing here?’

He didn’t say anything, just came towards the bed and Lydia knew him well enough to realise that he was really distressed and all the anger she’d had towards him seemed to take a back seat when he clutched her hands in his.

‘You’re hurt?’ he asked and his voice was nothing like his usual arrogant self.

‘It was a seizure.’ she found herself answering. ‘They don’t know why yet, but the doctor thinks it’s stress from the attack.’

Jackson nodded, his blue eyes suspiciously shiny.

‘I felt it.’ he whispered. ‘I felt it when you…’ He shook his head. ‘Something’s happening to me, Lydia. I can’t sleep, I keep having these dreams and with all the shit that happened at the school…’

He looked at her. ‘I don’t understand any of this.’

‘Neither do I.’ Lydia put her hand against his cheek. ‘None of this makes any sense. The only thing we can do is stick together. If we can’t trust you to do that, if you can’t help us, then there’s nothing you can do for me.’

‘Things feel so messed up.’ Jackson confessed. ‘I don’t want us to lie to each other anymore.’

‘Alright.’ Lydia said. ‘But you need to promise that you’re going to help us and that you’re going to fight with us.’ She held his gaze. ‘Promise me, Jackson.’
'I promise.' he whispered and laid his head on her shoulder. Lydia sighed softly and stroked his hair, her mind racing at just what the hell was going on with him.

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‘Those are disgusting.’ Derek’s nose was wrinkled and Stiles knew he shouldn’t find it adorable but he was weak when it came to Derek doing anything that counteracted his usual taciturn nature.

‘Excuse you.’ he replied. ‘Reeses are the best candy, hands down.’

‘They have peanut butter in them.’ Derek said peanut butter like it had personally offended him.

‘Don’t dogs like peanut butter?’ Scott asked, making Allison giggle.

‘We’re not dogs, Scott.’ Derek growled. ‘You’re as bad as he is.’

‘Yeah Scott.’ Stiles couldn’t resist mocking Derek just a bit. ‘We’re big bad wolves.’

‘Shut up, Stiles.’ Derek huffed. ‘Only one of us is the big bad wolf and it’s sure as hell not you. You two are both cubs. Actually you’re worse than cubs. You’re new bites.’

‘Fuck off.’ Stiles said, kicking Derek’s foot. ‘You’re almost mated to this new bite.’

‘Yeah, so I have questions about that.’ Allison said. ‘Sex questions.’

Derek choked on his M&Ms and Stiles slapped him on the back.

‘Are you sure you want to know?’ He was positively gleeful. ‘This is not something you can unhear.’ He put a special emphasis on the word and Derek pinched the bridge of his nose in exasperation.

‘For the love of Christ.’ he muttered.

‘Oh God.’ Scott hid his face in his hands. ‘Please don’t say that word.’

‘What word?’ Allison’s face was pure mischief. ‘Knot?’

‘Oh hell, she knows.’ Scott was cringing in his seat.

‘She does.’ Allison beamed. ‘Stiles isn’t the only one who can use the internet.’ She looked at Derek expectantly. ‘So is it true?’

‘If I say yes, will you promise to never ask me anything about it ever again?’ Derek snapped and she nodded. ‘Fine, yes it’s true.’

‘Guess the cat’s out of the bag now, Scotty.’ Stiles snickered. ‘Or the wolf even.’

‘Shut up.’ Scott hissed. ‘At least it’s not going to go up my ass.’

That shut Stiles right up and he gave Derek a speculative look.

‘Not a fucking word.’ Derek warned him. ‘We’re in a fucking hospital so have some fucking decorum.’

Stiles gave him the finger and Allison grinned.

‘This has been a weird ass week.’ she said and they all fell back in their seats.
‘No shit.’ Stiles replied and saluted her with his coffee cup. They all looked up though when Deaton strolled into the waiting room and came to stand in front of them.

‘Ah.’ he said. ‘So it seems that Miss Martin's powers are starting to manifest in earnest.’

‘Mani-what now?’ Scott asked and Stiles rolled his eyes at him.

‘Is that what it was?’ Derek asked and Deaton nodded.

‘It seems most likely.’ he replied. ‘The question is, who is going to die?’
Chapter Summary

Scott's first full moon. What could possibly go wrong?

Melissa was not convinced.

‘You’re locking my baby in there?’ She gave the room in Deaton’s basement a pointed look.

‘Trust me.’ Deaton replied. ‘You want him to be in there as opposed to out there.’ He nodded at the window. ‘Where the alpha can get his claws into him. Not to mention that this is Scott’s full first full moon and so he’s going to be near feral.’

Melissa made an unhappy noise and looked at Derek standing behind her with his arms folded. He shrugged.

‘It’s fine.’ he said. ‘It’s better than leaving him loose, believe me. He’ll be fine in there and Stiles will be with him. It’s something all wolves go through. My parents had to lock me up when I went through puberty too.’

‘Except they should have left puberty behind already.’ Melissa replied. ‘What exactly should I expect?’

‘A lot of growling and slobbering.’ Stiles snickered from his seat on the stairs next to a disconsolate Scott. ‘Maybe more facial hair than you’re used to.’

‘You don’t have that much.’ Derek said over his shoulder and Stiles stuck his tongue out at him.

‘At least I have my eyebrows.’ he countered. ‘Freak.’

Derek growled at him and turned back to Melissa.

‘The alpha won’t get close to him this way.’ he replied. ‘Scott is safest here and we’ll be making sure he doesn’t go anywhere.’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles grinned. ‘We’ll play Go Fish and eat all the Cheetos we can get our paws on.’

‘Oh God.’ Scott groaned. ‘This is going to suck.’ He winced when Stiles elbowed him in the ribs.

‘Can we get back on track here please?’ Deaton said, narrowing his eyes at them. ‘Now I am leaving Derek in charge.’

‘Suck up.’ Stiles cackled and Derek gave him the finger behind his back.

‘As I was saying.’ Deaton glared at both him and Scott. ‘Derek will make sure you’re both confined while I go with Chris Argent and your father to try and lay a trap for the alpha.’

‘Like that’s going to help.’ Stiles said and Derek turned around, walked over and smacked him round the back of the head.
‘You, shut up.’ he growled and Melissa frowned, even as Stiles bared his fangs at him. His eyes were glowing gold and Derek knew his control was wearing a little thin.

‘What’s wrong with him?’ Melissa asked. ‘He’s not normally this…’

‘Obnoxious?’ Derek asked. ‘It’s the full moon and Stiles is effectively still learning. Having Scott being out of control as well is not helping.’

‘He looks a lot calmer.’ Melissa said and Derek shook his head. Scott was a ball of tension, aggression seeping out of every pore and it was transferring directly to Stiles. Even the bond he had with Derek wasn’t calming him down and Derek knew that was likely due to the alpha’s current state.

He did a mental adjustment. Not just the alpha anymore but Peter, his uncle and one of the people in his pack that he’d been the closest too after his siblings. It was still surreal for him to think that the wolf running around in the preserve killing indiscriminantly was related to him. Not only that, but he was responsible for Laura’s death. Now on top of it, he had two new bites that seemed to have undergone a maturity removal process overnight. Not that it was Stiles’ fault. Scott’s emotional state was affecting him too, their naturally close relationship influencing the way he was behaving and it was coming out as brattiness. That was still preferable to Scott’s grumpy surliness, but Derek had been an old hand at that kind of behaviour when he was a cub himself and so he at least knew how to deal with it.

‘He won’t be once the moon’s up.’ he said. ‘You need to be gone before then.’

‘How long?’ Deaton asked and Derek closed his eyes for a second and let the feeling flow through him.

‘About an hour and forty-five minutes.’ he said, hearing Melissa gasp when he opened his eyes. He knew they were glowing but she’d have to get used to that now she had a werewolf son.

‘How do you know that?’ she asked and he shrugged again.

‘I feel it.’ he told her. ‘Born wolves are attuned to the moon. It’s like I have a link to it.’

‘So cool.’ Stiles said behind him and Derek could feel his excitement. It was dizzying how many feelings were surging through Stiles, changing almost every minute. His own conflicted emotions were just adding to all of this and Derek was seriously starting to think that he should lock himself up as well, but someone had to take care of the other two and it looked like he was the unlucky son of a bitch that had to do it.

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Allison sighed in exasperation. It was getting difficult to pretend that she knew nothing about what was going on and balancing her feelings for her family even when she knew they were all lying to her face. Kate had been very scarce since the start of the week and Allison could only surmise that she was out hunting the alpha every night. Her father was being shift as hell, not really looking at her or speaking to her and Allison was getting tired of it.

Desperate times called for desperate measures. Her mom was out, shopping for dinner and doing whatever else it was she did when she went off on her own and Allison knew it was now or never.

She found him down in the basement, working in the cage with the reloading press. She knew the rounds he was making were probably wolfsbane ones and notice how he very quickly eased the box of bullets off the bench and into a drawer as she approached. She leaned in the doorway of the cage
and tilted her head at him.

‘You need a hand?’ she asked and Chris gave her a smile that was probably supposed to be casual but came out thin lipped and strained.

‘No.’ He straightened up. ‘I’m good.’

Allison watched him turn around and noted the tension in his shoulders. It had been there since the parents’ evening.

‘I know.’ she said without preamble and watched how his shoulders dropped just a little.

‘Know what, sweetheart?’ he asked and she steeled herself.

‘About the alpha.’ she said. ‘About werewolves. I even know that Aunt Kate killed the Hales. What I don’t know is why you’ve been lying to me my whole life.’

Chris froze and for a moment Allison felt panic and fear and gut wrenching nausea at what she’d just done. Then she remembered that this was something she needed to find out, even if it meant facing more than she already had. It was too far gone to back away now and she lifted her chin and took a deep breath, ready to speak again. Before she got the chance though, Chris turned around and he looked like he’d aged ten years in as many minutes.

‘How did you find out?’ he asked, but there was no anger in his voice, only a deep resignation.

‘Sheriff Stilinski told me when I figured out there was something going on with Stiles and Scott that they were trying to hide after Scott came to dinner.’ She folded her arms, defensive. ‘Not a nice way to find out that your family sanctions murder.’

‘It was never meant to be about that.’ Chris said wearily. ‘Our family has always been an honourable one. Your roots go back far into history and the Argent name has always been synonymous with justice and upholding the laws that bind our kind.’

‘It doesn’t look like that from where I’m standing.’ Allison felt anger well up inside her. ‘The reason Scott was snooping around that night was to find a bullet from Kate’s gun because she’d shot Derek and tried to shoot Stiles as well. I covered for him and then I made him take me with because I knew he was going somewhere.’ Her mouth twisted. ‘I thought it was something to do with Derek because Kate told me that they used to be together and that he was abusive towards her. But that was completely wrong, wasn’t it?’

‘I didn’t know about the Hales.’ Chris told her, his gaze level. ‘And I definitely didn’t know about what she did to Derek. If I had, there is no way I would have let it happen.’

‘He was fifteen, Dad.’ Allison felt her stomach lurch. ‘She pretty much raped him and then killed his family and the only reason I have been able to even look at her is because I don’t want her to hurt him or Stiles.’ Her voice dropped. ‘Or Scott.’

Now Chris focused, his eyes narrowing.

‘I was trying to keep you safe.’ he said. ‘If your mom had had her way, you would have started training when you were thirteen like she did.’

‘So she knows everything.’ Allison said and he nodded.

‘Your mom’s the second daughter of another very prominent hunter family.’ he explained. ‘We were
married to cement an alliance between our families. You have the blood of the finest hunters in the world running through your veins. The archery, the gymnastics, the self-defence and shooting lessons were all part of that but were waiting until you graduated high school to bring you in fully. Of course, we were going to make sure that you were trained to follow the Code and only hunt when you needed to protect yourself.’

‘But that’s not it, isn’t it?’ Allison said, fighting to keep her voice level. ‘Because the Hales didn’t do anything to anybody. I’ve been doing my own research and all I can find is that they kept to themselves and didn’t hurt anyone. So that means that the only reason Kate killed them all was because they were werewolves.’

Chris’ silence was telling but he also made no excuses.

Allison sighed heavily and came into the cage, looking at what he’d been doing.

‘So wolfsbane bullets, huh?’ she said. ‘Guess those can help against the alpha.’
‘Maybe.’ Chris replied and then sighed. ‘You want to learn how to make them?’

‘Well, I’ll need to start somewhere and you could probably use my help.’ Allison replied and moved to stand shoulder to shoulder with her father.

**********

By the time the sun was starting to dip below the horizon, Derek was convinced that he’d managed to get entangled with a pair of hyenas and not wolves for all the cackling and snapping that was going on.

Stiles and Scott were now in the room with several large bags of junk food and a dogeared pack of Uno to pass the time. Derek was fervently hoping that Stiles’ presence would keep Scott calm enough during his shift and that him going in and laying down the law would be the last resort. There had been no sign of the alpha, no howls to signify he was even in the vicinity. Of course, that didn’t mean he wouldn’t try anything. Peter had been widely recognised as the sneakiest of all the Hales and as his mother’s Left Hand, he’d always been the one to get his hands dirty.

Melissa was on her way to the hospital, finally reassured that her son would be in good hands, and Derek had his own snacks, an army cot and sleeping bag and his copy of Herodotus to keep him company. Deaton had engaged the mountain ash barrier so they were all effectively locked in, something that made Derek a little nervous but which also meant that Peter would not be able to get in no matter how hard he tried.

There was the sound of laughter from the room and Derek tuned back in, listening as he made himself comfortable on the cot and dug out a bag of candy from the snack sack, as Stiles called it with a smirk that only a teenage boy could have managed. He opened the bag of M & Ms and took a handful, throwing them into his mouth and crunching as he heard Stiles expounding on the virtues of being a werewolf.

‘So no more asthma.’ he was saying. ‘That’s awesome. Dude, I can run like fuck now.’

‘You could run before.’ Scott protested. ‘Hello, track?’

‘Yeah, but now I can run fast and long,’ Stiles said. ‘And my tracking is crazy. And I’m nowhere near as good as Derek. He said that he can sort like all the different smells around him and tell you how old they are. It’s insane.’

Scott heaved a deep sigh.
‘I guess.’ He was still morose and Derek rolled his eyes at him. Scott had the whole tortured lovelorn thing sewn up. ‘But Allison and I are…’

‘Fine.’ Stiles told him, his voice stern. ‘Look, I know you live for the whole Romeo and Juliet shebang, but I got to tell you that that girl is a strong, badass bitch who’s not going to let the fact that you’re a werewolf and she’s a hunter get in the way of you two being together. Trust me.’

‘Her parents hate me already.’ Scott muttered. ‘What the hell am I going to do if they make her break up with me?’

‘Suck it up and ignore them.’ Stiles was grinning, Derek could hear it in his voice. ‘Life is short and we could all be toast tomorrow.’

‘You’re not helping.’ Scott whined and Derek chuckled. He hated to admit it, but Stiles was pretty good at managing people.

The sound of something moving upstairs caught his attention and Derek focused in on the sound. It wasn’t deliberately stealthy but it also wasn’t like the person wanted to announce their presence. He sat up, book set down and his senses on alert before getting up and treading silently to the foot of the basement stairs. He inhaled deeply and caught a drift of perfume. It set him at ease and Derek followed it up until he got to the examination room and saw the slender shape standing there. He smelled salt and sadness and met dark eyes that were shiny with tears.

‘I’m guessing something happened.’ he said and Allison sniffled and gave him a half smile that looked like it was costing her the earth to do.

‘So I told my dad I knew.’ she said. ‘And he told me everything about being an Argent. Now I kind of feel sick to my stomach.’

‘Yeah.’ Derek had nothing but sympathy, which surprised him. But then he’d just found out that his last remaining pack member had killed his sister and alpha and was running around Beacon Hills taking out people at the drop of a hat.

Perspective was a bitch Laura used to say, and Derek hated that she was right.

‘I wanted to understand.’ Allison shrugged, her hands still in her coat pockets. ‘But all it did was bring up more questions. I don’t know how they managed to keep it from me all this time, but it’s literally my entire life that’s been thrown into question.’

‘If it helps, I’m not exactly keeping it together myself.’ Derek said and then wanted to slap a hand over his mouth at that.

‘You’re kidding right?’ Allison’s eyes were wide and there was something flooding her scent that Derek hadn’t expected from her, an answering sympathy and understanding that he knew wasn’t from anything other than the discovery that she’d been so badly lied to. That something she’d believed had turned out to be a nightmare she couldn’t escape from. Christ knew he was familiar with that.

‘No.’ he said, and the confession felt good. ‘I’m not.’

‘If this is you not keeping it together, then I’d hate to see what you think is losing it.’ Allison told him. ‘I have no idea how the hell you’re even functional now I know what I know. What your family went through and what you’re still going through because of people who think they’re…’ She bit off the words and tears welled up and rolled down her cheeks. ‘How can you even stand to be in the same room as me?’
Derek was completely taken aback. That was the last thing he’d expected. It astonished him even more to realise that the answer was the same reason she was standing in a room with him.

‘Because we’re not our families.’ he ventured. ‘Because the fact that your aunt killed my family has nothing to do with you. Because you’re a good person and you’re still here fighting with us even when you don’t have to be.’

Allison’s smile was shaky but sincere.

‘So are you.’ she replied. ‘A good person, I mean.’

Derek met her eyes and then nodded.

‘Okay.’ he said. ‘So now that’s settled, you want to help me watch a couple of idiots and make sure they don’t eat each other?’

‘Sure.’ Allison said and followed him down the stairs.

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Noah watched through the windscreen of the cruiser as Chris got out his SUV and crossed the gravel lot on the far side of the preserve. He was dressed for hunting, the neutral colours he wore blending well into the shadows that lay across the ground and Noah was impressed that he moved almost soundlessly. It reminded him of the SEALs that he’d worked with in the Gulf on occasion.

He got out and shut the door behind him, both of them looking around as Chris reached him.

‘All clear on your side?’ Noah asked and Chris nodded.

‘Victoria knows I’m patrolling so she’s at home.’ he replied. ‘Kate is somewhere but I have no idea where. We need to keep under her radar.’

‘So where do we start?’ Noah asked and Chris nodded at the treeline.

‘Wolves are territorial.’ he replied. ‘I say we start at the Hale house.’

They started walking and Noah noticed the set to Chris’ jaw.

‘You okay?’ he found himself asking and Chris stared straight ahead.

‘Allison knows everything now.’ he said, his voice completely neutral. ‘She’s told her mother that she’s at Lydia’s and gone to the vet clinic to help with Scott.

‘Oh.’ Noah glanced at him. ‘Is that a good thing?’

‘We were going to tell her in a few years anyway.’ Chris replied. ‘It’s just brought things forward.’

‘That’s not what I asked.’ Noah said. ‘I need to know if we’ve got a problem?’

‘Why?’ Now Chris looked at him. ‘This is not your concern as Sheriff. It never has been.’

‘It’s my goddamn concern.’ Noah snorted. ‘Both as Sheriff and as the father of a brand spanking new werewolf.’

‘Law enforcement is not meant to know or be involved.’ Chris explained. ‘It’s always been safer that
‘Well, I know and I’m definitely involved.’ Noah said. ‘So get used to it. How did she take it all? I’m assuming that’s why you look like you’ve got a stick up your ass.’

‘It was better than it had any right to be considering the circumstances.’ Chris replied. ‘God knows how her mother’s going to take finding out about this though. Allison’s pretty much dead set against everything we stand for.’

‘Can’t really blame her.’ Noah said. ‘Considering your family’s track record.’

‘No, I suppose not.’ Chris stopped and lifted his head, listening. ‘You hear that?’

Noah did, noticing that the air was silent.

‘Well, that’s not good.’ He shifted the police issue rifle he’d taken from the armoury. ‘Speed up?’

‘Yeah.’ Chris said and started moving again.

**********

Allison was sitting on the cot and Derek was on the floor, his back to the door of the safe room. Inside there was growling and the occasional snarl when Scott obviously got out of hand and Stiles had to get him to back down. So far there had been no serious violence and Derek was pleased that using Stiles to calm him had worked. It also helped that Scott had picked up on Allison’s scent and presence. He had spent half an hour scratching pathetically at the door and whimpering. Stiles had had to drag him way and snarl at him to get him to stop.

‘So I’m his anchor?’ She was frowning as she processed what Derek had told her.

‘You could be.’ Derek replied, inhaling deeply and letting Stiles’s scent that was leaking under the door fill his senses. The moon was climbing and the feeling of it was like lightning through his veins. He knew his eyes were glowing blue, but Allison hadn’t smelled afraid and apart from a second of raised eyebrows, hadn’t commented on the fact either. ‘It’s not so much a conscious decision for wolves, but for humans it is. It’s like committing to any relationship. If you do it though, it means building a connection between you and Scott that could grow a lot stronger so you need to be sure if you decide to be that for him.’

‘I care about him.’ Allison said. ‘A lot. I know that we’re young, but I feel something for him that I haven’t felt for anyone else before.’

Derek thought about a beautiful girl with big brown eyes and moles and a sweet smile. It didn’t hurt quite so much anymore, not now that he had a boy who made him feel like he could carry on living in the next room, and he could appreciate how he’d felt the same way about her.

‘First loves are special.’ he said.

‘But Stiles isn’t your first.’ Allison said and Derek gave her a wry smirk. She was sharp, there’s was no doubt about that.

‘No, but he will be my last.’ he replied. ‘Especially if he stays a wolf.’

‘How does that work, exactly?’ Allison looked curious. ‘The mates thing. I have been trying to look stuff up but mostly what I find is porn.’
‘It’s not a soulmate thing exactly. It’s a connection with someone that fills in your gaps.’ Derek raised one knee and rested his elbow on it. ‘My mom used to say that. But because it’s not just one person who could be that, it does mean that you can get confused about who it might be.’

‘Did you think Kate was it for you?’ Allison’s voice held steady but Derek could smell her unease. ‘Is that how she…’

‘No.’ he interjected before she could finish. ‘I never thought that about her. She caught me at a time when I was…’ He broke off, feeling the nausea rise in his stomach. He’d been so vulnerable, something he’d only just started to realise. Heartbroken over Paige and guilt-ridden for killing her, he’d been waiting for something to throw himself into and self-destructive in his recklessness.

‘What?’ Allison asked but he could only shake his head.

‘I can’t.’ he said. ‘Not to you.’

‘Okay.’ Allison crossed her legs on the cot and folded into herself a little. ‘I understand. I know I don’t have any right to ask you to trust me but I do want you to know that you can.’

Her heartbeat held steady and that made Derek feel better. There was a thump from inside the room and he snorted a soft laugh.

‘Are they okay?’ Allison asked and he nodded.

‘It’s going to get worse before it gets better.’ he said. ‘But Stiles can handle it. He’ll heal.’

‘Gee thanks for that.’ Stiles muttered inside the room and then growled at a snarling Scott. ‘He’s gone all sideburny on me.’

‘Just try and keep him calm.’ Derek leaned his head back against the door, listening as Stiles moved to sit on his side, tapping his claws against the door.

‘Easy for you to say.’ he replied. ‘You’re not the one getting the death glare.’

‘What’s he doing?’ Allison asked.

‘Right now he’s standing and looking out the window.’ Stiles said. ‘I can’t hear anything though. He’s super growly but he’s stopped trying to bite me.’

‘That’s good.’ Derek said. ‘No violent behaviour means he’s not as bad as he could be.’

‘Even if he’s lost the power to speak?’ Stiles asked. ‘He’s like completely non-verbal.’

‘So long as he’s not trying to hurt you, Stiles.’ Derek repeated. ‘It’s normal to get lost in the animal. You did the same thing. And you tried to kick the shit out of me.’

‘Ugh.’ Stiles thumped his head against the door. ‘I know. I don’t remember shit, but I know.’

‘So what happens after all this?’ Allison was looking at Derek intently. ‘Are you going to stay here? Dad was telling me about treaties and territory but I guess that might not be something you’re interested in, seeing as what happened here.’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles said from behind the door. ‘I’d kind of like to know that too.’

Derek frowned. He didn’t make plans. It worked best when he just lived day to day but it seemed like now he was in a position to think about what he was going to do next.
'I don’t know.’ He went for honesty. ‘Beacon Hills is still Hale territory. No other pack has claimed it.’

‘So you could stick around.’ Stiles sounded hopeful. ‘You know, seeing as now you have a reason.’

Derek couldn’t help smiling at his not so subtle hint.

‘Yeah?’ He turned his head, listened to Stiles’ breathing and the thump of his heart. ‘You want me to stay?’

‘Asshole.’ Stiles muttered but his heart picked up. ‘Of course I do.’

‘You don’t count.’ Derek said and heard the outraged gasp. ‘You’re biased.’

‘Your face is biased.’ Stiles said and then yelled as something large and heavy thumped against the door and the room was filled with snarling.

‘Oh my God.’ Allison said but Derek waved her down.

‘They’re fine.’ He could hear Stiles was giving as good as he was getting. ‘They’re just play fighting.’

‘Oh good.’ Allison said, sounding less than convinced.

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The Hale house looked ominous in the moonlight and Noah was less than enamoured with sitting there in the shadows of the porch, the chill seeping through his coat. On the other side of the front door, Chris was just visible against the moonlight.

They had been sitting for what seemed like hours, but which was in reality only two according to the luminous hands on Noah’s watch. He’d agreed to the patrol in the hopes that they would track down Peter but it was looking like maybe the alpha was sitting this full moon out.

‘This place gives me the creeps.’ He kept his voice low, knowing that werewolf hearing as sensitive even over distance. Derek had confirmed that much to him and he’d been caught sneaking junk food from his hiding places a couple of times by Stiles, who seemed to delight in how he knew exactly where Noah was and what he was doing whenever he was in the house.

‘It’s certainly not the nicest place to stake out.’ Chris agreed. Noah thought about Derek staying here when he first got to town and shivered.

‘Why did you come back?’ he asked. ‘To Beacon Hills.’

‘The same reason Laura Hale came back.’ Chris replied. ‘We heard about the deer, the revenge sigils. It meant someone was about to stir up trouble. Turns out we were right.’ The last words were laced with undeniable bitterness.

‘So why bring your family?’ Noah was genuinely curious. ‘Why not just come take care of it yourself?’

‘I don’t know.’ Chris sounded like he was actually telling the truth. ‘I just did. It’s not like Victoria can’t hold her own. She’s a formidable hunter in her own right. At the moment she’s home protecting the house.’

‘What about Allison?’ Noah asked. ‘Now that she knows.’
'I need to train her properly.' Chris replied. ‘Train her the right way.’ There was so much going unsaid in his rods but Noah could tell what he meant.

‘She’s a good kid.’ he said. ‘She took it all like a champ when I told her.’

‘You were the one?’ Chris turned his head to look at him. ‘I don’t know how I feel about that.’

‘You should feel grateful.’ Noah chuckled. ‘It could have gone very differently otherwise. She’s a strong kid but she’s also smart. She knows right from wrong so you can rest easy knowing you’ve taught her that. She’s also loyal to her friends.’

‘I know.’ Chris admitted. ‘I hadn’t factored that into everything, but she really is. I heard it in the way she spoke this afternoon.’ He shook his head and Noah could almost see the rueful smile on his face. ‘She told me that if it came down to it that she’d have no trouble choosing. I got to say that hurt until I realised just how brave she had to be to tell me that. I wasn’t half as brave at her age and it cost me more than I can ever tell you.’

‘The thing with Peter?’ Noah asked and Chris nodded.

‘Don’t let them lose each other.’ he said and his voice was rough with loss. ‘Stiles and Derek. The thing about mates is that when you sever the bond, you never really recover from it. It’s like you lose part of yourself and there’s just an empty space where you had it.’

Noah thought about Claudia and how every day it felt like someone had cut out his heart for the those first few moments after waking when he had to remember again. Then he thought about Peter at the hospital and the penny dropped.

‘It’s not all the fire, is it?’ he asked. ‘The way he is.’

‘No.’ Chris said. ‘It’s not.’ He sighed. ‘So this is going nowhere. I suggest we try another spot.’

‘Alright.’ Noah winced as his knees popped when he got up. He was not cut out for nighttime stakeouts in the cold anymore. ‘Deaton said we could try retracing his steps, go back to all the places he’s killed.’

‘We could.’ Chris moved to stand next to him. ‘Where is Deaton, by the way?’

‘He said he had to go see someone.’ Noah said. ‘But he was doing his international man of mystery thing, so I don’t know who.’

‘Of course he was.’ There was an undercurrent of dry humour in Chris’ voice. ‘Do you think he practices his poker face in the mirror everyday?’

‘Probably.’ Noah chuckled again and followed him off the porch, more than happy to leave it and its ghosts behind him.

************

Deaton wrapped his hands around his coffee and blew away the steam, listening as the bell on the cafe’s door tinkled. He smelled the warm incense scent of Marin’s perfume even before she got to the table. Her dark eyes were sharp when she looked at him but her face was as neutral as his own. She was dressed for the chill, a thick shawl of wine red wool wrapped around her shoulders over jeans and knee high boots, a practical choice that he knew probably hid a few concealed weapons.

‘Alain.’ She used the French version of his name. ‘You’re looking well.’
Deaton rose enough to kiss her on both cheeks, giving his younger half-sister an appraising look.

‘So are you.’ he replied. ‘What would you like?’ He looked over at the waiter hanging around the counter and he came over.

‘Coffee, black.’ Marin said, barely sparing the man a glance and he scurried off again. Her eyes were fixed on Deaton and he smiled, knowing that she was hiding her curiosity. He knew her well enough to read it in her face, as careful as she was not to let it show.

‘I’m here on business.’ he said. ‘In my capacity as a representative of the Hale pack.’

Marin’s face tightened.

‘There is no Hale pack.’ she replied. ‘Not anymore.’

‘So you know about Laura Hale’s death.’ Deaton should have expected that. After all, Deucalion was an alpha who liked to know just what everyone around him was doing.

‘I heard.’ Marin said. ‘Hunters.’

‘Not exactly.’ Deaton replied, gauging just how much he should reveal.

‘That’s neither here nor there.’ Marin countered. ‘The fact remains that there is no longer a Hale alpha. Just Derek, and he’ll be an omega soon enough.’ Her eyebrow raised. ‘Unless you are here to appeal to Deucalion to take him into his pack?’

‘No.’ Deaton said. ‘I’m here to tell you that I plan to reinstate his claim on Beacon Hills and the associated territory.’

‘You’re retired, brother.’ Marin observed a little too sharply. ‘You’re no longer the Hale pack emissary.’

‘True, but I have come out of retirement for the time being.’ Deaton hid a smile at her obvious annoyance. ‘I’m acting as such until Derek is able to find one of his own.’

‘He’s not an alpha.’ Marin snapped. ‘He has no claim. Not to mention that Deucalion has already submitted his own claim to the Council.’

‘So I heard.’ Deaton replied. ‘Not even a week after Laura Hale’s death was confirmed by the Sheriff’s department.’ He tutted, knowing it would irritate her. ‘Not a very compassionate thing to do in light of Derek having lost his alpha and the only relative he has left.’

‘There’s still Peter.’ Marin corrected and Deaton was pleased that she had obviously not heard about the ensuing disaster. ‘Not to mention that a rogue alpha is running around Beacon Hills. It’s one of the reasons that Deucalion felt he needed to move swiftly.’

‘And yet he’s not offered anything in the way of assistance.’ Deaton said. ‘I have to wonder why that is?’

‘Derek and Laura relinquished their claim and their right to help when they ran to New York.’ Marin said. ‘They could have come to us.’

‘You mean submit to you.’ Deaton replied. ‘Because we both know that would have been the price for their safety. And after what happened with the girl before, I’m sure Laura was not about to trust Deucalion’s judgement with what had happened to their pack.’
Marin remained silent and Deaton knew he’d hit a nerve. Deucalion had probably been waiting for a chance to get his claws into Beacon Hills, but Laura would have had to submit officially. When she left to go to New York, the territory had been left in stasis but not truly abandoned so nobody else had been able to claim it.

‘Why are you telling me this?’ she finally said.

‘Why indeed.’ Deaton replied and sipped his coffee.

************

Kate was angrier than she could ever remember being.

Her confrontations with Chris and her realisation that Allison was pissed at her for something had led her to do a serious amount of stalking and she’d been given an answer for both. The fact that she’d discovered the fact that both her brother and niece were consorting with the enemy was enough to make her want to burn the whole fucking town to the ground, and everything else be damned.

She shifted in her seat, watching the clinic from her SUV concealed under a stand of trees just across the road. Allison had not seen her, her inexperience showing in her failure to make sure she wasn’t being followed. She’d led Kate directly to the vet clinic that her little boyfriend worked at and Kate knew there was something going when the second she’d seen the Hale bitch’s Camaro parked outside along with the blue Jeep of the Sheriff’s son. It looked like Allison was obviously in the know about what was going on in town and that grated Kate more than anything.

She’d wanted to be the one to introduce Allison to her heritage, to show her the way her family had kept the abominations that roamed the world at bay. Allison was strong and clever and stubborn, all the things that Kate saw in herself and she’d looked forward to taking her in hand. Chris would have never been capable of giving Allison the training she deserved, but now it looked like he’d dropped the ball royally on pretty much everything. He had allowed his daughter, the next Argent matriarch, to become involved with the Hale mutt and his new bitch, more than likely through the boy’s connection to Scott McCall. Now they were all there in one place, proof of all her suspicions, and Kate had a plan. It was a good one, and if she played her cards right it would bring Allison right back into her arms.

She smirked to herself and settled in to keep watch.

************

Derek shifted and studied his cards.

‘Got any sixes?’ he asked and heard an annoyed sound from behind the door. A second later, a card slid out from underneath it and Derek picked it up and added it to his hand. Allison huffed a laugh from her perch on the cot, texting Lydia about something for school and smiling.

‘Got any eights?’ Stiles asked and Derek heard the dull sound of him kicking something. ‘Scott, fuck off and go lie down.’

‘Go fish.’ he replied. ‘What’s he doing?’

‘Trying to sit in my lap.’ Stiles grumbled. ‘You didn’t say he was going to turn into an actual puppy.’

After the initial restlessness, Scott had settled down completely. He was still feral, not speaking and growling and pacing most of the time until he tired himself out. There had been no sign or sound of the alpha at all and Derek was pleased to see that Allison’s continued presence had had the desired
effect. It was going to be much easier to keep him calm if they could work on their connection.

‘So long as he’s not eating anything.’ he replied. ‘How are you holding up?’

‘I’m hungry.’ Stiles complained. He’d gone through all the snacks already and had bitterly lamented that Derek wouldn’t open the door to give them more. ‘And I’m horny as fuck. You didn’t say that would happen.’

Derek avoided Allison’s pointed look. He knew what Stiles was feeling. During puberty he’d been off the charts horny at the full moon and it still affected him but this time he’d had too much to think about to really pay attention to his body’s demands. Besides, jacking off with claws was never a good idea.

‘Try not to think about it.’ he said and got a derisive snort in reply.

‘Yeah, thanks a lot Captain Obvious.’ Stiles grumbled. ‘Like that solves the problem.’

Allison giggled, her dimples caving in.

‘He’s crabby.’ she said and Derek smirked.

‘At least mine can form sentences. Yours is one step away from chewing the furniture.’ he said and she narrowed her eyes at him. It felt good to tease her, a dim reflection of the affectionate torture he’d enjoyed inflicting on his sisters. He went back to his cards. ‘Got any nines?’

‘Go fish.’ Stiles muttered in the same tone he’d have used to say *fuck you*.

*So crabby* Allison mouthed at Derek and he let the corners of his mouth tilt up. As far as full moons went, this one was turning out to not be so bad.

**********

‘So all these people were accomplices?’ Chris was examining the rooftop of the video store.

‘It certainly looks like it.’ Noah replied, still puffing a bit after having to climb up using the service ladder. He eyed Chris’ lean form and considered asking him for tips. ‘There’s still a couple of persons of interest running around.’

‘Anyone I know?’ Chris asked and Noah shrugged.

‘I wouldn’t tell you even if they were.’ he replied. ‘Police business.’

‘This is far from being police business anymore and you know it.’ Chris stood up. ‘And if Peter is taking them all out, then we should be keeping track of them.’

‘Harris is the only one I have tabs on.’ Noah said. ‘The other two are mobile. I have no idea where they are right now.’

‘So they could already be dead.’ Chris pointed out.

‘True.’ Noah replied. ‘Although I am sure Peter would have left some sort of sign. He seems to have a flair for the dramatic.’

‘You have no idea.’ Chris said, his lip curling. ‘Dramatic doesn’t even come close.’

‘You knew him pretty well.’ Noah said. ‘I don’t suppose you could tell me anything that would help
us catch him?’

‘Only what I remember.’ Chris mused. ‘He was always incredibly intelligent. I don’t know what six years in a coma would have done to that but I think it’s safe to say, he’s probably not sane right now.’

‘No, I think not.’ Noah agreed. ‘What about places he might be besides the house?’

‘I don’t know.’ Chris said. ‘We used to meet at school or in the preserve. I never went to the house and he never came to mine.’

‘Real Romeo and Juliet story, huh?’ Noah asked and Chris shrugged.

‘I knew what I was feeling was something that my parents would never understand.’ he replied and his voice softened. ‘I know what Allison is going through.’

Noah was about to reply when his phone rang. He took it out and looked at the screen, then answered.

‘Tara?’ He moved to the edge of the roof. ‘What’s wrong?’ He listened intently and then sighed heavily. ‘We’ll be right there.’ he hung up and looked at Chris. ‘So much for a quiet night.’

‘What is it?’ Chris followed him back to the ladder.

‘What we said about the other suspects.’ Noah swung his leg over the edge and started to climb down. ‘It looks like Peter found one of them.’

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Lydia tapped at her keyboard, navigating to yet another journal article. She’d been reading for most of the evening, confined to her room by her parents in the mistaken belief that it would mean she was resting.

‘This is all really contradictory.’ Jackson muttered from where he was sitting on the floor next to her bed. He’d been extremely attentive in the wake of her hospital visit and Lydia was not above using him to help her.

‘That’s the whole problem.’ she said. ‘And it’s why we need to read as much as we can and then cross reference.’ She looked at the pile of print outs laid out on the covers. ‘Try reading those next.’

Jackson twisted around and grabbed the articles, then stopped and looked at her window. Lydia noted the change in his demeanour and frowned.

‘What’s wrong?’ she asked and he held up a hand, shushing her. She frowned, about to retort, when she heard the sound of something outside and it sounded suspiciously like something climbing stealthily up the outside of her house.

‘Shit.’ Jackson hissed and got to his feet. He moved in front of her bed and Lydia would have been touched by the protective gesture if she wasn’t freaking out.

‘Jackson.’ She slid off the bed and held out a hand. ‘Just come here. We can go downstairs.’ Her mom was watching TV and probably wouldn’t be any help at all, but it was something.

‘The sound stopped and they both froze. Jackson moved towards the window, his face set in a look of grim determination and Lydia bit her lip.
'It’s probably just the wind.’ It sounded weak, even to her.

‘Hang on.’ Jackson was now almost at the window and that was when all hell broke loose. The glass shattered, flying through the air and Jackson yelled even as two thick arms, the skin thickly haired and ropey with veins, came through the window and grabbed him. Lydia was frozen in place, her last glimpse of Jackson his wide terrified eyes as he scrabbled at the window frame before he disappeared into the darkness beyond.

‘Lydia!’ Her father’s voice sounded far away as she collapsed to the floor and screamed, the sound reverberating around the room and shattering the mirror over her dressing table.

*********

‘Jesus.’ Noah stared. He’d been at crimes scenes numerous times, had seen things In the Gulf that had made his hair stand on end and sick to his stomach but this was one of the worst. Now standing in one of the parking lots in the part of the preserve accessible to the public, he found himself wishing he’d never left home that evening.

‘We put the fire out.’ Tara was pale, even in the dark. ‘But there wasn’t anything else we could do, so we left him. He’s obviously deceased.’

‘No shit.’ Noah choked back nausea at the smell as Tara walked back to the EMTs. It brought back too many memories, not least standing outside the Hale house and watching as fire crews fought the blaze that had killed Derek’s family. This was nowhere on the same scale but it was still horrifying to look at.

‘I have to say that’s the first time I’ve ever seen that happen.’ Chris said from beside him. Noah had passed him off by telling Tara that he’d been helping patrol for the alleged mountain lion that was being posited as the perpetrator of all the attacks. ‘Do you think he tripped?’

The black humour made Noah’s mouth quirk. He hated to admit it, but he was starting to like him.

‘I’m at a loss as to exactly how that would work.’ he replied. ‘I think maybe he was pushed.’

‘Boss?’ It was Haigh and he had something in his hand, a piece of plastic warped by the heat. ‘Got a driver’s license here. Says his name was Shaun Unger.’

‘And the plot thickens.’ Noah looked at Chris. Haigh frowned and left them to go back to his vehicle and Noah looked around him.

‘I’m guessing Peter decided he wanted to do things a little more directly.’ Chris said. ‘You said he was one of the actual arsonists?’

‘He had form.’ Noah replied. ‘So it would make sense that he was one of the people who set the fire.’ He regarded the unfortunate Unger’s corpse, still smouldering where it had been tipped face first into the burning trash can. The stink of burnt flesh lingered and he made a mental note to discard everything he was wearing before he went home. The last thing Derek needed was to smell this on him.

‘This is a shit show.’ Chris muttered just as Tara came back.

‘So we have reports of him hanging around with another man.’ she said. ‘Apparently one of the rangers cautioned them this afternoon. They were harassing some joggers and generally being threatening.’
‘Nice people.’ Noah put his hands on his hips. ‘Let me guess, the other one is nowhere to be found.’

‘Nope.’ Tara said. ‘The ranger described him as a black male, maybe six-two and around a hundred and eighty pounds in a black jacket and red plaid shirt, jeans. I’ve put out an APB but we don’t have a name.’

‘Lucas Reddick.’ Noah told her. ‘He’s a known associate of Unger’s. It’s a different case I’ve been working.’

‘Okay.’ Tara nodded and went back to call the information in and Noah waited until she was out of earshot before blowing air out through his teeth.

‘He’s certainly tying up loose ends.’ Chris remarked. ‘So that only leaves Harris?’

‘And Kate.’ Noah said. ‘But I’m guessing she’s the biggest catch.’

‘She’ll also be the most difficult.’ Chris told him. ‘Trust me, taking down my sister is going to be a challenge even for an alpha wolf.’

‘And how do we feel about that?’ Noah was curious as to Chris’ reaction.

‘She’s still my sister, Sheriff.’ Chris looked at him, eyes glittering in the reflected firelight. ‘Whatever she’s done, I don’t want her to end up like that.’ He nodded at Unger’s remains. Noah decided not to mention the fact that that was exactly how the Hales had ended up. He needed him on board but the irony was not lost on him.

‘Then I suggest we keep looking,’ he said then frowned when his phone rang. To his surprise, it was Derek and he felt his stomach lurch at the thought that something else might be happening. He stepped away from Chris and answered the call.

‘Derek?’ He fought to keep his voice level.

‘We have a problem.’ Derek sounded calm but Noah had learned that meant nothing. Derek’s default in the face of anything traumatic was to shut down his emotions so this was not a good sign.

‘Is it Stiles?’ he asked.

‘No, he and Scott are fine and so is Allison.’ Derek said and Noah heaved a sigh of relief, although that quickly dissolved as soon as he heard the next words. ‘It’s Jackson.’

‘What about Jackson?’ Noah asked and the tension in his voice caught Chris’ attention. He came over and looked at Noah questioningly.

‘He was at Lydia’s.’ Derek said. ‘She’s just called us. Peter broke through her window and took him.’

‘What in the…’ Noah gritted his teeth. ‘What do you mean he took him.’

‘Exactly that.’ Derek replied. ‘I couldn’t get much else out of her. She’s on the phone with Allison right now.’

‘Jesus Christ.’ Noah pinched the bridge of his nose, envisaging the absolute hell that would break loose when David Whittemore found out that his son had been abducted. ‘Okay. I’m on my way there. I assume her parents have called the police.’ He glanced up and saw Tara running across the clearing towards him. ‘Never mind, I just got my answer. Look, stay where you are and make damn
‘Okay.’ Derek said and hung up and Chris raised his eyebrows at Noah.

‘Are they alright?’ he asked as Tara got to them.

‘Boss, we just got a call…’ she started and Noah put a hand on her arm.

‘I just got the same call.’ he said. ‘I’m on my way.’ He looked at Chris. ‘You coming?’

‘Right behind you.’ Chris replied, already moving to his car.

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‘So now what?’ Allison looked shell shocked. ‘We can’t just sit here.’

‘We’re safer here than anywhere else.’ Derek paced the floor, his unease now well underway to panic. The only thing keeping him from wolfing out was Stiles’ steady heartbeat in the next room. Thankfully he was too busy looking after Scott to have paid any attention to what had just happened. Scott was still out of it completely and they were tussling it out again.

‘Shit.’ Allison was chewing on a nail. ‘Why would the alpha take Jackson?’

‘I honestly don’t know.’ Derek replied. ‘This is all kinds of fucked.’ He kept pacing, wracking his brain for an explanation. ‘Maybe it’s because he was marked the night Lydia was bitten, although that shouldn’t make any sense.’

‘Why not?’ Allison asked.

‘Because it doesn’t work like that.’ Derek told her. ‘Lydia said that the alpha only put its claws in Jackson’s neck. That means all he did was access Jackson’s memories and he probably did that so Jackson wouldn’t remember seeing him, which is what happened. Jackson has no memory of the alpha from that night.’

‘Maybe he saw something he didn’t like.’ Allison said it like she was just throwing out the idea but something clicked in Derek’s head.

‘Or maybe he saw something else.’ He frowned. ‘What do we know about Jackson’s family?’

‘Not much.’ Allison said. ‘I do know he’s adopted.’

‘Oh?’ Derek stopped and looked at her. ‘So who are his real parents?’

‘They’re dead.’ Allison said. ‘They died in a car crash before he was born. Lydia said that his mom was on life support until they could do a C-section. He’s still pretty fucked up about it. What does this have to do with the alpha?’

‘Maybe nothing.’ Derek said and took out his phone. ‘Maybe everything.’

************

Jackson woke up with a start, the pain in his head exploding in white light behind his eyes. He wanted to get up, but he was sore and dizzy and when he looked up he saw that he was in a room somewhere, the roof broken and open to the star and the brilliantly full moon above.

‘I should have known.’ The voice was low, the edges of it rough with an animalistic sound that made
Jackson want to crawl away and curl in on himself to shield his belly. ‘I don’t know how I missed it.’

Jackson tried to speak, but all that came out was a strangled sound. He stared at the shape of the man standing under the part of the roof that remained. It was only a silhouette, and the outline of it seemed to ripple like it couldn’t hold its shape.

‘Please.’ It was a hoarse croak. ‘My father is the district attorney. He’s not going to be happy.’

‘He’s not your father.’ the man snarled and Jackson shrank back away from him.

‘Don’t hurt me.’ he whispered. ‘Please.’

‘I’m not going to hurt you.’ The man turned to face him and all Jackson could see where those burning red eyes that had haunted his nightmares. ‘In fact, I’m going to give you what you want.’

Jackson tried to back away but then the man changed and leaped at him and he screamed as he felt teeth sink into his side, the pain overwhelming him until he lost consciousness and darkness washed over him like a wave that took him down and down and down.
Jackson groaned and tried to open his eyes. He was shivering from the cold, his whole body aching and when he finally managed to open his eyes, he saw that he was staring up at a sky tinged with grey and silver. He had no idea how long he’d been out, but it looked like it was heading to morning. He shook his head, trying to remember what had happened to him but there was nothing but the last thing he could remember was sitting in Lydia’s room with her. He managed to sit up, rubbing at his eyes and cracking his neck. He was still dressed, although his shirt was hiked up on one side and he ran a hand over his exposed skin, feeling and seeing nothing but unblemished skin when he checked.

He got to his feet, unsteady and wavering, before taking a couple of steps. He felt light headed, like he’d taken a bad hit during a game, and he braced himself against the nearest tree. That was when he heard the faint calls and lifted his head.

He squinted at the treeline until he could make out a shape coming towards him, breathing a sigh of relief when he saw the Sheriff coming through the trees. Unfortunately he was being followed by somebody Jackson wasn’t so happy to see and he shrank back against the tree.

‘Jesus Christ.’ The Sheriff was shaking his head, breathing hard. ‘Thank God we found you kid.’ He turned to the man next to him and nodded, before calling in on his radio. Jackson ignored him, watching instead how Derek Hale melted into the trees as soundless as a shadow.

He sat down hard on the ground, his head now swimming as the Sheriff came over to him. He knelt down and rested a hand on Jackson’s shoulder.

‘You okay?’ he asked and Jackson frowned, wrapping his arms around him.

‘I think so?’ He peered over the Sheriff’s shoulder. ‘Where is he going?’

‘To try and find who took you last night.’ The Sheriff’s blue eyes were sharp. ‘What do you remember?’

‘Nothing.’ Jackson replied. ‘What happened to me?’

‘Dammit.’ The Sheriff sighed. ‘Look, let’s get you up. Your parents are worried sick.’
‘That can’t be right.’ Jackson could help the bitterness in his words. ‘It’s not like they care.’

‘Crap.’ The Sheriff looked more sympathetic than Jackson expected. ‘Okay, One thing at a time. Let’s get you to the hospital so we can have you looked at.’

Jackson gave him a shaky nod and let himself be pulled to his feet. His questions would have to wait and getting inside sounded like a really good idea.

***********

Derek got to the ridge, scrambling up to where Stiles and Scott were waiting.

‘You found him?’ Stiles asked and Derek nodded.

‘Your dad’s got him.’ he replied. ‘You two find anything?’

‘Not really.’ Stiles shoved his hands in his pockets. ‘The trail kind of disappears when you get to the ravine over that side.’ He jerked his chin in the direction he meant and Derek growled in frustration. They had been tracking since they’d been able to leave the clinic. Chris and Allison had joined them and were still in the preserve somewhere, making Scott antsy. Still, Derek wanted to keep him close. This was a good opportunity to train him a little bit and keep an eye on him, and Stiles could stand to do a bit more work on his tracking. The thing was, Peter was a sneaky fucker and this was some of his best work. Derek had been led down false trails and turned in circles and finding Jackson had taken almost five hours.

‘He can mask his scent.’ He huffed and lifted his head, scenting the air. ‘It’s something we learn how to do.’

‘Useful.’ Stiles muttered. ‘So now what?’

‘We keep looking.’ Derek said and started down the other side of the ridge.

***********

Allison checked her phone, frowning when she saw she had no signal. They were deep in the preserve and Chris was still marching ahead with purpose, a sign they were not going to be done any time soon. She stuck her phone back in her pocket and jogged after him, nearly running into him when he stopped abruptly.

‘See that.’ He was pointing at the ground and Allison knelt to see the clear imprint of a paw in the muddy ground. It was filled with water leached from the ground and she felt a strange urge to touch it but even as she moved, Chris caught her arm.

‘What?’ she asked, looking up at him.

‘There’s a legend.’ he said. ‘That one of the ways you can become a werewolf is by drinking the water from its paw print.’

‘Does that actually work?’ she asked, getting up and dusting her hands off on her jeans.

‘Maybe.’ Chris shrugged. ‘I’ve never felt the need to test it.’

They kept walking and he pointed out signs to her, bent vegetation and signs that the alpha had passed that way.

‘He’s different to Derek.’ Allison remarked. ‘And to Stiles and Scott.’
'Completely.' Chris said. ‘An alpha wolf is formidable in a normal state, but Peter’s gone feral. That makes him incredibly dangerous and I want your word you won’t try to take him on by yourself.’ He gave her a knowing look. ‘I realise you want to help your friends, but they are not equipped to deal with him.’

‘It’s so strange.’ Allison remarked. ‘I mean, I get he wants revenge but he’s attacking his own nephew.’

‘I’m betting that right now, he’s justifying it by saying he’s getting revenge for his family.’ Chris replied. ‘But I think it’s gone beyond that now and it’s about building a pack. Alpha’s have a biological imperative to build a pack and they gain strength from their betas. Stiles was the beginning, but now he’s bonded to Derek which means Peter’s influence is lessened and Lydia is immune. Scott is him trying to right the balance and if he’s bitten Jackson, it means he’s trying to gain enough strength for something big.’

‘Oh.’ Allison stopped, her heart picking up in apprehension.

‘Oh is right.’ Chris sighed. ‘So what we need to do it try to get you up to speed as fast as possible but also keep it under wraps. I don’t want Kate influencing you.’

‘You’ve never liked her.’ Allison said and saw the surprise on his face before he tamped it down. ‘I always got the feeling that her and Mom were closer.’

‘They share ideals.’ Chris said. ‘Probably ones that you’re not really going to approve of.’

Allison fell quiet and kept walking, taking her time before she spoke again.

‘So if werewolves and banshees are real, what else is out there?’ she asked and Chris huffed a short laugh.

‘That is a very big question.’ he replied. ‘I know only what we have in the bestiary, but there’s no saying where the limits are.’

‘We have a bestiary?’ Allison asked, curiosity sparking.

‘It belongs to your grandfather.’ Chris said. ‘He’s very protective of that information. The Argent line specialises in werewolves, but he’s always tried to get his hands in everything.’ He didn’t sound complimentary.

‘Werewolf specialists?’ Allison asked. ‘Wow, how many types of hunters are there?’

‘Well, the Winchesters specialise in demons.’ Chris replied. ‘I’ve had a couple of dealings with them. Then there’s the Order of the Axe and Cross, but they’ve been having some sort of internal power struggle. I met one of their witch hunters once when I was a kid. His name was Kaulder. Not a particularly sociable individual that one. He’s still around from what I hear.’

‘So there are many of us?’ Allison was fascinated.

‘Yeah.’ Chris glanced at her as she fell into step beside him. ‘Our family is very old and we’re renowned because we were the first family of werewolf hunters. What do you know about the Beast of Gevaudan?’

‘Just that it was a monster that terrorised France.’ Allison replied.

‘Well, it was actually a feral alpha.’ Chris told her. ‘And your ancestor was the one to kill it.’
‘Wow.’ Allison felt an odd sort of pride at that. ‘So we saved a lot of people, right?’

‘We did.’ Chris said. ‘But we’ve also taken lives and that is something you must never forget. We do not attack in aggression. We follow the Code. Nous chassons ceux qui nous chassent.’

‘We hunt those who hunt us.’ Allison translated. ‘But Kate didn’t, did she?’

‘No.’ Chris’ face darkened. ‘She also broke the Code by killing children and human members of the Hale pack. We don’t do that.’

‘Got it.’ Allison said. ‘How can we be sure that she’s the only one that does that though?’ She watched her father and saw his shoulders tense.

‘I’m starting to ask myself the same thing.’ he replied and kept walking.

***********

‘Well, he seems fine.’ Melissa said, leaning against the wall just down from the room they had Jackson in. ‘His parents are with him right now.’

‘Good.’ Noah sighed, feeling exhaustion wash over him. It had been non-stop and he was feeling his lack of sleep and food.

‘You look terrible.’ Melissa said, a small smile creeping onto her face. ‘You need to get some rest.’

‘I’m going home after this.’ Noah said. ‘I’ve left Tara running the ship. The boys are coming back later and we can all get some down time.’

‘How was he?’ Melissa lowered her voice and Noah smiled.

‘Stiles said he did a remarkable impression of a Labrador retriever.’ he replied.

‘Oh God.’ Melissa snickered. ‘Of course he would.’ She put a hand on Noah’s arm. ‘Thank you for taking care of him.’

‘Thank Derek for that.’ Noah replied. ‘He’s out there with them now, trying to tain them apparently. Whatever the hell that includes.’

‘I can only guess.’ Melissa replied, her smile now wide. ‘I don’t envy him having to wrangle both of them.’

‘Neither do I.’ Noah chuckled.

***********

‘Jesus fuck.’ Derek wanted to claw his own face off. ‘Can you two just focus for five minutes?’

Stiles and Scott looked at him from where they were tussling on the ground, all fangs and puppy growls. Their matching looks of faux innocence were infuriating.

‘He started it.’ Scott whined. ‘He said Allison’s eyes aren’t as pretty as yours.’

‘They aren’t.’ Stiles wriggled, trying to get out the headlock Scott had him in by gnawing his arm. ‘In fact, Derek’s just prettier all round.’

Derek put on his sternest face to hide the fact that he was possibly melting on the inside. He certainly
couldn’t ignore the smug preening his wolf was doing at Stiles’ comment.

‘Now is not the time.’ he said, hands on hips. ‘Get up and stop acting like cubs.’

‘Fine.’ Scott muttered, letting Stiles go so they could both scramble to their feet. There were few more half-hearted swipes but then they settled down, stomping along behind him so loudly that Derek knew the alpha would be able to hear them coming from a mile away. He breathed in deeply, lamenting that he had nobody to help him do this and finding a new appreciation for how his pack had dealt with the younger members during their first shifts. That line of thought brought up Cora, her sweet dark eyes and baby fangs and Derek felt a wave of longing go through him like it hadn’t in a while.

Stiles was immediately at his side, pressing up against him with his honey-gold eyes full of concern.

‘You okay?’ he asked and Derek sighed and nuzzled his head, scenting him gently.

‘Just memories.’ he replied and Stiles whined in sympathy. He nosed at Derek’s cheek until Derek turned his head enough to be kissed and then latched on like a limpet. Derek let him, accepting the comfort of touch and affection and ignoring the gagging noises behind them. Instead he pushed just a little, licking softly at Stiles’ lower lip and getting a mouthful of tongue for his efforts. Stiles hadn’t been lying about his full moon induced arousal and he wriggled up against Derek, his scent turning syrupy sweet.

‘God, you two are so gross.’ Scott grumbled, stomping off into the trees until something whizzed past his head and buried itself in the trunk of the tree next to him and making him yelp like someone had lit his tail on fire.

Derek fended Stiles off and saw Allison lowering her bow, her dark eyes sparkling with mischief.

‘Gotch’a.’ She gave Scott a dimpled grin that was completely unrepentant. ‘That could have been your head.’

‘What the hell, Allison?’ Scott yelled and then immediately fell silent when Chris moved into sight next to her.

‘Good shot.’ he said approvingly and then nodded at Derek. ‘Hale.’

‘Chris.’ Derek replied, moving in front of a bristling Stiles. ‘You find anything?’

‘No.’ Chris said, coming down into the clearing and giving them a pointed look. ‘But then it’s not like we’re tracking a novice here.’

‘No.’ Derek agreed. ‘And he knows this place better than both of us.’

‘And he’s a sneaky asshole.’ Stiles added, worming his way under Derek’s arm. He gave Allison a gleeful thumb’s up for her shot and she cackled back at him. Derek noticed how Chris’ face tightened at their interaction, secretly delighted that the hunter was discomforted.

‘I’ve checked the house, the tunnels and the boundary.’ he said. ‘Peter’s trail goes in and out, but he’s more than likely masking right now.’

‘I’d heard you can do that.’ Chris looked thoughtful. ‘It must come in handy.’

‘It does.’ Derek replied and then nodded at Scott and Stiles. ‘We’ve been working on tracking, but I think we’ve probably had enough for one day.’
‘Oh thank God.’ Scott stifled a yawn. ‘I really need to sleep.’

‘And eat.’ Stiles nudged Derek in the ribs. ‘I need food. So much of it.’

‘Can I go with them?’ Allison asked and Chris opened his mouth as if to say she couldn’t and then, to Derek’s astonishment, he nodded.

‘Be home before dark.’ he told her and she kissed him on the cheek and skipped over to take Scott’s hand.

Derek lifted a hand and Chris nodded and retreated into the trees, his footsteps quickly fading away. Next to him, Stiles gave a pleased growl.

‘So where to?’ he asked.

‘Back to Stiles’ house.’ Derek kept listening for Chris but the man was almost as silent as a wolf himself.

‘Yay.’ Allison dragged Scott over. ‘And then movie night? Lydia said that she’s staying with Jackson tonight. He’s fine, no injuries or anything but he’s confused about what happened.’

‘The alpha probably took his memories again.’ Derek started walking, Stiles taking his hand and falling into step with him.

‘Why’d he take him in the first place?’ he asked.

‘No idea.’ Derek replied. ‘Apart from his connection to us.’

‘Derek thought it might be a family connection but that turned out to be a dead end.’ Allison said and Scott looked at her in surprise.

‘Are you two working together now?’ he asked and Allison nodded, looking hesitant.

‘The Argents and the Hales used to have a treaty.’ she said. ‘I’ve been doing my own research into my family. Once we had a good working relationship and I would like us to build that again.’ Her voice was sure but her scent was apprehensive and Derek appreciated the courage it had taken to even bring the subject up.

‘I don’t see why not.’ he said to her and she smiled gratefully at him. ‘It would be good to have each other’s backs.’

‘So do I.’ He replied and then held out a hand. He had no idea why he was making the gesture, just that it felt right. ‘A truce.’

Allison lifted her chin in reply and took his hand firmly.

‘A truce.’ She looked around herself, shivering and Derek had to say that he was pretty sure he hadn’t imagined the matching shiver go down his spine.

‘Okay.’ Stiles was also looking around him and even Scott seemed spooked. ‘What the hell was that? I wasn’t the only one who felt that, was I?’

‘No.’ Allison let go of Derek’s hand and rubbed along her arm. ‘It was like when you accidentally zap someone.’

Derek felt something pull at the edge of his memory, stories his grandmother and great aunts had
spoken of and tales of how the preserve was alive with more than just wolves.

‘Come on.’ He took Stiles hand. ‘Let’s get out of here.’

*************

Victoria Argent was not a patient woman. She was also not a stupid woman and she was getting
tired of Chris’ little lies and mysterious disappearances of late, but then again she’d never really cared
for him as a person. He’d been a means to an end and a serviceable husband, but Victoria had
married him to get access to one of the most powerful hunter clans in the world and not because she
loved him.

Allison had been the best part of her bargain, her daughter and pride. She’d trained well, in spite of
Chris’ ridiculous notion that they wait until after graduation to induct Allison into the Hunters.
Victoria had made sure she’d had gymnastics practice, archery training and had taken Allison to the
shooting range herself for the first time. Allison had never questioned how well she’d taken to all of
these things and had assumed it was for her own pleasure and preparation for joining the family
business and she was right in one sense.

That had been the thing that had tipped Victoria’s tolerance. She could abide by her husband
assisting the authorities if the end game was to destroy the alpha. She was even willing to watch him
estrange his own sister (and hadn’t she warned Kate and Gerard that burning the Hale mutts in their
own house would have repercussions) in light of his own misguided sense of guilt. But now he was
taking his daughter with him into the preserve the night after the alpha had killed two vagrants and
abducted the son of the district attorney. Her contact in the Sheriff’s department had been very good
for passing on information in exchange for a little financial encouragement and the minor sexual
favours she was willing to bestow. Victoria was well aware of her attraction for a certain type of man
that begged to be dominated and unlike Kate, she always chose her targets wisely. She had no desire
to fuck underage werewolves for kicks.

The sound of her sister-in-law coming into the kitchen made her glance briefly in her direction. Kate
was irritated, her movements brusque. Victoria smirked into her cup of tea, feeling little sympathy.
The fact that Kate had hoped to simply breeze into town and kill the last Hale pup was perfectly
ridiculous. Derek Hale wasn’t a frightened teenage boy anymore, and now he had started building
alliances and making friends had strengthened his position. He’d been living with the Stilinskis and
working with the Sheriff, spending time with the awkward boy that was best friends with the sorry
specimen her daughter had brought home to introduce as her boyfriend. He’d even resurrected the
relationship with the Hale’s former emissary.

No, this situation needed more than just brute force and going in shooting to sort it out.

‘You were out late last night.’ she remarked and Kate snorted and poured herself a cup of coffee.

‘He’s getting bold.’ She leaned against the counter. ‘He took the Whittemore boy right from the
home of the Martin girl.’

‘Christopher took Allison out with him this morning.’ Victoria turned to look at her. ‘He thinks we’re
incapable of noticing.’

‘Has he told her?’ Kate asked, sipping her coffee. She seemed shiftier than normal and Victoria
frowned.

‘What do you know?’ she asked. ‘And don’t try to lie to me, Katherine. I am not your brother.’
Kate straightened up and her blue eyes were icy. Victoria smiled at her. She’d always intimidated Kate and felt no fear when she looked at her. Kate’s psychopathic behavior had never been able to stand up to her own razor sharp intelligence or ruthlessness. Victoria might not hunt as often as she had before, preferring to play the role of doting mother and wife, but she was formidable in her own right.

‘Fine.’ Kate snapped, her mouth twisting. Victoria was always amazed by people who thought Kate beautiful when her cruelty was so apparent and so ugly. ‘I found out that Allison’s little playmate got himself bitten. Not only that, but he’s playing nice with the Hale dog and his bitch.’

‘Hmm.’ Victoria moved to place her tea cup on the counter. ‘So the alpha now has two new betas.’

‘Maybe three.’ Kate said. ‘We don’t know about the Whittemore boy yet. He’s still in the hospital.’

‘We need to step things up.’ Victoria looked back out the window at where Chris’ SUV had just pulled up. ‘I think he’s told Allison.’

‘I guessed that already.’ Kate frowned. ‘The question is just how much does she know?’ Her normally arrogant demeanour was not in evidence and Victoria smirked. Allison was Kate’s one weak spot and even the thought of her beloved niece taking sides with the enemy must be killing her.

‘Worried she’ll find out the truth about you?’ She chuckled. ‘That she’s going to know just what lurks inside your head?’

‘If she does, then she’ll find out about you too.’ Kate snapped. ‘Your hands are hardly clean.’

‘No.’ Victoria turned back to the window and watched Chris climb out of the car. ‘And that’s why we need to do something about this.’ She heard Kate breathe in sharply and knew it was partly astonishment at Victoria’s implication that she would help and partly excitement. Kate always did get off on hurting people, not that werewolves could be considered people but the point still stood.

‘What did you have in mind?’ She moved to stand next to Victoria.

‘Something to get rid of all our little problems and bring Allison back where she belongs.’ Victoria told her and Kate nodded.

‘I may have a plan.’ she said.

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Stiles sat and looked towards the window. He’d brought Scott and Allison back to his house while Derek had gone to check in with Deaton he was unsettled waiting for him to come back. Scott and Allison were in the kitchen making pizza, their voices a low murmur on the edge of Stiles’ hearing. Derek had been teaching him to zone out of people’s conversations, a useful thing considering that becoming a werewolf hadn’t cured him of ADHD completely, although the symptoms had been mitigated. He’d gone off the Adderall because it had no effect anymore, but learning to focus on his bond with Derek had helped. He closed his eyes and reached out, feeling along the thread between them. Derek was calm, no sign of stress and that eased Stiles’ mind a little but not completely.

The night before had gone smoothly, with Scott showing no ill effects from his first full moon and whatever scratches and bites he’d inflicted on Stiles healing completely. It had distracted him as well, but now he was restless and wanted Derek back so he could wrap himself in those strong arms and breathe in Derek’s forest scent. It had been getting stronger, the pull towards him, and Stiles hadn’t been kidding about the arousal he felt. In spite of everything that had been happening, it wouldn’t go away and rippled like low grade electricity through his blood and made him want. He sighed and
buried his nose in the sweater he’d swiped from Derek’s room after his shower. It was soft maroon wool, Derek’s scent thick in the folds under the arms and around the neckline because he hadn’t washed it yet.

His phone buzzed and Stiles leaned over to pick it up, seeing Lydia’s name on the screen. It still seemed surreal that only four short weeks before he’d wished like hell for her to call him and now she was one of his most frequently used contacts but not for the reasons he’d hoped for.

‘Hey.’ He shifted the phone to his other hand and went back to sniffing the sweater. ‘How is he?’

‘He’s fine.’ Lydia sounded tired but relieved. ‘There’s no sign of a bite and Dr Deaton said he’s showing none of the symptoms of turning so it looks like he wasn’t bitten.’

‘That makes no sense at all.’ Stiles frowned. ‘Then why did he take him?’

‘I don’t know.’ Lydia replied. ‘It’s so weird. Your dad was here to take a statement and we’re making it look like an animal attack but I really don’t know how that’s going to fly. Jackson’s parents are not convinced.’

‘What about yours?’ Stiles asked and Lydia snorted.

‘Please.’ she said. ‘My mom had drunk like a whole bottle of merlot so she’s not exactly being counted as a reliable witness. I managed to make it look like Jackson had been leaning out of the window so that was something.’ She sighed heavily on the other side. ‘Dr Deaton wants me to go to the clinic after school tomorrow to talk about me and the...well I guess you could call it a vision. He wants to see if we can bring it back under more controlled circumstances and make some sense of what I saw.’

‘Is that even safe?’ Stiles asked, perking up when his ears caught the sound of the Camaro’s distinctive growl. Derek was still a few blocks away but at least he knew he was coming and he relaxed into the couch.

‘I honestly don’t know.’ Lydia replied. ‘Look, I need to go but tell the others, okay? I need to go fend off Danny.’

‘What, why?’ Stiles asked. ‘What does he have to do with anything?’

‘You’re kidding, right?’ Lydia’s judgy face translated very well through her intonation. ‘He’s almost as smart as we are Stiles, and he’s Jackson’s best friend. He’s been at the hospital with me and he’s been asking some very awkward questions hence the damage control.’

‘Shit.’ Stiles chewed on a nail. ‘Okay, so how likely is he to blab?’

‘Who the fuck knows?’ Lydia huffed. ‘Look, I’ll handle him. Just keep an eye on everyone else and tell Allison we still need to sort out how we’re getting to the dance on Friday.’

‘Seriously?’ Stiles grinned. ‘That’s what you’re worried about?’

‘My social standing at school has taken a knock, Stiles.’ Lydia was now sniffany as hell. ‘I need to get it back.’

She hung up without another word and left him staring at his phone, looking up only when the Camaro pulled in next to the Jeep. Derek got out and Stiles was up like a shot and at the door before he’d even got to the porch.

‘I just had a call from Lydia.’ he said, standing aside so Derek could come in. ‘She said that Jackson
wasn’t bitten.’

‘No.’ Derek shrugged out of his jacket. ‘Deaton said the same thing. There’s no sign of a bite apparently and he’s not turning so I have no idea what the hell is going on.’ He sniffed the air appreciatively. ‘That pizza? I’m starving.’

‘Yeah, I got extra.’ Stiles followed him into the living room. ‘Danny’s been asking questions too.’

‘Which one is Danny again?’ Derek asked, his head tilted like a quizzical puppy and Stiles was seized with a sudden and terrible urge to jump him.

‘Jackson’s best friend. The one that suggested the closet threesome.’ he replied, sidling closer and wondering if he could get Derek to agree to a quickie upstairs.

‘Oh him.’ Derek looked thoughtful. ‘Is he trustworthy?’

‘Maybe.’ Stiles replied and pounced. Derek was clearly not expecting the sneak attack and went over onto the couch in a flail of long legs and Stiles growled in triumph as he got him pinned, diving in for a kiss before Derek could shake him off. Derek’s growl rumbled through his chest, but he kissed back and smelled happy so Stiles decided to press his suit and coaxed his mouth open, diving in and taking complete advantage of his position. Derek made a warning sound but that didn’t stop him from sticking his tongue in Stiles’ mouth in retaliation or from trying to work his hands under the back of Stiles’ jeans while he bucked up into him, both of which Stiles considered excellent developments. Of course that was precisely when Allison walked in and stopped, giggling at the sight of them tangled up on the couch.

‘Pizza’s ready.’ she said, folding her arms and grinning at them. ‘But if you’re busy…’

‘Nope.’ Derek managed to get enough leverage to tip Stiles onto the floor and then offered him a hand up. ‘Pizza takes precedence.’

‘Asshole.’ Stiles muttered and rubbed his backside. ‘You’ll pay for that later.’

‘We’ll see.’ Derek gave him his most annoying smile, the one with all the teeth. He shoved Stiles in the direction of the kitchen. ‘Go.’

Scott was busy at the counter, taking pizzas out the oven and dumping them back on their cardboard boxes. He gave them all a grin over his shoulder and kept at it.

‘That is a lot of pizza.’ Derek remarked and looked at Stiles with a raised eyebrow.

‘We didn’t want to run out.’ Stiles protested and went to snag a piece from under Scott’s elbow. He stuffed the pizza in his mouth, making happy noises at the combination of cheese and grease. ‘Ally, Lydia wants to know what you guys are doing about transport on Friday.’

‘I’d completely forgotten about that.’ Allison was setting out glasses and bottles of soda on the table. ‘I know she wanted to do the limo thing, but maybe not.’

‘Are we still going?’ Scott looked hopeful and ridiculous because he still the oven mitts on. ‘I thought we might have to miss it.’

‘No.’ Allison smiled at him. ‘I think we all need a break.’ She looked at Stiles. ‘Are you two coming?’

‘Um. I don’t know’ Stiles glanced at Derek to gauge his reaction. He hadn’t really brought the
subject up and seeing how Derek’s eyebrows were doing their I’m not sure this is a good idea configuration, he was now worried that maybe having a boyfriend wouldn’t be automatic entrance to school social activities.

‘You can’t miss the dance, Stiles.’ Scott sounded appalled. ‘It’s important.’

‘Yeah.’ Allison was now giving Derek a meaningful look. ‘And you have someone to go with.’

Derek’s eyes widened in alarm and Stiles suddenly realised that if he’d been sixteen when the fire happened and then gone on the run with Laura, it probably meant that Derek hadn’t gone to many dances.

‘It’s fine.’ he said, jumping all over his disappointment at the idea. ‘You don’t have to. It’s just a stupid dance.’

Derek breathed in sharply and then his eyebrows drew down so much they looked like they were joined up.

‘Yeah, we can go.’ The words came out too quickly and Stiles could smell the tinge of embarrassment in his scent. ‘I mean I’ve never actually gone to one…’

‘Seriously?’ Scott looked astonished. ‘How did you never go to a dance?’

The pain on Derek’s face was there and gone so quickly Stiles was left asking himself if he’d even seen it, but before he had a chance to say anything Derek was out the back door.

‘Scott!’ Allison admonished, glaring at him when he looked at her in confusion.

‘What?’ Scott threw his hands up. ‘I didn’t mean anything by it.’

‘Shit.’ Stiles got up and walked out the back door. Derek was sitting on the bottom step and Stiles closed the door behind him and went to sit next to him, leaning against Derek’s shoulder.

‘Sorry.’ he said. ‘Scott tends to engage his mouth first sometimes. I think one of the reasons we’re friends is because we both have no filter.’

‘It’s okay.’ Derek’s eyes were fixed on his hands. ‘Laura and I moved around too much before I graduated and I never really wanted to take part in any of that stuff. I always felt like it didn’t mean anything.’ He sighed and sat back, looking at Stiles. ‘If you want to go we can go. I’ll even buy you one of those stupid corsage things.’ His scent was warmer now and he took Stiles’ hand. ‘But you have to promise not to laugh at me if I dance.’

‘Dude.’ Stiles was bursting with happiness and he didn’t bother trying to hide his smile. ‘What the hell do you think I look like?’

‘I’m imagining something that looks like a cross between an octopus and a windmill.’ Derek’s sidelong smile made Stiles’ heart start thumping even as he pretended to be affronted.

‘Fuck you, dude.’ he laughed and bumped him with his shoulder. ‘Now I’m thinking I should go stag.’

‘No, you’re not.’ Derek said, his arm sneaking around Stiles’ waist and pulling him in. Stiles had just enough time to clock the blue gleam in his eyes before Derek kissed him. This time it was soft and full of intent and he fell into it happily, grabbing onto Derek’s arm and keeping him there. Derek growled softly and Stiles opened his mouth, working entirely on instinct and whimpering a little as
Derek took control and got more forceful. Stiles responded, mimicking his movements and mapping out his mouth in turn. His heart was racing, his body fully on board with where this was going until Derek pulled back, eyes back to green and noticeably out of breath.

‘If we don’t go back in, Scott’s going to eat all the pizza.’ he complained and Stiles huffed, but let himself be pulled to his feet.

‘Fine.’ he countered. ‘But I’d better get some action later, dude.’

Derek laughed and flashed his eyes at him.

‘Get your ass inside.’ he said and shoved him through the door. The sight that greeted them made Stiles burst out laughing because he’d never seen Scott look so guilty before and when Derek growled at him, he whined.

‘Dude.’ He took in the mostly empty pizza boxes and an appalled Allison. ‘How?’

‘I was hungry.’ Scott protested and looked at her for backup but she just collapsed in giggles.

‘Fucking cubs.’ Derek muttered and went to get his phone. Stiles went to the table and sat down, grabbing the final piece of pepperoni before Scott could.

‘So I found out something interesting today.’ Allison said. ‘Apparently we have a bestiary.’

‘Isn’t that illegal?’ Scott asked and Stiles rolled his eyes at him.

‘That’s beastiality, Scott.’ he replied. ‘So what, like a guide to supernatural creatures great and small?’

‘Yeah.’ Allison lifted her feet to rest on the edge of her chair. ‘It belongs to my family, has done for centuries. Apparently we go back a really long way. My dad said that my grandfather has it.’

‘Pity.’ Stiles listened with half an ear as Derek ordered more pizza in the living room. ‘That would be super useful.’

‘It would,’ Allison sighed. ‘But I haven’t seen him in years. He and my dad kind of fell out and then we just stopped visiting.’

‘I’m betting I can guess why.’ Stiles picked at the congealed cheese on the box in front of him. He looked up as Derek came back into the room. ‘Hey, Allison’s grandfather has a bestiary.’

‘That still sounds so wrong.’ Scott muttered.

‘Oh?’ Derek looked interested. ‘Can you get your hands on it?’

‘I don’t know.’ Allison said. ‘Why?’

‘It’s a great resource.’ Derek replied, grabbing Stiles glass of soda and downing half. ‘My family’s one was lost in the fire.’

‘Oh.’ Allison bit her lip. ‘I mean I can try. Maybe my dad can.’

‘I would love to read that.’ Stiles mused. ‘The internet can only get you so far sometimes.’ He looked at Derek. ‘Did you have lots of books?’

‘Yeah.’ Derek leaned against the counter. ‘Peter was the loremaster for our family. His collection
was pretty big and I’m not unconvinced that everything he had was in the house either.’

‘It’s a pity he’s crazy.’ Stiles said and Derek shook his head at him.

‘He’s not crazy.’ he replied. ‘He’s close to feral. That’s why he’s biting. He needs a pack, to be strong to keep taking revenge.’

‘Isn’t it the same thing?’ Allison asked.

‘Not really.’ Derek replied. ‘Being feral means giving into the animal. Peter’s lost his anchor, lost his pack and spent six years trying to heal. I’m not surprised he’s like this, but that doesn’t mean I don’t hold him responsible for his actions. He killed Laura for her power. That’s pretty indicative that he knows what he’s doing, feral or not.’

‘So what do we do with him when we catch him?’ Scott asked.

‘Good question.’ Stiles looked at Derek and knew they were both thinking about what Deaton had said about a cure. Now there were two of them though, so he had no idea how that would work.

‘We wouldn’t need to kill him necessarily.’ Allison ventured. ‘Maybe we could contain him?’ She glanced at Derek. ‘If that was something you wanted. My dad was telling me about mountain ash.’

‘We’d need someone who could use it though.’ Derek said. ‘Like Deaton.’

‘Hang on, what’s mountain ash?’ Scott asked.

‘It’s a tree also called rowan.’ Allison said. ‘It can be used to make a barrier that supernatural creatures can’t cross.’

‘Cool.’ Scott said. ‘So we lure him out and then use it to catch him.’

‘Not that simple, Scott.’ Stiles said. ‘We need a plan, not just to go running in like we did last time.’

‘Agreed.’ Derek nodded. ‘Although now we’ve got plenty of people who could help. The thing is, he’s killed off pretty much everyone on the list now so bait is an issue and I’m not crazy about using you two.’

‘Except for Harris.’ Stiles said. ‘I’m down with using him as bait.’

‘Yeah.’ Scott brightened. ‘And he’s totally going to be chaperoning the dance on Friday.’

‘He is.’ Allison was grinning. ‘And we’ll all just happen to be there. I bet if I ask I can get my dad to chaperone as well.’

‘No.’ Scott’s face changed in a second. ‘That is not a good idea. What if we want to make out? It’ll be weird with him glaring at us.’

‘Actually he’d be better outside.’ Stiles said. ‘He could keep lookout with Deaton and my dad.’

‘I agree.’ Derek said. He tilted his head again. ‘In fact you can ask him now.’

Stiles followed suit, tracking the cruiser down the road and the progression of his father into the house, smirking at his look of disappointment at the empty boxes.

‘Don’t worry.’ he said. ‘Scott ate it all so Derek ordered more.’
‘Oh thank God.’ Noah said, coming over and ruffling his hair before he kissed the top of his head. ‘I need carbs and sleep and to never have to see a man burning upside down in a trash can ever again.’

‘Kind of poetic though.’ Stiles said. ‘You have to admit that it’s kind of perfect karmic payback for what he did.’

‘Did they find the other one?’ Derek asked and Noah shook his head, going to the cupboard and grabbing another glass, filling it and taking a long drink before he answered.

‘No.’ He belched softly. ‘If Peter got him, he probably dragged him somewhere else. Melissa called my just now though. They’re releasing Jackson from the hospital and he’s signed off school for a few days. Lydia was going with him. You kids have any luck in the preserve?’

‘Nothing.’ Derek said. ‘He’s making it really hard for us to even get a scent.’

‘Which is why we had an idea.’ Stiles interjected. ‘So it’s the dance on Friday.’

‘Oh God.’ Noah looked apprehensive. ‘Please tell me it’s not going to look like a scene from Carrie.’

‘Okay, no hear us out.’ Stiles said. ‘So the only one left from the lust is Harris, right? He’s going to be chaperoning the dance. If Peter’s dead set on avenging his family, he’s the last one to go after.’

‘Apart from Kate.’ Noah said with a quick glance at Allison. ‘So what’s the plan?’

‘We use Harris as bait.’ Stiles said. ‘And then we try and trap him when he makes a move. If he doesn’t come for Harris, he’s sure to come after me or Scott if we’re there as well.’

‘That does not make me want to sign off on this, Stiles.’ Noah narrowed his eyes at him.

‘It’s a good idea though.’ Stiles protested. ‘And with you helping us, we can maybe not burn half the school down again.’

‘That is a valid point.’ Noah said. ‘I’ll talk it over with Deaton.’ He looked at Derek. ‘I’m assuming you’ll be escorting my son, Derek.’

‘Yes, sir.’ Derek was trying to play it cool but Stiles could hear his heart picking up and he grinned. Who knew his sourwolf was a secret romantic that went all blushy as the mention of taking him to a dance. He had a brief moment of envisaging what Derek would be like at senior prom, his graduation and beyond but then broke himself out of it when he started thinking of barefoot beach weddings.

The pizza arrived not long after and this time Scott was relegated to the other side of the kitchen where he proceeded to sulk while they ate. When they were done, Noah patted his belly in satisfaction.

‘I think I’m going to hit the hay.’ he said. ‘I’ve got tomorrow off but I’m back in tonight, so nobody is to wake me for the next few hours at least.’

‘Got it.’ Stiles said. ‘We’re just going to hang out and watch some movies.’

‘Not too late though.’ Noah was already yawning. ‘You kids have fun.’

They waved him off and Stiles listened to the sound of his footsteps going up and then the sound of his door closing, followed by the shower. Derek was up and cleaning off the table with Allison and Scott. He gave Stiles a small smile at the way he was tracking his father, understanding because he’d told Stiles that he’d done the same to Laura after the fire.
They went into the living room, Stiles and Derek taking the couch and Allison getting the armchair with Scott leaning back against her legs. Stiles had put on The Wolfman, bought as a joke the previous week just to annoy Derek, but the excitement of the day and the full moon had him yawning before Benicio Del Toro even arrived at his family seat. He shifted and Derek moved with him so they were both lying down. Derek hooked one arm around his waist and nuzzled into the back of his neck and Stiles could hear his breathing and heartbeat slow. Across from them, Allison was curled up under one of his mom’s lap rugs and Scott’s head was lolling as he dozed.

It was the most peaceful it had been in days and Stiles gave in. He closed his eyes, tuning in to his father’s steady heartbeat above him and Derek’s behind him and slept.

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Peter Hale stood and watched the Stalinski house from inside the treeline at the back of the yard. He listened intently, counting off the heartbeats. All of them were slowed in sleep, the one upstairs belonging to the sheriff thumping along deep and steady. Downstairs was the Argent girl’s, lighter in tone but strong. If Peter had been of a more romantic nature, he would have compared it to the heartbeat he still had ingrained on his senses, but he wasn’t and so he switched to the one belonging to his nephew. It was so familiar to him, pack and family all together but he shut it out after only a moment. It still hurt, even after all this time, and he refused to think of the sad, broken man in the house as being the same serious faced child he’d carried on his hip and played baseball with. Instead he honed in on his betas. The Stilinski boy’s heartbeat was fast, even without his medication. It was more like a bird than a wolf, but Peter had sensed that quicksilver streak in Stiles, had been pleased to see just how well he’d adapted to the bite. Scott had been more driven by desperation, but he was solid and sturdy and would make a serviceable beta once Peter dealt with all the distractions around him.

He’d enjoyed the night before. Throwing Unger into the fire had felt cathartic and tearing Reddick into pieces so small the forensic techs would have trouble finding him had sated his bloodlust for an evening. Jackson had been the cherry on a very fine cake and now he just had to wait for the boy to turn. He’d be a good wolf, his contrary mix of arrogance and insecurity would bring out the aggression that lurked just below that impeccably maintained surface and Peter would be able to guide it in just the right direction.

The Argent bitch was still proving elusive, but Peter had a plan for that. He’d listened gleefully to the conversation inside, how they planned to lure him and trap him at their quaint little mating ritual. He’d never been one given to such juvenile pleasures, but it would be a perfect opportunity to bring in the last piece that he was missing. He knew that Kate was desperate to eliminate all his little wolves, and she wouldn’t be able to resist something where they would all be in attendance, her unfortunate former conquest included. Once she struck, it would be child’s play to deal her the final blow and assume command of his betas. If he was really lucky, she’d deal with Derek before he got to her and so his meddlesome nephew and the mating bond he had with Stiles would be a non-issue.

All he had to do now was lull everyone into a false sense of security and they would pretty much deliver themselves gift-wrapped.

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The gentle touch of his father’s hand woke Stiles from a very warm and comfortable sleep. He grumbled and cracked one eye open to see Noah standing over them. Behind him, Derek slept on, his breathing coming out in a low sound that was almost a purr.

Noah was freshly showered and dressed for his shift. Behind him, a sleepy-eyed Allison was putting on her coat and Scott was levering himself up off the floor.
'I got to go to work, kiddo.' he said. ‘I’m going to drop Scott and Allison off and I’ll be back in the morning, okay?’

‘Got it.’ Stiles mumbled. It wouldn’t be the first Sunday night he was left to his own devices and he was perfectly capable of getting himself off to school. He flapped a floppy hand at his father and settled back down again, listening with half an ear as they left and got into the cruiser.

Derek made a soft snuffling noise and then raised his head, green eyes bleary.

‘They all leave?’ he asked and Stiles snickered into his arm.

‘So much for keen wolfy senses.’ he said. ‘Yeah, they all left.’ A thought occurred to him. ‘Hey, you want to go upstairs and fool around?’

‘I want to go upstairs and sleep.’ Derek huffed and fell back down behind him.

‘Fine, sourwolf.’ Stiles wriggled into a sitting position and scrubbed a hand over his face. ‘Can we at least sleep together?’

‘Mmmm.’ It was non-committal at best and Stiles ended up having to drag Derek off the couch and herd him upstairs.

‘Why are you so useless?’ he grumbled, shoving Derek up the last few stairs.

‘Full moon hangover.’ Derek was almost a dead weight. ‘I didn’t get to run last night. That’s two full moons I haven’t been able to. I’m just…’ He gave up trying to explain and made a vague hand gesture that didn’t tell Stiles anything. Granted he didn’t feel great either, but he’d put that down to his adventures in Scott sitting.

He managed to steer Derek to his room, narrowly avoiding getting hit as Derek shed clothes along the way until he hit Stiles’ bed in just his briefs. Stiles had to race to catch up because Derek was a notorious hog when it came to bedding, but he managed to crawl in next to him before Derek wound the covers around himself in some sort of DIY mummification process. That of course meant that Derek just cocooned himself around Stiles instead until they were a tangle of limbs.

Stiles ended up pressed almost nose to nose with him and he took the opportunity to scrutinise Derek’s face, something he never got tired of. He freed one hand to slide his fingertip down Derek’s nose, smiling at the disgruntled noise he got. Derek was so very wolflike when he was like this, as if sleep wore down the line between the animal and the human. That gave Stiles a curious thought and he was suddenly filled with an urge to ask questions.

‘Hey.’ he hissed. ‘So earlier Scott thought the bestiary meant beastiliaty and now I just thought about how wolfy you are and you can totally turn into an actual wolf so does that mean it’s something I need to think about?’

That got Derek’s attention and he opened his eyes to give Stiles a look that wasn’t quite as appalled as it should have been.

‘No.’ he said but it sounded less than convincing and his heart did a funny little skip over the word.

‘Oh my God.’ Stiles’ eyes went wide. ‘Are you fucking serious? That’s something you’re into?’

‘Jesus, Stiles.’ Derek was now trying to twist away from him, his ears rapidly going scarlet. ‘No. That would be weird.’
‘Only to a human.’ Stiles was finding it hard to hide his glee. ‘Seriously though, is it a thing?’

‘If I refuse to tell you, are you going to just harass me?’ Derek demanded, awfully snippy for someone with such spectacular bed-hair.

‘I think you know better by now than to ask something like that.’ Stiles told him, grinning like a maniac.

‘Fine.’ Derek was trying to disappear under the covers. ‘It’s a full shift thing.’

‘Oh.’ Stiles hated to admit it, but then he had spent an inordinate amount of time googling werewolf porn and the sheer amount of xenophilia he’d encountered hadn’t really turned him off. He was a pervert, so sue him. He wasn’t about to apologise for what got him off and he definitely wasn’t going to kink shame an entire species. ‘So are we talking sex as wolves?’

‘If both mates can do a full shift, then yeah.’ Derek muttered from inside the covers. ‘But some alphas also like to have sex with their mates in human form while they’re in their alpha forms.’ He sounded like he wanted to fall through the bed, he was so embarrassed. ‘Alpha claims are actually done like that if the mate is human. If they’re a wolf, then the mate is usually in beta form.’

‘Oooh.’ Stiles’s head was spinning with all sorts of ideas. Derek suddenly cottoned onto what he was thinking and shook his head violently enough for the covers to fall away from his face.

‘No.’ He sounded adamant. ‘Do not even go there. When we mate, it will be done right with all the necessary ceremony and your dad’s permission and Deaton in attendance. We are not going off half cocked in your bed.’

Stiles snickered at the choice of words and then whined as pathetically as he could. He pawed softly at Derek, giving him the doe eyes and sticking out his lower lip in a shameless attempt to appeal to Derek’s appreciation of his submissive side. Derek narrowed his eyes at him, but he wasn’t quite quick enough to stop them from flashing blue.

‘No.’ He planted his hand over Stiles face and shoved him off the bed. That was like a red rag to a bull and Stiles was on his feet in a second and pouncing on him. Derek was caught in the covers and there was a second of wild thrashing before Stiles managed to bundle him into a burrito shape and sit on him.

‘Ha!’ he crowed until Derek gave a mighty heave and then they were both on the floor and that was when Stiles stopped dead and stared because Derek was laughing. He had been getting better with that, his smirks and chuckles now daily happenings, but this was a full blown laugh and the sheer beauty of it took Stiles’ breath away. And considering all the shit that had literally descended in the past week, it also made him want to cry to see Derek like that. He reached up and took Derek’s face in his hands, palms rasping against stubble, and kissed him fervently.

It only took a second for Derek to react and suddenly it went from play fighting to something far more intense, both of them scrambling to get back on the bed. Derek got hold of him and practically threw him on before climbing over him, one arm coming up to cushion Stiles’ neck and the other running up his thigh with serious intent as he licked Stiles’ mouth open and caught his lower lip between his teeth. Stiles fought back as best he could, shoving ineffectually at Derek’s briefs until he pulled back, panting hard.

‘So what was it?’ He snickered as Derek stuck his face in Stiles’ neck and scented the crap out of him. ‘The full moon hangover or the bestiality talk?’
Shut the fuck up.’ Derek growled but the effect it had was to only make Stiles get harder, faster. He shifted, legs falling open so Derek could thrust against him like a werewolf possessed and gave as good as he got as he rose to meet him, the friction between their cocks more than enough to make him lose control enough that his claws popped out involuntarily. Derek wasn’t much better, eyes glowing blue and fangs dragging delicately over the thin skin of Stiles’ neck and Stiles dragged his nails down Derek’s broad back and then shoved both hands down the back of Derek’s briefs, feeling the flex of muscle as they moved together.

‘You’ve ruined me.’ he lamented between breathless giggles. ‘I’ll never be able to get it up again for anyone who’s even remotely human.’

‘Christ.’ Derek snorted a rush of warm air over a patch of saliva wet skin and Stiles shivered. He could smell both of them, the sharp tang of precome and the beginnings of sweat at the base of Derek’s spine, between their chests and under their arms. He reached up, one hand burying itself in Derek’s hair as they kissed, wet and messy and perfect, whining through his nose and gasping when Derek pulled back again and went for Stiles’ throat, his velvety soft tongue dragging across his Adam’s apple in long languid licks.

‘I want you.’ Stiles threw his head back and gave him all the room he needed. ‘I want you to fuck me.’

‘You’re making it very difficult to say no.’ Derek grunted from his quest to tongue wash Stiles’ entire neck, hips still driving. ‘You know that we can’t. This close to the moon, I’ll want to mate you properly. But if you want we can try something else.’ He lifted his head and it was almost like Stiles was looking at a special effect out of control because Derek was shifting back and forth like crazy. His voice was nothing but a harsh growl and it made Stiles lose control as well, snarling at him.

‘Anything.’ He bit the shoulder in front of him, tasting the sweat on Derek’s skin. ‘I’m freaking dying here.’

‘No you’re not.’ Derek sounded pained. He moved back onto his knees and grappled with Stiles to get him onto his stomach, resulting in a very undignified exhalation and a glare over his shoulder.

‘Asshole.’ he grumbled but then Derek literally shredded his boxers and Stiles lost the power of coherent speech. He shoved his face into the bed, whining when Derek’s claws dug into his hips, brilliant flares of pain where they briefly pierced the skin, and then his ass was in the air and his knees were spread and it felt so wonderfully dirty and exposed that Stiles had to seriously focus to stop himself from coming.

‘I got to say I love the direction this is going in.’ He had to lisp it around his fangs but the deep growl from behind him meant Derek had understood him just fine.

‘Yeah?’ He shifted on the bed and there was another tearing noise before the remains of his briefs flew past Stiles’ head. ‘You think you can take it if I eat you out?’

‘Holy fucking hell...’ Stiles had hoped, but hearing Derek voice the idea made him lose focus so badly he ended up face-planting into the bed. Of course, all that did was make his ass even more prominent and Derek laughed.
‘I’m taking that as a yes.’ He was shuffling down the bed and then his hot breath skated over Stiles’ over-sensitised skin. ‘I can’t promise I won’t bite though.’

‘Just don’t bite my balls and we’re all good.’ Stiles was nearly choking in excitement, all the arousal from the previous night coming back in a rush of pheromones that choked the air and made Derek’s own scent thicken and curdle in a way that made him shudder. He felt Derek’s nose track down from the base of his spine and wrapped his hands up in his comforter, praying that he wasn’t going to rip it, and if he did that he would be able to come up with a decent cover story.

‘Fuck, you smell so good.’ Derek growled and then he was clamping one arm underneath Stiles to hold him still and pulling him open with the other before his tongue was suddenly there, hot and wet and everything Stiles had dreamed about in the middle of the night.

‘Oh God…’ He went full shift, his fangs biting into his bottom lip so he tasted copper. ‘Fuck…’ He couldn’t stop himself from pushing back into Derek’s mouth, moaning at the way Derek was using his tongue to get him wet and then press in, before pulling back to torment him with soft kitten licks. Stiles panted hard, his cock throbbing and his chest heaving as he sank his claws into the mattress right through the sheet. Derek growled, the sound vibrating across his skin, moving back and then spitting on him before diving right back in. Stiles felt it track down his balls and it was mind-blowingly hot. He lost it, humping back against Derek’s face and snarling as he tried to get Derek to go deeper, moaning when he speared his tongue into him. That worked for about a minute and then he was being shoved away.

Stiles threw an outraged look over his shoulder before he realised that Derek was scrabbling in his bedside drawer, coming out with the lube and a triumphant expression. That was quite a feat considering he was also fully shifted. He bit the end off the tube and inhaled sharply as he pulled his control back into place, turning back to human long enough to slick his fingers up and give Stiles a questioning look, eyes still glowing.

‘Can I?’ he panted and Stiles nodded frantically.

‘Go for it.’ He dropped his head back down. ‘I do it myself, so I’m good to go.’

‘Jesus fuck.’ Derek came back in close, licking at him a couple of times. He touched tentatively at first, circling with his fingertip until an impatient growl fro Stiles prompted him to sink straight in. His clean hand was on Stiles hip, his erect cock brushing up against Stiles’ thigh and leaving trails of wetness as he started thrusting with his hand, taking only a moment before he hit his target and Stiles yelped.

‘Fuck, right fucking there…’ He squirmed at the insistent pressure on his prostate, holding on by barely a thread.

‘Stop fucking moving.’ Derek gritted out. He twisted his hand and Stiles fell forward again, so close he could feel everything pulling up and tightening as he got a hand around himself and then he was coming all over the bed below him after barely three strokes, his roar only slightly muffled by the pillows.

That seemed to be the limit of Derek’s patience because he pulled his finger out and grabbed Stiles by the hips, humping up against him like an animal so his cock slid along Stiles balls until he was a mess of leaked lube and Derek’s pre-come. Derek’s thrusts turned shocky and uneven, barely any time at all before he hauling Stiles up and slamming home between his thighs, howling to the ceiling as he came. Stiles could feel it, the slow warm wetness down his inner thighs, and it smelt amazing. Their commingled scents were heady as Derek grunted and collapsed against his back, making even more of a mess because both of them were fairly drenched in sweat. Stiles couldn’t be
bothered to even try and stay upright and followed suit, only grimacing briefly as he felt himself land in his own come.

They lay there for what seemed like ages, until Derek started to gently lick the back of Stiles’ neck. He paid careful attention to it and Stiles closed his eyes and luxuriated in the softness of Derek’s tongue.

‘You’re very talented with that thing.’ he slurred, already half asleep. Derek didn’t reply. Instead he rolled off and hauled Stiles into being the little spoon, and Stiles wrinkled his nose because he knew they were going to be an awful sticky mess when they woke up later. He just couldn’t bring himself to care enough at that particular moment though, so he let Derek snuffle into his neck, managing to get one arm far enough to snag the covers and pull them back up over them, before giving in and passing out.

Chapter End Notes

Please note this chapter contains a discussion on mating in wolf form (t/w xenophilia). If that’s not your thing, feel free to skip the last section between Stiles and Derek. Also warning for increased sexual activity, including rimming :)
The Other Stilinski

Chapter by HaleHathNoFury (My_Trex_has_fleas), My_Trex_has_fleas

Chapter Summary

It's been suspiciously quiet...

Three days later and there had been nothing - no sign of Peter or Kate or anything going amiss and it was driving Derek a little crazy. He’d gotten so used to running on adrenaline when he and Laura had left Beacon Hills and it had hardly been any better in New York. He’d always lived looking over his shoulder and the lack of threat now was making him anxious.

He glanced over at where Stiles was squashed into the opposite corner of the sofa, nails in his mouth as he watched TV. His scent was happy and relaxed, and Derek breathed in deeply, getting a crooked smile when he did.

‘Perve.’ Stiles wedged his toes under Derek’s thigh. Across from them, Noah snorted and gave them an indulgent look. He was having a rare night off after working almost solidly since Saturday. Stiles had been worried sick about him working himself to death and so that evening had been about making dinner and feeding his father and even allowing him dessert. Now Noah was well fed and drowsy, his eyelids lowering almost against his will even as he tried to stay awake through the police procedural they were watching. Derek found it amusing the way he and Stiles would berate the script writers for lazy fixes and inaccurate procedure. He had missed this, the easy companionship that the Stilinskis offered. In the days after the fire, he’d missed his pack so much he’d clawed his own arms just to take his mind away from the gaping hole that had been left by the deaths of his pack. He’d eventually learned to deal with it, but he and Laura had never been able to replicate the close ties of pack and family and this was the first time he was actually feeling something akin to what he’d lost. It felt good, even having this little pack of three.

Stiles’ phone buzzed and he picked it out from the depths of the couch and peered at the screen.

‘Lydia.’ he said by way of explanation and Derek settled back into the couch. The past two days at school had been largely everyone in the know keeping an eye on Jackson for signs of odd behaviour. He still had no recollection of what had happened between him and Peter, but he’d been withdrawn and sullen and quick to anger. Stiles had dismissed that as Jackson just being his usual douchebag self, but Derek had asked them to monitor him. He was a great believer in better safe than sorry.

‘Any news?’ he asked and Stiles pulled a face.

‘He’s the same.’ He put his phone back into whatever weird liminal space it disappeared to in the couch. ‘Lydia's at his place. Seems his condition means that their parents are being extra lenient with the curfews and sleeping privileges.’

‘Hmmm.’ Noah was barely paying attention. Derek could smell the fatigue on him. ‘Sounds like another parent I know.’ He gave them both a wry smile. ‘Don’t think I haven’t noticed that Derek’s been in your bed more than his own lately.’

The pointed comment hit its mark and Derek went red in the ears.
‘Sorry.’ he said. ‘I’ll stop.’

Noah sighed and waved him off.

‘Alan’s told me that communal sleeping is common with werewolves.’ he replied and Derek ignored the gleeful look Stiles was giving him.

‘It was.’ He tucked one foot underneath him. ‘My sisters and I used to a lot when we were little. On full moons, the whole pack would as well.’

‘I bet you missed that.’ Noah commented and Derek knew he’d heard the wistfulness in his voice, even though he’d tried to hide it just like he always did.

‘Sometimes.’ he admitted. ‘It’s been better since you let me come live here.’

‘Good.’ Noah’s smile was warm and it made Derek feel good, that little glow of paternal care that he’d missed so much. James Hale had been a very tactile father, doling out kisses and bear hugs even when Derek had become a teenager. He’d brushed them off when he’d met Kate, taken her teasing about being a baby to heart. Now he regretted it terribly, would give anything for one more hug and a tiny part of him wondered if one day he might get that back from the man sitting across from him. Certainly Noah was very affectionate towards Stiles and Stiles returned his father’s touches with equal affection. Derek thought it was partly because they had a great deal of love for each other and also partly because there was a big hole in the shape of Claudia Stilinski still haunting their lives.

A gentle nudge from Stiles’ foot made him look over to see him watching Derek with knowing eyes. It made Derek more than a little proud to see how well Stiles could read him now, the bond between them settled and feeding back how they were both feeling. He was also much better at chemosignals and had done a decent job of going back through the woods with Derek on the Sunday. They’d left Scott at home so that there would be no distractions and Stiles had been focused in a way he never seemed to be at school to hear him talk about it. He gave him a soft subsonic growl and Stiles visibly relaxed, his scent going blurry with contentment.

‘So.’ Noah said. ‘Dance is on Friday. You boys sort out your suits yet?’

‘Huh?’ Stiles looked slightly alarmed and Derek hid a smile.

‘Suits, Stiles.’ Noah repeated. ‘Last time I checked, it was still traditional to wear one to the school dance. Unless I’m going to be paying for a prom dress, not that it would bother me if I was.’ His blue eyes were twinkling and Derek watched as Stiles squirmed.

‘Don’t tempt me.’ he replied, cheeks flushed. ‘The only reason I wouldn’t is because I’d have to go shopping with Allison and Lydia and you’d never see me again.’

‘Fair enough.’ Noah said easily and Derek was a little amazed by how easily he accepted what Stiles had just intimated. A lot of parents wouldn’t have been as understanding but then again, Noah had probably seen enough to make him so. He thought about his family, what they would have thought if he’d brought Stiles home. Werewolves were not particularly concerned with the gender of mates, scent being more important that what was between their legs or what they identified as. He had a feeling that his mother would have been secretly charmed by Stiles and his mouthiness. His father would not have cared either way, so long as Derek was happy and not for the first time he lamented not trusting them enough to talk to them about Paige and then Kate. Christ knew he should have. Maybe that was why he was opening up now in ways he hadn’t since Paige had died. Trusting Stiles and Noah was the only way he was going to survive any of this.
He caught the tail end of a sentence and zoned back in.

‘Sorry?’ he asked and saw them both staring at him.

‘Just saying that you two should go shopping tomorrow.’ Noah said. ‘The last time Stiles wore a suit…’ He trailed off, his scent tinged with pain and Derek didn’t need to ask.

‘Sure.’ He shifted and gave Stiles a considering look. ‘I’ll try to make sure he’s got something decent.’

‘Oh ha ha.’ Stiles snorted. ‘Just because I’m not GQ material.’

‘Son.’ Noah looked grave. ‘I think that you blow every possible stereotype about gay men right out the water with the way you dress.’

‘Bi, not gay.’ Stiles retorted. ‘And plaid is always in.’

‘You’re not getting a plaid suit.’ Derek was mildly horrified at the thought.

‘You’re not the boss of me.’ Stiles grinned and dug his toes into Derek’s thigh. ‘Tomorrow? We can go after practice?’

‘So long as I’m not on work duty.’ Derek looked to Noah. He was keen to get back into a routine, craving the stability. College and then work had been the things that had kept him sane and the job at the station would be another lifeline in getting him back to living something close to a normal life, something he now realised he wanted more than anything else.

‘You can come in with me in the morning and then swing by and pick up Stiles after practice.’ Noah said. ‘I think that sticking together thing needs to go back into effect. Safety in numbers.’

‘What about Scott?’ Stiles looked at Derek. ‘You want to bring him with us?’

‘We can.’ Derek replied. ‘It’s probably a good idea to keep an eye on him. He needs to be supervised until he’s got full control.’

‘Okay.’ Stiles wriggled into a more comfortable position, aligning himself along Derek’s side and resting his head against his shoulder and Derek wrapped an arm around him, breathing in the scent of mate, pack and home.

The next morning brought nothing unusual and Derek was up and ready before Noah even made it downstairs, buckling on his utility belt. Stiles had another hour before he had to be up for school, so Derek had left him sleeping and muttering into his pillow.

He and Noah ate breakfast in comfortable silence, the sound of chewing and slurping coffee the only accompaniment. Derek had been surprised at how easily they now fit into each other’s company, Stiles the overly energetic glue between them, but he and Noah were a lot more alike in personality than Derek had expected.

He followed behind the cruiser in the Camaro, the radio turned down so the music was only a soft murmur in the background and thought about his future. Working as a deputy had its merits and a steady job would prove he could be a good mate for Stiles. Money would never be an object and Derek started thinking about how he could put his inheritance to good use in making them a home that his mate could be proud of. Stiles would also need to go to college, a good school that now he would be easily able to afford with Derek’s support. Derek could work and Stiles could study and they could both look after Noah when he got older and maybe there would be others. If Scott chose,
he could be part of their pack and they would have a chance to be a family. He’d get back everything he had lost.

Just ahead of him, Noah turned into the parking lot of the station and Derek followed, pulling in next to the cruiser and getting out. He fell into step next to Noah and a couple of deputies coming out greeted them in a way that suggested that there was nothing out of the ordinary about he and Noah being together, and Derek felt a warm feeling in his chest at being accepted.

Inside, he took a seat at the desk that he’d been assigned and started working through the data entry Noah had given him to do, a cup of coffee at his elbow and a piece of gingerbread that Tara had bought in sitting next to it. Derek liked her and her kind disposition. Her scent that morning was all ginger and spice and a perfume that wasn’t hers. Derek smiled to himself knowing that she was obviously seeing someone but not wanting to draw attention to it. He glanced at her as she leaned over to answer the phone, catching a glimpse of a dark mark just hidden by her collar and the scent of blood near the surface of the skin. Tara saw him looking and her face changed a sheepish smile.

‘Girlfriend.’ she mouthed at him and Derek answered her with a sympathetic smile. Stiles could be like a vacuum cleaner and Derek was incredibly thankful that he healed as quickly as he did. He went back to his screen, half listening to her take a complaint about a neighbour dancing nude in his front room from Mrs Gillespie down on Leabrem Street and chuckled.

‘My life.’ Tara sighed as she put the receiver down. ‘I have to wrangle a naked man that’s playing Frankie Valli and doing the twist in his own home.’ She got up and grinned at Derek. ‘You know if you end up working here, this shit is what you’re going to have to deal with.’

‘Beats murders.’ Derek said and her face became serious.

‘I know.’ She picked up her jacket and put it on. ‘I’m seriously considering getting the hell out if it gets any worse.’ She gave a jaunty salute and walked off, leaving Derek to think about Beacon Hills. The crime had been managed when he’d been younger and Derek knew that had been partly because Talia had been alpha of the region. It made sense that with his family gone, things would get out of control and now he was back maybe it was a sign that he needed to step up. It would help if he was an alpha but that wasn’t the case. Peter was, but he was so crazed by the need for revenge and the power he’d stolen from Laura that he would never be in a position to be responsible for the town.

An idea lodged in Derek’s mind, something that he’d never contemplated before but once he thought of it he couldn’t stop. He picked up his phone and tapped out a message and waited until he got a reply. Then he got up and went into Noah’s office. Noah had his glasses on and was reading what looked like a report. He glanced up at Derek and frowned.

‘Everything okay?’ he asked and Derek closed the door behind him.

‘I need to ask you something.’ he said and Noah gestured to the chair on the other side of his desk.

‘Shoot.’ He put the report down. ‘What is it?’

‘I know that the game plan has always been for Stiles to turn back once we can get Peter.’ he said. ‘But what if he decided not to?’

‘That’s his decision.’ Noah said, and looked at him steadily. ‘Right now I honestly think he’s not going to want to change back. I’ve seen the way he is, and the way he looks at you and there’s one thing you have to understand about my son. He’s loyal through and through and once he’s committed himself, only an act of God or whatever hell else is out there will sway him.’
‘I know.’ Derek said. ‘But I also know that being what I am is something that comes with a whole lot of trouble attached to it. This now could be our lives forever if he chooses me. I need to know that you’d be okay with that.’

‘Why do you think I suggested this, kid?’ Noah sat back and looked at him. ‘I’m not an idiot and I am starting to realise that this kind of shit has been going down since forever. Only back then, weird shit seemed to get cleaned up but when your mom and dad died it came back. I don’t know why I never put two and two together but once I remembered that thing with the girl…’

‘What girl?’ Derek was intrigued. ‘Sorry, I didn’t mean to interrupt.’

‘No, it’s fine.’ Noah steepled his fingers. ‘I haven’t really told anyone about this before and Stiles doesn’t know so I’d appreciate it if this stayed between us.’

‘Of course.’ Derek could smell his sadness, an almost lavender scent that was softened by time. It was so different to the sadness that Stiles carried, bitter like unripe pears.

‘The night Claudia died, I was working the night shift.’ Noah said. ‘There was a traffic collision and the driver was a young woman. She was badly injured, so badly that we both knew she was dying. The EMTs were on their way but I was sure she wasn’t going to make it so I stayed with her and held her hand.’

Derek listened, feeling a prickle go down his spine at Noah’s next words.

‘I don’t know how she knew, but that she looked at me and squeezed my hand so hard I thought she was going to break something.’ Noah was now twisting his wedding ring around his finger. ‘And she told me that if I wanted to say goodbye to Claudia that I needed to go to her. I didn’t think anything of it because I didn’t believe she could possibly know that and so I stayed with her. After she died and the EMT’s took her away I went straight to the hospital and found Stiles in the hallway, just sitting there. He wasn’t crying, just sitting there in complete silence that was so unlike him that I just knew.’ He took a deep breath. ‘Then the doctor came out and told me that Claudia had died while I was on the scene. That girl had been telling the truth and it was only when all this shit started that I put two and two together. Then once I started, I just couldn’t stop and then I found things that didn’t add up had been happening for a long time. I’ve investigated unexplained murders going back all the way to the fire.’

‘It was my mom.’ Derek found himself saying. ‘She was the Alpha, so she kept a lot of things in check. But it didn’t start with the fire.’ He inhaled deeply. ‘It started with Paige Krasikeva.’

‘Paige?’ Noah frowned. ‘I remember that. She had an accident in the preserve. When they found her they discovered that she’d fallen and broken her neck.’

‘That’s not what happened.’ Derek dug his nails into his palms. ‘I’m the one who killed her.’

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‘You could go traditional.’ Allison said, showing Stiles the picture on her phone.

‘Or I could go out on a limb and surprise everyone.’ Stiles argued. ‘Besides Derek’s probably going to wear black and we’ll look like a wedding party if we’re dressed the same.’

‘I agree.’ Lydia said. ‘Making a statement is going to definitely get him to notice you.’

‘He sleeps in my bed.’ Stiles grinned. ‘He’s noticed me.’
‘Ah, but has he noticed you, noticed you.’ Lydia’s lips curved in a wicked smile.

‘No.’ Stiles went pink. ‘And stop speculating about my sex life.’

‘God, yes please.’ Scott moaned from his folded arms. ‘I do not need to know about it. It’s bad enough he reeks like Derek all the time.’

Allison and Lydia exchanged looks and snickered.

‘Okay, also a moratorium on talking about how I fucking smell.’ Stiles grumbled. ‘And dude, it’s not like I can’t smell you and Allison all over each other.’

Scott muttered something inaudible and Allison went a charming shade of pink herself.

‘So.’ Lydia had her business face on. ‘I am going to get my dress this afternoon, the limo has been booked, and Jackson is more or less back to normal.’ She looked over at where he and Danny had just come into the cafeteria. ‘All things considered, Friday is a go.’

‘Do we know any more about the P-L-A-N?’ Scott lifted his head, looking adorably resigned to it all.

‘My dad and Stiles’ dad are staking out the dance and we’re working it from the inside.’ Allison explained. ‘That’s all you need to know.’ She’d taken to treating Scott like a puppy that might upset things with its giant paws and Scott gave her a look.

‘I’m one of them now.’ he hissed. ‘I can look after you.’

‘Why?’ Allison’s grin was cocky as hell. ‘I can look after myself. In case you hadn’t noticed, badass hunter on this side of the table.’ She held out her hand and Stiles snickered and bumped it with his own.

‘She has a point.’ he said.

Scott’s look was withering.

‘I’m stronger.’ he countered and Allison’s dimples came out to play.

‘I’m smarter.’ she replied and Lydia rolled her eyes.

‘For God’s sake.’ She got up. ‘Allison, we’re going to be late for History. You two idiots can stay here and sniff each other’s butts.’

‘Ew.’ Scott recoiled. ‘His butt smells like Derek.’

Stiles cackled, remembering the thorough licking said butt had gotten on the weekend and since.

‘Damn straight it does.’ he said, giving Scott the finger guns. ‘Although maybe that is a poor choice of words. So, you want to come suit shopping with me and Derek this afternoon?’

‘Hell no.’ Scott muttered. ‘I’m going home and I’m pretending that my best friend is not getting it from a guy who looks like an axe-murderer.’

‘Fine, be an asshole.’ Stiles laughed and mauled his straw.
‘Here?’ Victoria looked around her. Behind her, Kate was watching with several of her mercenary hunter goons lurking in the shadows. Victoria didn’t know where she got them from but they obeyed Kate without question.

‘I thought it would lend a nice poetic touch.’ Kate’s voice was sharp. She nodded at the cage behind Victoria. ‘We lock him up in there, administer the wolfsbane and let Allison see him for what he really is. Once he’s out the way, then you help me to hunt down Derek and the Stilinski boy and we’re even.’

‘There’s a dance on Friday.’ Victoria ran her fingers along the bars before turning and taking in the rickety table already set with a couple of portable batteries ready to used to send current through a werewolf’s body. ‘But I assume you know that.’

‘I do.’ Kate said. ‘There’s some unfinished business to be attended to, and then I’m going to use the ensuing chaos to take what’s mine.’ Her eyes gleamed with unbridled delight. ‘I have plans for both of them. It’s always so much fun when they’re mates and they’ll do anything to save each other.’

Victoria raised an eyebrow at her, but didn’t comment on Kate’s penchant for torture and rape. She preferred more traditional methods to dispatch her prey as quickly as possible. Allowing a werewolf to live a second longer than needed was tantamount to inviting them to cause trouble. Then again, she wouldn’t mind teaching the McCall boy a lesson about touching her daughter.

‘We’ll have everything set up by then?’ she asked. ‘I want this to go off without a hitch.’

‘It will.’ Kate’s eyes narrowed.

‘I hope so.’ Victoria told her. ‘If you fail to get the McCall boy into position, it’s going to look bad when I bring her here.’

‘I wouldn’t worry about that.’ Kate nodded at one of the men behind her. ‘We’ll take McCall after school on Friday. Then all you have to do is bring Allison here.’

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‘I’m starting to think I should change this place into a confessional.’ Noah was trying to joke, but his face was serious. ‘That explains a hell of a lot.’

‘It’s why my eyes are blue.’ Derek said. ‘I took an innocent life.’

‘But not without reason.’ Noah sighed. ‘Now you say that the alpha that bit Paige was a man called Ennis?’

‘Yes.’ Derek frowned. ‘Why?’

‘I’ve met him.’ Noah said. ‘There was a young man who was killed. It was pretty gruesome. He’d been shot in the throat, tortured and his nails pulled out, then cut in half.’

Derek paled as the realisation kicked in. Noah watched him and nodded.

‘Exactly.’ he said. ‘Just like Laura. I’m now assuming it was hunters.’

‘Yeah.’ Derek felt sick. ‘The nails were missing because they’d pulled his claws.’

‘Ennis was questioned by myself when he turned up at the morgue.’ Noah explained. ‘He was aggressive and angry and got right up in my face about finding out who had killed his friend and not
‘Not his friend, his beta.’ Derek replied. ‘Ennis was one of the alpha’s that came to meet with my mom. The other one was a woman called Kali but that’s all I know. Laura was the one in training then so she went with my mom and she’s never said anything.’ He caught his mistake. ‘At least she never said anything before she was killed.’

‘There was another body in the Preserve not too long after the fire as well.’ Noah said. ‘It was a mutilation, a lot like the killings that Peter’s been doing. I’d just been made Sheriff when it happened.’

‘Did you find out who it was?’ Derek asked.

‘No.’ Noah said. ‘It was a Jane Doe. She was so badly mauled that identification was impossible and her dental records and DNA weren’t in any system. Not only that, but the body went AWOL and we never managed to track it down.’

‘Sounds like something supernatural.’ Derek said. ‘Whoever killed her might not have wanted her to be autopsied.’

‘Something I now realise.’ Noah tapped his fingers on the desk. ‘I’m tempted to start going back over every unexplained death in Beacon County.’

‘That’s not a bad idea.’ Derek agreed. ‘But you might not know what you’re looking for.’ He sat up straight and took the plunge. ‘That’s what I wanted to talk to you about. I’ve been thinking a lot about what’s going to happen here and I’ve decided to take you up on your offer of working here.’

‘Really?’ Noah smiled. ‘That’s great news, I have to tell you. If you want, we can get the process started as soon as you’re ready.’

‘Okay.’ Derek felt nerves bubble up inside him. ‘There’s something else as well that I would like to ask. It’s kind of a formality.’

‘Oh?’ Now Noah’s eyes were twinkling. ‘This wouldn’t happen to have anything to do with my errant offspring, now would it?’

‘It would.’ Derek said. He stood up, assuming the formal position, head bowed and tilted slightly to show submission to the man who was effectively his potential mate’s alpha. ‘Sheriff, I would like your consent to begin courting your son. Officially.’

‘Oh my.’ Noah’s smile was gently teasing. ‘That is very formal. You’ll forgive me if I don’t really know how to respond to that. I should also point out that mystical bonds aside, Stiles is still a couple of months away from being seventeen. There’s no way in hell that I’m going to let you two get hitched before he graduates, if then.’

‘I know that.’ Derek’s cheeks heated up. ‘I also know that he’ll want to go to college and have a career and I have absolutely no intentions of getting in the way of that.’

‘Good to know.’ Noah said. ‘But I’m also going to acknowledge that your relationship with my son is not an orthodox one by any stretch of the imagination and what Alan has told me about these things is that your kind tends to get together young and stay that way for life.’

‘We do.’ Derek realised he was wringing his hands and shoved them behind his back. ‘I’m not going to change the way I feel about Stiles.’
'Jesus kid, sit down.' Noah waved a hand at him and Derek flopped into the chair. ‘Okay, so what’s this courting malarky about?’

‘It’s pre-emptive to mating.’ Derek said and blushed even harder when Noah’s expression became knowing. ‘Not strictly in the physical sense, but like getting married.’

‘I got that bit.’ Noah grinned. ‘What do you have to do?’

‘This is the first thing, getting permission from the alpha.’ Derek explained. ‘You’re Stiles’ alpha, so I have to ask you. Then I have to ask him. If he also agrees, then I can start the traditional tasks.’

‘It sounds like the Twelve tasks of Hercules.’ Noah chuckled. ‘Like what?’

‘I have to prove I can be a good mate.’ Derek remembered all this. ‘I have to show that I can provide for him by presenting your pack with the results of a hunt, give him a suitable den and show him that I am a good protector.’

‘I think you’ve already got that last one covered.’ Noah smiled. ‘The first one though, that sounds interesting. Does it involve red meat?’

‘Usually.’ Derek said. ‘Unless, you’d rather I gave you a vegetable box?’

‘Laugh it up, wise guy.’ Noah pointed a finger at him. ‘Just remember that apparently I’m the alpha in this equation.’

‘Is that a yes?’ Derek felt his heart start thumping in a way it had never done before.

‘Yeah, what the hell.’ Noah said. ‘It’s not like I could keep the two of you apart, even if I wanted to. And I kind of don’t want to. I haven’t seen Stiles this happy, not since his mom died, and in spite of all the batshit crazy things that have happened to us in the last six weeks. And if I’m being honest I kind of like having you around, Derek. You’re good for us and I know we’re good for you. Fate has laid some shitty things in your path, but maybe now it’s time to start paying those back. I know nothing can replace your family but I think this could be a new beginning for all three of us.’

Derek hadn’t smiled like this in so long that it actually made his face ache a little.

‘So do I.’ he replied.

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‘So what has Deaton been teaching you?’ Stiles asked around the highlighter in his mouth. He and Lydia and Scott had study hall together and Scott had wandered off into the stacks so Stiles decided to try and get some information out of Lydia. She’d been ridiculously secretive about what she had been doing with Deaton every afternoon once the clinic was closed. Not even subtle threats or outright entreaties had any effect.

Lydia sighed and looked up at him from her Physics book. She’d already completed her AP work and was now branching out into college stuff, something that amazed and made Stiles envious in equal measures.

‘If I didn’t tell you the first ten times you asked, why would I tell you now?’ she asked with an arched eyebrow.

‘Because Scott’s all the way over there and he’s not so good with the wolly listening thing yet.’ Stiles pointed out. ‘Now spill.’
Lydia looked amused. ‘What I’m learning stays with me until I’m ready to tell you.’ Her face softened a little when Stiles pouted. ‘Look, I know that you’re curious. But I’m not comfortable with this yet. Deaton’s been doing some digging into my family and so have I and I’m finding things out that I’m pretty sure my mom doesn’t know at all. My Nana’s life and what she was is only the beginning of it, and I knew nothing at all. I’m still coming to terms with it.’ She shrugged and it was so unlike her usually confident self that Stiles found himself reaching across the table and taking her hand, squeezing gently.

‘Okay.’ he replied. ‘I get it. And I’ll be here to listen when you are.’

‘Thank you.’ Lydia smiled at him. ‘You know, you’re turning out to be a pretty good friend. In fact, I’m so impressed by your turnaround from creepy stalker that I’m going to help you.’

‘Help me with what?’ Stiles asked and she tapped the screen of her Ipad and then showed him the picture. ‘Wow. Okay, it’s very...red.’

‘It’s perfect.’ Lydia looked impossibly smug. ‘Nobody else will be wearing anything like it.’

‘Yeah no, I get that.’ Stiles stared at the suit in the photo. ‘But do you really think I can pull it off?’

‘Okay, I know that you think you’re not in the same league as Derek and you’re right.’ Lydia said. ‘He doesn’t need anything special to look amazing. But you’re also far from being the worst looking guy at school. In fact, if you put your mind to it you’d be every bit as attractive as Jackson or Danny. You just have to have the attitude to pull it off.’

‘Okay but…’ Stiles looked back at the picture. ‘It's kind of a cliche, right?’

‘The Big Bad Wolf and Little Red Riding Hood?’ Lydia’s smile was sly. ‘Sounds like the perfect excuse for a little bit of role play. Maybe get rid of the pesky thing you’re carrying around.’

‘You think?’ Stiles was trying to sound casual but he would be lying if the idea wasn’t incredibly appealing.

‘He’s an animal, Stiles.’ Lydia said, her dark green eyes sharp. ‘If you run, he’ll chase you. You’ve just got to figure out how to tap into that.’

Stiles met her look steadily even as an almost electric shiver raced down his spine.

‘I can think of a few ideas.’ he replied.

‘Good.’ Lydia took the Ipad back. ‘So I already called Macy’s and it just so happens that they have it in your size. You just have to go pick it up.’

‘How the hell do you even know my size?’ Stiles was bemused.

‘I have my ways, and Danny checked your clothes during gym.’ Lydia replied. ‘I worked from there. Oh, I also took the liberty of getting shoes and a shirt set aside for you.’ She pursed her lips. ‘Actually a belt probably wouldn’t be a bad thing either.’

‘Jesus, Lydia.’ Stiles laughed. ‘You know I’m like a broke high school student, right?’

‘Of course.’ Lydia said. ‘Which is why I gave the store Derek’s credit card number. Trust me, if he’s toting the card he is he can afford this.’

‘Okay that just brings up more questions.’ Stiles said. ‘Like how the hell did you get him to give it to
‘That part was easy.’ Lydia smirked. ‘Seeing as he called me for advice on what to wear this morning. It turns out that your boyfriend is just as keen to make an impression as you are.’

‘Holy shit.’ Stiles was impressed. ‘You are amazing.’

‘I know.’ Lydia preened. ‘Now I just have to make sure that he’s going to look good as well. The group photo has to be perfect.’

‘There’s going to be a group photo?’ Stiles frowned.

‘Of course.’ Lydia said. ‘Deaton has told me that werewolves run in packs just like real wolves. And seeing as there’s three of you now, I guess that’s what we kind of are.’

‘Derek told me that his pack had humans in it too.’ Stiles said. ‘So that makes sense.’ He looked up as Scott got back to their table. ‘Hey, you want to be in our pack?’

‘Sure.’ Scott grinned and flopped into his chair. ‘But who’s in charge?’

‘Good question.’ Lydia laughed and went back to her work.

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The rest of Derek’s afternoon went smoothly and it was so good to just himself get lost in the soothing tap of the keys and the repetition of filling data in field after field. The cases he was entering in were all misdemeanours, but he still kept an eye out for anything unusual and he’d made some notes on the legal pad at his elbow regarding a few that had caught his eye.

His phone buzzed and Derek checked it quickly. The message was from Stiles saying that school was done and they were heading off to practice. There were some choice words about Harris and Derek smirked. He remembered him from his last year at Beacon High, a snotty arrogant man who’d delighted in picking on students he deemed different. Derek had never attracted his ire, too much of a jock to appear on his radar and getting decent enough grades. Stiles wasn’t so lucky though.

There were a few more messages, one detailing Finstock’s rant of the day that had Derek chuckling. Those had always been legendary. He tapped out a quick reply and then looked up as Noah came to his desk.

‘I think you should head out.’ he said. ‘Stiles will be done in about an hour and you still need to drop the car off at the house.’

‘Okay.’ Derek finished the record he was working on and handed Noah the top piece of paper from the pad. ‘In light of what we were talking about earlier.’

‘Okay.’ Derek finished the record he was working on and handed Noah the top piece of paper from the pad. ‘In light of what we were talking about earlier.’

‘Oh?’ Noah scanned the cases and frowned. ‘Hey, have you ever set up a database before?’

‘Not on my own, but I do have some experience with working in them.’ Derek said. ‘You thinking we need one for those?’ he nodded at the piece of paper.

‘It couldn’t hurt.’ Noah said. He tucked the paper into a pocket. ‘Might be a good sideline and having a deputy that specialises in these kinds of cases is probably an excellent idea. You can fill out the application tonight and then we can get you set up for a written exam. I don’t think you’ll have any trouble with that, but I’ll walk you through it. You’ve got your GED and you’re over the minimum age so that part’s no problem. I’ve got some links for test preparation so all you have to do
is get this done, pass your physical and background check and we can have you starting as soon as possible.’

‘Thank you.’ Derek was ridiculously touched, ducking his head.

‘Nonsense.’ Noah put a hand on his shoulder, giving him the now familiar squeeze. ‘Now get out of here. I’ll be home in a few hours and we can have dinner.’

‘I’ll cook.’ Derek offered, pulling on his jacket. ‘I was thinking I’d make burritos.’

‘Sounds great. I’ll see you both later.’ Noah said and went into his office.

Derek left, walking to the Camaro and unlocking the door. He was just about to get in when he caught a hint of something and lifted his head, scenting as subtly as he could. He looked over in the direction it seemed to be coming from and then froze when he saw the figure standing on the opposite side of the road.

‘Derek.’ Peter’s voice was low but it was still enough for Derek’ to pick up with his enhanced hearing. ‘We need to talk.’

‘We have nothing to talk about.’ he growled, his heart racing and anger rippling through him. ‘You killed my sister.’

‘I had a reason for that.’ Peter said, his voice completely neutral as if he wasn’t talking about murder. Even from this far away, Derek saw his eyes flash red. ‘Now, do I need to do something drastic to get your attention or are we going to have a conversation like two adults so I can explain myself?’

‘I don’t want to hear anything you have to say.’ Derek kept his eyes on him, sliding his phone out of his pocket. He pressed the screen, hoping like hell that Noah would pick up and hear. ‘There’s nothing you could say that would ever make me forgive you for what you’ve done.’

‘I did it for us.’ Peter’s cool was starting to slip. ‘To make them pay for destroying everything we had. To make her pay.’ His eyes flashed again. ‘And may I remind you that it was you who brought her into our lives, you who allowed her to kill everyone I loved.’

‘You think I don’t know that?’ Derek could hear the phone ringing on the other side. ‘That I don’t hate myself every single fucking day knowing that I brought a hunter into our home and told her everything? That I’m the reason I had to grow up without my pack? That I’m why Laura never had a single happy day after the fire and got herself killed because she was obsessed with finding out who did it?’ His stomach twisted, nausea welling up.

‘You can’t imagine how much I suffered.’ Peter’s voice was venomous. ‘What it was like, trapped in my own body and abandoned by the only pack I had left.’

‘I know that too and I am so fucking sorry, but this is not right.’ Derek could hear how his own voice was shaking. ‘You have to let me help you.’

‘You can help me by joining me.’ Peter demanded, his voice reverberating with alpha power. ‘And letting my betas come to me. Together we can finish this and we can be a pack again.’

‘No.’ Derek felt the pull, the strength in Peter’s voice reaching deep inside him. It was so different to when his mother or Laura had used it, the malevolence in it running deep. He shook his head like a wet pup and backed away a step. ‘I’m not your beta, and neither are they. I will not let you have them for this.’
'You’re stronger than I thought you were.’ Peter’s voice was almost a purr now. ‘But I will finish this Derek, and when I’m done you’ll wish you’d been on my side. I’ll make that little bitch of yours scream and you can watch when I rip his throat out.’

‘Derek!’ Noah’s voice caught his attention as he came running down the front steps, one hand on his service weapon. Derek felt a flood of relief but when he looked back at where Peter had been, his uncle was gone.

‘He was here.’ he said. ‘Just across the road.’

‘Shit.’ Noah looked around the parking lot. ‘Okay, go get Stiles. I’ll get one of the deputies to pick up the Jeep.’

‘On it.’ Derek said and got in the Camaro. He did his best to stay within the speed limit but fear drove him to jump a couple of red lights in his need to get to Stiles. By the time he got to the school, he was fighting to control the panic that came with thinking about Peter’s threat.

He pulled up at the front stairs and gripped the steering wheel so tightly his knuckles were white, closing his eyes and listening as hard as he could. The second he caught the sound of Stiles’ laughter coming from inside the school, he almost collapsed in relief.

He looked at the front door of the school, watching as it was thrown open and a group of boys came out from practice. Stiles and Scott were just behind them and he saw Stiles’ frown in confusion when he saw Derek in the Camaro.

‘Get in.’ Derek said. ‘Bring Scott with you.’

‘But I have the Jeep.’ Stiles protested even as they approached the car.

‘Your dad’s going to have one of the deputies pick it up.’ Derek said. ‘Peter came to the station this afternoon so he wants us to stay together.’

‘Fuck.’ Stiles got in the passenger side. ‘Okay, so much for a respite.’

‘I need to get home though.’ Scott said, leaning in between the seats with his hair falling in his eyes.

‘Not today.’ Derek started the car. ‘Today you stay close to me. I need to be able to protect you.’

He didn’t realise he was growling until Stiles put a warm hand on his thigh.

‘What happened Sourwolf?’ he asked. ‘You smell all messed up.’

‘He made some threats.’ Derek breathed in hard, trying to steady himself. He focused on Stiles’ heartbeat, his scent, and it calmed him. ‘I’m not going to let him hurt you.’

‘I know you won’t.’ Stiles replied. ‘And I won’t let him hurt you either.’

‘How about me?’ Scott whined from the back seat.

‘And obviously not you either.’ Stiles snorted. ‘Didn’t we already say you were pack?’

‘What?’ Derek glanced at him. ‘Who said pack?’

‘Lydia.’ Stiles told him, his voice assured. ‘She said that we should be pack, all of us. And it makes sense, I mean you and me and Scott are wolves and she’s a banshee and you had humans in your pack. We’re stronger together, right? I mean, if that’s what you want?’
‘It is.’ Derek realised how true it was the second he said it. ‘I want that more than anything.’

‘Okay then.’ Stiles grinned. ‘Team Wolf for the win.’

‘God.’ Scott said. ‘Trust you to turn this into a superhero thing.’

‘Because we are, Scotty.’ Stiles laughed over his shoulder. ‘And Reviva-Alpha and the scary hunter lady are not going to get the best of us.’ He held out a fist at Derek and he huffed and bumped it with his own.

‘That’s good because I’m already working on a cover.’ He smiled at the curiosity on Stiles’ face. ‘I’m applying for a deputy position tonight. You’re helping me.’

‘Dude!’ Stiles’ scent bloomed with happiness. ‘That’s amazing.’ His eyes were sparkling and Derek could hear his heart thumping along. ‘So that means you’re here for the long haul.’

‘I am.’ he replied. ‘I also asked your dad if I could court you. Properly.’

‘No way.’ Now Stiles warm brown eyes were at full Bambi. ‘What did he say?’

‘No proper mating before you graduate and college is a must.’ Derek replied. ‘Which is what I figured you’d also say.’

‘Yeah, I mean that’s what I want too.’ Stiles was smiling so hard, he was practically glowing. ‘So what’s the courting stuff? Are you going to like, bring me whole deer and shit?’

‘Not exactly.’ Derek replied. ‘You’ll just have to wait and see.’

‘So where are we going?’ Scott asked, back between the seats. ‘If you two are finished doing this weird ass engagement thing you’ve got going.’

‘Macy’s.’ Stiles said and grinned at Derek. ‘I too have a fairy godmother.’

Derek found himself laughing. He was still shaken but being with Stiles smoothed it out like nothing else did.

‘Do I even want to know?’ he asked.

‘I’m not telling anyway.’ Stiles’s smile was mischievous. ‘It’s a surprise. But she did make me promise to help him out.’ He jerked a thumb at Scott.

‘A suit’s a suit.’ Scott grumbled.

‘Not according to Lydia.’ Stiles said. ‘Apparently the group photo has to be perfect.’

‘It’s like being in the army.’ Scott muttered. ‘Allison gave me a list of flowers I can get for her corsage today. Lydia’s a really bad influence.’

‘The worst.’ Stiles snickered, catching Derek’s eye and winking at him.

Macy’s was hell. Scott bitched the entire way around the men’s department. He was notoriously whiny about buying clothes and Stiles had many fond flashbacks to Melissa and his mom dragging them to get their new school outfits every year.

‘Did you like grow extra fast because you’re a werewolf?’ he asked Derek as they wandered around the shoe department while Scott threw a fit in the dressing room.
'Not really.' Derek replied, eyeballing the display and looking like he’d rather swallow his own foot than try anything on. ‘I was pretty skinny until I got to college.’

‘Yeah?’ Stiles frowned trying to picture it. ‘I’m having a hard time imagining it.’

‘I think they’ve probably still got my picture in the trophy cabinet.’ Derek replied. ‘The Cyclones won the state championship the year of the fire and I was starting line-up. It’s probably the only one.’

That made Stiles incredibly sad.

‘You don’t have any others?’ he asked and Derek shook his head, avoiding Stiles’ eyes in a way that almost broke his heart.

‘It all went up in the fire.’ he replied. ‘Everything was gone. Laura and I literally left with what he were wearing and what was in the Camaro.’ He did a weird little gesture thing with the overly long sleeves of his leather jacket. ‘This was my dad’s. I don’t have anything of my mom’s or Cora’s. When I got to New York, I had to pretty much buy from scratch. The places we’d been living were mostly these rented furnished apartments, and I guess both of us never got out of living out of suitcases.’ His mouth twisted and Stiles took his hand, not caring who might be looking.

‘Laura never lived with you in New York?’ He was always curious to hear about Derek’s life from before he came back.

‘No. She’d stop in and stay a couple of days but never for longer than a week.’ Derek replied. ‘I had college so I wasn’t too worried and I kind of didn’t want to be around anybody. I had some friends, but I wasn’t exactly sociable.’

‘Yeah, I can see that.’ Stiles gave him a gently teasing grin. ‘There’s a reason I call you Sourwolf.’ He held his breath a little, waiting for Derek’s response and breathed out in relief when he got a smirk rather than a scowl.

‘I’m not a hermit, Stiles.’ he said and Stiles snorted.

‘You’re not winning any medals for conversationalist of the year either.’ he pointed out. ‘But I like you like that. It means I get to do more talking.’

‘Like anyone could shut you up.’ Derek said and shoved him into a display. Stiles flailed to regain his balance and then pointed triumphantly at a pair of shoes in front of him.

‘How about those ones?’ he asked and Derek took out his phone. Lydia had been texting them both as to what he needed to buy. He’d already shown Stiles his suit that Lydia had picked out. It was plain black and severely cut, and Stiles had nearly passed out when he’d made Derek go put it on for him to see. He had to hand it to Lydia, she had one hell of an eye.

‘Fine.’ Derek grabbed one and glared at the hovering sales assistant. ‘Whatever works.’

‘Trust me, you want to get what she says.’ Stiles laughed. ‘She’s ferocious.’

‘She’d make a good alpha.’ Derek handed the shoe to the shaking assistant, barking out the size he wanted and sending the man scurrying off. ‘Laura would have loved her.’

‘In what sense?’ Stiles wasn’t really paying attention to what he was saying so when Derek gave him his wolf smile, he was a bit startled. ‘Really?’

‘Oh yeah.’ Derek said. ‘She had a thing for redheads.’
‘Huh.’ Stiles tried to picture it, then shuddered at the thought of both of them ganging up on him and Derek.

‘I miss her.’ The admission was quiet but heartfelt and Stiles looked at him. Derek looked back and then sighed deeply, shrugging. ‘She could be a raging bitch and the fire fucked us both up so much that we never really managed to have anything like a normal relationship again, but I do. She was my big sister.’

Stiles moved in closer, leaning his head against Derek’s shoulder.

‘You’ve got me now.’ He looked up at the sound of someone tripping over a display and grinned when Scott righted himself. ‘And that doofus.’

‘I know.’ Derek kissed the top of his head, and Stiles made a happy noise. He loved the casual affection that Derek now felt comfortable with giving him. Scott loped over, suit carrier over one arm.

‘Got it.’ he said and looked longingly in the direction of the exit. ‘Can we go now? I’m hungry.’

‘Jesus Christ.’ Derek rolled his eyes at him. ‘Between the two of you I’m amazed we get anything done.’

‘Wolves, Derek.’ Stiles grinned. ‘And you eat like twice as much as we do.’ He snickered at the low growl Derek gave him and skipped off to join Scott just as the sales assistant came back to accost Derek.

‘So?’ Scott was looking at Stiles own suit carrier with blatant curiosity. ‘What’s it look like?’

‘You’ll see.’ Stiles was feeling smug. He’d gone to try the suit on while Derek was busy and had been blown away by how good he looked. It had given him hope that he would be able to pull enough moves to maybe get some in the back of the Camaro afterwards.

They trailed along the upper level of the mall, Scott keeping up a running commentary about the corsage he was planning on buying Allison when Derek stopped dead and Stiles nearly walked into him.

‘What the hell…’ he started, then saw the man standing across from them on the other side of the open atrium. He was wearing a long black coat and had a sweep of hair that needed cutting but there was no mistaking who that was.

‘Is that…?’ Scott started and Derek nodded, pale eyes blazing.

‘He knows we can’t start shit here.’ he gritted out. ‘He’s just being an asshole.’

‘Now now, Derek.’ Peter’s smile was creepy as hell. ‘I’m just saying hello.’ Stiles could hear him perfectly even over the noise of the shoppers.

‘Yeah?’ Derek narrowed his eyes at him. ‘Well, you’ve said hello so now you can leave.’

‘I just wanted to see my betas.’ Peter’s look was appraising. ‘We haven’t even had a chance to be formally introduced.’ He started to move and Derek growled. It was threatening and even Stiles felt like he wanted to take a step back, even as he was filled with pride at how protective Derek was being.

‘Dude, I really don’t want to be introduced formally.’ He stepped up next to Derek. ‘Seeing as how
the whole beta thing wasn’t exactly my decision.’

‘Yeah, me either.’ Scott added. He was on Stiles’ other side, his dark eyes defiant.

‘Oh, Scott.’ Peter said. ‘Can’t you see that you’re so much better off. No more pesky asthma. No more being the loser sitting on the bench. All the better to impress the hunter’s daughter?’ He had one hand on the rail of the glass wall in front of him, and Stiles could hear the click of his unsheathed claws as he tapped them against it. ‘And if I hadn’t bitten you Stiles, you would never have met Derek. I can see how close you two have become. I’m responsible for that.’

‘Like hell you are.’ Derek growled. ‘Now I suggest you back the fuck off before I lose my temper.’

‘And what, Derek?’ Peter’s eyes flashed red. ‘Shift in public? Your mother taught you better than that.’

‘My mother’s dead.’ Derek’s voice was flat. ‘My fault, as you pointed out. So is my father and my sisters. It’s not like I have a hell of a lot to lose.’

‘You have him, though.’ Peter’s eyes met Stiles’. ‘Your mate.’

‘I can take care of myself.’ Stiles retorted. ‘And one call to my dad and this place will be crawling with cops.’

‘Fine.’ Peter straightened up. ‘I’ll just have to find a time to drop by when there aren’t so many people around.’ He gave them all a little wave. ‘See you boys around.’

They all watched him melt back into the crowd and Stiles pulled a face.

‘Your uncle’s fucking creepy.’ he muttered and Derek raised an unimpressed eyebrow.

‘And borderline psychotic.’ He took Stiles’ arm, steering him in the opposite direction.

‘What was that all about?’ Scott asked.

‘He’s playing games.’ Derek told him. ‘Showing us that he’s around and can get to us anytime. He’s smart, knows it’ll freak us out. We need to get out of here and nobody goes around alone until we can get this shit sorted out.’

They made it back to the car in record time, taking the stairs to get there faster. All three of them were shook up. Stiles could smell it leaking off of them.

‘So I think it’s safe to say that Uncle Psycho rattles all our cages.’ he muttered, strapping himself in and waiting for Derek to start the car.

‘He’s really lost it.’ Derek was shaking his head. ‘I…’ He looked lost for words and Stiles felt horribly sorry for him. It really sucked that the only family he had left was that.

‘It’s okay.’ He gave Derek a gentle push. ‘Come on, let’s get out of here.’

They dropped Scott off under Melissa’s watchful eye and went straight home. Derek was lost in his own thoughts and Stiles didn’t try to talk him out of them. Instead, he went and got his laptop and dumped it on Derek’s lap.

‘Job application.’ He instructed. ‘Now.’ He was used to gently bullying Derek into doing things, had had plenty of practice on his father. Derek didn’t protest, just opened the laptop and logged in. Stiles watched him navigate to the website and then went to make dinner. He had ground beef in the fridge
and started in bolognese sauce. He was busy frying off the onions and garlic when Derek appeared in the doorway, looking a little perplexed.

‘I need my stuff.’ he said and Stiles frowned.

‘What stuff?’ he asked.

‘My GED and college transcripts.’ Derek shifted from one foot to another. ‘And I just realised that everything is in New York.’ He let out a harsh breath. ‘It’s been two months since I left and I’m sitting here looking for a job in a town that I swore I would never set foot in again.’ His shoulders hunched and Stiles knew that if he had a tail it would be down. ‘I’ll have to go back at some point, get everything packed up.’

‘But you’re staying, right?’ Stiles asked, wiping his hands off before going over to him. ‘I mean, that’s what the courting thing kind of implied.’

‘Yeah.’ Derek was still frowning. ‘And I want the job. It’s just so weird that I had to come home to find what I was looking for.’ He reached up, hand at the back of Stiles’ neck while he leaned his forehead against his. ‘And I’m tired of running away. I want a home and a pack and you.’

‘Me you’ve already got.’ Stiles smiled. ‘And I know Scott’s kind of a dumbass but you’ve got him too and my dad and Lydia and I’ll bet even Allison if you ask.’ He slid his arms around Derek’s waist. ‘You might want to hold off on Jackson though. He’s a dick.’

‘Okay.’ Derek nosed at him. ‘So if I go back to New York, you want to come with? We could road trip it in summer.’

‘Hell yeah.’ Stiles grinned. ‘I always wanted to go.’

‘Go where?’ Noah’s voice came from behind them. He was hanging up his coat and sniffed the air hopefully. ‘Damn, that smells good.’

‘I need to go back to New York, get my life up there sorted out.’ Derek told him. ‘I was thinking I could take Stiles with me.’

‘I don’t see why not.’ Noah moved past them into the kitchen. ‘So long as it doesn’t interfere with school.’

‘Like there hasn’t been enough of that already.’ Stiles snickered as he went to go carry on with the cooking. ‘Tell him about Peter.’

Derek heaved a sigh.

‘Peter tracked us down to the shopping mall.’ he said. ‘He made some vague threats but I think it’s pretty clear he was trying to freak us out, show us he could track us down any time he wants.’

‘Yeah.’ Noah took a couple of beers out of the fridge and offered them to Derek, who opened them with a practised flick of a claw. ‘I told Alan and he’s coming over later to put a contingency plan into place.’

‘What kind of plan?’ Stiles asked, chucking the ground beef into the pan and stabbing at it with the wooden spoon he was holding.

‘He said he’s going to ward the house.’ Noah replied. And something about teaching me to use mountain ash like he did. Apparently he thinks I might have a talent for that sort of thing.’ he
chuckled. ‘If you’d mentioned the word magic around me a couple of weeks ago, I’d have thought you were crazy. Guess I know better now.’

‘So what? He thinks you’re magic?’ Stiles was completely intrigued, giving Derek a broad smile. ‘My dad’s magic?’

‘I have no idea.’ Derek was regarding Noah with interest. ‘My mom’s cousin Cassidy was a witch, but she started when she was really young. I have no idea what Deaton’s talking about though.’

‘Hang on.’ Stiles turned to glare at him. ‘Magic is real? Witches are real? How the hell have you not told me this?’

‘You didn’t ask.’ Derek replied, his eyebrows getting defensive. ‘And it’s not like we’ve exactly had time to talk all this out.’

‘You suck, man.’ Stiles shook his head at him and went back to the spaghetti sauce.

Noah watched them both with an amused grin on his face.

‘You know you sound like an old married couple when you bicker like that.’ he said and Stiles snorted at him.

‘Laugh it up, old man.’ He waved the spoon, flicking tomato everywhere. ‘At this rate, you’ll be lucky to get any dinner.’

‘Ungrateful child.’ Noah said but there was no heat in it.

The doorbell rang and all three of them looked in the direction of the front door.

‘That must be Alan.’ Noah got up. ‘I doubt Peter Hale would be ringing the doorbell.’

‘I don’t know.’ Derek mused. ‘He always did have a twisted sense of humour.’

Noah snickered, sounding remarkably like his son as he did so as he went to answer the door.

‘See.’ Stiles said. ‘That was funny. Who said you can’t teach an old wolf new jokes.’

‘I’m not old.’ Derek snipped and bared his teeth at him.

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It was Deaton and he ended up joining them for dinner. Stiles watched his father and the vet share stories about their respective days and wondered at the surreal nature of their lives when they finished dinner and Deaton took a small bag of black powder from his pocket and declared it was time to see what his father could do with it.

He’d half expected the whole magic thing to be a joke but Deaton gave him a stern look as they filed outside into the back yard.

‘I’ve felt it on your family before.’ he said. ‘If you hadn’t been bitten I would have suggested that you have a try. Unfortunately this particular brand of magic is not compatible with lycanthropy.’

‘Oh.’ Stiles was disappointed and huffed as he sat down next to Derek on the back steps.

‘Being a werewolf is already magic in itself.’ Deaton added. ‘But having said that, there are some kinds of magic that are specifically for werewolves. If you like I can research some things and we
can see if the spark that your family seems to carry holds over in your wolf form as well.’

‘What’s a spark?’ Noah asked. He’d changed into civvies and was now standing in the middle of the yard looking sceptical.

‘Some families carry in inherent ability for magic.’ Deaton replied. ‘I’ve always felt it around you and Stiles, but the situation has never been conducive to mentioning it before. Now things have changed. As I said, if Stiles hadn’t been bitten I would have approached him. But he was and so I’m going to have to see if we can make your spark catch fire as it were.’

‘Huh.’ Noah looked at the handful of mountain ash he had. ‘Okay, so how do I do this?’

‘Well, the key element is belief.’ Deaton said. ‘It’s why I can use it. I believe in the power of the mountain ash to create the circle that will form the barrier and it works because of that. It should actually be a little easier for you because of the spark.’

‘So I do what exactly?’ Noah asked and Deaton waved a hand through the air.

‘What I did at the hospital.’ he instructed. ‘Throw the ash into the air and visualise it forming a circle around you. Use your love and need to protect your son as a motivator. Emotion is the most powerful tool we have to make us believe.’

‘Okay, here goes nothing.’ Noah said and tossed the ash into the air. They all watched as it blew back in his face, making him splutter and spit.

‘Guess that magic thing needs some work, huh Pops?’ Stiles was battling to hold his giggles in. Noah gave him an affronted look and then glared at Deaton.

‘Again.’ Deaton was clearly hiding a smile. ‘It doesn’t always take the first time.’

Noah huffed in annoyance and took another hand of ash.

‘You can shut your damn mouth.’ He narrowed his eyes at Stiles as the giggles started leaking out. ‘I think I’m owed a little respect here. And I’d like to point out the fact that I at least don’t grow sideburns like something out of a bad western.’

‘Ohhhh.’ Stiles snickered and clutched his chest in mock anguish. ‘Right in the feels.’

‘Shut up.’ Derek rumbled and elbowed him. ‘He’s trying.’

‘Thank you, Derek.’ Noah said. ‘You are so my favourite.’

‘Suck up.’ Stiles muttered but he was touched by how Derek beamed at that.

It took another half an hour before Noah threw up his hands. His sweater was coated in a thin sheen of black and his hands were smudged.

‘I don’t think I’m cut out for this.’ he said.

‘It’s because you don’t really love me.’ Stiles heckled. He was happily tucked under Derek’s arm, his hand wedged into Derek’s sleeve.

‘Shut up, Stiles.’ Noah shook his head. ‘Maybe it skips a generation?’

‘One more.’ Deaton held out the bag. ‘Then we can call it a night.’
'Fine.' Noah muttered and took the last of the ash Deaton had bought. He was about to throw it into the air when something came crashing through the trees and fell over their back fence. It righted itself just as Noah let out a startled yell and swung his arm in a violent arc at the intruder and just like that the ash fell in a perfect circle, trapping a very confused looking Scott inside what looked like a shimmering wall of light when he stumbled into it and fell back on his ass with a yelp.

'What the hell…?' He looked so hurt that Stiles burst out laughing and Derek’s shoulders started to shake in silent mirth.

'Shit.' Noah seemed torn between pride and embarrassment. ‘Sorry Scott, you kind of caught me off guard there.’

'I just came over to see how the whole magic thing was going.' Scott protested. He got to his feet and eyed the line of ash and then gingerly prodded at the barrier, making little flares go up. ‘What did you do to me?’

'We’ve contained you.' Now Deaton was smiling, looking immensely pleased with himself. ‘Seems I wasn’t so wrong after all.’

'Way to go, Dad.' Stiles grinned. ‘You going to pull a rabbit out of your hat next?’

'No, but I might just kick your smart ass all the way back upstairs.' Noah retorted, looking at his hands. ‘This is going to take some getting used to.’

Deaton chuckled and clapped him on the shoulder.

'I think you might be a natural.' he said. ‘This is going to be just the start.’

'Great.' Noah sighed. ‘I can’t wait.’

Stiles gave him a thumbs up and then leaned to look past them when Scott let out a plaintive noise.

'Can somebody let me out?’ he whined and Stiles buried his face in Derek’s shoulder and kept laughing.
Friday Night's Alright for Fighting

Chapter by HaleHathNoFury (My_Trex_has_fleas), My_Trex_has_fleas

Chapter Summary

Apologies to Elton John. Alternatively titled Oh Fuck, We're All Gonna Die.

It's the night of the Winter Formal and shit's kicking off.

Stiles ate breakfast and bolted out the house in a fit of nerves. He got in the Jeep and drove to Scott’s, tapping his fingers in a staccato rhythm as he waited for him to come out the house and get into the car. Scott looked every bit as anxious as he did. Both of them knowing what was coming. It was difficult to stay calm when they were on the verge of catching Peter once and for all.

Peter had been notably absent since his appearance on Wednesday. Not only that, but Kate was as well. Allison had reported that she’d packed her things and gone before she’d gotten home on Wednesday. Victoria’s explanation had been that she’d been called away for work, but Allison had said that she suspected that was a cover. Theoretically, Kate worked for Argent Arms, just like Chris did. It was a good cover for someone always on the move and transporting weapons, but Allison had said that her father had been jumpy and quiet unlike himself since she’d gone, although he’d refused to say where he suspected she was.

Derek had been on his first night shift with Noah and they had come home earlier and crashed out. Stiles had gone in to kiss him goodbye and got growled back out the room. Derek wasn’t so much wolf as bear after an allnighter. Noah had said even less, snoring loudly when Stiles had cracked the door open.

They got to school and Stiles had to slam on breaks as Jackson cut him off, pulling into the last available spot at the front of the lot and giving them a smug smile when Stiles flipped him off.

‘Jackass.’ he muttered, turning the Jeep into the next row and having to settle for a space right down the back end.

Inside, the general excitement of the dance that evening had finally managed to outstrip the near constant talk about the murders and Stiles was able to spend most of the day actually focusing in class. Harris was especially nasty, glaring at the entire class and not just Stiles. He also smelled off, fear wafting sour and thick around him, and Stiles wondered if he’d figured out that he was the last link left in what had happened to the Hales. Whatever it was, he looked pale and startled easily when Greenberg fell off his lab stool.

‘He smells really off.’ Scott murmured when he and Stiles got to be paired for their lab work.

‘I know.’ Stiles regarded Harris berating a very unimpressed looking Jackson about his sloppy penmanship. ‘You think he knows we’re using him as bait tonight?’

‘Maybe.’ Scott looked at his notes in confusion and then turned them the right way round. ‘How much acid solution do we add?’

Stiles snorted and took over, thanking all his lucky stars that his new wolfy prowess made him far
less clumsy than before. Scott, however, was still getting to grips with his new strength so it was better to keep the test tubes out of his paws.

Lydia was paired up with Allison and their heads were together as they worked. Stiles was tempted to listen in, but Lydia had figured out just the volume to speak at that even his enhanced hearing couldn’t catch anything. He was pretty sure that Lydia had confided in Allison but she was still being closed lipped with him and Scott. Jackson had been better after lacrosse practice on Wednesday and he and Danny were busy working on their own experiment.

Class ended and they filed out. Harris had hardly even seemed to notice their departure and Stiles took the opportunity of escaping unscathed as he bolted from the classroom with Scott hot on his heels. Unfortunately he wasn’t looking where he was going and nearly ran into a brick wall, otherwise known as Vernon Boyd. They had a couple of classes together and Stiles knew Boyd as a quiet serious guy who worked part time at the ice rink (there had once been an ill advised plan to take Lydia skating, but thankfully that had been just before the whole bite scenario and so had never come to fruition).

He bounced off Boyd, regaining his footing easily. Body just looked down at him, dark eyes quizzical and Stiles realised how it looked. He had been good at playing the klutz after being bitten, but if he’d still been regular old Stiles he would be on his ass right about then.

‘Hey, Boyd.’ He gave him a winning smile. ‘Didn’t see you there.’

Boyd said nothing, just sidestepped him and kept walking down the corridor. Stiles wouldn’t have really noticed anything but as he turned to watch Boyd go, he caught a wash of scent that was not what he’d expected. He was now able to read Derek by scent as well as by expression and body language and he’d gotten enough of the ashy scent of Derek’s sadness to be able to recognise it on someone else. It wasn’t like his own grief, still too hot and too strong to be that burned out bone deep sadness that Derek carried. That kind of sadness was quieter and hid in corners so it couldn’t be seen.

The fact that Boyd smelled just like Derek’s kind of sadness hit him like a truck.

He stood and stared, mouth hanging open as his mind raced. It took Scott bumping him with his shoulder to jerk him out of it.

‘What’s wrong?’ he asked and Stiles promptly shut his mouth and then grinned as something occurred to him.

‘Nothing.’ he said and kept walking, a plan forming in the back of his mind.

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Derek stopped the Camaro and looked out at the remains of what had once been his family home. He sat and lost himself in thought, then eventually opened the door and got out. He lifted his head, scenting the air as he walked around the back of the house.

The mound of earth at the back was now covered with tangled vegetation and Derek stopped in front of it and wondered if Peter had visited. He couldn’t smell him but then Peter knew how to mask his scent, something that had been clear for all their unsuccessful attempts to track him. He knelt and sank his fingers into the earth that covered the half of Laura he had buried. The other half was still being held by the Sheriff’s Department and it made him ache deep inside to know that he wasn’t able to bury his sister properly. Noah had assured him that once they caught Peter, he’d be able to do just that but it still hurt.
He took a deep breath and then closed his eyes, letting them flare blue when he opened them.

‘I’m going to get him, Laurie.’ He dug his fingers in deeper, claws extending. ‘I promise.’

The sound of a twig snapping a little way away had his head up and his senses on alert in a matter of seconds. He scanned the trees and spotted Chris standing a fair distance away, his stance almost respectful. He had his hunting rifle cradled in his arms and when Derek acknowledged him with a nod he stepped into the clearing and walked over. When he got to within a foot or so from Laura’s grave he stopped and looked at the mound of earth.

‘Your sister?’ he asked and Derek stood up and nodded, dusting the spoil from his hands on his jeans.

‘Why are you out here?’ he asked.

‘Noah told me about what Peter did at the station and the mall.’ Chris said. ‘I thought if I was around he might come out.’

Derek gave him a steady look, breathing in the cologne and cordite that made up Chris’ scent. It wasn’t that far from Noah’s, but there was a steely note to it that was missing from the sheriff’s. He stepped back from the grave and folded his arms.

‘Did you want something?’ He watched Chris carefully, scenting unease coming off the hunter that surprised him.

‘The thing with Kate.’ He straightened up and met Derek’s eyes. ‘It’s not been easy for me to come to terms with it.’ There was a defiance in his voice and Derek growled, the sound rumbling from deep in his chest.

‘Too bad.’ He didn’t stop his eyes from flashing. ‘I’m the one who had to live without my pack. My sister and I were orphaned and our lives were destroyed by what she did.’

‘I know.’ Chris smelled unsettled and he shifted his weight from one foot to the other. ‘Allison told me what you and her agreed. That you both want to put the past behind you and renew the treaty that our families used to have.’

‘Yes.’ Derek said. ‘Your daughter is an honourable person and she understands that we work better together. She’s proven that she’s someone I could get to trust in time and if I’m staying then I’ll need to have an ally that isn’t going to try and kill me at every turn. Our families used to live in peace. I want that to be the case again.’

‘So do I.’ Chris replied. He looked at the house and his face changed, regret creeping into his expression.

At first Derek thought it was because of the fire but then he scented a deep lingering unhappiness and that was a shock. He had no idea why Chris would feel like that unless…

‘I never got to see your house.’ Chris was still staring at the ruin and there was a faraway look in his eyes. ‘Peter would never let me get close enough for your family to catch my scent.’

Derek inhaled sharply. The shock at what Chris was implying made his stomach lurch.

‘You…?’ He couldn’t bring himself to say it.

‘The whole idea to seduce a member of the Hale pack was my father’s.’ Chris sighed heavily and
bowed his head. ‘I didn’t want to go along with it but I was barely eighteen and I wanted to prove myself. He always said that I didn’t have what it takes to be a truly great hunter and I let him convince me that this was the way I would finally win his approval.’

‘I don’t understand?’ Derek was blown away by what he was hearing. ‘You and Peter?’

‘I didn’t want to fall in love with him.’ Chris swallowed hard, his throat bobbing in a way that looked uncharacteristically vulnerable. ‘But there was just something about him that I was powerless to resist.’ He huffed. ‘It sounds like a bad teen romance but I forgot what I was supposed to be doing and before I knew it, I was lost.’

Derek frowned as several things started to click into place.

‘That’s why he never mated.’ He took a step back. ‘You were his mate.’

‘We would meet out in the preserve.’ Chris told him. ‘At first it was just having someone to be my friend but then it got more serious and I realised that whatever my father wanted me to do, I wouldn’t be able to. So I took the coward’s way out and told my mother what was happening. We left town two days after Peter told me that I was his mate.’ He shook his head and Derek flinched at the devastation that now seemed to be pouring off of him. ‘I ran away from the best thing that had ever happened to me and I didn’t look back. My guess is that Kate was sent in to finish what I wasn’t able to do and for that, I am sorrier than you will ever know.’

Derek took a moment to recover his composure and then knew what he had to do.

‘Then help me to take her down.’ he replied. ‘Help me put her away so that she can never hurt anybody else ever again. If you want me to trust you, if you want me to help you catch the only family that I have left and put him down because you broke something in him, then you’ll give me Kate.’

Chris looked right at him and his blue eyes were piercing.

‘And when it’s done, we have a truce.’ he said. ‘And you’ll never lay a finger on Allison to hurt her.’

‘No I won’t.’ Derek promised. ‘She’ll have a place here as long as she wants and I’ll stand by her as the last Hale and guarantee she’ll always be safe in Beacon Hills, for whatever that’s worth.’

‘Alright.’ Chris nodded. ‘Then you’ve got a deal.’

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Stiles breathed a sigh of relief and grinned at Scott at the desk next to him. They had made it through the day without anything weird happening and now the final bell was ringing, meaning it was only a few hours until they would all be back for the dance.

‘Okay, we’ll see you boys later.’ Lydia was already up from her seat and giving Allison a gleeful look. They had all been a little infected by the giddiness of doing something that wasn’t about people being mauled to death. ‘Scott, I expect you to be dressed and at Allison’s house at 7pm sharp.’

Yeah, yeah.’ Scott was giving Allison a dreamy smile.

Stiles snorted with laughter. Lydia had micromanaged the entire experience and had instructed him to take Scott home before he headed back to his own house to get ready. From there, Melissa was going to take him to Allison’s and then Lydia and Jackson would collect them with the limo. He and
Derek would get ready at his house (his father had already stated his intention to take pictures) and then meet them at the dance. Stiles was pleased they were avoiding the limo situation because he was still nervous about what kind of reaction Derek would have to seeing him.

They said goodbye on the front steps, Allison and Scott taking a full five minutes to finally let each other go before she skipped off with Lydia, who was giving her a ride home. Stiles waited impatiently, finally grabbing Scott by the arm and dragging him off the the Jeep.

‘I can’t wait to see her.’ Scott was staring out the window, his face split in a goofy smile. Stiles was tempted to remind him that it wasn’t going to all be fun and games but Scott smelled so happy that he let him be. They drove the well worn route to Scott’s house and he got out, leaning back in through the open window.

‘I’ll see you later, bud.’ Stiles leaned across to fist bump him.

‘Yeah.’ Scott waved over his shoulder as he jogged off to the house and Stiles watched him open the front door and then go inside. He was about to put the car in gear and leave when a sudden noise caught his attention. It sounded like Scott had hurt himself, his pained yelp followed by a thud that didn’t sound right to Stiles’ keen ears. He froze, remembering how Peter had broken into his own home and then he was out the seat a second later when he heard a whine that sounded like Scott was badly injured.

He bolted for the house, not even thinking about anything else but helping his best friend and when he burst through the front door, the last thing he expected was to see Scott out flat on the floor of the hall with Kate and Victoria Argent standing over him while he whimpered in agony.

‘Oh fu…’ That’s all Stiles got out before Kate lifted the taser she was holding and shit him with it, the electrodes hitting him square in the chest before the voltage streamed through the wires and knocked him flat on his ass, pain flaring in ever part of his body.

He lay there, paralysed and barely able to breathe. He could hear the two women arguing, but he was so dazed by the shock he’d just received that he couldn’t really make out what they were saying. He only just managed to turn his head, seeing Scott’s panicked eyes looking back at him.

A shadow fell across his face and then his head was turned by a rough hand gripping his chin and Kate smiled down at him like he was a prize pig at a country fair.

‘Stupid little bitch.’ She said it almost affectionately. ‘I was going to save you for later, but I think I’ll have some fun with you now instead. Then when your mate turns up, we can all party together.’

Stiles drew on every last bit of will power and strength he had.

‘Fuck you, you psycho child molesting bitch.’ he gritted out and Kate laughed at him, clouds of smoky perfume flooding his senses and making him nauseous.

‘Oh, sweetie.’ she cooed. ‘That’s just going to be the start of it.’

Stiles snarled at her and couldn’t even muster the energy to wince as she brought down the cattle prod in her other hand and knocked him out.

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Derek was just coming in the house when the pain hit. He’d felt a sense of apprehension but it hadn’t been strong enough to worry him until the sudden feeling of what he could only describe as oh shit before he was on the floor, writhing in agony. It was excruciating, every nerve feeling like it was
being set alight from the inside and Derek knew exactly what it was. His family had warned him of how hunters incapacitated werewolves, using electricity to keep them helpless and unable to shift.

‘Stiles.’ He clawed at the carpet, fighting to get up but the agony was too great. All he could do was lie there and pant for breath as he felt defiant anger and no small amount of fear clog up the bond between them before it went utterly blank. The only thing that stopped him from completely falling apart was that he didn’t feel it break, not like that awful day six years previously when each pack bond he’d possessed had snapped one after the other as his family had died. His mother’s had been the last one, her alpha strength keeping her alive right till the bitter end.

He thought the night Laura’s bond had disappeared was the worst night since then but now he took it all back. Laura had been his sister and alpha but what he felt for her was completely different to what he felt for Stiles and to have it ripped from him made him howl on the floor like an animal. He took no comfort from the fact that his mate was still alive because the very fact that he had been electrocuted and knocked unconscious meant that Derek knew exactly who had him and what she was capable of.

He held on for only a moment, fumbling for his phone to at least try and alert Noah but it got too much and he fell down into black before he even worked it out his pocket.

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Allison heard the front door close downstairs and went back to laying out her dress. She was pairing it with black tights and ankle boots and Lydia had lent her a massive chunky rhinestone twisted collar to go with it. She hummed as she set everything on her bed, tracking the measured tread of her father up the stairs until he was leaning in the doorway of her bedroom.

‘Hey sweetheart.’ He looked tired, his face drawn and Allison went over immediately.

‘Are you okay?’ she asked and Chris nodded.

‘It’s been an interesting day.’ he replied. ‘Are you going to be alright tonight?’

‘You’re all going to be watching for him.’ Allison said, going back to her dressing table and selecting a ring to go with her outfit. ‘And Derek will be with us inside. I think I’ll be okay.’

‘Well, in case you need a little extra firepower.’ Chris said and then he was standing next to her, holding out a pair of leather sheaths. There was a slender hilt protruding from each with a finger hole at the end. ‘I want you to carry these tonight.’

‘Dad.’ Allison’s breath caught. She had had training with knives, along with archery, but she’d never owned her own set of kunai and these looked like they were exquisitely wrought. She took them and smiled at him, a little overwhelmed.

‘An Argent should never be without a weapon.’ Chris reached up and tucked a strand of her hair behind her ear. ‘I forget how grown up you are now. I think in light of current events that you need to be able to take care of yourself and those others in your…’ He swallowed hard. ‘Pack.’

Allison looked at him in wonder, knowing how much it was costing him to say what he was. She threw herself at him, wrapping her arms around him.

‘Thank you.’ she whispered. ‘I can’t tell you how much this means to me.’

‘I know.’ Chris kissed the top of her head and then let her go. ‘Now you need to get ready and I need to head on out to meet Noah and Deaton. We’re going to shut this all down tonight.’
‘I believe in you.’ Allison smiled at him. ‘And I’m proud of you.’

‘Thank you.’ Chris tapped his fingers against the doorframe. ‘Be safe tonight.’

‘You too.’ she replied and watched him leave. About twenty minutes later the front door closed and his SUV pulled away. Allison watched him through the window and then went to shower. It was just a little before six and Scott was due at seven so she went to take a shower. After that, she got dressed and sat to do her hair and make-up, keeping up a steady stream of texts with Lydia while she did. As she applied her lipstick, Allison glanced at the kunai and considered how best to carry them. She eventually got up and went downstairs to dig around in her father’s workshop, coming out with a pair of thigh holsters that she could attack the sheaths to and put them on. It was comfortable and easy to access and well-hidden by the flounced skirt of her dress.

Allison smirked to herself as she pictured what Scott’s reaction would be and then frowned. She trotted back upstairs to check the time on the oven clock and realised that it was about five to seven and there was no sign of Scott yet. She went back to her room, finding her phone among the mess on her dressing table and tapping out a quick notification.

Hey, you on your way?

It was only a moment before she got a reply.

Having problems with bike. Can’t get there. Can you meet me instead?

Allison was momentarily confused. It wasn’t like Scott didn’t know what they had planned.

What about limo? Lydia and Jacks will be picking us up soon.

This time the reply took longer.

Go with them then. I’ll get a ride with Stiles and Derek.

That made even less sense so Allison dialled Scott’s number and listened as the call was declined and went to voicemail. Now her alarm bells were ringing. She immediately called Lydia and got a bored sounding Jackson instead.

‘She can’t talk to you because her nails are drying.’ he said. ‘I told her she needed to start earlier.’

‘Shut up and listen to me.’ Allison didn’t have time for niceties. ‘Scott hasn’t turned up and when I messaged him he sounded shifty. Have either of you spoken to him since school?’

‘No?’ Jackson’s boredom turned into annoyance very quickly. ‘He’s probably with the other morons.’

‘No, that wasn’t the plan.’ Allison went into action, grabbing her jacket and her purse. ‘Look, I’m going to call Stiles and see what’s going on. Just be on alert, okay?’

‘Whatever.’ Jackson muttered before she hung up on him and called Stiles. This time it went straight to voicemail and a cold feeling took up residence in the pit of her stomach.

‘Fuck.’ She tucked her phone in her purse and started downstairs, nearly running for the front door only to almost collide with her mother at the bottom.

Victoria caught her by the upper arms to steady her, and Allison was about to protest that she needed to leave when she caught a herby whiff of something that was all too familiar.
‘Mom?’ She asked and then jolted hard as something sharp sunk into her neck. Her vision went woozy and she felt her legs give out as Victoria lowered her gently to the floor.

‘I’m sorry it came to this sweetheart.’ Her face was swimming in and out. ‘But believe me when I say it’s for your own good.’

That was the last Allison heard before her eyes slid shut of their own accord and everything went black.

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‘What?’ Jackson protested and Lydia glared at him.

‘Look, if Allison thinks something is wrong, then I trust her.’ she snapped.

‘There’s the goddamn werewolves!’ Jackson snorted. ‘They can look after themselves.’ He folded his arms. ‘Now can we please go?’

‘Not yet.’ Lydia stared at her phone, tapping the side in agitation. She didn’t know how, but she could feel something was very wrong. She tried calling Allison but there was no reply so she called Stiles and got voicemail. Scott as the same so she went with her last resort and called Derek. It rang for what seemed like ages before it was answered.

‘Derek?’ She frowned as she heard the sound of pained breathing from the other side. ‘What the hell is going on?’

‘She’s got Stiles.’ Derek sounded like he was barely conscious. ‘Kate’s got Stiles.’ The phone clattered on the other side, presumably because it was dropped and Lydia inhaled sharply.

‘Where are you?’ she demanded. ‘Derek! Where the fuck are you?’

There was no answer, only the sound of a frantic battle to breathe and she wasted no time, grabbing her wrap, purse and Jackson’s hand and towing him out to the drive and shoving him in the direction of the Porsche.

‘But the limo…’ he started and she gave him a withering look.

‘So help me if you don’t get in that fucking car and drive me over to the Stilinskis in the next five seconds I will cut your balls off.’ she hissed.

‘Fine!’ Jackson threw up his hands and went around to the other side.

Lydia got into the car, shaking in anger and fear at what might have happened. Thankfully Jackson had grasped the urgency of the situation and put the Porsche through its paces. The screeched to a stop next to the Camaro in under twenty minutes and Lydia all but fell out the car in her desperate need to get inside. Her skin was practically prickling, every sense feeling like it was in overdrive. The front door was unlocked and the second she got inside, she saw Derek sprawled on his back in the hall. She fell to her knees next to him and he looked at her with frantic green eyes as she helped him up.

‘How?’ she asked and he shook his head.

‘She took him down with electricity. Hunter trick. I’m pretty sure though that if she’s got him, chances are good that she’s got Scott too.’ He wavered and Lydia looked over her shoulder as Jackson came in and immediately moved to help Derek onto his feet, grunting with effort. They got him into the living room and onto the sofa.
‘So where will she take them?’ Lydia asked and Derek shook his head.

‘Did you try his phone?’ he asked.

‘Voicemail.’ Lydia said. ‘We need to call his dad.’ Then she put two and two together. ‘Allison.’

‘What about Allison?’ Derek seemed to be more with it now, his eyes honing in on her with laser focus.

‘She didn’t answer her phone.’ Lydia looked at Jackson. ‘Peter.’

‘Fuck.’ Derek tried to get up and winced as he fell back, still disorientated. ‘Call Noah. Get him to go to Scott’s house. We can try and track Allison down.’

‘There’s a faster way.’ Lydia gave Jackson a meaningful look and he shook his head violently.

‘Not a chance,’ he said. ‘It’ll violate his probation.’

‘Not if he does it from a different computer.’ Lydia replied. ‘Call him and get him to get his ass over here now.’

‘Christ almighty.’ Jackson scrabbled for his phone. ‘This is turning into a shitshow.’

************

Stiles felt himself come back online a little at a time. He was still hurting badly, his wrists bound above his head by leather bands that burned his skin and a steady stream of electricity making every muscle spasm as it fed into his side. He licked dry lips and tried to focus enough to see what the hell was going on. He knew from the rush of cold air over his skin that he was shirtless. There was mesh at his back, like the cage for the gym equipment, but the air was stale and smelled like dirt and old ash.

‘Aw, the puppy is awake.’ There was movement in the gloom and Kate stepped out of the shadows. Seeing her snapped Stiles back faster and he snarled, trying to shift. Nothing happened and she laughed, coming closer enough for him to see the manic glint in her blue eyes.

‘You’re going to regret this.’ he spat, appalled at how weak he felt. ‘Derek’s going to rip your throat out. With his teeth.’

‘That’s so cute.’ Kate ran a gentle finger down the centre of his bare chest, making him want to cringe away from her touch. ‘In the meantime though, we’re going to have some fun.’ She stepped back and turned to nod at a car battery set up on the table next to her, the wires leading to the patch of gauze on Stiles’ right side. ‘The interesting thing about electricity is that enough of it at a certain voltage stops you from transforming and makes it harder for you to heal. Go up a bit and suddenly there’s something else that happens.’ Her hand twisted a dial on the transformer and Stiles screamed as it hit him. It was so much worse than before, the pain beyond anything he’d ever felt.

‘Stiles.’ His name was whimpered from somewhere to the left and the second Kate dialed down the he slumped, ignoring the drag on his wrists as he tried not to cry. He got his eyes open enough to see that it was Scott who had spoken. He was strapped face down to a steel table, transformed and trying desperately to free himself.

‘It’s kind of pathetic really.’ Kate moved back in front of him. ‘A little bit of direct current and you turn into nothing but an animal. The best part is going to be when Derek shows up, though. The things he’ll do just to stop me from hurting you are going to be such fun.’ Her sharp nails trailed
along his happy trail and Stiles shuddered.

‘You’re sick.’ he panted and she smiled.

‘I just know what I like.’ She got to her knees in front of him and Stiles had a horrifying moment where he thought she was going to try something, but thankfully all she did was drag her tongue along his abdomen, making a satisfied sound when he growled at her, snapping teeth that were too human to be of any help. ‘And I want him back. He was so sweet when I got hold of him, all innocent and broken.’ Her eyes sparkled with twisted mirth. ‘He was such a clumsy puppy. I had to teach him how to go down on me, how to fuck me the way I liked. And he liked it too. I was his first and he’ll always belong to me.’

‘You’re fucking insane.’ Stiles managed to huff out an appalled laugh. ‘And if there’s one thing I know, it’s that Derek hates your fucking guts. He’d let you die in the dirt if it was his choice.’

Kate was on her feet in a second, digging her nails into his skin as she gripped his chin and forced him to look at her.

‘Careful sweetie.’ Her mouth was a cruel twist. ‘Just because I’m humouring you, doesn’t mean you get to shoot your mouth off.’

‘Truth hurts, doesn’t it.’ Stiles could feel the wolf inside him frothing with rage, throwing itself at the barrier keeping it back in a frenzy. ‘You just can’t stand that he managed to survive you. He’s not your plaything anymore. He’s mine now, and I don’t fucking share.’ He laughed when her face contorted in anger.

‘We’ll see.’ she snapped. ‘I was going to be nice, but now I’m going to fuck him in front of you, just to show you how much he doesn’t give a shit about you and how much he likes it. Then I’m going to cut his throat and let you watch him bleed out.’

‘Try it.’ Stiles bared his teeth at her. ‘ I’ll fucking kill you if you lay a finger on him.’

‘You forget, I’m not the one tied up like a rabid mutt.’ Kate took a step back and then glanced over at Scott. ‘And you better be nice to me or he’s going to end up dead long before Victoria gets back.’

That made Stiles pay attention.

He watched as Kate went over to Scott, dragging her fingers through his thick hair.

‘Such pretty brown eyes.’ she cooed and Scott whined under her hand.

Stiles kept his mouth shut, mind racing as he reached out. The bond between him and Derek was weak, but it was enough to feel that he was awake. Now he just needed to get there.

***************

The front doorbell went and Jackson went to answer it. Lydia already had Stiles’ laptop on the coffee table, open and waiting. Derek was still weak, lying back and grasping at the tenuous feeling of Stiles that had come back only a few minutes before.

‘He’s awake.’ He looked at Lydia. ‘He’s hurting though. And he’s incredibly pissed off.’

‘Good.’ Lydia replied, her face set. ‘Angry means he’s fighting.’

Derek looked up as Jackson came back in with the good-looking boy he’d met at the school.
‘This is Danny.’ he said and went to sit across from them. Danny gave Derek a quick nod and took a seat next to Lydia.

‘Jackson explained on the phone.’ he said, giving Derek an uneasy glance. ‘I have to say. I’m kind of having a hard time buying this.’

Derek heaved a sigh and shifted and was only a little gratified when Danny nearly fell off the chair.

‘Derek.’ Lydia admonished, sounding remarkably like Laura had when she’d pulled rank on him.

‘It’s easier that way.’ He leaned forward, fighting dizziness. ‘You can help us find him?’

‘Yeah.’ Danny’s fingers were already flying over the keyboard. ‘But I don’t want to hear a word about this ever again. This is strictly a one time deal.’

He kept working and Derek met Lydia’s eyes. He could smell her distress, even if she was covering it up well.

‘You should go when we know.’ he said. ‘We still need eyes at the dance.’

‘No.’ Lydia protested. ‘That’s not happening.’

‘Lyds.’ Jackson’s voice was unusually gentle. ‘He’s right. Someone needs to keep an eyes on Harris.’

‘Chris needs to know what is happening.’ Derek added. ‘Noah hasn’t told him. He doesn’t trust him completely and I think that’s wise.’

‘Fine.’ Lydia tossed her head. ‘But I’m going on the record as saying that I don’t think you going to find Stiles and Scott by yourself is a good thing.’

‘I’m not going to be alone.’ Derek waved his phone at her. ‘Noah’s on his way.’

‘Great.’ She folded her arms and glare him a mutinous glare. ‘And old cop and a werewolf that’s barely able to even get off the couch.’

‘We’ll be fine.’ Derek tried to reassure her, even though he wasn’t feeling all that confident.

Next to him, Danny made a triumphant noise.

‘Got it.’ He pointed at a map he’d pulled up. ‘He’s there. Or at least his phone is.’

Derek frowned as things clicked in his head.

‘That’s…’ He growled, his temper flaring like a match to gunpowder. ‘That fucking bitch.’

‘Isn’t that your house?’ Lydia was also staring at the map. ‘Why the hell would they be in your house?’

‘They’re not in the house.’ Derek was on his feet, phone in his hand as he messaged Noah. ‘They’re under it.’

*************

Allison came back to consciousness with a start, the smell of ammonia strong in her nose. When she was able to look around her, she found herself in the passenger seat of her mother’s car. Next to her,
Victoria recapped the smelling salts and gave her an apologetic look.

‘I’m sorry, Allison.’ She put the tiny bottle back in her purse. ‘But I needed you to come without a fight. I know you and your father have been working with the werewolves. I also know that Scott is a beta, turned by the monster that’s busy terrorising this town.’

‘Mom.’ Allison winced as her head ached. ‘What the hell did you do to me?’

‘What I needed to.’ Victoria huffed, impatience colouring her voice. ‘And I’m sorry, but you need to wake up and realise that things are not the way you think they are.’

‘I…’ Allison tried to think, tried to come up with a way to argue herself out of what she’d landed in. ‘Mom, I know everything. And I can make my own decisions.’

‘No, you can’t sweetheart.’ Victoria said soothingly. ‘But that’s all right. We’re all young and stupid once. Tonight I’m going to show you just what werewolves are and when we’re done, you’re going to see that the way of being a Hunter is the only moral choice to make.’

‘What, how can you say that?’ Allison protested. ‘Hunters kill people, Mom. Aunt Kate killed the entire Hale family.’

‘They’re not people, Allison.’ Victoria was stern. ‘They’re animals. And yes, your aunt went a little overboard but she’s your family and you owe her your loyalty.’

‘A little overboard? She’s psychotic.’ Allison flinched away when Victoria reached for her arm. ‘No! I am not a child that you can lie to like you have been my whole life. I know what she did and how she did it and that it’s the most reprehensible thing anyone could do. You say the Hales were animals but right now the only animals I see are the ones that I’m related to!’

Victoria’s nostrils flared a second before she lifted her hand and slapped Allison so hard across the face that her head spun.

‘You will hold your tongue!’ she hissed. ‘I am ashamed to call you my daughter and you should be ashamed at the disrespect you are showing your family. Now we are going to go inside and you are going to listen or so help me I will kill your little boyfriend right in front of you.’

‘What?’ Allison’s entire body went cold with fear. ‘Scott?’

‘Get out the car.’ Victoria ordered. ‘You need to see this.’ She opened her door. ‘Now, Allison!’

Allison waited a second, trying to breathe evenly and stamp down on the panic she was feeling. She went for her phone but her purse was empty and she recalled her father’s words that her mother was a superb hunter in her own right.

She opened her door and slid out, taking a tentative step towards Victoria before she was grabbed by the arm and hauled along. It looked like they were in the preserve, moonlight filtering through the trees above her. In front of them was what looked like an entrance, sealed off by a barred gate. Victoria shoved her in front of her, and Allison stepped through the barred gate into a concrete tunnel. She walked along, blinking to try and get her eyes used to the darkness before a beam of light came from behind her and showed her the way.

‘This used to be the Hale’s tunnels.’ Victoria had recovered her composure and now sounded like a tour guide. ‘They have a whole network of them down here. Kate was clever. She sealed them in the house with mountain ash and sealed this tunnels as well and then set it alight. There were timed incinerations inside the house and they all came down here and burned.’
‘You’re both monsters.’ Allison clutched her jacket around her, stumbling a little as they got further in.

‘No, we are the ones that keep the monsters from the door.’ Victoria shone the flashlight at an iron door set in the side of the tunnel. ‘Through there.’

It was even darker inside with more tunnels branching off and rooms that they went through. Allison tried not to inhale too deeply. Even with her human nose, she could smell something wasn’t right with the place.

‘I’m not going to do what you want me to do.’ She tried to make her voice sound more confident than she felt.

‘Oh you will, once we show you that werewolves are ruled by their baser selves.’ Victoria replied. ‘Your precious Scott will happily take the chance to rip you to pieces.’

‘No.’ Allison shook her head. ‘You’re wrong. Scott would never hurt me.’

‘We’ll see about that.’ Victoria sounded smug and then strode past her to lead the way into a much larger room. It reminded Allison of jail, the walls lined with barred cells. There was a large open space in the middle of the room and she gasped audibly when she saw who was in it.

Stiles was suspended against the mesh of one of the cells. He was bound, his wrists strapped to the mesh above his head. His shirt had been removed and his pale torso was streaked with sweat. His hair was also matted with it, his dark eyes wide with pain and his skin pasty. That was only the start of it though because she then saw Scott. He was fully clothed but strapped to a steel table, face down and panting hard.

Her eyes finally moved to Kate, who was standing there like a magician that had just performed a grand flourish.

‘Oh good.’ She smiled brilliantly at them. ‘Now the fun can start.’

************

The dance was filling up when Lydia, Jackson and Danny arrived. They were all shaken and they walked in together, much to Danny’s dates’ clear irritation.

‘I got to go.’ Danny muttered to them and walked off to mollify the other boy and Lydia took Jackson’s arm.

‘First things first.’ she said. ‘We find Harris. Then we need to take a look for Mr Argent.’

‘Okay.’ Jackson held her hand tightly. Lydia knew him well enough to see through the bravado, but she was just as frightened. They tried to do a casual round of the room, but they were both so wound up all they did was hold on to each other tightly and get several very odd looks.

‘I think we’re not being as inconspicuous as we should be.’ Lydia hissed.

‘We’re looking for a crazy ass werewolf that wants to eat our chemistry teacher.’ Jackson hissed back. ‘I think the time for being inconspicuous has passed.’

‘Okay.’ Lydia took a deep breath. ‘Stiles said that Mr Argent and Dr Deaton were going to be watching the ways into the school. I think it’s safe to say there’s no alpha here so maybe we should go find one of them.’
'I don’t like the idea of going out there with you.’ Jackson said. ‘I’ll go by myself, You stay here with Danny.’

‘No way.’ Lydia waved a hand at where Danny and his date were now arguing. ‘I’m not getting between the two of them. No, I’m coming with you.’

‘I don’t want to argue with you about this…’ Jackson started to say and then broke off and grabbed her arm, pulling her behind a fake palm tree. ‘Shit, there’s Harris.’

They both peered out from behind the tree to watch him berate a pair of students that were dancing too close for his liking. He glared at them and then walked off, his face pinched.

‘So now what?’ Lydia asked. ‘We have to split up.’

‘You watch Harris.’ Jackson said. ‘I’m going to try and find Argent or Deaton.’ He looked at her and his face was uncharacteristically open. ‘And for the love of Christ, please don’t go looking for trouble.’

Lydia gave him an unimpressed look.

‘You get your ass back here in ten minutes.’ she ordered. ‘Or I’m pulling the fire alarm.’

Jackson gaped at her and then completely astonished her by grinning and pulling her in for quick hard kiss.

‘You got it.’ he said and headed off into the crowds of students. Lydia shook her head at him and started to follow the path Harris had taken.

*************

Noah’s mouth was set in a hard line that was the image of his son’s. Derek had never realised just how alike he and Stiles were when they were angry until now.

‘I’m going to kill her.’ he bit out. ‘I don’t give a fuck who says I can’t.’

Derek hung onto the passenger door of the cruiser as it rattled down the dirt road and bit his lip. He knew he should try to calm Noah down, but the truth was that he was every bit as enraged and he was battling to keep his wolf on lockdown. He couldn’t quite stop his eyes from flashing though and Noah had startled a couple of times.

‘He’s still alive.’ he growled. ‘And he’s furious.’

‘Default Stilinski reaction.’ Noah sounded proud. ‘When you get knocked on your ass, you get the hell up and fight.’ He tightened his grip on the steering wheel. ‘Claudia was a fighter and so am I. Unfortunately you’re going to be werewolf married to a belligerent little son of a bitch.’

‘I think I love that belligerent little son of a bitch.’ Derek blurted. ‘Fuck, did I just say that out loud?’

‘Yeah, you kind of did.’ Noah chuckled but it was flat. ‘We’re going to get him and Scott back, Derek. And then we’re going to run those goddamn Argents the hell out of town.’

‘Not all of them.’ Derek gave him a wry smile. ‘I think Allison and Chris can stay.’

‘That’s very generous of you, kid.’ Noah shook his head. ‘Is it were up to me, I’d hand all of them an eviction notice.’ He turned the cruiser down a side road and then glanced at Derek. ‘How much
‘About a hundred yards.’ Derek said. ‘But we should probably park up. If we want to get in unnoticed, it’s best to go in on foot.’

‘Got it.’ Noah did just that, slowing and stopping in a stand of trees just off the track. He reached between his seats and retrieved his service shotgun, checking it was loaded and then opening the door. Derek was already out, sniffing the air. He could smell the spicy perfume Kate favoured and another lighter floral fragrance that he knew Allison wore.

‘Noah.’ He looked at the sheriff. ‘Allison’s here too.’

‘Shit.’ Noah looked worried. ‘Guess that answers the question as to what happened to her. Now the question is whether she’s here to help or under duress.’

‘She wouldn’t hurt Scott.’ Derek assured him. ‘She loves him. I’ve never heard anything but the truth from her about that.’

‘Then it looks like we’ve got three hostages.’ Noah’s expression was grim. ‘Any ideas?’

‘They’ll be expecting me.’ Derek replied. ‘But not you. We can use that.’

‘Alright.’ Noah nodded. ‘How about a diversion?’

**********

Jackson was not happy. Every shadow spooked him and he was feeling more and more like he was going through an out of body experience as he ran along the darkened terraces through the school’s open areas trying to find one of the two men he was after.

He got to the pathway down to the sports fields and that was when he heard something whispering his name. It was so faint that at first he thought it was just his imagination working overtime but then it happened again and Jackson felt the strangest compulsion to follow the voice. It was like something inside of him was being pulled along against his will, but he was powerless to disobey. He stumbled out into the darkness, the damp grass under his feet making soft noises as he walked to the tree line. There was a brief moment when he thought he saw two red points of light, but the second he blinked they were gone.

Jackson kept going, moving off the field and into the trees. Something in the back of his head was screaming at him to get away, but he ignored it and followed the whisper deeper and deeper into the trees. It was eerily quiet, all the night noises silenced and his very footsteps muffled in his ears.

He got to a clearing that led down to a slope and again the red flashes of light caught his attention. This time they didn’t disappear and Jackson was hypnotised, moving towards them.

‘I’m coming.’ he breathed. ‘I want to be like you.’

‘You can be.’ The low growl drifted across the clearing. ‘You just have to submit to me.’

Jackson nodded, reaching out a hand towards the lights until he felt like he could almost touch them when suddenly a weight slammed into him and drove him to the ground. It fairly knocked the air from his lungs and he lay there battling to breathe as another shadow appeared to stand over him, firing a rifle into the dark where the lights had been. It was horribly loud and Jackson clamped both hands over his ears and shut his eyes until the sound died away and then string hands were hauling him to his feet.
‘Christ.’ Argent was shaking him. ‘What the hell were you doing out here alone?’

‘Looking for you!’ Jackson yelled back at him. ‘But then I thought I could hear someone and there were lights…’

‘The alpha’s here.’ Chris started dragging Jackson with him. ‘I need to find the others.’

‘The Sheriff’s not coming.’ Jackson tried to free himself. ‘He’s with Derek. Your crazy ass sister took Stiles and Scott!’

‘What?’ Chris demanded and let him go and Jackson had to do a Stilinski type flail to stop himself from landing on his ass. ‘When?’

‘This afternoon.’ Jackson babbled. ‘She’s got them in the tunnels under the Hale house.’

‘Fuck!’ Chris spat. ‘Where’s Lydia?’

‘Inside.’ Jackson froze. ‘Shit, if the alpha’s here…’

‘Come on.’ Chris was already running in the direction of the school. ‘We need to find her!’

**********

Lydia was agitated. Jackson wasn’t back yet and she kept having the creepiest feeling that she was being watched. Eventually she couldn’t take it anymore and made her way out the gym and into the corridor. There was still a section of the school that was sealed off by plastic sheeting while it was being repainted and she was about to head in the opposite direction when movement caught her eye.

She made her way towards the corridor, moving cautiously. There seemed to be no-one there but as she rounded the corner she saw the dark shape of a man silhouetted by the light coming through the windows and stopped dead.

‘Miss Martin.’ Peter Hale’s voice was smooth and eloquent. ‘You look beautiful tonight.’

Lydia gulped down her fear and lifted her chin. She watched as he moved into the light, seeing that the horribly scarred face that she was expecting was now clear and unfeasibly handsome.

‘You can’t hurt me or Harris.’ She wrapped her arms around herself. ‘Everyone knows you’re here.’

‘Ah, if by everyone you mean the emissary and the hunter then I am sorry to disappoint you.’ Peter smiled. ‘Deaton is currently sleeping off a nasty bump on the head in the back seat of his car. I would have killed him, but I might need him later. Emissaries are hard to come by. As for Argent, he’s currently on a wild goose chase in the woods with your errant boyfriend.’

‘Well that’s a pity.’ Lydia looked him right in the eye. ‘Because right now, Kate Argent has both your betas and is busy doing God knows what to them and probably plans on luring Derek in too and killing all three, so your little revenge deal you’ve got going is going to need tweaking.’

‘You’re…not lying.’ Peter’s face contorted into a snarl. ‘Where is she?’

‘In the Hale house tunnels.’ Lydia replied. ‘If you run now, you might be able to stop them from being cut into pieces or whatever the hell she decides to do to them.’

Peter snarled, his fangs descending and his eyes flashing red. He jabbed a clawed finger at Lydia.

‘This is not over little banshee.’ He bared his fangs at her. ‘I’ll be back for you.’
Lydia watched as he melted back into the shadows and then ran as fast as she could in her heels until she was back in the main corridor. She was almost at the door when two other shapes came at her from the dark and she screeched so loudly she about terrified herself. When she stopped she saw it was Argent and Jackson, both of them clutching at their chests.

‘Jesus, Lydia!’ Jackson looked like he’d aged about ten years. ‘What the fuck?’

‘Peter Hale was here.’ She spoke directly to Argent. ‘I told him about Kate and Stiles and Scott and he took off after her.’

‘This keeps getting better and better.’ Argent’s growl sounded almost wolflike. ‘Here’s what we’re going to do. You two are going back inside and staying the hell away from this. I’m going to see what the fuck is going on.’

He bolted before Lydia could protests and they heard the sound of a fire escape door slamming. She waited another minute and then started moving in the direction of the chemistry lab.

‘Lydia!’ Jackson was jogging to keep up with her determined pace. ‘Where the hell are you going?’

‘I am not sitting around like a damsel in distress.’ she replied. ‘You go find Danny and tell him to watch Harris like a hawk. I think we’re going to need as much fire power as we can get so I’m going to make us some.’

‘Fuck.’ Jackson glared at her. ‘You’re not going to blow shit up again, are you?’

‘Yes, I fucking am.’ Lydia declared and kept walking.

*************

‘Anything?’ Noah whispered and Derek shook his head.

‘We’ll need to draw them out.’ He sniffed the air, his lip wrinkling in a silent snarl when he caught a hint of Stiles’ scent. He’d been shifted since they got within striking distance of the tunnels. Derek had no desire at all to go back in there, too many ghosts haunting him to make this any less than torturous, but his desire to find Kate and rip her to pieces for touching Stiles was easing a lot of his mental anguish. There was a reason anger had been his anchor for so long.

‘Got any ideas?’ Noah hissed and he nodded and stepped out from the trees, staring at the entrance to the tunnels.

‘Yeah, I do.’ he replied and threw back his head and roared. It reverberated around the clearing, bouncing off the trees and down into the tunnels. Derek knew this because he’d used to practice howling here with his family, one of them inside to howl back so they could laugh at the echoes. He put every bit of challenge and fury into it, knowing Kate would not be able to resist. She’d always liked a challenge. He looked back at Noah, eyes blazing blue and got a thumbs up.

‘That ought to do it.’ he hissed and Derek had to grin. It felt good to be fighting with someone at his back again and he turned to watch and see who would emerge.

*************

The roar died away and Stiles lifted his head, giving Kate a bloodstained smile. She’d hit him in the mouth when he’d tried to intervene with the little demonstration Victoria was going to put on for a terrified Allison. They had cable-tied her to a water pipe, and then Victoria had set up some sort of
humidifier that started to seep purple vapour. Scott was making alarming noises, horribly reminiscent of his worst asthma attacks and both Stiles and Allison had been screaming at her.

Now though, both hunters were frozen. There had been no mistaking the intent behind the roar and Stiles managed a dry chuckle.

‘You two are so unbelievably fucked. Derek’s here and he’s going to eat your fucking ugly faces off. He’s probably got my dad with him too, so either way you’re either dead or in jail for the rest of your lives.’ He strained against the wolfsbane soaked leather (Kate had taken great delight in telling him what it was that was holding him back) and snarled as best he could. He was pretty certain that the wolfsbane vapour hadn’t quite managed to reach him but the electricity was still doing a number on him.

‘Don’t just stand there, do something!’ Victoria shouted and Kate grabbed her rifle and started running. Behind her, Allison looked at Stiles and as their eyes met, he knew that she had a plan.

‘Mom.’ She sounded heartbroken. ‘Please don’t do this. You’re killing him!’

‘You’ll understand one day.’ Victoria waved her off.

No I won’t.’ Allison spat out. ‘If you kill him, I will never be a part of this family again. I will turn against everything you hold sacred and take down every hunter I can find, including you.’

‘You don’t mean that.’ Victoria turned to look at her in disbelief and Stiles knew they had found a chink in her armour.

‘Like hell I don’t.’ Allison was now smiling and she looked a little unhinged. ‘You know how the Argent name is revered? I will systematically destroy it piece by piece until your precious legacy is nothing but a mockery.’

‘I won’t let you do that!’ Victoria stormed towards her and that was when Allison grabbed the pole behind her and twisted her whole body up to kick her mother square in the face. Victoria dropped like a load of bricks but Allison didn’t stop there. She folded herself almost in half until she had her legs up by her face and then dropped back down into a graceful crouch. There was a glint of light and Stiles saw the knife in her hand as she ran for the humidifier, turning it off and then working to cut Scott loose. She eased him off the table and set him down gently, then ran to Stiles and sliced through the leather cuffs as easily as if they were paper.

Stiles fell to the floor, grabbing at the cables and ripping them from his side. The second the electrical current stopped, he felt himself starting to feel much better as his healing was able to kick in. It was slow but it was something and he staggered to his feet and went to help Allison drag Scott out of the room.

‘Holy shit.’ he breathed. ‘That was fucking awesome!’

Allison didn’t reply and then Stiles saw the conflict on her face. Of course this was her mother and he felt for her, but at least Scott was still alive and starting to recover. He was coughing frantically and Allison pulled his head into her lap.

‘Go help Derek.’ She shoved gently at him. ‘I’ve got this. I won’t let anything happen to him.’

Stiles met her eyes and then nodded. He got to his feet and stretched, then threw his own head back and let loose a roar that shook the very foundations of the tunnels and took off running the way Kate had gone.
Stiles’ eyes fluttered open and he whined, blinking blearily at the sunlight that was starting to break through the branches above him. He was chilled, his bare skin sticking to the leaves he lay on and the damp earth beneath him.

He sat up, ignoring the growled protest behind him, and stretched. His body ached in places he knew it really shouldn’t, but he smiled anyway and reached up to trace the raised skin under his fingertips, heat flaring through him as he looked behind him at where Derek was still communing with the earth, eyes stubbornly closed and one arm trying to pull Stiles back down to him.

‘C’mere.’ It was barely a mumble. ‘Sleeping.’

‘Excuse you.’ Stiles frowned at how rough his voice was. ‘But my ass is freezing off and I think we should reconvene to an actual bed.’ He prodded at Derek’s stubbled cheek.

‘No.’ Derek’s eyes cracked open just enough to glare at him. ‘I’m comfortable.’

‘How?’ Stiles was aghast. ‘I mean it was okay when you were all furry, but seriously dude. Come on, before I lose my dick to frostbite and then where will you be?’

‘Able to sleep in peace probably.’ Derek growled, but he opened his eyes properly and sat up. Stiles caught sight of the matching scar on his shoulder, pride filling him at the remembrance of the taste of Derek’s blood in his mouth and the way he’d howled when they had come together.

‘So.’ He gave Derek a brilliant smile. ‘No taking it back now, big guy. You’re officially stuck with me.’

‘Guess so.’ Derek looked around him. ‘Where the hell did we leave our pants?’

‘Hate to break it to you, but the pants are a lost cause.’ Stiles snickered. ‘You did a Hulk on yours and I shredded mine because you decided that you just had to have me.’

‘Crap.’ Derek had the decency to look embarrassed. ‘I so owe your dad an apology. I was going to court you properly.’
‘I’m glad you didn’t.’ Stiles smiled, all teeth and flashing eyes. ‘If last night was anything to judge by, I really don’t think either of us would have been able to hold out.’

Derek ran a hand through his hair, raising an eyebrow at the handful of leaves and twigs that came out of it. He tossed them aside and got up, swaying a little on his feet as he did a full body stretch that had Stiles staring in admiration. Derek was gorgeous to look at even with his skin dirt streaked and splattered, with the evidence of what they had been doing for most of the night matted in the thick line of hair from his stomach to his cock. Stiles could smell them both on him and on himself. It was rich and heady, the smell of mating and the woods and happiness. He inhaled deeply and growled at his mate, flashing his eyes at him.

‘Come on.’ Derek held a hand out to him, his own eyes flashing red in turn. ‘Let’s go home.’

Stiles took the hand, letting Derek haul him to his feet and hold him close so they could breathe in each other’s scent, naked skin warming as they pressed along the line of each other’s bodies.

‘Yes, Alpha.’ he murmured and Derek smiled and kissed him, turning it wet and messy in seconds as their teeth clashed and tongues tangled in a frantic dance.

‘I love you.’ he growled when he finally let Stiles come up for air. Stiles stared back into those beautiful burning eyes and felt his pulse pick up until it was racing. Very deliberately he let his fangs drop and dragged them gently over the mating scar on Derek’s shoulder.

‘I love you too.’ he whispered and smiled when Derek caught him by the hair, pulling his head back to kiss him again.

***********

12 hours earlier

Derek crouched in readiness, his heart racing and the wolf inside him clamouring for him to shed his clothes and shift. He resisted, knowing that he needed to stay in beta shift until he could at least get Kate as far away from the tunnels as possible so that Noah could get in and free the three teenagers inside.

He didn’t have to wait long. Kate emerged from the tunnel mouth, her rifle up and targeted.

‘I’m here!’ she shouted. ‘Come out and play puppy!’

Derek growled low in his throat and flashed his eyes once, barely dodging the round when she fired without hesitation. He skidded in the dirt as he threw himself backwards, twisting and getting to his feet before he hurtled into the trees. Another round hit a tree behind him and he put his head down and ran like hell.

***********

Noah watched Kate set off in pursuit of Derek before he came out of the trees and started jogging across the clearing towards the tunnel. He took a diagonal trajectory, keeping his weapon trained on the tunnel at all times just in case there were some nasty surprises waiting for him. He’d learned well in the Gulf and later on the job that even when you were sure the threat had been neutralised, you could never trust a situation not to escalate.

He used the shadows to his advantage, getting to the edge of the concrete pipe and then was caught completely off guard by the shape that threw itself out the tunnel and latched onto him, arms tight enough to make him wheeze. He caught a glimpse of glowing golden eyes and returned the hold
with one arm, keeping the shotgun at bay.

‘Jesus, kid.’ He said it into Stiles’ hair. ‘Don’t sneak up on me like that!’

‘You’re okay.’ Stiles pulled back from him. He was shirtless and looked like he’d been knocked around a bit and Noah had to really shove back the anger he felt that someone had touched his son to hurt him.

‘Yeah, I’m fine.’ He lowered his voice. ‘But you…’

‘I’ll heal.’ Stiles growled. ‘Where did Derek and Kate go?’

‘Into the woods.’ Noah nodded in the direction they had gone. ‘Where’s Scott and Allison?’

‘Inside.’ Stiles gripped his arm. ‘Dad, Allison’s mom is helping Kate. She was using some kind of wolfsbane gas on Scott and he’s not doing so good.’

‘Fuck.’ Noah glanced back at the trees. ‘Okay, look. You go after Derek, help him. I’ll go get Scott and Allison.’

‘Be careful.’ Stiles urged and Noah caught him by the back of the neck and kissed him on the forehead.

‘You too, son.’ He let him go and Stiles took off into the trees, shifting to run on all fours just before his disappeared into the dark. Then he moved to the tunnel entrance and went inside. It was dank and cold and smell the acrid stench that still lingered even six years later. He remembered the recovery of the bodies from the basement and how it had made even hardened firefighters retch. There had been precious little left. Most of the bodies had been incinerated to the point where dental records had been necessary to identify all of them. There had even been a couple that they couldn’t. Derek’s little sister Cora had been the same age as Stiles and as it turned out she didn’t have any dental records. The same had gone for his infant cousins.

He gritted his own teeth and eased his way along until he got to an open steel door. Inside was a series of darkened rooms and he heard a low voice murmuring, following it until he got into a room that was dimly lit and saw Allison sitting on the floor with Scott lying next to her. She had his head in her lap and was encouraging him to breathe. Noah put up his weapon and immediately went to her, seeing the relief on her face when she spotted him.

‘We have to get him out.’ she said. ‘He’s really hurting.’

‘Yeah, I can see that.’ Noah put a reassuring hand on Scott’s chest. ‘Come on buddy, we’re going to get you the hell out of here but you need to work with me.’

Scott wheezed and nodded, grabbing onto Noah’s sleeves and letting himself be pulled upright. Between Noah and Allison, they managed to get him on his feet and slung his arms around their shoulders to support him. They dragged the still exhausted Scott out through the rooms and into the tunnel, but just as they were about to get to the end, a figure stepped into the light coming from outside and they all froze.

‘Well, well, well what have we here?’ Peter’s voice was amused and his eyes glowed red, making him look positively demonic.

Noah let go of Scott and levelled his shotgun at Peter.

‘Get behind me, both of you.’ he instructed and Peter laughed.
‘Sheriff, unless you are packing non-regulation wolfsbane rounds, the worst you’ll give me is a scratch.’ His tilted his head and regarded them. ‘What happened?’

‘Wolfsbane vapour.’ Allison replied. ‘So if you want him to live, you’ll get the hell out of our way.’

‘Such a brave little hunter.’ Peter smiled, fangs glinting. ‘I’m not here for you, not yet at any rate. I want the other Argent, the one that murdered my family.’

‘She’s gone.’ Noah said. ‘Derek and Stiles are going after her.’

‘Silly boys.’ Peter huffed. ‘It’ll take an alpha to take that bitch down.’ He smiled and suddenly his face distorted as he went into beta shift. ‘I’ll be back soon.’

And just like that, he was gone.

Noah breathed out hard, lowering his weapon.

‘Jesus Christ.’ He went back and took Scott’s arm again. ‘Let’s get the fuck out of here before anyone else turns up.’

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Derek snarled and dropped his head, feeling the lay of the land under his feet. He knew this place like he knew his own face. The preserve held no secrets for him and it was no surprise that his feet were doing what they had been conditioned to do for sixteen years and carry him home. The house came into sight, a dark silhouette against the sky. He slid to a stop, his breath catching and his heart aching at the sight of it.

‘Derek!’ Kate’s shout came from behind him. She was close, her cries getting louder and Derek hurdled the porch steps and melted into the the shadows cast by the eaves. He shifted back to human, knowing that she wouldn’t be able to see him like this. Hiding had been another game he’d played with his pack, and Derek had excelled at it. He held his breath, watching her step out from the trees into the space at the front of the house. Her rifle was held ready and she looked around her.

‘I’m going to find you, puppy.’ Her voice lilted seductively and it made him want to gag. ‘You can make this easier on yourself by giving me what I want.’

Derek kept quiet, tracking her as she walked back and forth, her movements practiced and soundless as any superlative hunter would be. He hoped that she would give up and go in another direction but then he heard another sound and that chilled him to the bone.

‘No.’ he breathed. ‘Fuck, go back…’ He was torn between revealing himself and wanting to leap over the porch rail to intervene. Before he could make the decision though, Stiles burst from the trees, shifted and furious and making enough noise that Derek knew he wasn’t going to back down without a fight. But he also knew that Stiles was young and inexperienced and that, along with the absolute refusal to lose anyone else he loved and that more than anything else had him shifting back. He roared and threw himself over the railing just as Kate wheeled around and aimed right at where Stiles was about to attack. He moved faster than he ever had, every muscle screaming as he ran right into her, knocking the rifle up just as she pulled the trigger. It boomed loud in his ears and he rolled with the momentum as he hit the ground, coming up in a defensive crouch in front of Stiles.

‘Run!’ he snarled but Stiles shook his head.

‘Not without you!’ His eyes were blazing, fangs bared as he snarled and Derek wanted to kiss him and shake the stuffing out of him at the same time.
‘We don’t have time for this!’ He shoved at him, but Stiles was doing his impression of an unmoveable force and knocked his hand aside, leaping for him and sending them both into the dust as another shot rang out and this time it winged Derek’s shoulder. He let out a howl of pain and Stiles was instantly in front of him.

Kate was on her feet, walking towards them with a cruel smile on her face, her mouth a slash of teeth.

‘So cute.’ She aimed at them. ‘The puppies protecting each other. Guess you’re not as broken as I thought you were, Derek. Your little boyfriend was right.’

‘You bet your ass I was.’ Stiles spat. His claws were scoring lines into the dirt and the aggression was rolling off him in waves. In any other circumstances, Derek would have been inordinately proud to see how much he and the wolf had become one, but now was not the time. He got to his feet, moving to Stiles’ side and snarling a challenge at her.

‘You can’t shoot both of us.’ He bared his fangs and was gratified to see her eyelid flicker as the tension got to her. ‘If you take one of us down, the other one will rip your throat out.’

‘Maybe so, but are you willing to risk him?’ Kate swing the barrel towards Stiles. ‘I mean, you’ve lost everyone else you’ve ever loved Derek. How will you handle losing him too?’

‘He’s not going to lose me.’ Stiles growled. He was looking over Kate’s shoulder. ‘But I think your number’s up.’

‘Kate!’ Chris’ voice rang out. ‘Enough!’ He was striding across the ground in front of the house, his own rifle raised but Kate didn’t take her eyes off them.

‘This is none of your business, big brother.’ She smirked at them. ‘It’s not like you ever had the balls to get the job done anyway.’

‘This isn’t the kind of job I do.’ Chris replied, sidestepping so he could keep the rifle trained on her as he came to stand perpendicular to them. ‘This is not the Code I follow, Kate.’

‘Fuck your damn Code.’ Kate said easily. ‘It’s worthless, just like you and your pathetic attempts at being the honourable man. Come talk to me when the mutt sticks whelps in your daughter’s belly and she births those abominations.’

‘Allison has more grasp of what is right and wrong at her age than you’ve had your entire life.’ Chris replied. ‘These are boys, Kate. They’ve done nothing wrong. The same cannot be said for you.’

‘So what are you going to do about it, Chris?’ Kate’s voice was mocking. ‘Shoot me?’

‘If I have to.’ Chris replied. ‘And that’s one area where I’ve always beaten you, Kate. You know I won’t miss.’

‘And have the death of your own flesh and blood on your hands?’ Kate snorted. ‘You’d never be able to live with yourself.’ Her eyes gleamed as she looked at Derek. ‘Maybe you can ask Derek for pointers. He can tell you what it’s like to kill your family.’

‘Fuck you, Kate.’ Derek snarled. ‘You killed my family.’

‘With your help, puppy.’ she crooned. ‘And all it took for you to give it up was me opening my legs. I could have led you around by your dick and you would have thanked me for it.’
'Not anymore.’ Derek stared her down. ‘Now I’d be happy to kill you myself.’

‘You say the sweetest things, lover.’ Kate’s finger tightened on the trigger. ‘Pity you’re not going to live long enough to make good on that threat.’

‘Kate…’ Chris started to say but he was cut off by a deafening roar and then a massive back shape launched itself through the air and Kate screamed. Derek took the opportunity and grabbed Stiles around the waist, bearing him to the ground and out of range. They crawled to the nearest trees and turned to see that Kate was now down, choking as she tried in vain to fight off Peter. He was in full alpha shift, one massive hand wrapped around her neck. Chris had fallen back and was on his ass, back to the house’s foundations.

‘Peter.’ He sounded broken. ‘Please…’

Peter turned his head and snarled at him, then got up. He dragged Kate with him and she kicked out but every blow was completely ineffectual. Peter regarded her, his features cracking and straining as he shifted back into his beta form. His naked skin was streaked with dirt and his face was twisted with fury as he looked back at Chris.

‘Please?’ he said. ‘She never gave them a chance, Chris. She sealed them all in, set charges to start the fires on every floor. They were trapped inside and when they tried to escape into the tunnels, they found she’d blocked those too. The only reason I got out was because the back of the house collapsed and broke the line, but by then it was too late for any of the others. I had to hear them die around me, feel the fire consume me as we fought to stay alive. Talia would have made it but she died saving me when a wall fell in on us. My big sister pushed me out the way, and sacrificed herself. I didn’t even have Laura and Derek because they were both so traumatised that they left me behind and I had to rot in that hospital room for six goddamned years. So you can save your pleases, because they mean nothing to me.’

‘She can be arrested for what she did.’ Chris pleaded. ‘There’s enough evidence now to put her away forever. Please, you were a good man once. You don’t need to keep killing.’

‘No, that’s where you’re wrong.’ Peter looked back at the near unconscious Kate. ‘When I kill her, I’ll finally be done. Then I can take my places as the alpha of what’s left of this pack.’

‘And then what?’ Chris asked. ‘You’re still a murderer. They’ll come for you anyway, you know that.’

‘If that’s the case, then shoot me now.’ Peter replied. ‘You can finally get rid of me for good.’

‘You know I won’t do that.’ Chris’ voice cracked. ‘Please don’t ask me to do that.’

‘Why not?’ Peter tilted his head. ‘Because you still love me? Is that the line you’re taking, with your wife and your daughter and your life?’

‘I never stopped loving you.’ Chris got to his feet, hands held up in supplication. ‘So help me, but it’s true. I married Victoria because it got my father off my back and I’m not apologising for Allison because she’s the best thing in my life. I thought I had lost you, that you were never coming back and it nearly broke me. So yes, you can laugh in my face and tell me that you hate me, but it doesn’t change the fact that it’s only ever been you.’

‘Liar.’ Peter snarled but his face told a different story.

‘Listen to my heartbeat, Peter.’ Chris stepped forward. ‘You know I’m telling the truth. Now please let Kate go so we can turn her over to the police and then we can figure things out.’
‘I can’t.’ Peter growled. ‘You can’t ask me to do that.’

‘Allison and Derek have already agreed to a truce.’ Chris said. ‘I have money and connections that could get you out of here. If you asked, I would even go with you.’

Peter choked out a laugh at that.
‘You’d let me get away?’ His face fell. ‘After all this?’

‘Yes.’ Chris replied. ‘I would. You’re my mate, Peter. I would do anything to have you back.’

Derek held his breath. He could feel Peter wavering at the desperation in Chris’ voice, could see the conflict on his uncle’s face at the truth he was being faced with. Next to him, Stiles held onto his arm, fingers digging in as he whined softly in distress. Derek knew it was the bond between him and Derek and Peter and all the emotions now flickering wildly through it so he pulled him in closer and growled in reassurance.

‘I…’ Peter slowly released his grip on Kate’s neck and she slumped to the ground, coughing frantically. His whole face seemed to collapse in on itself. ‘I haven’t had a moment’s happiness since you left me. I wanted to burn the whole world down because I thought you’d rejected what I’d offered you.’

‘My father would have killed you, would have killed both of us.’ Chris moved towards him. ‘And I could live with that if it was just me, but I would never let him hurt you. I left to save you.’ He got to Peter, standing toe to toe with him. ‘Please, Peter. Give me another chance.’

Peter’s breathing hitched and then he threw out a clawed hand, grabbing Chris at the back of the neck and pulling him close enough that he could lean their foreheads together.

‘You’re such an asshole.’ he murmured. ‘And I’m an even bigger asshole because I believe you.’

A ghost of a smile crossed Chris’ face and he raised a hand to cup Peter’s face.

The shot took them all by surprise and Derek gasped as Peter’s whole body jolted one and then again and again. He tried to cry out, but choked instead as blood welled up and spilled from his mouth, collapsing in Chris’ arms. Chris’ horrified expression said everything as he went with him, falling to his knees and looked up aghast as Victoria came out of the trees, her rifle still smoking.

‘Oh Christopher.’ Her eyes were icy. ‘How you’ve disappointed me.’ She raised her gun and was about to pull off another round when another shot rang out and she flinched as she glanced over her shoulder.

‘Dad!’ Stiles yelled, scrambling to his feet and running in the direction the shotgun blast had come from and Victoria took off in the opposite direction. Derek was about to run after her, when he saw movement out the corner of his eye. Kate was up and stumbling towards the house and he was damned if he was going to let her get away.

He started after her, chasing her up the stairs and through the doorway. She made it into the side parlour, the room his mother had used to sit and eat breakfast in and go through her papers in the morning, the same room he and his siblings and cousins had played in as cubs and the room that he remembered best of all. It seemed fitting.

‘You’ve run out of places to run.’ he growled, stalking through the doorway.

‘I’ve still got some tricks up my sleeve.’ Kate rasped. ‘You’re not taking me down without a fight.’
‘I don’t want a fight.’ Derek replied. ‘I want you gone.’ He moved quickly, pinning her to the wall next to the fireplace. Kate struggled and bared her teeth at him but Derek was unmoved.

‘If I was an animal I would just rip you to pieces right here.’ He leaned in and looked her in the eye. ‘But I’m not an animal, Kate. I’m worth something beyond what I was born as. You took my innocence and you took my hope and my family and my life and for a long time I wanted to die just like they had.’ He heard the sound of footsteps behind him and smelled Stiles’ scent. ‘But now I have a reason to keep fighting. I have a mate and a pack again and you’re going to have nothing. Your family hates you and you’ve lost the only game you’ve ever known how to play.’ He sighed and stepped back, releasing her. ‘You’re done here.’

With that, he turned and started walking away. Stiles was standing at the doorway, his eyes glowing like embers and his heart in plain sight.

‘Fuck you.’ Kate spat. ‘We’re never going to be done!’

‘Derek!’ Stiles shouted and Derek spun around, working entirely on instinct as he shifted and sunk his claws into Kate’s belly, ripping up deep until his whole hand was near buried inside her.

Kate shuddered, her eyes wide and frantic as blood welled up around his hand. She whimpered in pain and Derek stared dispassionately into those eyes he’d once thought were the most beautiful he’d ever seen.

‘You…’ Kate gasped, blood spilling black from her mouth and staining her teeth. She tried to say something else but Derek yanked his hand back and she fell to the floor, her hands going to her torn belly and the wickedly curved knife she’d pulled from where it was concealed at her back falling to the floor.

Derek felt Stiles come to stand next to him, both of them watching as she thrashed and gurgled on the floor. Her blood ran across the uneven surface in rivulets and collected in the grooves of the scorched wood until eventually she stopped moving, her eyes glazing over, and Derek heard the last of her breath escape her lungs as she finally stilled and her heartbeat simply stopped.

‘Fuck. Well, that’s something I never expected to see.’ Stiles voice was soft. His hand crept into Derek’s. ‘Are you okay?’

Derek looked at Kate’s body and thought about how she’d died alone and unacknowledged and something inside of him worked itself loose.

‘Not yet.’ he replied. ‘But I think I’m going to be.’

‘Boys.’ Noah’s voice came from the doorway, urgent and low. ‘Derek, I think Peter’s dying.’

They followed him out to see Peter still in Chris’ arms. The wolfsbane in the bullets Victoria had fired had done their work, and black lines spread out from the gaping wounds in his chest. He saw them and growled, defiant until the end. Derek went to them, falling to his knees. It was one thing to wish for an end to this madness and quite another to see the demise of what was literally his last family member.

‘Kate’s dead.’ he said and Peter smiled, teeth black with his own blood. He was shifted back to human and with his now unscarred face Derek could see the man he’d known.

‘Good.’ He reached out and beckoned to Derek. ‘Now I need you to do me a favour.’

‘No.’ Derek shook his head. ‘I don’t want it.’
‘You have to.’ Peter growled. ‘You’re going to be the last one of us, Derek. If you don’t take it, our family and our legacy is gone forever.’

‘Maybe that’s a good thing.’ Derek was suddenly terrified. ‘I’d be no good as an alpha.’

‘You’re all we have left.’ Peter leaned back into Chris’ arms. ‘You have no choice.’ He held out a clawed hand. ‘You need to do this before it’s too late.’

‘I…’ Derek looked at Stiles and Noah. He was afraid of what would come, but he also knew he had a responsibility to protect his mate and his pack. He turned back to Peter. ‘What do I do?’

‘Give me your hand.’ Peter coughed weakly and Derek extended his arm, wincing when Peter’s claws sank into his skin.

‘I hope like hell you know what you’re doing.’ he blurted out and Peter tried to laugh, the sound coming out as a bloody wheeze.

‘Too late now.’ he replied and closed his eyes and then it was like fire climbing up Derek’s arm. He tried to pull away but Peter’s grip was like iron.

Then it hit.

It wasn’t like anything Derek could ever have comprehended. It was like tsunami, the power completely overwhelming him. He held on as long as he could until it all got too much and he fell back, howling as he hit the ground.

‘Derek!’ Stiles was on him, shaking him and trying to pick him up off the ground all at the same time.

‘I’m okay.’ He fended off the hands on him. ‘Just give me a second.’ He managed to finally open his eyes and saw Peter looking at him, his own now glowing blue.

‘It’s done.’ He slumped back into Chris’ arms and closed his eyes and Derek made himself stumble back to him.

‘Peter…’ Chris was a broken man.

‘My eyes are blue, aren’t they?’ Peter looked up at him and lifted a hand to his face. ‘Don’t cry, my love. It’s better this way.’

Derek stared helplessly as his uncle closed his eyes and stopped breathing, feeling an odd little twinge inside him and then nothing.

‘Oh God.’ Chris made a keening noise and bent over Peter’s body, his shoulders shaking.

Derek sat back on his heels, his vision burning red as he looked at Stiles and Noah.

‘I’m the alpha now.’ he said and they both stared at him.

‘Jesus, kid.’ Noah’s face was a picture. ‘Your eyes…’

‘They’re beautiful.’ Stiles interjected. He was looking at Derek with unashamed pride. ‘That’s a good look on you.’

‘Shit.’ Derek got to his feet. ‘This is not how I saw tonight going.’
‘I don’t think anyone saw it going like this.’ Noah came forward. ‘Victoria got away though, so that’s not good.’

‘She won’t go far.’ Chris had lifted his head. His eyes shone with unshed tears but he was calm. ‘You will need to put out an APB.’

‘I can do that.’ Noah nodded down at Peter’s body. ‘We also need to take care of him and your sister.’

‘I’ll do that.’ Derek said. He thought of Laura buried in the woods. He couldn’t out Peter there next to her, but there was somewhere he would be happy to go. ‘Help Chris.’

‘I’ll go with you.’ Stiles moved to him and then they all turned as light flooded the drive and Jackson’s Porsche came to a sudden stop, kicking up dirt.

He and Lydia fell out their respective doors and came running up, both of them holding bottles and nearly falling over when they saw Chris and Peter.

‘Shit.’ Jackson’s were like saucers. ‘Are we too late?’

‘You could say that.’ Noah replied and gently wrested the Molotov from his hand.

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Allison sat in the back of the cruiser with Scott in her arms. He was breathing easier now, his healing working to fight the effects of the wolfsbane. He shifted and growled softly and she looked down at him.

‘Peter.’ he said. ‘I think he’s dead. I can’t feel the connection to him anymore.’

‘Oh?’ Allison felt a huge sense of relief. ‘But then who’s the alpha now?’

‘I don’t know.’ Scott looked a little lost as he met her eyes. ‘And why haven’t I turned back? I thought that was how it was supposed to work?’

A tap at the window had them both nearly jumping out of their skins. Deaton was looking in at them, a hand to his head. Allison gave him a sheepish grin and wound down the window.

‘Are you alright?’ she asked and Deaton grimaced in a way that said he was most certainly not.

‘Peter decided to get me out of the way.’ he replied. ‘I suppose I should be thankful that he didn’t kill me. What happened?’

‘Scott got hit with vapourised wolfsbane.’ Allison explained. ‘It was my mother. She was working with Kate and she had Stiles as well. They were torturing them.’

‘You’re injured?’ Deaton asked and she shook her head.

‘No. Noah helped us get to the car and then went after Stiles. I heard screaming but I didn’t want to leave Scott.’

‘That was a good idea.’ Deaton stepped back from the car. ‘Stay in there until Noah comes back. I’m going to go and see what happened.’

‘Okay.’ Allison closed the window and watched him walk away into the dark.
‘So what do we do with him?’ Stiles was staring at Peter’s body. ‘I mean we can’t exactly take him with us.’ he gave Lydia a look and she shrugged at him. Next to her, Jackson was looking a little green around the gills.

‘Bury him.’ Derek replied. He looked up at the Hale house. ‘In there. I think that’s where he’d want to be.’

‘I can’t believe I’m aiding and abetting this.’ Noah muttered. ‘I’m supposed to be the goddamn sheriff.’

They all turned and looked at Chris as he came out of the front door, Kate’s body in his arms. He’d done a quick run back to his SUV to get a tarpaulin and she was wrapped in it, her boots sticking out one end. Stiles desperately wanted to make a Wicked Witch analogy but he caught Noah’s eye and knew that if he did it would probably be the last thing he ever said.

‘You need a hand with that.’ Noah was rubbing the back of his neck and Stiles snorted a little. Anyone with half an eye could see where he got his awkwardness from. Derek gave him a quiet growl and Stiles shut up. He was picking up some mixed messages through the bond. Derek wasn’t especially sad, but then Peter had killed Laura and caused enough shit for a lifetime so he wasn’t too surprised by that. What did surprise him was the almost burning possessiveness he was getting little glimpses of. It should have made him uncomfortable, but instead Stiles felt himself wanting to take off into the trees with his new Alpha in hot pursuit. It hadn’t occurred to him even for a second that he wasn’t Derek’s beta, and he was feeling an equally desperate need to submit to him in a way that was distinctly not safe for work.

The dead bodies made that super awkward though.

‘No.’ Chris sighed. ‘I need to take care of it. She was fucking crazy, but she was still family.’

‘Yeah.’ Noah glanced at Derek. ‘I’ll stay here and help the boys, then drop Allison off when we’re done.’

‘Actually, we can do that.’ Lydia interjected. ‘We’ll go get her and Scott and take them home. I think it would be good if we were all very far away from this, our minor status considered.’

‘An excellent point.’ Noah replied. ‘And Miss Martin? I’d appreciate it if you would stop making incendiary devices. I have enough problems with those two.’

Stiles realised who the words were directed at and was offended and amused in equal measures when he realised that Derek was giving his father the same outraged look he was.

‘I’m making no promises.’ Lydia declared and stalked off to the car, an unusually quiet Jackson following in her wake.

Chris nodded to them and walked off, carrying Kate in the direction of his car. Stiles wondered just what he was going to do with her when Derek moved. He went to Peter and hefted him off the ground into his arm, grunting with effort.

‘I’m putting him under the library floor.’ he announced to no-one in particular. ‘He’d like that.’

Stiles watched him go and then jumped as Noah’s hand came down on his shoulder.
‘I really wish your mother were still alive.’ he said. ‘She would have been so much better at handling this.’

‘Well, it’s not like this shit comes up in the parent handbook.’ Stiles replied. ‘I think you’re doing pretty good all things considered.’

‘So what does this mean now?’ Noah asked. ‘Derek being an alpha?’

‘I think I can answer that.’ Deaton’s voice came from the trees and the vet appeared a few moments later. ‘He’s now the resident alpha of Beacon Hills. That means that he’s in charge of things now.’

‘And Stiles and Scott?’

Noah asked. ‘What about them. Will they go back to being human?’

‘The fact that Stiles and Scott are both still werewolves in spite of Peter’s death suggests not.’ Deaton replied. ‘But we can still try to find a cure.’ His dark eyes fixed on Stiles. ‘If you want one, that is.’

Stiles felt like he was balancing on a knife edge. Everything rested on this. He turned and looked at his father, needing the reassurance and he was not disappointed. Noah gave him a warm smile, his I’m proud of you whatever smile and Stiles instantly relaxed. He knew what he had to do now and turned back to Deaton.

‘No.’ he said. ‘I’m fine as I am.’
‘All right then.’ Deaton’s smile was suitably mysterious. ‘In that case, I need to warn you about something.’
‘On God…’ Noah turned his eyes to the heavens. ‘Now what?’

The sound of a deep rumbling growl caught their attention and as one they spun around to see a massive shape in the front door of the Hale house. Stiles could hear wood splintering as it moved out of the shadows and the gasped when he saw what it was.

‘Derek.’ he breathed and emotion flared through the bond between them. It was all heat and animality, the sheer need coming from Derek taking his breath away. His eyes flared instinctively and he snarled, not in anger but in playful challenge.

‘Holy Mother of God.’ Noah took a step back. ‘Is that…?’

‘Derek’s alpha form, yes.’ Deaton was transfixed. ‘I haven’t seen this since Talia.’ There was pain in his voice and his scent.

Derek descended the stairs, his bulk making them creak alarmingly. In shape, his head was canine, the head and muzzle shaped like that of a wolf. His hind legs bent at the hock like a true quadruped, but his front limbs ended in clawed hands rather than paws. Every inch of skin was covered in dense black fur, lips curled back to reveal gleaming white fangs and the black broken only by his glowing red eyes. Stiles could make out the swish of a plumy tail behind him. He was such a contrast to the twisted thing Peter had been in alpha form and Stiles found him utterly beautiful.

‘Stiles.’ Deaton’s voice was soft. ‘Do you know what this is?’

‘I have an idea.’ Stiles could feel his heart starting to race, smell his own arousal thickening in the night air. ‘What do I do?’

‘He wants to chase you.’ Deaton had a pacifying hand out, keeping Noah from moving. ‘I suggest
You run.’

In front of them, Derek lifted his head. His snarl was loud enough to echo through the space between them and Stiles felt his body light up with an almost unbearable excitement. He almost fell over in his haste, but recovered quickly and took off into the trees. Behind him, he heard a howl and then the rhythmic thump of Derek’s feet as he ran after him.

It was like he was only really feeling things for the first time. Every sense was heightened to a degree Stiles could barely comprehend. The night air was rich with scents, none more beguiling then the residual woodiness of Derek’s skin and fur. He wanted to turn and let himself be claimed, but at the same time was driven to run. He knew that the harder and longer his did, the sweeter his reward would be at the end.

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‘What the hell was that?’ Noah was two seconds away from pursuing his son and Deaton restrained him, hand gripping his arm.

‘I need to ask just how happy you’re going to be to have a werewolf son in law.’ he said and Noah groaned.

‘Christ.’ He shook Deaton off. ‘I really don’t want to know what’s going to happen out there, do I?’

‘Absolutely not.’ Deaton replied. ‘Just rest assured that whatever does, Derek will never hurt Stiles. But, I would start looking into marriage licenses if I were you. I believe that as Stiles’ parental guardian you do have the power to grant permission. That should get around any legalities.’

‘Are you seriously suggesting that I let Stiles and Derek get married?’ Noah was appalled. ‘He’s not even seventeen yet!’

‘No, but by morning your son is going to be the mate of the Beacon Hills alpha.’ Deaton replied. ‘Things are going to change in ways you could never have comprehended before.’

‘Crap.’ Noah shook his head. ‘I need so much whisky.’

‘No, what we need right now is to go and bury Peter Hale.’ Deaton started for the house. ‘Then we can go back to my place. I have a bottle of Haig that we can break into. We can leave Derek and Stiles here for now. They’ll be quite safe until morning.’

‘Oh thank God.’ Noah muttered and followed him.

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Derek ran.

Every breath brought the tantalising scent of his mate and Derek could hear Stiles’ heartbeat even over the pounding of his blood in his ears. He threw himself into his run, muscles flexing and relaxing over and over again as he followed just close enough that he didn’t lose the scent. His mate was wily, zigzagging through the trees and jumping over obstacles. It thrilled Derek and drove him to go faster, losing himselfs to his instincts.

He inhaled deeply with each bound, tongue lolling and slaver flying from his jaws as he tracked Stiles’ scent, honey sweet and rich with arousal and anticipation. Up ahead, he caught a quick movement and then almost tripped over himself when his front feet got tangled in laces.
They were Stiles shoes, and Derek stuck his nose right in the first one and took it all in. He lifted his head at the sound of a flirtatious snarl floating back to him, put his ears back flat against his head and growled happily in reply.

This was going to be fun.

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Stiles grinned, put his head down and redoubled his efforts. Derek was so close behind him and Stiles wanted to give one last push, to prove himself worthy. His mate would need someone smart and fast and capable to be by his side and Stiles was going to give him that.

He hopped frantically for a second, trying to run and strip off his jeans at the same time and then eventually gave it up, settling for ripping them clean off. He didn’t even take a second to think about the consequences of doing that, followed with his boxers and socks afterwards. Being naked was freeing, the brush of air on his overheated skin unbearably intimate. He was hard, his cock already wet with the thought of letting Derek bear him to the ground and mount him.

He was so enthralled with the idea that he completely missed the heavy panting from his left and the hit knocked him clear off his feet. He landed on his stomach and got a mouthful of dirt and leaves before Derek’s massive hand (paw?) landed between his shoulder blades and pinned him. Stiles spat out the leaves and lashed out, trying to twist away. He wasn’t trying very hard though, snarling playfully and spreading his legs even as he tried to give the impression he was fighting Derek off.

Derek let out a deep growl and Stiles could feel it resonating through him. The command in it was clear and he froze, heart pounding. Derek moved over him, his soft belly fur brushing Stiles’ bare back and his teeth setting in a loose grip at the nape of his neck to hold him still. The desperate heat was back, Stiles’ skin on fire from it, and he writhed underneath him in the dirt, whining high pitched and excited. He’d never made a sound like this before and the last bit of rationality he had told him he sounded like a bitch in heat.

Derek’s tongue, hot and wet, dragged down his spine. It felt rougher in this form, the feeling exquisite and making Stiles arch back into it. He raised himself as much as he could and Derek’s growl took on a different tone. Now it was demanding and Stiles braced himself enough to get on hands and knees, legs spread to give Derek all the access he wanted. It was wanton and shameless and Stiles couldn’t care less. He could feel Derek’s hot breath, saline cooling in stripes along his skin lower and lower until he was breathing over where Stiles was exposed and he whined, wanting it so badly he could barely stand it. He took in deep greedy breaths, Derek’s smell thick on his tongue.

Derek’s growl grew muted, his hand withdrawing before coming back, still clawed but without the fur. It ran up the back of Stiles thigh and there was the gentle touch of lips to the base of his spine.

‘Stiles.’ His voice was rough. ‘I have to ask…’

‘Do it.’ Stiles glanced back over his shoulder, shuddering at the intensity of Derek’s alpha eyes. He was in beta shift but Stiles knew what he was asking. ‘I want it.’

‘We can’t go back.’ Derek sat back on his heels. He was devastating in the moonlight, the dull glimmer of his pale skin like satin. ‘Not if we do this.’

Stiles growled at him and flipped back over before launching himself at his alpha. Derek let out a delightfully astonished sound and Stiles attacked his mouth, snapping playfully and catching Derek’s lower lip between his fangs.
Derek slipped both arms around him, holding him close and kissing back frantically. There was a moment of fangs scraping against each other and a bloom of copper before it became wet and messy. Stiles licked at him, lapping at his mouth and sucking on his tongue until Derek finally flipped them back over, getting Stiles underneath him. Their eyes met and Stiles smiled, deliriously happy.

‘I think I might be stupidly in love with you.’ The words were distorted by his fangs but the beautiful fanged smile Derek gave him told Stiles he’d been clearly understood.

‘I want you to be mine.’ He ran his claws over Stiles’ bared throat with a touching delicacy. ‘I want to keep you, Stiles.’

‘Why?’ Stiles wriggled in pleasurable anticipation.

‘Because you’re my mate.’ Derek leaned down enough to gently lap at his mouth. ‘Because I love you too.’

‘Will it hurt?’ Stiles asked. ‘If you do it like you were before?’

‘We can do things to make it hurt less.’ Derek replied. ‘I can take your pain, and your body will heal. But if you want, we can stop this now and go home.’

Stiles lay back and looked over Derek’s head at the sky through the trees.

‘Is this how your family used to do it?’ he asked. ‘Out here in the woods.’

‘Yes.’ Derek’s face was so completely open it tore at Stiles’ heart.

‘Do you want to take me here?’ he asked, amazed by how much sway he had over this powerful creature. ‘Claim me like this?’

Derek’s eyes flared.

‘I do.’ he whispered, the edge of one fang catching on his lip. ‘Just like this, out here for the moon to see.’

‘What do I need to do?’ Stiles asked and felt himself lifted and gently turned over.

‘Let me take care of you.’ Derek’s voice faded out as he moved a, his body coming over Stiles and the rough brush of his tongue tracing a steady path down. Stiles assumed his previous position, the feeling of Derek panting on his balls getting him to tilt up and expose himself enough that the next pass of Derek’s tongue found its target.

It was like everything and nothing he’d expected. Stiles moaned loudly, the sensation making him even harder. His cock fairly ached for some sort of friction, but moving down to the ground would take him away from Derek’s mouth and he couldn’t have that. So he bore the torture and was rewarded with a thorough tongue fucking, whimpering when Derek managed to penetrate him the slightest amount. He could smell them both, the tang of pre-come strong in his nose.

‘Please…’ It was more of a growl than anything else now, Stiles’ voice unrecognisable to himself.

‘Okay, I got you.’ Derek breathed and then his finger was there, circling and eventually pressing in. It burned a little, the stretch and lack of wetness making Stiles shiver. Derek growled and started licking around his fingertip, easing the way. It slid in further, and Stiles pushed back into it. It was good, and when Derek spat onto his skin it jolted a low cry from him.
'Change.' he panted. ‘I want to feel you like you were before.’

‘If I do, I won’t be able to stop.’ Derek hissed, clearly at breaking point of the barrage of emotions coming at him through the bond were any indication.

‘I don’t want you to stop.’ Stiles clawed at the dirt and threw his head back when Derek hit his prostate. ‘I want you to fuck me.’

Derek withdrew and shifted and the animal smell of him made Stiles whine and fell flat with his ass in the air, presented for his alpha to mount. Like this, Derek was so much bigger, his huge clawed hands coming down either side of Stiles elbows, claws sinking into the earth. He could feel a slippery trail over his back where Derek’s cock dragged, feel his alpha’s uncoordinated thrusts. Derek was leaking so much there was no need for anything else and Stiles decided enough was enough. He braced himself and reached back far enough to grasp Derek’s cock. In his alpha shift, it was almost slimy with lubrication, wetting Stiles’ whole hand and leaving a sticky trail sliding down his forearm.

It took a couple of tries but he got Derek into the right position. Even with his werewolf strength it was hard to keep himself from falling face first into the dirt, both of them bubbling over with arousal and excitement for either of them to have any grace about the whole procedure. Derek was panting and growling at the same time, an unholy noise that made him sound like he’d gone completely feral. He was drooling freely, thick strings of it landing on Stiles’ back. He pushed back and Derek’s cock went in easily, the tapered end thickening as he bottomed out. He got one arm up and wrapped around Stiles’ body, tucking his haunches in and jackhammering into him.

Stiles lost control of himself, his cries getting louder with every drive into him. It felt incredible, Derek’s fur keeping him warm and his cock a delicious thick stretch inside him. The shape and size of it had Derek rubbing up against his prostate, and it didn’t take long for Stiles to feel himself edging closer towards orgasm. He’d never really believed that it could happen, but the hammering he was taking had him closer than he thought it would without even laying a hand on himself.

Above him, Derek’s whines were frantic. He was shifting from paw to paw like a real wolf, his teeth finding purchase over the bite scar he’d left behind their first full moon together. The burst of pain only heightened everything between them, the bond singing with their combined pleasure and when Stiles felt the swelling of Derek’s cock inside him, he threw his head back as best he could and howled. He knew it would happen but hadn’t realised just how good it would feel. It was impossible to stop and he shredded the ground in front of him as he bucked back into it. Derek snarled, lost to the wolf, and bit down as he came. The feeling spurred Stiles to get a hand around himself, two strokes all it took before he came too. It was so strong it made everything else fade into the background, his whole body convulsing as Derek’s fangs and cock sank deeper, penetrating him so thoroughly that Stiles was lost to him. He came for what felt like forever, edging close to blacking out until Derek finally released him from his bite and roared his triumph into the night sky above them. The sound was deafening, and Stiles howled with him.

It finally started to fade away and Stiles was exhausted, his sense slowly coming back to him. He felt Derek change, fur melting away to skin that was like a furnace against his own. Derek licked softly at the mating bite on his shoulder and Stiles smiled as he was gathered into strong arms and laid to the ground. He was overcome with the need to sleep and made a happy noise when Derek nosed at the place behind his ear.

‘When we do this again, I want you to bite me back.’ he whispered into Stiles’ ear. ‘My mate.’

He reached up, blindly petting Derek’s hair and smiled.
‘Sure thing, Sourwolf.’ he yawned and gave into his body’s need to sleep, wrapped up in his alpha’s arms.

Chapter End Notes

Derek claims Stiles as his mate in alpha form. This is the last part of the chapter so you may duck out before if you wish :) Stop after the line ‘This was going to be fun.’ All wolfy shenanigans are explicitly consensual.
A Brief Reprieve

Chapter by HaleHathNoFury (My_Trex_has_fleas), My_Trex_has_fleas

Chapter Summary

Sunday after the chaos.

Chapter Notes

Because I like my boys versatile ;D and have a yen for powerbottom!Derek.

Stiles woke up sore and horny. His body had taken a beating the previous night and he turned over and gave the culprit a baleful glare. Derek was in wolf form, lying sprawled out on his back with all four paws in the air, his furry belly exposed and snoring lightly. Stiles stifled a snort of laughter at his mate acting like an overgrown puppy and snuggled back down behind him, one arm sneaking around to cuddle Derek to him.

Saturday had passed in a blur, Noah and Chris frantically working to try and cover up what had happened. Kate’s body had been ‘found’ and called in on an anonymous tip and the Sheriff’s department had gone to recover it. All traces of Peter had been taken care of and he was now buried underneath the floor of the library in the Hale house, his body surrounded by wolfsbane and changed into a huge grey wolf. Noah had said it was one of the strangest things he’d ever seen but he was handling the whole thing very well considering. Scott had taken twenty-four hours to go back to normal, his recovery overseen by Deaton, and Melissa and Allison had been by his side the entire time. Lydia had dropped in a few times as well, bringing Jackson with her. Victoria was gone, her things vanished from the house by the time Chris had returned and there had been no sign of her at all.

The official story that Kate’s body had been found and that there had been a mountain of evidence on her body that had linked her directly to the recent murders, as well as evidence that she had been behind the Hale house fire six years before. The official story was that she had been covering up the evidence of that crime by taking out her accomplices. There had been a journal detailing Derek’s seduction and the planning of the arson found among her things, as well as Laura Hale’s necklace as testified by her niece. The theory was put forward that she hadn’t acted alone though, and that her accomplice had killed her and made it look like all the other crimes they had committed, Kate’s experience as a hunter allowing her to make it look like an authentic animal attack. Derek had made a formal statement as to the statutory rape and Harris had been convinced to come in detail how Kate had gotten him to help with the preparation of the arson materials. David Whittemore, reeling from his son’s abduction that they had presented as an attempt to keep him quiet because he would make good collateral in striking a deal, had been all too eager to rush the proceedings through and declaring Kate guilty of the crimes. The papers had seized on the story and Noah had had a busy day giving media briefings and interviews. He hadn’t come home until well past four in the morning, which had given Stiles and Derek time to reenact their mating more than a few times, although there was a moratorium on mating in alpha form inside the house. Even Noah had his limits and Stiles
hadn’t wanted to push.

Next to him, Derek stirred. He stretched out his front legs and then his back legs, making a deep rumbling noise as he yawned and exposed the pink interior of his mouth and his sharp teeth. Stiles smiled and rubbed a hand down his belly and Derek stretched again, shifting back to human, and the belly beneath Stiles’ hand changed from thick fur to soft skin and dense black hair. It also meant that he could see that Derek’s cock was half hard, and heat bubbled up inside him.

‘Morning.’ He leaned on one elbow and slid his hand lower, tracing Derek’s happy trail with one finger. ‘You’re up, I see.’

‘On the way there.’ Derek’s sleepy voice was rough. He rolled onto his side, coming to stick his face in Stiles’ neck and inhaling deeply. ‘Fuck, you smell good, like come and sex and me. I just want to fuck you all over again.’

‘Maybe, but my ass is not ready for you to take it apart again.’ Stiles tilted his head back, sighing happily when Derek started dragging his tongue down the line of his neck.

‘Not a problem.’ he growled, nosing behind Stiles’ ear. ‘You can fuck me this morning, if you want.’

That made Stiles freeze. He’d kind of assumed that Derek being the alpha meant that he would always be the one in the position to receive. This little revelation, uttered so casually, had the effect of being a direct hit to his libido and he pounced, getting a surprised noise from Derek as he landed on him.

‘Are you fucking serious?’ he asked, leaning forward and eyeballing Derek sceptically. ‘You want me to fuck you?’

‘Yeah.’ Derek’s lazy smile had a sharp edge to it. ‘I also like being fucked, if that wasn’t apparent from what I just said.’

‘Asshole.’ Stiles muttered and dived right in. Derek’s mouth opened easily under his, their tongues tangling in a lazy dance. He was growling, the vibrations travelling through his mouth into Stiles’ and it made him do a full body shiver. The past two nights had demonstrated just how animalistic Derek could be, showing Stiles that the human mask he wore was just that but now this final barrier between them had been torn down, Derek was so at ease with showing him the wolf inside him that he acted more like an animal than he had before. He rubbed his scruff over Stiles’ face and throat, ignoring Stiles’ protests and the hand that tried to swat him off, tipping them over and pinning Stiles’ hands with his own before licking across Stiles’ mouth repeatedly until he gave up and let himself be subjected to a thorough tongue bath. When he was satisfied, and only when, Derek finally pulled back and that wolf smile was back.

‘I’m going to ride the fuck out of you.’ he growled and all Stiles’ blood made a determined dash for his nether regions.

‘Okay.’ he replied faintly, lying there as Derek started a sniffing inspection of his neck. ‘How do you want to do this.’

‘Any way you want.’ Derek purred. ‘So long as I get your cock in me.’

‘Oh God.’ Stiles swallowed hard. He had had no idea that Derek’s taciturn nature would not apply to the times they were having sex. In fact, the more times they had done so, the chirpier Derek had gotten. By the time they had gotten done the night before, Derek was snarling all kinds of filthy things into Stiles’ ear, things which had made him blush in spite of the fact that he had been filled up
with alpha knot at the time and really shouldn’t have been embarrassed.

‘Mmmm.’ Derek was smiling blissfully, his own rock-hard erection digging into Stiles’ stomach. He stretched past Stiles to grab the severely depleted tube of lube lying on the nightstand and waved it in Stiles’ face. ‘You okay to do this?’

‘Sure.’ Stiles grabbed for the lube, flashing his eyes at Derek when the alpha moved it out of reach and gently bopped him on the nose with it, making him go cross-eyed. ‘Hey, give it here you dick or you can forget about getting any.’

Derek gave him a low laugh and kissed him and Stiles all but melted back into the bed. It won the argument though, the warm swipe of Derek’s tongue through his mouth making him forget about anything else. They lay like that a moment until Derek finally placed the tube in Stiles’ open palm.

‘So?’ His green eyes were sparkling. ‘Get to it.’

‘Bossy.’ Stiles muttered, the nerves coming back. Derek had done this to him enough times for him to be comfortable being on the receiving end, but this was totally different. It certainly didn’t help that Derek flopped over onto his back, long arms above his head and his legs spread enough for Stiles to get between them, one knee bent and falling open to the side in a louche display. He hadn’t been kidding when he’d said that he enjoyed sex and Stiles sat up, contemplating his best plan of attack.

He opened the lube and coated his first two fingers the same way Derek usually did and then scooted down the bed until he was kneeling between Derek’s legs. He took in a deep breath, inhaling the smell of his mate. His own cock was skyward, hard and wet already in anticipation but Stiles manfully ignored it. Instead he focused on Derek’s warm skin, the smell of physical arousal coming off him in waves through their bond and saturating his scent. His cock was leaking onto his abdomen, the hair on his stomach matted with precome, and Stiles was filled with a desperate desire to lick it off him. He knew this was the wolf starting to come through, in fact if their positions had been reversed Derek would already be doing it.

‘You can.’ Derek’s luminous eyes were fixed on him.

Stiles leaned down, inhaling the deeply male smell and licked tentatively at the line of hair. Derek tasted clean and slightly acrid and Stiles braced himself on one hand to get the other between his legs. The texture of the skin was no different to his own and he eased in the tip of his forefinger. Derek tipped his head back, throat exposed, and moaned, drawing it out when Stiles pressed in hard enough for his whole finger to go in.

‘Fuck.’ It came out choked. ‘Okay so I’ve done that.’

‘It’s not a goddamn to-do list.’ Derek grumbled, but he sounded too turned on to be annoyed.

‘Just hang on.’ Stiles snapped back. ‘Amateur at work here.’

‘You’re not an amateur.’ Derek bared his fangs at him. ‘You finger yourself all the time.’

‘Yeah, but this is not my ass we’re dealing with.’ Stiles told him, easing back and then pushing back in. He did it a few more times and then worked the second one in, ignoring Derek’s pointed glare. This time, he crooked them when he went in deeper and felt the small irregularity skate under his fingertips that make Derek arch into his hand.

‘Harder.’ he hissed, eyes now glowing red. ‘Fuck me with them.’
‘Christ.’ Stiles spared his poor aching cock a glance. ‘I’m going to come all over you if you don’t shut the fuck up.’

‘Then come all over me.’ Derek smiled again, all danger this time. ‘You know you can get it up again.’

That much had become horribly apparent in the past two days. Stiles hadn’t quite believed just how quick he could recover, even with being a teenager. Derek on the other hand had demonstrated appalling levels of stamina, something he put down to the change to being an alpha and mating just after the transformation. He had told Stiles that it was a good thing he wasn’t a female because he would be pregnant by this stage several times over, and Stiles had proceeded to freak out until a call to Deaton had assured him that it was an impossibility.

He retaliated by driving his fingers in deep and hard and Derek snarled at him, both hands coming back up to claw at the already somewhat shredded mattress and the other knee splaying to the side. That gave Stiles a perfect view of what he was doing and the wet slide of his fingers inside Derek was captivating to watch. He twisted them, mimicking the way Derek did it to him and the noises from overhead went from happy kitten to outboard motor very quickly. He looked up and saw that Derek had his eyes closed, muscles flexing as he pushed back into Stiles’ fingers.

He wondered, not for the first time, what it would be like to out his mouth there, but Derek beat him to it. He snarled and sat up, grabbing Stiles forearm and practically yanking his fingers out of him, then rolling them so Stiles was flat on his back. He stared as Derek climbed on top of him, his powerful thighs taking the strain as he moved into position, one hand around Stiles’ cock and the other braced on Stiles’ chest. His eyes were all red now, fangs and claws out. Stiles shifted in kind, unable to stop himself. He all but howled when Derek lowered, feeling his cock go in through the initial resistance until Derek sunk all the way down.

Nothing could have prepared him for the feeling and Stiles felt his own instincts take hold and dig their teeth into the nape of his neck. He let go, sitting up and wrapping both arms around Derek to hold him in place and his mouth latching onto the nearest nipple, scraping his teeth over it and sucking hard until it was swollen between his teeth before moving onto the other one and doing the same.

Derek growled, hips rolling as he set a punishing pace with one hand at the back of Stiles’ neck and the other between them working his own cock. The smell of them was thick enough to taste on the air and Stiles breathed it in greedily, thrusting up as best he could and nearly passing out from the pleasure when Derek clenched down hard around his cock and attacked his mouth, the ferocity of the kiss knocking their fangs together so copper bloomed in Stiles’ mouth. He dug his claws into Derek’s skin, trying to hold onto him as the bed rocked alarmingly, banging against the wall loud enough to echo around the room.

‘Derek…’ It came out stuttered as Derek threw his head back and bounced even harder, panting like an overheated dog. ‘We’re going to break the bed!’

‘I’ll buy you a new one! Just don’t fucking stop!’ He was completely gone and Stiles whimpered as he felt the tremble in his thighs, his orgasm rapidly building as he watched Derek’s cock pulse in his fist and then he was coming, unable to do anything but let it take him. It felt so good, the tight wet heat around him getting even wetter as he filled Derek up, another little quirk of werewolf physiology as it turned out as was the swelling of the base of his cock.

Well that was both not unexpected and also a complete mind fuck. Derek had explained knots in graphic detail but Stiles had not expected it to feel so good. It was like a direct current had set up between his cock and his balls and his brain, shorting everything out as he locked up inside Derek.
‘Yes! Fuck! Come in me!’ Derek roared, throwing himself forward and ripping his claws right through the bed. When he climaxed it felt like a vice clamping down around Stiles’ knot, his own come practically drenching Stiles’ stomach and chest. He grabbed Derek’s thighs, holding him still as they both fucked through their orgasms, going on and on until Derek toppled over like a felled redwood and squished him.

‘Derek.’ Stiles spat out a mouthful of hair, his whole body shaking violently as he came again, the intensity tapering off but no less earth shattering for it. ‘I can’t…’

‘Yeah you can.’ Derek lifted his head, eyes still red although now it was banked, like dying embers in a fire. ‘It feels so fucking good to have you knotted all up inside me.’

Stiles tried to resist the urge to preen and failed utterly, beaming back at him as he fell back, pretty sure that he couldn’t possibly ejaculate anymore until Derek purposefully tightened around him and he arched up into another orgasm.

‘I’m going to die.’ he whined and Derek laughed, grinding down and shuddering through another one of his own from the relentless pressure on his prostate.

‘You’re not.’ he panted. ‘But we’re probably going to need a nap after this and then food.’

‘Got it.’ Stiles finally fell back onto the bed and closed his eyes as he finally stopped coming. He battled to breathe for a good few minutes, easing himself back down. He’d never felt anything like it, had never experienced his brain going so completely quiet.

‘Not bad for a the recently deflowered.’ he said and Derek chuckled softly and pawed at his face.

‘Give me ten minutes.’ He was already getting comfortable, mindless of the ocean of come that was going to cement them to each other. ‘Then we can go again.’

‘Nuh-uh.’ Stiles shoved rather ineffectually at his shoulder, still to blissed out to really have the strength to move him. ‘We are going to wait until I can pull out and then clean up.’

‘Yeah but not for a while yet.’ Derek had his head snuggled underneath Stiles’ chin, arms tucked in against himself and a dopey smile on his face. ‘I like being locked to you.’

‘Weirdo.’ Stiles ran a hand through Derek’s sweaty hair. Then a horrible thought occurred to him. ‘So with you it’s about half an hour, right. But that’s because you’re an alpha.’

‘Nope.’ Derek licked absently at the sweat pooled in the hollow of Stiles’ collar bone. ‘That’s pretty standard for male wolves.’ He looked up at Stiles, his eyes gloriously hazy. ‘Why?’

‘Because my dad said he was going to get Scott and Melissa and bring them round for breakfast.’ Stiles winced at the sudden change of expression from sex-drunk puppy to I am going to kill you Stiles. ‘Guess I forgot to mention that, huh?’

‘You think?’ Derek snarked and bit him on the shoulder.

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Noah got to the front door and knew something was off. He turned back to Melissa, who gave him a quizzical look. Next to her, Scott’s nose wrinkled.

‘Oh man.’ He looked scandalised. ‘I do not want to go in there.’
‘Okay.’ Noah stepped back and shut the door again. ‘I’m guessing from that I probably don’t want to
either.’ He took his phone out and dialled Stiles’ number, hearing the echo of his son’s voice from
above him when he answered.

‘Hi Dad.’ Stiles was using that suspiciously cheerful tone of voice that meant he was up to no good
and Noah sighed.

‘We’re going to the diner.’ he said. ‘When you and Derek finally managed to separate, you can join
us. Just make sure you shower thoroughly. Scott’s going kind of green out here.’

‘Can do.’ Stiles trilled back and hung up. There was the sound of someone being berated coming
from above them and Scott grimaced.

‘Okay, that’s about all I can take.’ He threw up both hands and stalked back to the car, leaving
Melissa and Noah to look up at Stiles’ window.

‘Nobody warns you about shit like this.’ Melissa was frowning.

‘You didn’t have to drive out to the preserve yesterday morning and collect your naked ass son and
his equally naked ass boyfriend who both looked like they’d spent the night doing sexy mud
wrestling.’ Noah muttered, steering her back to the car. ‘I think I am emotionally scarred after that
one.’

‘I’ll get my chance I’m sure.’ Melissa replied.

The drive to the diner was filled with awkward silence until Melissa let out a very loud snort. Noah
glanced at her, caught her eye and then he was bellowing with laughter. Scott watched them from
the back seat, his face all scrunchsed up in complete bafflement as he watched them howl (if you’d
pardon the pun) with laughter.

‘Oh my God.’ Melissa wiped her streaming eyes. ‘What the hell are you going to do? I mean they
can’t keep that up for much longer, can they?’

Noah snickered at her choice of words and turned until the parking lot of the diner.

‘Alan said it’ll take about a week to calm down. I’m seriously thinking about checking into a hotel.’
He parked the car and looked back over his shoulder at Scott. ‘But at least I can’t smell it, right?’

‘Be thankful.’ Scott glowered and folded his arms. ‘It’s disgusting.’

‘Aw, come on now.’ Melissa was looking at him in the rear view mirror. ‘It can’t be all that
disgusting. I mean, I found condoms in your room last week so you must be okay with it, when it’s
you that is.’

‘You’re not helping, Mom.’ Scott narrowed his eyes at her. ‘And at least I’m trying to be
responsible.’

‘True.’ Melissa smiled and opened her door. ‘Now, I’m starving. Are we going?’

‘I have to say, the best part about this is how distracted he is.’ Noah chuckled. ‘I’ve been able to get
burgers two days in a row and he hasn’t noticed.’ He got out, offered Melissa his arm, and they
walked to the diner laughing. Scott scrambled after them, kicking at stray pebbles and snorting.

‘Not sure who the goddamn adults are supposed to be around here.’ he muttered.
‘Allison?’ Chris tapped gently at the door and then pushed it open. Allison was still in bed, lying with her back towards him and her silence made him come around to sit down next to her. He reached out and laid a hand on her shoulder, examining her pale face for anything he could get. She’d been scarily blank since he’d picked her up from Lydia’s house the day before and he knew she was processing everything that had happened. He was incredibly grateful that she’d stayed with Scott and missed what had happened between him and Victoria, but also what had happened between him and Peter. There were some things he wasn’t ready to tell her.

She sighed deeply and finally looked at him, her deep brown eyes filled with tears.

‘She just left.’ Her voice was dull with pain. ‘She didn’t even look back, just left.’

‘I know, sweetheart.’ Chris moved a little closer and stroked her hair. ‘I’m so sorry.’

‘She tried to kill Scott.’ Allison gripped her pillow so hard her knuckles went white. ‘She was helping Kate. She knew all about what she did before, how she killed Derek’s family.’ She gave a mirthless little laugh. ‘She called it going a little overboard. Like it was no big deal.’

‘The thing is that to her, it wasn’t.’ Chris sighed. ‘Your mom’s family has always been...militant.’

‘You think she went back to them?’ Allison asked and he nodded.

‘I do.’ He met her eyes. ‘And I also think that we’ve just let ourselves in for a world of trouble. I know that you were serious about reinstating the truce with Derek, and honestly it’s going to work both ways. We’ve pretty much painted targets on our backs. I can guarantee that we’re going to need their protection every bit as much as they need ours. Not only that, but you’re going to have to step up now. I can train you as much as possible, but it’s going to be tough and dangerous. But I don’t want to lie to you and say that you don’t need to worry because that would leave you vulnerable and I can’t afford for you to not be ready.’

‘You make it sound like we’re going to war.’ Allison was watching him carefully and he felt pride at how calmly she was handling everything. She had steel inside her, that much was evident and Chris was more than happy to have her fighting by his side.

‘We will be, when the Hunter community hears what is no doubt going to be a pretty twisted version of events. They’re going to seriously doubt our loyalty and question our actions.’ he said. ‘But we’ll be ready when they come for us, and we’ll have allies.’

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Derek yawned as he came down the stairs to answer the doorbell. He scratched absently at the hair on his chest, dressed only in sweatpants. Stiles was still languishing naked in bed, threatening to start without him if Derek took too long to see who was at the door.

He breathed in as he got into the hall and listened to the sound of Deaton’s heartbeat outside and frowned. He opened the door and the vet smiled at him.

‘Good morning.’ His eyes dropped to the mating scar on Derek’s shoulder. ‘I know I’m interrupting, but I thought it might be a good idea to have a talk about your new status.’

‘Okay.’ Derek stood aside and ignored Stiles’ vociferous protests from upstairs. Deaton came in and stood looking at him expectantly, leaving Derek wondering just what the etiquette was for visiting emissaries. ‘You want some tea?’
‘That would be most welcome.’ Deaton replied and walked to the kitchen. Judging from the muttered profanities up stairs and the sound of Stiles stomping around his room, Derek assumed that he was also coming down.

He filled the kettle and made up three mugs while Deaton sat down at the table and regarded him.

‘You seem to be handling the transition well.’ he remarked.

‘It still feels odd.’ Derek poured boiling water into the mugs. ‘Like my skin is too small for my body.’

‘That’s normal.’ Deaton replied. ‘Laura felt the same, although of course her change was far more traumatic than yours although I don’t mean that purely in the emotional sense. Talia had been alpha for a long time so her power was a lot more potent.’

‘So what?’ Stiles voice came from the doorway and he sidled in and up to Derek, now in a t-shirt and boxers. He reeked of sex and his hair was doing something inexplicable, but his amber eyes were warm and he was the most stunning thing Derek had ever seen. He growled in appreciation and slid an arm around Stiles’ waist, nosing at his neck and quite forgetting Deaton was there until he cleared his throat pointedly.

‘So that a serious matter and what I’ve come to discuss.’ His dark eyes were twinkling with undisguised amusement though and Derek could smell he was pleased. ‘You’re off to a good start, Derek. The transition of power was done through love and not by violence, which means that it’s going to be far more stable than it was in Peter. You also have a mate bond and a strong anchor in Stiles, so you’ll be balanced and able to resist the natural surges in aggression that you’re going to have.’

‘Yay. Go us.’ Stiles looked unspeakably smug. He flashed his eyes playfully at Derek and Derek couldn’t help doing to the same in reply.

‘Why do I feel like there’s a but coming?’ he asked Deaton. ‘I know that you didn’t come all the way over here just to say that.’

‘Well, the previous situation will have no doubt attracted attention in the community at large.’ Deaton said. ‘All the packs your mother was in contact with and had treaties with have been largely ignoring Beacon Hills while there has been no pack here. Peter’s actions have had repercussions and there are some others who have taken an interest again. They will want to know that this new change in alphahood will be one that’s not going to be a threat. Once they know that Peter’s gone, they will probably come sniffing around.’

‘Ha! Good one, Doc.’ Stiles grinned. He glanced gleefully at Derek and Derek gave him the eyebrows. ‘What. it was funny.’

‘So what do we do about that?’ Derek batted Stiles’ wandering hands away and went back to the tea. He felt uneasy, all his instincts kicking in at the mention of other packs coming into his home.

‘You need to become strong enough to see off a challenge. No-one would willingly challenge an experienced alpha or indeed a feral one like Peter had become.’ Deaton looked thoughtful. ‘But you’re young and you were not trained to take up your mother’s position, not like Laura was. They’ll see you as an easy target.’

‘Fuck that noise.’ Stiles folded his arms and looked belligerent. ‘This is Derek’s territory, right?’

‘Yes, it is by birthright.’ Deaton replied. ‘But that doesn’t mean he can’t have it taken from him in a
challenge. He needs to make sure his position is cemented.’

‘So what do I do?’ Derek frowned. ‘To strengthen my position.’

‘You need a pack.’ Deaton told him. ‘And not just by proxy. You have Scott and Stiles at the moment. Stiles is already pack by mate bond, but Scott will need to submit to your authority. Noah will be included as the parent of your mate and Melissa too, should Scott choose to join. I’ll be acting as your emissary for the time being, although I do strongly suggest that we start looking for someone to replace me. Miss Martin would be an excellent choice, if you want my opinion. Banshees are powerful creatures in their own right, and she’s got an excellent strategic mind and strength of character. But that won’t be enough. You’ll need to have more betas to prove that you have strength in numbers.’

‘So what do we do?’ Stiles’ mouth quirked. ‘Put an ad on Craigslist?’

‘Obviously Derek will need to be careful who he chooses.’ Deaton gave Stiles an unimpressed look. ‘I am simply suggesting that you both need to be on the lookout for any prospective candidates. Remember that they have to consent to the Bite, and be fully aware of how the change will affect them, as well as the fact that it is not one hundred percent guaranteed to work.’

‘We can work with that.’ Stiles folded his arms. ‘Is there anything we should avoid.’

‘Try to find candidates that are going to want to be part of a pack.’ Deaton said. ‘Older people are fine but younger ones have a better chance of surviving the Bite. Children are out, as is anyone unable to fully consent.’

‘Got it.’ Derek looked at him. ‘When?’

‘As soon as possible, ideally.’ Deaton replied. ‘It’ll stabilise the pack and cement the alpha mate bond.’

‘I don’t know.’ Stiles’ eyes were sparkling with mischief. ‘I think we’ve been doing okay on the cementing front.’

‘There’s more to this than sex, Mr Stilinski.’ Deaton told him, all seriousness now. ‘Your role is a significant one. As Alpha mate, you’ll be Derek’s equal and also his balance. When he becomes aggressive, you will need to bring him back. Derek’s going to be dealing with significant changes as an alpha and he’s not going to be equipped to deal with all of them. Laura was trained and I’ll be trying to fill in the gaps Derek has, but you will be instrumental in keeping him human and reminding him to stay in touch with his gentler side. New pack members will also look to you for guidance. Derek will be the disciplinarian. You will be the protector.’

‘So what, I’m going to be Pack Mom?’ Stiles was clearly amused.

‘Gender roles have no real place in an Alpha pair.’ Deaton replied. ‘Male and female are purely human concepts and wolves don’t have the same socialisation or expectations as human society does. Cubs are raised communally, and every member of the pack is expected to contribute to its running and upkeep.’

‘It’s true.’ Derek added. ‘My mom was Alpha and my dad was a low ranked beta from another pack. When they mated, he took her status but they were treated the same in terms of deference even though he was the one who essentially ran the house. Me and my sisters were raised in the same way. Laura was given extra training because she was going to be the next alpha, but it had nothing to do with her ability to have cubs or the idea that she’d be looking after them because she was female.’
‘Wow.’ Stiles’ face was alight with interest. ‘I guess I’m going to need to research some more if I’m going to understand how everything works.’

‘Precisely my thought.’ Deaton moved to the bag he’d bought with him and unloaded a few books onto the kitchen table. ‘I’ve bought what I have. Derek, Here’s the key for the storage unit I mentioned before. There’s also a safety deposit box at Beacon Hills Building Society Bank. Laura knew what was in it but she never closed it down.’

‘I didn’t know about that.’ Derek frowned, taking the key.

‘She never told me what was inside and I wasn’t granted access, even in my position as emissary.’ Deaton said. ‘So your guess is as good as mine.’ He got up from the table and smiled at them. ‘Now, I need to get going. If you have any other questions, call me.’

‘Okay.’ Stiles went with him to the door and then chewed on his lip, wanting to say something else but hesitating. Deaton raised his eyebrows at him.

‘What is it?’ He kept his voice low.

‘Do I need to know anything else?’ He threw a look back at the kitchen. ‘About being…’

‘Alpha mate?’ Deaton finished for him and smiled. ‘No. You’re doing fine, Stiles. Derek is very lucky to have you.’ He noted with approval the way Stiles ducked his head, a shy smile spreading across his face. ‘I may as well tell you that I have recommended to your father that he take steps to make your relationship official.’

‘What steps?’ Stiles asked.

‘That I’ll leave for him to discuss with you.’ Deaton chuckled and walked out, humming as he went to his car.

‘Cryptic bastard.’ Stiles muttered under his breath, jumping a little when warm arms went around his waist and Derek stuck his nose in his neck.

‘Whatever it is, it can wait.’ His tongue dragged a warm wet trail across the nape of Stiles’ neck. ‘Let’s go back to bed.’ He moved so Stiles could clearly feel his cock pressing up against his ass.

He turned and let Derek pick him up, lifting him into his arms as if Stiles weighed nothing, then kicking the front door closed and carrying him back towards the stairs.

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Chris was making coffee when the knock at the door interrupted him. He went to answer it and found Noah standing there, dressed in civvies and holding up a bag.

‘Donuts.’ He grinned. ‘I’ve just had breakfast with Melissa and Scott and he nagged me to come and see how things were going. Allison’s not answering her phone.’

‘She’s taking this all pretty hard.’ Chris stepped aside and let him enter. ‘Not that I blame her. It’s a lot to put on someone as young as she is and she’s had to deal with a lot of unpleasant truths coming out.’

‘Ain’t that a fact.’ Noah followed him to the kitchen. ‘I also wanted to see how you were doing. After what happened with Peter.’
‘It is what it is.’ Chris swallowed down the lump in his throat. ‘I would have been kidding myself if I thought it could have ended any other way. Now, I have to pick up all the pieces and keep going.’ He poured out the coffee and handed Noah a mug, going to sit at the table with him and taking a sugared donut from the bag.

‘What about Victoria?’ Noah asked through a mouthful. ‘What are you going to do about her?’

‘Not much I can do.’ Chris replied. ‘She’s gone. I think she’ll go back to her family, not that they would say anything if she did. It’s a guess as to what her next move will be. I think we can say that hostilities are certain.’

‘More hunters?’ Noah asked and Chris nodded confirmation.

‘And I also think we should expect a visit from my father.’ His face said all it needed to in that respect. ‘I called this morning to let him know that Kate is dead. His reaction was as expected.’

‘In what sense?’ Noah’s keen blue eyes were fixed on him. ‘How much trouble are we going to be dealing with?’

‘That I don’t know, but I can assure you that my father will not have anyone’s best interests at heart, least of all Derek Hale and by association your son. Kate got her fanatical beliefs from him, all the way down to doing whatever is necessary. And he did not take her death well. I believe something along the lines of ‘it should have been you’ was mentioned.’ Chris was bitter, sighing as he pushed aside his mug. ‘He’ll be here for the funeral, but I’m going to make damn sure he gets the hell out of Beacon Hills as soon as possible and there’s no way in hell he’ll be getting near Allison.’

‘He’s probably not going to take kindly to that.’ Noah observed. ‘You got a backup plan for if it all goes to shit?’

‘Yeah.’ Chris’ grin was sharp. ‘You and the power of the Beacon Hill’s Sheriff’s office. We’re going to start by weeding out everyone that’s in the pockets of the Hunter’s Council from here to Sacramento.’

‘I wasn’t aware that there was anyone like that.’ Noah look unsettled and Chris huffed a laugh.

‘We’re everywhere, Noah. In the police, the federal agencies, all levels of government. It’s how we’ve kept the supernatural quiet for so long. We’re all very old, rich and powerful families and we can buy off anyone we need to.’ He leaned back in his chair and raised an eyebrow. ‘What I have chosen to do is the equivalent of putting a very large target on my back and Allison’s. I’m going to need your help to keep us safe.’

‘And in return?’ Noah asked. ‘Because I have to tell you, if it comes down to saving anyone it’s going to be my family first.’

‘And you include Derek Hale in that?’ Chris asked and Noah nodded without hesitation.

‘I sure as hell do.’ He was perfectly calm and Chris had to admire that certainty he had about him. ‘No-one is laying a finger on that kid because if they do then my kid’ll cry and if anyone makes Stiles cry, I’m going to go postal on their asses.’

‘Okay.’ Chris did a quick calculation in his head. ‘I’m guessing this has something to do with the fact that Derek became an alpha last night.’

‘Let’s just say I’m now father-in-law and leave it at that.’ Noah replied. ‘So yes, Derek is now family. Although I think he’d prefer the term pack.’
‘Then we both have everything to fight for.’ Chris leaned on his elbows and looked at him. ‘So here’s the part where I start trusting you to have my back and you do the same for me. This isn’t going to be like Hunting the alpha, this is going to get far messier if I’m right. Gerard isn’t a man who does things by halves and he’s very unpredictable.’

‘In that case, I have conditions.’ Noah folded his arms. ‘One - Derek and Alan are fully involved in this every step. No secrets between us and them. Two - I need access to every weapon you have that can keep us safe and I’ll need a crash course in Hunter tactics. Three - the Mc Calls are protected as well as our families.’

‘All of those are things I can agree to.’ Chris said. ‘I’m going to start training Allison properly. If the boys would like to come along, I could certainly use the distraction. Does Stiles have weapons training?’

‘Of course.’ Noah replied. ‘He’s been able to shoot since he was old enough to figure out how firearms work. He’s damn good too.’

‘That’ll help.’ Chris considered his options. ‘I’ll ask Derek if he’ll help out with Allison too. Having an actual wolf to fight against will give her an edge and he’ll learn better how to defend himself against hunters.’

‘What about Kate?’ Noah asked. ‘Have you got any plans for what to do with her body?’

‘I’ve planned the funeral for Wednesday.’ Chris sighed and scrubbed hand down his face. ‘That’ll be enough time?’

‘Should be.’ Noah replied. ‘Coroner will do the autopsy Monday afternoon and then we can release her to the funeral home.’

‘I’m having her cremated.’ Chris said. ‘Gerard can take her remains home with him and do whatever the hell he wants. I’m expecting a crowd, mostly hunters and press but I would appreciate it if you could maybe provide some help to keep everyone away from Allison. She certainly doesn’t deserve this.’

‘I’ll do my best, even if it’s me having to do it.’ Noah told him. ‘What are we saying about Victoria?’

‘That we’ve separated.’ Chris shrugged. ‘That she couldn’t take the strain of being married to the brother of a murderer and rapist, so she decided to cut her losses. It works well as a narrative and it’ll give us a sympathetic story. We’ll need all the help we can get.’

‘What if she comes back?’ Noah asked and he rapped his fingers on the table top and thought about what he would do.

‘I don’t know.’ he replied. ‘She heard what I said to Peter. She knows about us now. I can’t imagine that she’d take me back, especially after hearing that. I mean, I’ve never pretended and neither has she that this was anything other than what it was but she never suspected the reasons for my feelings. Me being mated to a werewolf would be the last thing Victoria would be able to tolerate and I wouldn’t be surprised if she completely disowned us.’

‘Even Allison?’ Noah looked doubtful. ‘I can’t imagine that she’d stay away from her daughter.’

‘From what Allison’s told me, she and her mother did not part of particularly good terms.’ Chris’ mouth twisted. ‘Victoria tried to kill Scott and abducted Allison to try and get her on side. That wasn’t a good idea. Allison is headstrong and backing her into a corner is always going to misfire.’
‘Kids.’ Noah chuckled and then blew out a deep breath. ‘Okay so I need a favour. I would appreciate it if you could fill me in on werewolves.’

‘Don’t you have Alan for that?’ Chris frowned. ‘I would have thought he would be a better source of information being an emissary.’

‘I need to know everything, Chris.’ Noah replied. ‘Good and bad. I’m not so naive that I’m going into this thinking that you don’t have reasons for hunting, as misguided as those might be. I’m thinking that sometimes there’s a reason for your actions and I need to know what those are. My son is involved now and there’s no going back for me. Add into that the fact that Derek is an alpha, which makes this all very different. I don’t want another two months like the past two we’ve had. Murder is not something I want to be dealing with every day.’

‘I can give you what I’ve got.’ Chris offered. ‘Have you spoken to Alan about Derek at all, what him being an alpha is going to mean?’

‘Not yet.’ Noah said. ‘Is there something I should be aware of?’

‘Then drive for alphas is different for other wolves.’ Chris said. ‘Derek is going to change, become more aggressive and more protective. His instincts are going to make him seek out a mate and a pack.’ He noticed the wry quirk of Noah’s mouth. ‘What?’

‘The mate thing may be taken care of.’ Noah raised an eyebrow at him. ‘I’ve been effectively driven out of my home. What the kids these days call sexiled, I believe.’

‘Ah.’ That took Chris by surprise. ‘They’ve mated?’

‘Apparently.’ Noah snorted. ‘Gotta say, having your sixteen year old son get chased off into the woods by something that looks like a special effect kind of throws you. I’ve been told that it’s a wolf thing, you know get together young and stay together forever, but I’m still processing all of this.’

‘It’s true though.’ Chris felt slightly sick knowing what he did about mates. It was a useful piece of information that hunters had used against wolves for posterity. ‘The loyalty of wolves is something that’s never been in dispute. They’re not like humans in that respect. If Derek and Stiles have mated, you can rest assured that short of a catastrophe or something beyond our way of thinking they’ll stay together. Pack is everything to wolves and their bonds are strong.’ He nodded at the ring on Noah’s finger. ‘But I also think that it’s something you know at least a bit about. And something you’ll appreciate. Derek will never be anything but completely committed to Stiles, and it makes me feel better knowing that he’s a mated alpha. Unmated alphas are more liable to act out or become violent.’

‘That does make me feel better.’ Noah said, smiling. ‘I just wish they would do it their ‘bonding’ a little more quietly. Poor Scott nearly passed out when we went to the house this morning. Apparently werewolf noses are particularly sensitive.’

That made Chris laugh, in spite of everything.

‘It won’t last forever.’ he said. ‘At least, I hope not.’

‘Me too.’ Noah sighed. ‘I can only imagine what they’re getting up to right now.’

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‘This is entirely your fault!’ Stiles waved an accusatory finger in Derek’s face and then gesticulated wildly at the bed. ‘I told you we were going to break it!’
'And I said I would buy you a new one.' Derek was frowning so hard his eyebrows were doing their meet in the middle thing.

‘That does not help the situation now.’ Stiles glared at him, eyes flashing. ‘What the fuck?’

‘Look.’ Derek held up his hands in a conciliatory gesture. ‘We’ll just need to go online and order one. Expedited delivery. Maybe something big enough to actually fit both of us and sturdy enough that it’s not going to break just because we fuck on it.’

‘I think you’re underestimating just how hard you like to fuck.’ Stiles grumbled. ‘I liked that bed. It was comfortable. Now it’s freaking matchsticks.’

Derek rolled his eyes and heaved a truly dramatic sigh.

‘Fine.’ He leaned over to grab his sweats. ‘You pick out something and I’ll pay for it. Whatever you want.’

‘Throwing money at me isn’t going to make up for the fact that I had to spend half an hour lying upside down with my dick stuck in your ass.’ Stiles contemplated the wreckage. ‘I have a serious crick in my neck.’

‘It’ll heal.’ Derek muttered and stomped out the room. Stiles could hear him muttering all the way down the stairs. He huffed in annoyance and went to grab his laptop.
Monday's Child is An Evil Genius

Chapter by HaleHathNoFury (My_Trex_has_fleas), My_Trex_has_fleas

Chapter Summary

They're everywhere...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Allison bowed out of school on Monday.

It was bad enough having to deal with the weekend’s events. Now the entire school would know because Monday morning had come with a news report on Kate and the whole sordid Hale family saga. Derek hadn’t been named but the mentions of sexual abuse with an unnamed minor at the time would be enough to damn her, all the murder notwithstanding. So here she was, curled up on the couch and sniffing into her favourite fleecy blanket while she watched the news and cursed her family.

The doorbell rang and Chris heaved a sigh and got up from his armchair. The line of reporters and news crews had been a mile long since the Sheriff’s station had made their formal statement that morning and he was on guard duty. Allison was at least happy that her father was a terrific guard dog but she was surprised when he opened the door. That turned into gratitude when she saw who it was.

‘Damn.’ Lydia’s perfect raspberry mouth was twisted into a judgmental line. ‘It’s worse than I thought.’

‘Easy for you to say.’ Allison muttered, burrowing into her blanket. ‘You’re not related to a bunch of murdering nutjobs.’

‘You do not want to face off on family legacies.’ Lydia snorted and came to sit next to her, shoving Allison along the couch with an astonishing amount of strength to make herself a place. ‘I’m the one who’s turned out to be a harbinger of death.’

‘Okay.’ Chris regarded them both and then grabbed his jacket. ‘I’m going to get coffee and pastries. Please try not to kill anyone while I’m gone.’ He gave them a flicker of a smile and left, barking at the reporters as he went.

‘You look like shit.’ Lydia said after a moment.

‘I feel like shit.’ Allison countered. ‘How’s Jackson?’

‘Weird.’ Lydia snorted. ‘He’s not sleeping.’

‘Again?’ Allison asked, struggling out of her cocoon enough to look at her. ‘Is it the whole getting abducted thing?’

‘Not sure.’ Lydia’s lips pursed. ‘I’m kind of worried about him, but I’m worried about you more.’
'Yeah?' Allison gave her a watery smile. 'That makes me inappropriately happy.'

'Good.' Lydia kicked off her shoes and tucked her feet under herself, reaching for the blanket. 'Now what are we watching?'

*************

'So now the bed takes up like most of the room.' Stiles snickered, shifting his backpack and grinning at Scott’s appalled face. 'My dad was so horrified that he hasn’t spoken to either for us for like twelve hours.'

'Please.' Scott begged. 'Stop talking about you and Derek having sex.'

'Nope.' Stiles was still floating on air, bed disasters aside. 'Have I told you how awesome knotting is?'

'Only like a thousand times.' Scott muttered and stomped along the corridor. 'I regret everything.'

'I mean, genitals generally are great and I’ve always appreciated mine but it’s a whole other league getting up and personal with Derek’s.' Stiles was pretty sure he had stars in his eyes. 'And the way he sucks cock is just…'

'No!' Scott spun around and stuck a finger in Stiles’ face. 'You shut your damn mouth Stiles Stilinski or we are not going to be friends anymore.'

Stiles laughed out loud at that and then flailed as Scott walked right into someone and knocked them flying.

'Dude!' He gave Scott an admonishing look and ran to help the victim of Scott’s hit and run. 'Hey, you okay, man?'

The person Scott had floored looked up, blue eyes wide and face a picture of near panic. Stiles recognised him as Isaac Lahey, another sophomore that he had a few classes with and who was on the second string for lacrosse.

'Yeah whatever, I’m fine.' He refused Stiles outstretched hand and got up, dusting himself off. His brusque movements stirred the air around him and Stiles had to stop himself from growling when it hit him - pain and blood and what smelled like the most intense despair he’d ever encountered that even rivalled Derek’s in its intensity.

It stopped him in his tracks, staring as Isaac grabbed his backpack and fled. He glanced back once and gave them both a look of deep distrust before he rounded the corner and disappeared.

'What the hell was that?' Scott asked, coming to stand next to him.

'I don’t know.' Stiles knew what he’d smelled wasn’t at all natural. 'But we’re going to find out.'

*************

Derek stood and looked at the house. It felt completely different to how it had been just the week before when he’d promised Laura he’d get revenge for her death. Now it felt like he could finally close the door on what had happened to him, had happened to his family. He studied the facade, so close to collapse, and imagined what it would be like rebuilt. In his childhood it had been beautiful, a graceful pack home that had withstood generations. Now it was a shell of all those things past but it could also be a future once again.
He thought about Deaton’s words, about how he’d need a pack soon. Derek could already feel it taking hold, the instinct to find others and bite them. He’d need to be careful about who though and about how to go about it. That last thing he needed was to start shit again, just now that everything had died down.

He considered who he’d turn. He had Stiles already, and his mate was everything he’d wanted. Stiles was intelligent and witty and made him laugh even when he didn’t want to. He was adept at making Derek come out of himself even if it was only to bicker. He was also kind and brave and stronger than Derek had ever been, a true anchor and someone he could trust.

Scott was not as bright, but he also had a good heart. Like Stiles he was brave and his need to only see the good in others would be an excellent counterpoint to the cynicism he and Stiles both possessed. He’d make a good beta though, and so Derek added him to his mental list.

Deaton had mentioned Lydia, and Derek had to admit that she was probably the most intelligent person he’d ever met, after Peter of course. She was also snarky and inventive and very capable of kicking ass when she needed to. Deaton’s suggestion of having her as emissary was a sound one because she was supernatural enough to understand how a pack would run, but not affected by the things that affected wolves.

Finally there was Noah. Derek would never say it aloud, but he was already attached. Noah was so much like James Hale had been, solid and dependable and with the ability to make Derek feel safer than he had since his family had died. He would go to the ends of the earth to protect him and not just for Stiles’ sake.

So that made four.

Allison and Chris would be good allies. He was now convinced of their truthfulness and had come to realise that maybe he could trust them. They might not be pack and would never take the Bite even if offered, but for now that would be good enough.

Derek couldn’t remember anyone being made pack by his mother. All the humans in his pack had wanted to stay that way and there had never been an incident where one of them had needed to get the bite. He had no idea of how to about choosing pack or what to do once he did. What he did know was that he had been by himself before and he’d wanted to die from the loneliness. He knew what it felt like to be unwanted, to feel like the whole world was against you. He would never wish that on anyone.

That was what pack was for, to give a home and belonging.

Derek smiled to himself. That was it, what he was going to do. He would find those people who needed a pack and give them one.

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‘Dude!’ Scott hissed. ‘You’re being creepy.’

‘Scott, the logical reasoning states that if you want to find out about somebody you need to follow them.’ Stiles hissed back. Okay, so maybe he was taking a leaf out of Derek’s Big Bad Book Of Stalking but the more he observed Isaac Lahey the more he thought it was necessary.

Isaac was like a shadow. He moved silently through the halls, kept entirely to himself and didn’t speak up in class. When he was seated at his desk, his long fingers worried at the hem of his sweater and he chewed on his bottom lip until Stiles caught a whiff of copper. He also pulled the sleeves down over his hands constantly and jumped when anyone came to close to him. Now Stiles was not
a police officer, but he’d lived with his dad long enough to know when something was off. Granted
he’d never noticed it before, but now Isaac had caught his attention he was like a bloodhound on the
trail.

Derek would have appreciated the dog joke.

Now he and Scott were lurking behind a corner, watching Isaac at his locker. Stiles genius plan was
to follow him around and see if they could pick up anything else.

‘That’s if he doesn’t spot us and think we’re stalking him.’ Scott pointed out and Stiles elbowed him
in the ribs.

‘Dude, we’re like two super sneaky werewolves.’ he whispered. ‘He’s never going to see us.’

‘Hey guys. Have either of you seen Jackson or Lydia?’ Danny’s voice behind them made them both
startle so badly they ended up flailing and falling over each other. The end result was them tumbling
right into the corridor and landing in the middle of a bunch of people, all of whom stepped back and
revealed them to a bemused looking Isaac. They scrambled to their feet, trying to look as casual as
possible before grinning at Isaac in what they hoped was a winning manner. Isaac gave them both a
look that said he thought they were freaks and scuttled off into the throng of students.

‘Fuck.’ Stiles huffed. ‘Now he’s definitely on to us.’

‘Yeah well, you two aren’t exactly subtle.’ Danny said, slinging an arm around both their shoulders.
‘And it works out because I need to talk to you. You know, about the thing.’

‘The thing?’ Scott asked, his face trying desperately not to look guilty.

‘Yeah.’ Danny’s dimples were cavernous. ‘The thing where I had to hack into Stiles phone on
Friday night because he’d been kidnapped by Allison’s crazy ass aunt because he’s a werewolf, and
then spend the rest of the night trailing Harris while he made people dance a foot apart and inspected
the punch. Let me tell you now, my date was not fucking happy.’

Stiles was sure that he stopped breathing for a whole minute.

‘Oh shit.’ He looked at Scott, who’s eyes were wide. ‘Um...so...fuck.’

‘I thought you’d say that.’ Danny grinned. ‘May I suggest we convene somewhere more private, say
the library upper level during study hall to discuss this?’ He clapped them both soundly on the back
and strolled off, whistling a jaunty little tune.

‘How the hell did we miss that?’ Stiles asked, dragging Scott to the side of the corridor. ‘And more
importantly, why the hell did no-one inform us that he fucking knows?’

‘Maybe because you’ve spent the entire weekend getting laid.’ Scott hissed and walked off, making
Stiles have to run after him.

‘Jealousy makes you nasty.’ he retorted and Scott gave him the finger.

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‘So, what do you think is going on with Jackson?’ Allison spoke through a mouthful of cookie
dough. She’d managed to get herself out of her pyjamas and into sweatpants which was a win. She’d
also managed to get Lydia into sweatpants which was an absolute triumph.
‘I don’t know.’ Lydia confessed. ‘Ever since the video store he’s been a little bit crazy. I know he’s got issues but this is looking more and more like a breakdown.’

‘Maybe we need to talk to him about it.’ Allison passed her the tub. ‘Like not just you, but as a group.’

‘Like an intervention?’ Lydia shook her head. ‘He’d hate that.’ She looked thoughtful for a moment and then snapped her fingers. ‘Danny.’

‘Danny?’ Allison frowned. ‘Why him?’

‘Well he…’ Lydia trailed off and then looked a little sheepish. ‘We told him. About what was going on. He helped us track down Stiles by hacking his phone so we kind of had to. He took it really well.’

‘Oh my God.’ Allison sat up and gaped at her. ‘Are you serious?’ She flopped back against the couch. ‘My dad’s going to freak.’

‘So don’t tell him.’ Lydia made a face. ‘Containment, Allison.’

‘No, I can’t do that.’ Allison protested. ‘I told him no more sneaking or lying and I’m going to stick to it.’

‘Fine.’ Lydia huffed, then frowned when her phone buzzed. She looked at it and her eyebrows went up. ‘It’s from Stiles.’

‘What does it say?’ Allison leaned over to her and peered at the screen.

WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU AND WHAT THE FUCK??? ALSO YOU TOLD DANNY???? ADCFLKHALKFHALKJ

‘Oops.’ Lydia said. ‘Guess he knows now. I’m surprised Derek didn’t tell him.’

‘I think Derek’s been kind of busy doing stuff.’ Allison’s mouth quirked and Lydia gave her a quizzical look.

‘What kind if stuff?’ she asked and Allison shrugged, looking more animated than she had all morning.

‘Stiles, mostly.’ she replied. ‘Scott’s been bitching about it since Saturday. Stiles wouldn’t answer his calls or texts and then the Sheriff called to invite them over for breakfast but when they got there Scott said it smelled like the whole house had been sprayed in jizz. Derek and Stiles’ jizz in particular.’

‘What?’ Lydia’s face was a picture of distaste. ‘How?’

‘So, don’t say anything but I kind of raided my dad’s library,’ Allison said. ‘The special library. Turns out werewolf mates are a thing and since Derek turned into an Alpha when he killed Peter he would have been driven by a biological imperative to take one and seeing as he and Stiles are a thing…’ She trailed off with a meaningful tilt of her head and Lydia got it.

‘Oh my God.’ Her whole face changed. ‘Okay is it weird that I find that hot?’

‘No, it is pretty hot.’ Allison confessed. ‘I mean…Derek.’

‘And Stiles has gotten way better since he got bitten.’ Lydia was looking speculative. ‘You should
have seen the way he filled out that suit I picked out for him.’ She flicked through her phone to show Allison the pictures Stiles had sent from the fitting room. ‘I can only imagine what he looks like underneath.’

They sat in contemplative silence for a few moments and pictured what mating between a pair of werewolves would look like.

‘Who do you think tops?’ Lydia eventually asked and Allison snorted.

‘Does it matter?’ she asked. ‘I can’t get past the knotting.’

‘The what now?’ Lydia was bursting with curiosity.

‘Yeah, I have a lot to tell you.’ Allison got up. ‘We’re going to need chocolate sauce for this.’

************

Stiles and Scott peered around the bookcase at where Danny was waiting at the most isolated table on the top level of the library, looking out of place with his muscle shirt and general handsomeness.

‘So how do we do this?’ Scott asked and Stiles took a deep breath and steeled himself.

‘Like manly men, Scotty.’ he replied and strode out to meet Danny. Unfortunately he tripped over a ridge in the floor and went flying past, arms windmilling and then bouncing up like a jack-in-the-box two seconds later. ‘I’m fine!’

‘I thought being a werewolf was supposed to make you more graceful.’ Danny mused and Stiles glared at him as he fell into a chair.

‘Hey, I’m on first line just like you.’ he retorted and waved Scott over.

‘So.’ Danny looked expectantly at both of them. ‘You’re both of the creature of the night variety now, huh?’

‘Why aren’t you more surprised?’ Stiles narrowed his eyes at him and Danny’s mile grew wide.

‘Can you keep a secret?’ he asked and Stiles and Scott looked at each other before nodding vigorously.

Danny smiled and he held out both arms, palms up. There was a second when Stiles felt like the very air around him was charged and then Danny’s normal scent changed to something deep and salty and altogether unsettling. The skin on his inner forearms roughened, the texture becoming like sandpaper, and his eyes bled black until there was nothing human about them.

‘Whoa.’ Scott threw himself back but Stiles was utterly fascinated. He leaned forward to inspect Danny’s skin and then grimaced as Danny laughed, showing off a mouthful of razor sharp teeth. Then he blinked and in a moment was back to normal.

‘Now you know my secret.’ He grinned and his dimples caved in.

‘So what are you?’ Stiles asked, frowning. ‘I’m guessing...shark?’

‘In our mythology, it’s said that when you die you can be transformed into nuihi.’ Danny replied. ‘It’s a sign that you are favoured by Kamohoali‘i, he who can walk in his human form and take to the oceans in his shark one at will. My family is different though, we’ve always been able to do this from the time we’re born. I knew something was off about you when you came back after that weekend
but I wasn’t sure what. My senses aren’t as sharp on land as they are in the sea.’

‘Damn.’ Stiles was dumbstruck. ‘Why the hell do you play lacrosse? You could kick absolute ass on
the swim team.’

‘Is that seriously what you’re taking from this?’ Danny laughed. He leaned back in his seat, hand
behind his head. ‘So, now you know you’re not the only supes around here. I’m also assuming that
Lydia’s something else as well. She’s smelled weird ever since the video store but not like you and
Derek or Scott.’

‘Not my place to tell, dude.’ Stiles replied. ‘I mean you and Jackson are like besties, so why don’t
you ask him?’

‘I would if I could find him.’ Danny replied. ‘But that’s the thing. He’s not in school and I haven’t
been able to get hold of him since the dance.’

‘Maybe he’s still in shock.’ Stiles offered. ‘I mean a lot of freaky shit went down on Friday. Maybe’s
he’s taking a time out?’

‘Yeah, but that isn’t it.’ Danny replied. ‘Look, I’ve been best friends with Jackson since grade
school. And I can tell you he’s not right. In fact, since he had his own little moment in the woods,
he’s been acting real strange.’

‘But he didn’t get bitten.’ Scott protested. ‘We’re sure about that.’

‘No, he doesn’t smell like you.’ Danny agreed. ‘But he also doesn’t smell like himself. It’s almost
like he’s…’ He frowned, seemingly at a loss for words. ‘Like he’s putrifying.’

‘Okay that’s so not good.’ Stiles felt a chill go down his spine. He looked at a bemused Scott and
rolled his eyes. ‘It means rotting, Scott. Like decomposing.’

‘Gross.’ Scott wrinkled his nose. ‘But he’s still alive.’

‘That’s just it.’ Danny said. ‘It’s like he’s rotting from the inside out. Trust me, if there’s one thing
weresharks are good it, it’s tracking down dead shit.’

‘Fuck.’ Stiles met Scott’s eyes. ‘I think we need to ask Derek about this.’

************

Derek set down the last bag of groceries that he’d picked up on his way back from the house. He
heard Noah moving around upstairs, and then a few moments later the sound of his footsteps coming
down. Unlike Stiles, he was remarkably light-footed and that just made Derek assume that Stiles got
his clumsiness from Claudia and that made him smile for reasons unknown. He had vague memories
of her from the town library, a dark-eyed woman with a lovely scent and a ready smile, but they was
water-washed by time.

‘Hi.’ He smiled as Noah came in. He was in jeans and a Beacon PD sweatshirt and his hair was a
mess. ‘You just get up?’

‘Catching up on my beauty sleep.’ Noah replied. That’s the last overnighter I’m doing for a week so
I plan to do an indecent amount of it.’

‘How was the press meeting?’ Derek asked, going to the coffee machine.
‘As you’d expect.’ Noah came to stand next to him. He was inch shorter than Derek was but he always felt like he was taller. ‘Lots of questions about the murders and your family. I think I should warn you that they’re probably going to dig shit up. You’ve got anonymity because you were a minor at the time, but I can’t guarantee that nobody will find out.’

‘The important thing is that there’s been closure.’ Derek leaned against the counter and sighed. ‘I just wish Laura was alive to see this. I should have told her a long time ago.’

‘No use looking to the past, kiddo.’ Noah replied. ‘Do you know how many times I’ve done that? Thought about how maybe if I’d been more attentive, I’d have realised what was up with Claudia. That maybe if we’d caught things earlier, we could have saved her. It does nobody any good. What I can tell you is that she would be proud of you for what you’ve done. Just like your family would. And that the best revenge you could ever have is to live, and to live well.’

‘I’m trying.’ Derek gave him a wry smile.

‘That I am aware of.’ Now Noah was giving him the side eye. ‘Do you know how many times I’ve done that? Thought about how maybe if I’d been more attentive, I’d have realised what was up with Claudia. That maybe if we’d caught things earlier, we could have saved her. It does nobody any good. What I can tell you is that she would be proud of you for what you’ve done. Just like your family would. And that the best revenge you could ever have is to live, and to live well.’

‘I’m trying.’ Derek gave him a wry smile.

‘That I am aware of.’ Now Noah was giving him the side eye. ‘I’m not mentioning the bed.’

Derek felt his whole face heat up.

‘Yeah.’ He ducked his head. ‘Sorry about that.’

‘Derek, I am well aware it takes two to tango.’ Noah reached for the now full coffee pot. ‘And that my son is an oversexed teenager. And that you’re a twenty-two year old Alpha werewolf. I would be lying if I said I hadn’t expected a few accidents. But for the love of God, try and leave the structure intact.’

That forced an unbidden laugh from Derek and he nearly choked on the sip of coffee he’d taken. Noah pounded him cheerfully on the back.

‘So I was thinking about something Alan said.’ He went to sit at the kitchen table and Derek went to grab sandwich fixings from the fridge.

‘What did he say?’ He glanced over his shoulder and saw, to his slight unease, that Noah’s blue eyes had the same manic sparkle Stiles’ did when he thought he was being particularly clever.

‘He was saying now that you two are...ahem...formally bonded, that perhaps it would be a good idea for you two to make it official. I have to say that makes a lot of sense, mostly because of the underage thing but also because if anything should happen to you, there’ll be someone who can look after all that. Deaton’s not family, and I know you’re not exactly close. I like to think that Stiles and I would do a better job.’

Derek was floored. This was the last thing he’d expected to hear when he got up that morning.

‘You want us to get married?’ He asked it hesitantly and Noah nodded.

‘I know it’s kind of a shotgun deal, and certainly not the most romantic way to go about things but then again you’re a pretty practical person and so is Stiles, under all his bullshit. And what’s more important is family. This way, you’d be officially family. Our family. And I wouldn’t have to worry about arresting your ass because you can’t keep your hands off him.’ He grinned. ‘It’s a practical solution to several problems. Besides, you’ve already got the suits.’

‘So this is you giving me permission?’ Derek had to make sure.

‘Guess it is. I’m going to see about getting a court order this week, but you’ll have to ask him yourself.’ Noah chuckled. ‘Welcome to the family, son.’ He held out a hand and Derek took it, all kinds of bemused at what had just happened but feeling the smile spreading across his face.
nevertheless.

‘I didn’t court him properly.’ he protested. ‘I said I would.’

‘How about you do that retroactively.’ Noah said. ‘We’re all on a learning curve here. I’m just glad we’ve got a chance to breathe now and work things out.’

‘Yeah.’ Derek let out a deep breath. ‘Me too.’

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‘So can you breathe underwater?’ Stiles asked through a mouthful of sandwich. Heaven was having a hot-ass alpha wolf at home who’d blow you before school and then also make you a packed lunch you could eat on the QT in the library.

‘You’re not supposed to eat in here.’ Danny replied, not looking up from his chem book. ‘And yes, I can.’

‘What about super senses?’ Scott had gotten on board and was now also pestering him with questions.

‘In the water, I could probably track you over twenty-five miles.’ Danny said. ‘My hearing isn’t so good, but I got these.’ He grinned and suddenly the pores in his nose and across his face lit up bioluminescent blue.

‘Holy hell, dude.’ Stiles wanted desperately to touch but knew that Danny could actually take his hand off if he did. ‘Are those Ampullae of Lorenzini?’

‘Yeah.’ Danny grinned. ‘How do you think I’m so good at saving goals? This gives me an edge like crazy.’

‘What do they do?’ Scott was staring.

‘They track electromagnetic fields.’ Stiles said in awe of what he was seeing.

‘It means that I could basically play with my eyes closed and still be able to tell where everyone is.’ Danny explained. ‘We take the shape of different sharks and my family are makos, so I’m incredibly fast even on land. And my reflexes are insane. You have no idea how hard it is for me to not save every damn shot but that would spark way too many questions.’

‘Nice.’ Scott looked envious and Stiles snickered.

‘You’re pretty cool too, buddy.’ he reminded him. ‘And everyone knows wolves are the best on land.’ He gave Danny a quizzical look. ‘Why does your family live here though? Wouldn’t it be better to be coastal.’

‘Hunters don’t just go after werewolves, Stiles.’ Danny said, turning serious. ‘This is the last place they’d expect to find us.’

‘So your family is all like this?’ Stiles asked and Danny nodded.

‘We moved here when I was just a baby.’ he said. ‘We kept to ourselves, although we knew about the Hales. My mom and her had kind of a live and let live agreement, but after the fire we lay low. We didn’t want to attract attention and have that happen to us. It’s why I’ve never told anyone.’

‘That makes sense.’ Stiles snorted. ‘Hunters are such assholes.’
‘No shit.’ Danny said. ‘So, tell me about Derek.’ His grin was back. ‘I want to know how the hell you landed such a fine piece of ass, Stiles. It’s not like you have any game.’

‘I do now.’ Stiles was smug.

‘Yeah.’ Scott gave him the side-eye. ‘We can smell.’

‘Hey!’ Stiles protested. ‘I showered. Twice.’

‘And yet you still stink of Derek.’ Scott muttered. ‘Like we would even want to know.’

‘I want to know.’ Danny said, turning his focus to Stiles. ‘Is his cock as big as I think it is?’

‘It’s pretty big.’ Stiles was all smiles. ‘And he’s very good at using it.’

‘And I’m done.’ Scott got up, taking his backpack with him. ‘You two have fun talking about dicks.’

‘We will.’ Danny laughed as he stomped off, raised an eyebrow at Stiles. ‘Now spill, Stilinski. I want to know everything.’

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Across town, Jackson stood and stared at himself in the mirror. He was pale and sweaty and feeling like shit so he’d skipped school. It hadn’t been hard. His mother had taken one look at him and made him stay in bed. Now he watched as black fluid trickled from his ears, tracing a slow line down his cheeks until, it dripped onto his bare shoulders. He was barely breathing, soft panicked hiccups of sound escaping his mouth as he shook as badly as someone going through chemical withdrawal.

On the counter his phone rang, Lydia’s smiling face flashing up. Like he had the twenty times before, Jackson rejected the call. He picked it up and walked back into his room, trying to think what the hell he could do. He didn’t want to get his parents involved and he certainly didn’t want the idiots Lydia was running around with to know. There was only one person he could think of that might be able to help him and Jackson hated the thought of asking but he didn’t know what else to do.

He cleaned himself up and got dressed, grabbing his keys and leaving to go find who he was looking for.

***************

Lydia finished the last toe in her lap and closed the nail varnish, blowing gently across the wet surfaces.

‘All done.’ she declared.

‘Thank you.’ Allison looked a little ridiculous in the mud mask she was wearing. ‘This has made me feel so much better.’

‘It always does.’ Lydia smiled. ‘Pampering is healing.’ She adjusted her towel turban and picked up the dvd case from the coffee table. ‘Notebook?’

‘Yeah.’ Allison grinned and then turned when the doorbell went. ‘I wonder who that is.’

Lydia shrugged, getting up and padding to the door. When she opened it, she looked back at Allison and snickered.

‘Did you order a puppy dog?’ she asked and Scott looked outraged.
‘Hey.’ He came in, and then did a double take when he saw Allison. ‘What the hell is that on your face?’

‘Never mind that. What are you doing here?’ Lydia folded her arms. ‘We’re having a girl day.’

‘I just wanted to check how Allison is doing.’ Scott was already at her side, gingerly prodding at the mask with one finger.

‘I’m okay.’ Allison took his hand and squeezed. ‘Thank you.’

‘Well.’ Lydia huffed. ‘If you’re going to crash our spa session, then you’ll have to join in.’

Scott frowned at her and then squawked as she manhandled him into a towelling headband.

‘What the hell, Lydia?’ He flailed as she pushed him onto the couch next to Allison and then grabbed his chin and tilted his face up to the light.

‘We need to do something about those pores.’ she said and then went to work, accompanied by the sound of Allison’s frantic giggles.

************

Stiles got home after dropping Scott off and parked the Jeep next to the Camaro. He got out, smiling happily as he trailed his fingers along the sleek black surface. It was undoubtedly a sexy car, just like it’s sexy driver. A sexy alpha werewolf driver that was also his mate and who he had wicked sexy plans for.

‘Honey, I’m home.’ he yelled as he came in, and then frowned when there was no response. Stiles listened and then he heard it, frantic angry whispers from what sounded like the second floor bathroom. He bolted up the stairs and got to the door, rattling the knob and growling when it turned out to be locked. Inside, he could hear the distinctive beat of Derek’s heart but it was quick and scattered, a sure sign that Derek was panicking.

There was also a second heartbeat in there with him, and this was pounding in unadulterated fear. Stiles felt a chill go down his spine and scratched at the door, desperately trying to keep his claws in.

‘Derek.’ He let out a shaky breath. ‘Who the fuck is in there with you?’

‘Hang on.’ Derek sounded like he’d been caught with his hand in the cookie jar. There was more frantic whispering and he caught an angry growl or two and then the door opened.

Derek looked terrible, pale and very young.

‘We may have a problem.’ he said and Stiles looked past him to a very unhappy looking Jackson. His face was white, his blue eyes wild and Stiles was hit with the smell that Danny had described earlier that day, the source of which was the black sticky fluid leaking from his ears and nose.

‘Oh fuck.’ He glanced at Derek and instantly knew that they were shit. ‘What the hell is that?’

‘I don’t know.’ Derek had his arms folded in his classic defensive pose. ‘But it looks a hell of a lot like his body is rejecting a bite.’

‘But I didn’t get bitten.’ Jackson protested.

‘No.’ Stiles told him. ‘You don’t remember being bitten, there’s a difference.’
‘You think Peter took his memories.’ Derek said and he nodded. ‘But that doesn’t make sense. If his body was going to reject the bite, it should have happened right after.’

‘Well, what else could it be?’ Stiles asked. ‘I’m only going on what I know, big guy.’

‘Shit.’ Derek had his phone out. ‘We need to ask Deaton.’

‘No!’ Jackson protested. ‘You can’t tell anyone! I only came to you because I didn’t want them to know!’ He glared at Stiles as he said that and Stiles growled at him

‘Tough shit.’ he snapped. ‘Because Derek and I are mated now and we don’t keep secrets.’

‘He’s right.’ Derek looked at Jackson. ‘I would have told him after.’

‘Fuck.’ Jackson’s shoulders slumped. ‘How the hell am I supposed to go to school looking like this?’

‘Okay, we need to be logical about this.’ Stiles’ mind was racing. ‘You’re clearly not dying because you would be dead already. You aren’t a wolf either. Apart from the goo situation, how do you feel.’

‘Kind of like I’ve got really bad flu.’ Jackson sat down on the closed toilet lid. ‘Shit, this is so fucked up.’ He gave Stiles a furious look. ‘And I can’t believe I have to ask you two to help me.’

‘We could always say no.’ Derek snarked and Stiles wanted to kiss him. ‘You came to me, remember?’

‘Yeah.’ He moved to stand next to his mate, folding his arms so they were mirrored. ‘So do you want our help or not?’

‘You’re not helping!’ Jackson waved his hands around. ‘You’re just being sarcastic.’

‘It’s our superpower.’ Derek deadpanned and Stiles had to stifle a giggle. ‘Okay, so you don’t want us to talk to Deaton and you have no idea what this is. How the fuck are we supposed to help you?’

‘Fine.’ Jackson gritted out, looking like he hated everyone and everything. ‘Call the damn vet.’

‘Okay then.’ Derek took his phone back out and dialled, looking extremely smug at having got his way. Stiles was not ashamed to admit that he found him wildly attractive like that. He gave Derek a little nudge with his elbow and got a flash of fang. Oh yes, he was so getting laid once they got rid of Jackson.

‘Okay.’ Derek was saying. ‘We’ll be over soon.’ He hung up and raised his eyebrows at Jackson. ‘Come on. I don’t have all afternoon.’

‘Jesus.’ Jackson whined and got up. ‘Your bedside manner sucks.’

‘Oh it sucks all right.’ Stiles couldn’t resist saying and got a glare from both of them. ‘That was funny, fuck both of you.’

‘Move.’ Derek grasped him by the back of his neck and it went straight to Stiles’ cock. He was so easily aroused at the moment, it was crazy. He whimpered a little and Derek’s eyes flashed.

Jackson’s nose wrinkled.

‘Jesus Christ, what the hell is that?’ He looked disgusted and Stiles realised that he could smell the pheromones that were practically flooding out of his pores.

‘Well, that’s going to make things interesting from now on.’ he pointed out and Derek huffed.
‘This is starting to get ridiculous.’ he muttered and Stiles had to agree with him.

They finally got outside and he looked around.

‘Where’s the Porsche?’ he asked and Jackson made a face.

‘You think I’d park it here?’ He looked aghast. ‘I don’t want anyone to see us together.’

‘Funny.’ Stiles sniped. ‘Because we seem to be spending an awful lot of time together.’

‘Not my choice.’ Jackson grumbled and stomped off down the street.

They watched him go, both of them not so secretly judging him.

‘He’s such an asshole.’ Derek rumbled. ‘I am seized with an overwhelming desire to kick his ass every time I talk to him.’

‘I knew there was a reason I liked you.’ Stiles grinned at him in delight. ‘Your incredible cock notwithstanding.’

‘You have to learnt to control that.’ Derek sounded stern but he was smiling in that predatory way of his that set Stiles loins aflame. ‘It just makes me want to jump you when you smell like that.’

‘It’s your fault.’ Stiles went to the passenger door of the Camaro. ‘This whole alpha thing is giving me an authority kink.’

‘You have an everything kink.’ Derek said and got in his side. Once in he settled his hands on the steering wheel and watched Jackson drive past. ‘I don’t like this. I have no idea what the fuck it could be.’

‘Ugh.’ Stiles thumped his head against the headrest. ‘Was it too much to ask for one week of peace?’

‘Apparently.’ Derek said and then looked at him. ‘How was school?’

‘Oh my God!’ Stiles flailed a little in excitement. ‘Okay so I have something to tell you. So it turns out that your family wasn’t the only family of were-things in Beacon Hills.’

‘Okay, did you hit your head or something?’ Derek was giving him the what the fuck are you on Stiles eyebrow formation. ‘What other family?’

‘So you remember Danny?’ Stiles grinned. ‘Hella cute, killer dimples? Hacked my phone so you could be the wolfy cavalry?’

‘Yeah.’ The eyebrows changed formation and now were in please explain mode. ‘What about him?’

‘Get this.’ Stiles was nearly vibrating in glee. ‘He’s only a freaking wereshark.’

‘Bullshit.’ Derek shook his head. ‘There’s no such thing.’

‘Turns out there is.’ Stiles said. ‘I watched him shift. He’s got all these teeth.’ He bared his own as demonstration. ‘Makes us look harmless.’

‘Damn.’ Derek looked torn between disbelief and fascination. He started the car. ‘Tell me.’

***************
‘So, how was school?’ Allison prodded Scott’s leg with her now dry toes and he made a non-committal noise under his heated gel eye mask. His face was smothered in a white clay and Lydia was currently buffing his nails. She’d even made him extend his claws so she could inspect them properly.

‘We found out that Danny’s a wereshark,’ he said, like it was no big deal and Lydia got such a surprise she dropped her nail file.

‘What?’ Her eyes were wide. ‘He’s a what?’

‘It’s so cool,’ Scott said. ‘He can breathe underwater.’

‘Holy shit.’ Allison exchanged looks with Lydia. ‘I had no idea.’

‘I think it’s clear we’re all in the dark.’ Lydia pressed her lips together. ‘We need to seriously start getting more information on this. Deaton’s books had nothing about weresharks.’

‘I wonder if the bestiary would.’ Allison mused. ‘My dad said it’s been maintained by Argents literally since the beginning. I bet it’s pretty comprehensive.’

‘Yeah, but you don’t have it.’ Lydia pointed out. ‘Your grandfather does.’

‘Yeah.’ Allison’s eyes narrowed in thought. ‘He does.’

‘What?’ Lydia raised an eyebrow at her. ‘Ally?’

‘My grandfather,’ Allison grinned. ‘Who’s coming here for Kate’s funeral. And I bet he keeps it with him all the time, because it’s super valuable.’

‘Why do you sound like you’re plotting?’ Scott lifted one side of the eye mask. ‘Allison?’

‘I have the best plan ever.’ Allison grinned, suddenly feeling a whole lot better. ‘And you’re both going to help me.’

*************

‘Weresharks?’ Deaton’s eyebrows were trying to escape his face. ‘I have never heard of them.’

‘How about this.’ Derek gestured at where Jackson was sitting on the steel examination table.

‘This is very concerning,’ Deaton said. ‘But I can say there seems to be no immediate threat. Jackson’s general health is fine, his vitals are good. Apart from the listlessness and general feeling of unwellness, he seems to be fine.’

‘Yes, but the goo.’ Stiles hissed. ‘That’s not freaking healthy, doc.’

‘It’s not wolfsbane poisoning.’ Deaton said calmly. ‘That’s our main concern. Jackson is clearly undergoing something, but I don’t know what. All I can suggest is that he goes home and rests and I’ll do what I can to find out something.’

‘That doesn’t make me feel any better.’ Jackson glowered at them.

‘Well, it’s what we are going to do for now.’ Deaton said in a tone that brooked no argument. ‘Derek, I’ll call as soon as I know something.’

‘Thank you.’ Derek gave Jackson a pointed look and he huffed and slid off the table. They walked
him outside and he got into the Porsche, swearing and muttering under his breath before pulling out in a squeal of tyres.

‘That’s gratitude for you.’ Stiles said and then looked at Derek. ‘What, I can feel you brooding from over here.’

‘There’s something in the back of my head.’ Derek looked uncharacteristically unsettled. ‘I’m sure that I’ve heard about this before, but I just can’t remember what. As much of an asshole as Peter was, we could really use him right now. He was the one who knew all about this supernatural bullshit.’

‘You do realise you’re a werewolf, right?’ Stiles grinned. ‘You’re part of all this supernatural bullshit.’

‘I know, but I could really use some help on this.’ Derek sighed and waved a hand back at the clinic. ‘And Deaton isn’t always a solution to the problem.’

‘That’s because he likes to be a cryptic motherfucker.’ Stiles replied. ‘But you know who’s good at research? Me.’ He gave Derek a brilliant smile. ‘And I’ll even do it for free.’

Derek’s mouth quirked and he huffed a soft laugh.

‘Okay smartass.’ His gentle sarcasm made Stiles’ heart do a happy flip-flop. ‘Show me what you got.’

‘Excellent.’ Stiles rubbed his hands together. ‘First we go to the store. I shall require sustenance.’

‘I thought you said it was free.’ Derek reminded him as they got in the car. ‘This doesn’t sound free.’

‘I could do it in exchange for sexual favours.’ Stiles tried his best to look seductive and Derek’s whole face seemed to spasm before he actually burst out laughing. That took Stiles completely by surprise. Derek’s laughs were like being smacked in the face by pure sunshine and very rare indeed. He basked in the face of it until Derek finally got a hold of himself and lovingly cuffed him on the head.

‘You’re a little shit.’ His voice was warm with affection. ‘Fine, I’ll buy your damn junk food.

That was how they ended up back at the house on the couch. Stiles was sitting with his feet under Derek’s thigh, absently prodding him with his toe claws from time to time. Derek was watching baseball and stealing from the bag of Doritos on Stiles’ lap, his hand appearing around Stiles laptop and growling when Stiles slapped at him.

‘These are mine, go get your own.’ He cuddled the bag protectively to his chest and Derek bared a fang at him.

‘Give.’ He held out a hand and glared at him until Stiles relented.

‘This is such bullshit.’ he snorted. ‘There is nothing online at all. Usually I can at least get some idea of what I’m looking for but we’re just running around in the dark on this.’

‘Maybe it would be a good idea to try and get some information from outside Beacon Hills.’ Derek suggested and Stiles made a face at him.

‘For that I would need to know people outside Beacon Hills.’ He caught the change in Derek’s expression. ‘What?’
‘So, I might know some people.’ Derek shrugged. ‘I haven’t spoken to them in years but it might be a good idea to start.’

‘Like who?’ Stiles was curious.

‘There’s another alpha whose pack lives not to far from here.’ Derek said. ‘Her name’s Satomi Ito. She and my mom were friends, but after we left Beacon Hills we obviously lost contact. Laura didn’t want us getting tracked through anyone, and so we didn’t even tell her where we were going.’

‘See, I know she was your sister and I know you two were completely traumatised but I don’t understand just disappearing like that.’ Stiles said.

‘It was easy in New York. There’s no territory per se, just an agreement that all werewolves stay in their own lanes. Most packs live where there’s enough open ground to run.’ Derek shifted, his hand a warm weight on Stiles’ ankle. ‘Before that, we had to keep moving. I was in and out of different schools until I graduated, and then she took off and did her own thing. I don’t blame her, she was young and she had no idea how to do the whole alpha thing.’

‘And this Satomi might help us?’ Stiles asked.

‘Maybe.’ Derek leaned his head back against the couch. ‘It’s been about seven years since we last saw her pack. My mom used to visit more frequently than we did. I guess we could go and see her, but we’d have to do it properly, maybe ask Deaton to set something up.’

‘What about the safety deposit box.’ Stiles said. ‘There could be something in there.’

‘Yeah.’ Derek toyed with the remote, spinning it on one hand. Stiles wondered if he could do that cool one finger spin thing with a basketball and resolved to steal one from the locker room. ‘I’ll go tomorrow. See what’s in there.’

‘It might be nice to have some stuff of theirs.’ Stiles wriggled closer, rubbing his cheek against Derek’s shoulder. ‘It must be hard not having anything left.’

‘I don’t really remember.’ Derek replied. ‘I think the shock and the guilt made me feel like I deserved to have nothing.’

‘Well, you don’t’ Stiles looked up at him. ‘You deserve to have everything.’

Derek’s mouth quirked and he leaned down to kiss him gently.

‘I have you.’ he replied. ‘That’s pretty much all I need.’

Stiles went bright red and meeped.

‘Dude.’ He was absurdly pleased. ‘That’s like, stupidly romantic.’

Derek smiled and then completely ruined all of it be dragging his tongue across Stiles’ face and leaving him spluttering.

‘Can’t have that now, can we?’ he asked and Stiles growled and then pounced on him, toppling them both onto the floor.

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‘No.’ Chris shook his head. ‘Absolutely out of the question.’

‘Why not?’ Allison protested. They were alone now, Lydia and Scott having left an hour before. ‘I
'It’s too dangerous, that’s why not.’ Chris huffed. ‘You’d be playing a very treacherous game against a man who’s been doing it all his life.’

‘I’m still an Argent, Dad.’ Allison lifted her chin. ‘And if I’m correct, my being the last Argent woman means the family’s authority now falls to me.’

Chris frowned, but she knew she had him at a loss.

‘I don’t like it.’ He folded his arms and she saw naked fear in his eyes. ‘It feels like leading you to slaughter.’

‘I need to grow up.’ Allison said. ‘Become a Hunter. You said you would train me, that we would restore our family’s name and honour. In order to do that, I need to claim what’s mine and pretending to be on his side is how I’m going to do that.’

‘He’s not some grandfatherly figure, Allison.’ Chris sighed. ‘He’s strong willed and smart and incredibly manipulative. I don’t want to see what happened to Kate happen to you.’

‘There’s a difference between Kate and I.’ Allison’s voice was like ice. ‘I’m not a murderer or a fanatic. I can do this.’

‘If you do, and I’m not giving my blessing just yet, then you’ll need backup.’ Chris said. ‘I need to be kept informed every step of the way and the rest of them need to know.’

‘Okay.’ Allison agreed. ‘It’ll have to look real though. I’m probably going to have to say some pretty cruel things.’

‘I know.’ Chris reached out and pulled her into a hug. ‘You’ll have to break up with Scott.’

‘Yeah.’ Allison sighed. ‘At least for the time being.’

‘Have you informed him of this?’ Chris raised an eyebrow at her.

‘We spoke about it earlier.’ Allison’s mouth turned down. ‘Tomorrow, I’m going to ‘catch’ him and Lydia making out and we’re going to have a huge fight and break up. We’re not going to tell anyone until after though, so it looks really real.’

‘Okay.’ Chris didn’t look at all convinced. ‘What about Jackson?’

‘We’re hoping that it’s going to be the wake-up call he needs.’ Allison explained. ‘Lydia’ said it should make him pull his head out of his ass. Obviously, once it’s done she’ll explain to him.’

‘And now that’s a variable I don’t like at all.’ Chris said. ‘Not telling everyone means that you can’t predict all their reactions. People can get hurt.’

‘We’ll take care of that.’ Allison wished she sounded more confident, but the truth was she wasn’t altogether happy with Lydia’s scheme, even though the break up would be entirely for show. Scott’s sad eyes had almost broken her resolve and she wasn’t sure how she felt about him getting acquainted with Lydia’s tongue. Still, she couldn’t present herself as the heir apparent if she was dating a werewolf and it would mean isolating herself from everyone she counted as friends too. If the payoff wasn’t so big, she would never have suggested it.

‘And us?’ Chris’ voice was gentler now. ‘What do you want to do about that?’
‘I thought we could start with an argument.’ Allison’s lip wobbled, her nerves starting to show.
‘What time is he due to arrive tomorrow?’

‘Early.’ Chris replied, suddenly looking every one of his forty-five years. ‘He’ll be here before you
go to school.’

‘Perfect.’ Allison bit her lip and tried hard to ignore the creeping dread she felt.

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‘So there’s something else we need to talk about.’ Stiles said as he jumped to shift his jeans back
over his ass, adjusting his balls to lie correctly. Derek gave him a naked smirk from the floor and
stretched like the overly large canid he was.

‘Is it about how I just rocked your world?’ His fangs gleamed when he grinned and Stiles growled
playfully at him.

‘You’re being a really smug asshole for someone who just got their ass pounded into the rug.’ he
retorted and Derek snickered.

‘I reject your gender stereotypes and substitute my own.’ He sat up and rolled, careful to stop the
come leaking out of his ass and smeared across his perfectly toned stomach getting on said rug.
‘Only real alphas can take dick like I can.’

‘God, I have so many questions about that.’ Stiles said. ‘But no, it was about the whole pack thing.’
He followed Derek to the foot of the stairs and leaned on the bannister. ‘Do you have like, some
criteria or something?’

‘Maybe.’ Derek’s voice came from the general direction of the bathroom. ‘Why?’

‘Because I ran into this kid at school today.’ Stiles replied, inhaling deeply and enjoying the thick
smell of come and sex and Derek’s sweat still lingering in the air. ‘He smelled really hurt, like bad.
Like he’d been beaten up or something and he was terrified too. I did some digging after study hall
and I may have hacked into the school computer while Mrs Jenkins was having a cigarette break out
the back of the school.’

‘Stiles.’ Derek’s voice held an edge of alpha command. ‘Short answer, man.’

‘I love it when you’re all alpha.’ He sighed. ‘Okay so if we thought someone was in trouble or like
sick or needed someone to watch their back, would that make them a good choice? Or do people
have to be like all super grounded to be chosen?’

Derek came back down the stairs, now in sweats and a t-shirt. He still reeked though and Stiles gave
him a happy growl.

‘Mine.’ He threw his arms around Derek’s neck and smooched the hell out of him, momentarily
distracted. Derek let himself be kissed and then gently eased him back.

‘Why are you asking me that?’ His green eyes were piercing though and Stiles knew that he could
see right through him.

‘Maybe because you and I are both kind of broken.’ He shrugged. ‘And maybe that’s the reason this
has all happened, so we can help some other kids whose lives are fucked up and who need a family.
I know I never asked for the Bite but it’s given me you and I am more than happy that it did. I
needed you, and you definitely needed me.’
‘Yeah, I did.’ Derek came over, one hand going to the back of Stiles’ neck and pressing their foreheads together. ‘Is that what you want, to save a bunch of dysfunctional teenagers just like us?’

‘Yeah, I think it is.’ Stiles lifted his hand to Derek’s face, stubble rasping his palm. ‘Is that okay?’

Derek smiled and kissed him.

‘What’s the kid’s name?’ he asked and Stiles did an internal whoop.

‘Isaac Lahey,’ he replied. ‘The weirdest thing is that he’s been in my class forever and he’s on the lacrosse team but I really didn’t know anything about him until day. I still don’t, except he’s like one of the saddest people I’ve ever smelled.’ He looked into Derek’s eyes and sighed. ‘He smells like you did when I first met you.’

‘Okay.’ Derek nodded. ‘Then we check him out.’

‘He lives over at the cemetery,’ Stiles said.

‘In that case, maybe we should give a day or two.’ Derek said. ‘You know, seeing as how they’re doing her funeral tomorrow.’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles gave him a crooked smile. ‘Would it be out of line to turn up and blast Ding Dong! The Witch Is Dead from the sidelines?’

‘Seeing as she wasn’t a witch, probably not really relevant.’ Derek replied, but there was an answering twitch at the corners of his mouth. ‘Fun though.’

‘So much fun.’ Stiles smiled back at him. ‘Hey, have I told you I’m super proud of what an awesome mate you are and that you’re the best alpha?’

‘You asshole.’ Derek nosed at him. ‘I’m literally the second alpha you’ve met and the first one was Peter.’

‘See?’ Stiles grinned. ‘Absolutely the best alpha.’ He let out a giggle as Derek hoisted him off his feet and over his shoulder before he slapped him on the ass. He was about to ascend the stairs when the sound of Noah’s cruiser brought them up short.

‘You’re lucky.’ Derek set him back on his feet.

‘Don’t you mean I’m going to get lucky.’ Stiles cackled and then heard Noah let out an exasperated sound from the front hall.

‘If you two are naked, I’m going to the Golden Rooster and eating enough moo shu pork to clog every artery I have,’ he threatened.

‘Later.’ Derek growled at Stiles and went into the kitchen, leaving him to face Noah alone.

‘Coward,’ he called after him and grinned at his father. ‘Good evening, Father. How was the frothing mob of Beacon Hill’s minor media outlets today?’

‘I swear, I don’t why the hell you have to act like you’re permanently on stage at all times.’ Noah sighed, walking past him and into the kitchen.

‘At least I don’t backflip to make a dramatic exit.’ Stiles snickered and Derek gave him a glare over the opened fridge door before handing Noah a beer.
‘What’s going to happen Wednesday?’ he asked and Stiles could smell the anxiety now clouding his scent.

‘She’s due to be cremated at the memorial home in the morning.’ Noah said. ‘Chris said that Gerard will be arriving beforehand so make sure you lie low tomorrow as well.’ He patted Derek on the shoulder. ‘I don’t want you ending up with a bullet in your ass.’

Stiles squirmed, the obvious joke about things in Derek’s ass burning on his tongue but even he didn’t have that much of a death wish.

‘I’ll stay in.’ Derek replied gravely. ‘The last thing I need is anything else in my ass.’

For a moment it was like time stood still. The joke hung in the air between them until Stiles couldn’t stop himself and practically guffawed with laughter, slapping his hands over his mouth in horror when he saw that his dad had understood exactly what Derek was implying.

‘Jesus fucking Christ.’ He took his beer and left the kitchen, shaking his head in what could only be described as utter resignation. ‘You two fucking deserve each other.’

Stiles looked back to see Derek holding his hand up for a high five.

‘That was fucking masterful.’ He gave it to him, noting Derek’s smug face. ‘I’m starting to think that under that tortured soul lies nothing but pure evil.’

‘Takes one to know one.’ Derek said and placidly sipped his beer.

Chapter End Notes

Because I absolutely refuse to believe that Danny doesn’t 100% know about all the crap in Beacon Hills and is forever rolling his eyes at it. ALSO because I think he would make a splendid wereshark.
Strange Encounters

Chapter by HaleHathNoFury (My_Trex_has_fleas), My_Trex_has_fleas

Chapter Summary

Well, what else would you expect from wandering around graveyards at night?

Tuesday Night

If anyone had told Stiles that he’d be walking through a cemetery in the middle of the night with Derek in search of a boy they were planning on turning into a werewolf a mere six months before he’d have laughed himself stupid.

Unfortunately that wouldn’t have changed the fact that that was exactly what they were doing.

It had started out innocently enough. Stiles has dragged Derek along to Isaac’s house to scope out the potential candidate, as he was calling him much to Derek’s exasperation (I’m giving him the Bite Stiles, not a fucking job interview). He hadn’t know what to expect really, but the shouting coming from inside hadn’t really been it. Of all the possibilities for the way Isaac acted and smelled, Stiles couldn’t believe he’d been so blind as to not realise that abuse could have been the cause. He’d suspected bullying, maybe self-harming. After all, a little digging had produced a dead brother, killed in tragic circumstances while serving his country, along with a long dead mother and a father who had a bit of a reputation for being a drunk, something that had more than likely been the cause of his dismissal from his position as BH High’s swimming coach while his son had been attending.

The shouts had resulted in a stricken looking Isaac leaving the house, dressed and with his shoulders drooping. Stiles and Derek had heard enough to know that there had been a change of plans with regards to Kate’s funeral arrangements, something they were going to alert Chris too as soon as they left. Gerard had bought off John Lahey, as well as paying for a burial plot. The argument had been because Isaac had come home later than expected and had not dug the hole for Kate’s burial. Now he trudged down the drive towards the cemetery to go do it, and they were following him at a safe distance.

Not the most normal way to spend a Tuesday night, Stiles mused. Then again, the whole fucking day had already gone to hell so why not?

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Tuesday Morning

‘So what are we doing again?’ Scott was having trouble following. Lydia’s schemes were so unnecessarily complicated.

‘It’s simple.’ Lydia said, giving him a look that told him that she was bordering on smacking him for being dense. ‘We’re going to rendez-vous in Finstock’s office after gym class. He always takes ages to get back so the coast will be clear for at least twenty-minutes. I’ll be waiting in there for you and once everybody’s gone, we can make out a bit and wait for him to catch us. Allison’s going to be lurking just outside and when he starts the inevitable yelling, she’s going to come in and find out
what we’ve been up to. Then you two will have your big confrontation in the hall, and we have the perfect scenario for a break up.’

‘Okay but how am I going to get rid of Stiles?’ Scott countered. ‘We always get changed and leave together.’

‘So do that and then tell him you forgot something.’ Lydia shrugged. ‘Then come back in to meet me. Actually that will be perfect because if Allison times’s it right, she’ll be able to run into him and ask him where you are.’ Her smile turned gleeful. ‘This is going to work perfectly.’

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‘There.’ Derek whispered and Stiles followed the line of his arm. He could see the open door of the shed where the backhoe was obviously kept. Isaac had disappeared inside a second before.

That wasn’t what had caught their attention though.

The thing that moved in the shadows wasn’t like anything he’d seen before and Derek had confirmed that he had no idea what it was either. It had been crouched on the roof of the shed, moving with an eerie grace as it dropped soundlessly to the ground and prowled around the entrance to the shed.

‘What the fuck…?’ Stiles could feel his adrenaline ramping up.

‘Shhh.’ Derek was watching intently, every line of his body predatory in its intent. His eyes were glowing red and Stiles could feel the combination of unease and hostility coming through their bond. Then the light inside the shed flicked on and just as quickly as it appeared, the figure melted into the darkness and left them scratching their metaphorical heads in confusion.

There was the sound of the backhoe starting up and Derek pulled Stiles back into the cover of the trees.

‘We need to follow him.’ he growled. ‘He has no idea that there’s something out here.’

‘Okay.’ Stiles shivered, the tension getting to him. ‘That wasn’t a wolf.’

‘No.’ Derek agreed. ‘I don’t know what it was, but I very much doubt it has good intentions. Come on.’

*************

‘Dodgeball.’ Finstock’s eyes had a manic gleam in them. ‘Jackson. Danny. Pick your teams.’

Stiles grinned to himself. He’d always been picked last, even after Greenberg which was a humiliation beyond all humiliation. Okay, so he’d managed to hit most of his classmates in the face accidentally (Jared still flinched whenever he had the ball in his hands) but now he was a changed man. Or sort of man. Whatever, the point was that he now rocked and they could all suck his fuzzy wolf balls.

He glanced at Scott and then frowned because Scott was looking kind of green. He’d been like that since before homeroom, when Stiles had caught him, Allison and Lydia huddled together and whispering at Lydia’s locker. The conversation had come to a very suspicious stop the second Stiles had gotten within earshot and Scott had been looking guilty as fuck since. Stiles knew they were up to something, but he had no idea what.
‘Stiles.’ Danny’s voice made his head shoot up and it took Stiles a moment to register. Danny’s dark eyes were sparkling with mischief and Stiles grinned madly, knowing that now he and Danny had something in common. He bounced up, ignoring the astonished faces of everyone else and went to jog over to Danny’s side, first pick for the first time in his life and absolutely loving it.

‘McCall.’ Jackson’s voice was laced with quiet venom and Stiles felt like being childish and sticking his tongue out at him, but managed to hold onto his dignity. Instead he looked at his best friend and realised that Scott hadn’t even registered that Jackson had called on him.

‘Hey, McCall!’ Finstock stomped over. ‘You want to pull your head out of your tuches and join the living? Get over there!’

‘Sorry Coach.’ Scott stumbled to his feet and Stiles knew something was definitely very wrong. He scented as subtly as he could and got a wash of unhappiness.

‘What’s up with him?’ Danny murmured after he’d called their next player and Stiles knew that he’d clearly picked up on it too.

‘No idea.’ He scuffed a shoe along the floor. ‘He’s been acting freaked out all morning.’

‘He’s not the only one.’ Danny’s eyes flicked in Jackson’s direction. ‘He damn near took my head off this morning when I asked how he was.’

‘You’re up.’ Stiles nudged him and Danny considered who was left.

‘Isaac.’

Stiles watched how the lanky boy startled at the sound of his name. He wasn’t smelling as bad as the day before, but he was still jumpy as hell.

‘Matt.’ Jackson called and there was a very soft growl from Scott. Stiles knew that Scott wasn’t Matt Daehler’s biggest fan. He’d made no secret that he liked Allison and his attentions had picked up in the week leading up to the dance. He’d even gone so far as to ask her out, but of course Allison had declined.

Stiles didn’t like him at all. Matt didn’t ping his radar too much, but his habit of lurking around and taking photographs of people without their permission had become more of an issue since he’d turned. Derek had explained that werewolves were physiologically different to humans in some ways, and having a tapetum lucidum was now one of the things that would mark Stiles out as no longer being human. It helped at night, making his night vision as good as every other nocturnal predator out there, but it also meant he did the whole zombie eye thing when photographed with a flash. Matt’s creepy little hobby could out him and so he’d started keeping an eye on him and realised just how stalkery Matt’s behaviour was. He’d also pointed it out to Scott and now Scott had it out for Matt, his new wolfy aggression making it difficult for him to just let it go. His control was not as good as Stiles’ and Stiles had a bad feeling when he saw Scott’s eyes flash for just a second when Matt went to stand with them.

‘Oh crap.’ he muttered. Next to him, Danny sighed.

‘Let me guess.’ He was also looking at Matt and how Scott was glaring at him. ‘We need an intervention?’

***************

Isaac drove the backhoe along the rear fence of the cemetery. Apparently, Gerard had wanted Kate
to be buried well out of the way of normal foot traffic and they ended up in a heavily treed area.

Stiles was annoyed to realise it wasn’t too far from where the crosses changed to stars and his own mother’s grave, and he growled before Derek’s hand landed on his arm, quieting him.

Isaac was now busy with the backhoe, seemingly oblivious to anything else around him. Stiles did wonder at how he seemed so calm to be working digging grave in the dead of night, pun not intended, and just what the house he lived in held that made this preferable to being there. The thing they had seen over at the shed had completely vanished like it had never been there and only the fact that Derek had seen it as well had Stiles thinking that he wasn’t hallucinating.

A distant sound caught his attention and it was loud enough that even Isaac seemed to have heard it. He turned off the backhoe and sat, listening.

‘Shit.’ Next to him, Derek was frozen. ‘Can you hear that?’

Stiles focused. His hearing wasn’t quiet as acute as Derek’s, especially now that Derek was an alpha and his senses had all been elevated to superman levels, but he could make out what sounded like wet tearing and then the sound of…chewing?

‘Oh gross.’ He could feel the face he was making and knew it was unattractive as hell. ‘It’s eating something?’

‘Yeah.’ Derek looked equally disgusted, which was rich because Stiles was not unconvinced that born wolves were above adding a little wildlife to their diets. Derek’s persistent interest in squirrels was too keen to be purely academic.

‘Should we go check it out?’ Stiles hissed, fervently praying that Derek would decline and they could just pretend it wasn’t happening.

‘You stay here.’ Derek got to his feet. ‘Don’t take your eyes off Isaac.’

‘Wait...what?’ Stiles barely got his protest out before Derek was gone and he threw a few choice phrases after his errant mate about stupid sourwolves and their reckless asses.

He crouched down further, wincing as the sounds get louder. Isaac was now off the backhoe, standing next to Kate’s grave and staring in their direction. Even in the dark, Stiles could see the fear on his face and he was about to reveal himself and offer Isaac some company when there was an ungodly screech and something flew out of the darkness and right in Isaac’s direction.

It moved on all fours like a werewolf but the movement was all wrong. This scuttled and Stiles was convinced he saw something like a sinuous tail behind it. He started to move, scrambling to run before it got to Isaac but he was too slow. Isaac let out a startled cry, falling over and into the fresh grave and the thing screeched again, much louder now it was close, and leaped onto the backhoe. The machine toppled over, landing across the opening and trapping Isaac underneath.

‘Fuck.’ Stiles first priority was Isaac and he ran to the edge of the grave. The creature was perched on the backhoe and he caught a glimpse of slitted yellow eyes and scaly skin before it jumped off the other side and disappeared again.

‘Help me!’ Isaac’s frantic panting below the backhoe brought Stiles back to the situation at hand and he caught the edge of the machine and started to heave it up. It was far heavier than he anticipated and he let out an off before suddenly Derek was next to him. He took the weight as well and it was easy for them right the backhoe and looked down into the grave. Isaac was on his back, his blue eyes wide as he stared at them both.
‘Stiles Stilinski?’ He was completely bemused, that much was apparent. ‘What the hell are you doing here?’

‘Funny thing, right?’ Stiles gave Derek a quick look and then extended his hand. ‘You want to get out of there and we’ll tell you just why we happen to be in a cemetery in the middle of the night?’

‘Okay.’ Isaac didn’t sound sure but he took the offered hands and together they hauled him out of the grave and back onto his feet. He dusted himself off, giving Derek a wary look. ‘Who’s he?’

‘Oh.’ Stiles couldn’t help the little flicker of happiness inside him. ‘This is Derek Hale. he’s my...boyfriend.’

‘Oh yeah, I heard you’d come out.’ Isaac shifted on his feet. ‘So you want to tell me what the hell that was?’

‘We don’t actually know.’ Derek replied. He looked at Stiles for approval and Stiles nodded. ‘But we could show you what we are.’

‘You mean besides a couple of guys cruising a graveyard?’ Isaac raised an eyebrow at them and Stiles had to appreciate the sass.

‘Okay one, we’re in a committed relationship so no cruising.’ he retorted. ‘And two, we just saved your ass.’

‘Granted.’ Isaac folded his arms. ‘But that still doesn’t exactly explain things.’

‘No.’ Derek said. ‘But this does.’

He shifted and Isaac let out a startled yell and fell right back into the grave. There was some muttered profanity and Stiles glared at his unrepentant alpha.

‘You’re a douchebag sometimes, you know that right?’ He moved to help Isaac back out of the grave again.

‘So are you.’ Derek snorted. ‘And he was being smartass.’

‘Not helping, Derek.’ Stiles looked at Isaac. ‘Sorry dude. My idiot boyfriend thinks it’s funny to scare the pants off people.’

‘Worked with you.’ Derek grumbled but he came to offer his assistance. They got Isaac back out the grave again and now he was shaking.

‘What the fuck are you?’ he demanded and Stiles had to admit he was impressed at the way Isaac wasn’t running.

‘Werewolves.’ Derek smiled, all sharp teeth. ‘And we just so happen to be recruiting.’

************

Gym was turning into a shitstorm.

Stiles was grappling with a very angry Scott while Matt looked up from the floor. His nose was bleeding from where Scott had taken a swipe at him, blissfully ignoring the fact that they were on the same team and hitting Matt hard in the face with his ball. Finstock was swearing a blue streak at them, Jackson was yelling at them and Danny was grinning in a way that made the expression shark like seem far more real now Stiles was in the know. Everybody else was standing around and
watching like a bunch of grandmas with their afternoon soaps and so not helping.

‘Jesus fuck.’ He had to dig his feet in, nearly slipping and falling on his face as Scott tried to get out of his grip and throw himself back at Matt. It had all started because Matt had made a comment about Allison looking pretty that morning and Scott had completely lost his temper and slammed the ball into his face from right across the court. Finstock had spontaneously cheered and then realised that Matt was actually seriously hurt. Now he was on his knees and trying to get Matt to tilt his head forward, huge red blots palling onto the floor.

‘He’s going to fucking die.’ Scott growled, and yes those were his eyes flashing gold. Danny moved to stand in front of him to block him from everyone else’s view and that gave Stiles enough time to flash his own eyes at Scott and bare his teeth at him.

‘Calm down, you asshole!’ He tightened his grip. ‘You want everyone to see?’

Scott looked at him and then he finally seemed to see Stiles and the glow faded into dark brown once again. Stiles raised his eyebrows at him, letting go when he felt the tension drain from Scott’s body.

‘You good?’ he murmured and Scott nodded.

‘I’m okay.’ He blew out a deep breath. ‘I’m sorry.’

‘McCall! You get your ass to the principal’s office right now!’ Finstock looked furious. ‘Bilinski, take him! I don’t trust him to get there by himself.’

‘Okay Coach.’ Stiles huffed. He shoved at Scott and then saw his friend’s face changed. Scott looked like someone that was about to get severely reprimanded, understandable in the face of being sent to the principal, but Stiles had a sneaky suspicion it wasn’t because of that.

‘Come on, stop being a delicate flower.’ Finstock barked at Matt, helping him up. ‘Greenberg will escort you to the nurse’s office and then we can get this sorted out. I swear it’s like the goddamn Drama club in here.’

Stiles tugged on Scott’s arm.

‘Let’s get out of here.’ he said. ‘Before you decide to eat him.’

*************

Isaac stared at them across the table of the small all night food truck they had dragged him to. It was at the edge of the parking lot and far away that nobody would be able to hear them. It also served killer burgers and that was what they’d eaten while they’d explained everything to Isaac.

‘Why me?’ he asked.

Stiles looked at Derek and then shrugged, waiting for him to take the lead.

‘Because we think you could use us.’ Derek said. ‘One of the things about being a werewolf is that we have enhanced senses. We can smell things humans can’t. And you smell hurt. Like blood and bruises and pain. I didn’t realise just how much until I got close enough tonight. Stiles picked it up yesterday while you were at school and he told me about you, said that maybe you might be interested.’

The look on Isaac’s face went through various stages of denial, shame and anger before becoming completely blank. Stiles was impressed just how much he’d managed to pack in there.
‘I’m fine.’ he said and Stiles snorted.

‘Dude we heard you and your dad going at it tonight. He sounded drunk.’ He leaned his elbows on the table. ‘Look, we’re not going to act like social workers and drag the truth out of you. But there’s some shit going down and we just want you to know that this is an option.’

‘And you think being a werewolf will do that for me?’ Isaac was clearly trying to sound scornful but Stiles could hear the slight tremble in his voice. ‘What if I don’t want it?’

‘No problem.’ Derek replied. ‘But we’ve taken a leap of faith in telling you what we are, so we’d want you to keep it quiet. We’re offering you a chance to be part of our world. It would mean not having to go through what you are alone. It would mean a family that cares and doesn’t hurt you for the sake of hurting you. It means pack.’

Isaac was quiet for a long time and Stiles looked at Derek. Derek just gave him a slight shake of his head, all his attention on Isaac.

‘You don’t need to decide now.’ His voice was gentle. ‘If you want to think about it, fine. You know where to find Stiles, and he knows where to find me.’

‘Okay.’ Isaac seemed to fold in on himself. ‘Can I go home now?’

‘Not keeping you here, dude.’ Stiles smiled at him, hoping to reassure. ‘You’re a free guy.’

He wasn’t expecting Isaac’s derisive snort.

‘Yeah, right.’ he said and got up, wrapping his coat around himself. ‘Thanks for the food.’

‘You need a ride back?’ Derek asked, concern colouring his voice. ‘There’s something still out there.’

‘No.’ Isaac ducked his head, his voice pitching so low they almost couldn’t hear him. ‘It’s not like anyone would care if it got me.’

‘Hey.’ Stiles stood up. ‘Not anymore, okay. Even if you don’t want to be part of the pack, you’ve still got a couple of people who’ll be worried if you don’t turn up for school tomorrow.’ He stuck his hands in his pockets. ‘I’m sorry I never saw any of this before, but now I know I want to help.’

‘It’s okay.’ Isaac shrugged, then looked at him shyly. ‘But maybe if you want we could eat lunch together tomorrow? It would be nice to have someone to eat lunch with.’

‘Done.’ Stiles gave him his brightest smile. ‘Although I have to warn you that you may have to put up with Scott.’

‘Not such a hardship.’ Isaac ducked his head again. ‘McCall’s okay.’ He gave them a weird little wave and started walking off. Stiles sat back down and then saw Derek watching Isaac with a grin on his face.

‘What?’ he asked and Derek gave him a pointed look.

‘You didn’t hear that?’ he asked, still grinning. ‘The way his heart skipped when you mentioned Scott?’

It took a while for the penny to drop but when it finally did, Stiles gaped at him.

‘Really?’ He looked back in the direction Isaac had gone. ‘Like, like him like him?’
‘What the fuck does that even mean?’ Derek snorted and stole the last of Stiles’ fries.

**********

Alison chewed her nails, waiting for her cue.

It had been a rough morning. Gerard had not turned up when he was supposed to, and she’d left the house feeling thrown off balance. She’d spent the whole night planning how she was going to convince him that she and her father were at odds but it had all been for nothing.

Getting to school had bought no relief at all either. The impending pretend break up with Scott and knowing that in a few hours she was supposed to walk in on him and Lydia had done nothing but make her anxious. She’d known that Scott was just as worried, just as fearful. It hadn’t been hard to see the way he’d looked at her, his dark eyes pleading. She’d told him how it was all just a means to an end but it felt so much more than that.

Chris had messaged her at lunch time to let her know that Gerard had called and said that he would be arriving that afternoon. Another message had told her that he had in fact arrived but would be staying at a hotel. Her father’s curt tone, apparent even through text, made her think that there had obviously been some kind of confrontation and that worried her. She knew Chris could take care of himself, but she also didn’t want to walk into anything when she had no idea what the status quo was.

Sp now she was there, waiting outside the locker room because she hadn’t seen Stiles come out with the stream of other boys. Scott hadn’t either so she figured they must still be inside. However, Lydia had them on a strict timetable and she needed to get inside to catch them. The feeling if what she was about to do made her feel a little nauseous, tension building up in her stomach until she felt like it would all just come flooding out of her.

The door to the locker room slammed as Greenberg and Jared went by, giving her a curious look but not stopping their conversation. She frowned and looked at the door, debating her next move. If things were going on inside, she still had a role to play so she strode over, swallowing down her misgivings and went in.

The boy’s locker room smelled like sweat and musk and Axe but it was also completely empty.

‘Shit.’ Confused Allison headed for the office at the side, cracking the door open before someone grabbed her arm and yanked her inside.

‘Where the hell is Scott?’ Lydia hissed. She looked mad as hell and Allison waved her hands at her.

‘I have no idea.’ she hissed back. ‘He’s supposed to be in here with you!’

‘Well, he’s not!’ Lydia looked beyond annoyed. ‘I can’t make out with Scott when he’s not here!’

‘Fuck.’ Allison’s mind raced. ‘What do we do now?’ She froze when they heard the sound of Finstock doing that thing where his normal conversation was the same as anyone else yelling and gave each other a frantic look.

‘Allison!’ Lydia grabbed her arm again. ‘What do we do?’

Suddenly it was like everything slowed down and Allsion took a good look at her best friend. Lydia was wearing her hair in a braid around her head, her eyelids dusted in sparkly green to bring out their depths and her lips an enticing shade of pink.
There were worst things she could do.

‘I got this.’ she said and gently cupped Lydia’s face. ‘Trust me.’

Then she leaned in and kissed her. Lydia inhaled sharply, her perfume filling Allison’s senses. It was exactly as she had thought it would be (and wasn’t that an admission she’d take to her grave) and nothing at all like she had expected.

She let Lydia go, pulling back from her. To her complete surprise she wasn’t pushed away.

Instead, Lydia was perfectly still, her green eyes impossibly wide. Then all of a sudden she made a soft little sound and moved forward, kissing Allison back. Her mouth was petal soft, the brush of tongue she gave Allison tasting like mint and artificial bubblegum. It seared through Allison, heat curdling in her chest in a completely unexpected way and she pulled her closer until they were flush against each other. She felt Lydia’s slender arms around her waist, their kiss deepening until all Allison could taste and smell and feel was Lydia.

It was nothing short of a revelation.

Allison was so lost in what they were doing, she didn’t hear the door open and had no idea that had an audience until Finstock spoke.

‘Well now, that’s sure as hell not what I was expecting to see.’ He was at the door, his whole face creased up in confusion.

Allison broke away from Lydia, both of them breathless and flushed. Then her heart leaped into her mouth because he wasn’t the only one standing there watching them.

‘Oh fuck.’ Lydia’s shocked outburst spoke for both of them and Allison forced herself to meet Jackson’s eyes even as she held onto his girlfriend, the same girlfriend whose mouth she’d just had her tongue in.

‘Lyds?’ His face was a perfect picture of heartbreak and betrayal and Allison felt her stomach lurch as she realised what she and Lydia had just done.

‘Jackson…’ Lydia started, letting go of Allison’s hand only to have her pathway cut off by Finstock.

‘Oh no.’ He folded his arms and narrowed his eyes at them. ‘Principal’s office, both of you. I’ve had just about enough of the damn shenanigans today. First Stilinski and McCall acting like nutjobs and now you two.’

Allison watched Jackson bolting from the locker room behind him and knew they had fucked up. She glanced at Lydia and could see that she knew it too. This was definitely not what they had planned.

***********

‘Hey.’ Noah looked up as they came in the front door. ‘You’re out late.’

‘And you’re up late.’ Stiles pointed out. ‘I thought it was early nights all week, especially with the funeral tomorrow.’

‘Fuck that.’ Noah scratched at his unshaven jaw. ‘I pulled rank and got Tara to do it. I figured seeing as Derek didn’t get to the bank today, we could go tomorrow. Keep our minds off things.’

Derek looked at him and Stiles gave him the say nothing look. The last thing Noah needed to know
was that there was a murdering supernatural creature lurking in the graveyard and chewing on corpses. They’d hadn’t gone to go look for what it had been eating, preferring to keep isaac in the dark about that shit just a little longer.

‘Probably a good idea.’ Derek thankfully took the hint and went to flop on the couch.

‘Yeah.’ Noah sighed. ‘Chris called me. Gerard threw a royal fit at Kate being cremated. He wants her buried.’ He took a sip of his whiskey and gave an evil chuckle. ‘He’s going to be disappointed.’

‘Why?’ Stiles knew that look. ‘What did you do?’

‘Pulled some strings.’ Noah replied. ‘I got the funeral home to send her over to Deptford. Ricky at the crematorium is doing her tonight and Chris is going to pick up the ashes in the morning. Gerard has no clue.’

‘Damn.’ Stiles was impressed and also amused that Gerard’s plans were already being undermined. Not only that, but that his father’s glee was so evident. ‘How’s he going to break the news?’

‘He’s turning up with her in a box at the funeral tomorrow.’ Noah chuckled. ‘It would almost be worth going just for that, but honestly I just want a drama free week.’ He looked between Stiles and Derek. ‘So where have you boys been and why do you smell like burgers?’

************

Stiles and Scott were still outside the principal’s office when Jackson came tearing down the corridor like his ass was on fire. At first Stiles thought he was angry but then he caught the salty scent of distress and stood up to intercept him.

‘Hey.’ He gave Jackson a questioning look. ‘Where’s the fire, man?’

Jackson came up short, as if seeing Stiles for the first time. Then he looked past him to Scott and his mouth twisted.

‘You poor dumb bastard.’ he said to him. ‘I’d be pissed but I’m guessing you had no clue either.’

‘No clue about what?’ Scott asked, also getting up. His eyebrows drew down in worry. ‘Jackson, what the hell are you talking about?’

‘Lydia and Allison.’ Jackson’s voice broke. ‘They were making out in Coach’s office.’

‘Huh?’ Now Stiles was just as confused, at least until he saw the change in Scott’s expression.

‘But that’s not possible.’ Scott protested and Jackson choked out a humourless laugh.

‘Believe whatever you want, McCall.’ He shoved Stiles out the way. ‘I just know that Lydia can say anything she wants to defend this, but she’s never kissed me like that.’ He shook his head and looked at Scott, pity in his eyes. ‘And I’ll bet every last penny of my inheritance that Allison’s never kissed you like that either.’

He stormed off, leaving them both standing there in shock.

‘Okay.’ Stiles said once he recovered his wits. ‘What the fucking fuck was that?’

‘It wasn’t supposed to happen like that.’ Scott muttered and then wheeled around. A shamefaced Allison and Lydia were being escorted towards them by a very annoyed looking Finstock. He pointed at the line of chairs.
‘You two sit your asses down.’ That was to the girls, then he turned to Stiles and Scott. ‘And you two alos sit your damn asses down. I’m done with today. I’m going back to my office and I’m going to take a very long nap.’

He stalked off and Stiles looked between his friends, his face settling into an equally unimpressed expression.

‘Okay, start talking.’ He folded his arms and glared at them. ‘What the hell did you just do?’

‘It’s a long story...’ Allison started but Scott interrupted her.

‘You kissed Lydia?’ he hissed. ‘That wasn’t in the plan.’

‘Oh, can it Scott.’ Lydia snapped. ‘It did what it was supposed to. At least you’re not the one who’s going to be labelled a lesbian tomorrow.’

‘Neither are you.’ Allison assured her. ‘We just play it off as a prank, right? Jackson will calm down when we explain it.’

‘Except we can’t explain it.’ Lydia replied. ‘The whole point was to make it look like you two have broken up. So we have to stick to the plan.’

‘So what?’ Scott was appalled. ‘You two start dating now?’ His voice kept going up into frantic territory. ‘Because that’s not...you can’t...I mean...’ He finally stopped, his dark eyes huge.

‘Allison?’

‘Well, we did say that we were going to break up.’ Allison protested. ‘Just while Gerard’s here so I can get on his good side.’

‘Whoa, whoa, whoa.’ Stiles waved his hands around. ‘Why are we getting on Gerard’s good side. I thought he was like Big Evil Number One.’

‘He has the bestiary, which is something we need.’ Lydia grated out. ‘And so Allison has to play nice and pretend she’s on board the werewolf murdering train to win him over until she can get her hands on it.’

‘Oh, I see.’ Stiles creased his face up and looked at them in bemusement, unable to keep the sarcasm out of his voice. ‘And you thought this was a good plan?’

‘Oh shut up.’ Lydia snapped, wringing her hands, and Stiles realised that she was actually really upset. ‘This was not the way it was meant to go.’

‘No shit.’ Allison slumped in her chair. ‘How the hell am I going to explain this to my dad?’

‘Never mind your dad, what about Jackson?’ Lydia lamented. ‘All I wanted was to give him a wake up call. Kissing Scott would have been fine because it would have just thrown his dumb ass into competitive mode. He’s not going to bother trying to compete with Allison because he knows he can’t.’

‘Huh?’ Stiles looked at her. ‘What do you mean he can’t?’

Lydia looked back at him and for the first time ever, Stiles knew he’d thrown her a complete curveball and she had no idea how to answer.

‘Just that she’s my best friend.’ she replied quickly. ‘That’s all.’
She wouldn’t meet his eyes and Stiles had a little epiphany all of his own, hearing how her heart skipped when she glanced back at Allison, who was not even listening because she was trying to placate Scott.

‘Lydia…’ he trailed off when she finally looked at him, and the raw feeling in her eyes kind of knocked him sideways. She gave him an almost indiscernible shake of the head and Stiles shut his mouth, his heart sinking as he realised things were about to get very very messy.

************

‘So Lydia and Allison?’ Derek asked. He was on his stomach, one arm draped off the side of the bed while Stiles lay pressed up along his side and drew over the lines of his tattoo with his fingers, feeling the different textures of skin. ‘That’s interesting.’

‘The thing is, I think there might actually be something there.’ Stiles told him. ‘But maybe they didn’t realise it until they actually did something about it.’

‘Fuck.’ Derek shifted, the play of muscles under Stiles’ finger rippling like water. ‘So that’s why Scott didn’t want to come with?’

‘He’s kind of in a weird place right now.’ Stiles said. ‘This whole dumbass scheme of theirs to get the bestiary and find out as much as they can about Gerard’s plans feels like there are a million things that could go wrong with it.’ He nosed at the silky skin of Derek’s shoulder. ‘I don’t like it.’

‘No, neither do I.’ Derek rolled onto his side and raised himself up to lean on one elbow. ‘There’s a lot of shit they’re playing with that they’re not equipped to deal with. There’s a reason we ran for so long.’

‘I just hope Chris can keep control of it.’ Stiles looked at him. In the light coming through his window, Derek’s eyes looked luminous. ‘How are you doing? I mean about tomorrow.’

‘I feel kind of weird.’ Derek admitted. ‘It’s like I hung onto that for so long and I can’t quite believe that she’s dead.’

‘Dead and burnt.’ Stiles said. ‘I would pay good money to see Gerard’s face when he sees Chris walk in with an urn tomorrow.’ He bit his lip and then asked what he wanted to. ‘Your family? They’re not in the cemetery.’

‘We had our own plot.’ Derek swallowed hard, and then lay back down, head resting on his outstretched arm and his face in shadow. ‘It’s way back in the preserve. When all this shit is done and I get Laura back, I’m going to move her there.’

‘What about Peter?’ Stiles asked. ‘You going to leave him in the house?’

‘For now.’ Derek replied. ‘I’m still not sure how I feel about him.’

‘That’s totally understandable.’ Stiles nestled next to him. ‘Hey, remember at the beginning of the week when we thought things were going to quiet down for a while?’

‘Yeah.’ Derek leaned across and kissed the tip of his nose. ‘How’s that working out for you?’

‘Great.’ Stiles had to grin. ‘I’m glad I’m not the one who’s going to find the chewed up corpse tomorrow morning.’

‘Shit.’ Derek sighed and closed his eyes. ‘We probably should have told Noah.’
‘Let him have one more quiet night.’ Stiles yawned hugely and stole a quick kiss. ‘You think Isaac is going to take up our offer and be in our pack?’

‘Maybe.’ Derek’s mouth curved in a smile. ‘And I like that. That you call it our pack.’

‘Like I’d let you run it by yourself.’ Stiles snorted and closed his eyes too.

************

Allison lay on her back, staring at the ceiling but not seeing anything. She felt sick to her stomach after the day’s events and coming home to find her father and grandfather locked in an epic battle had been the cherry on the top.

There had been no time to adjust or throw herself into the altercation, although she picked up quickly enough that the problem was Kate’s funeral arrangements. Gerard was dead set against having her cremated and Chris and he had shouted at each other for a good hour before her grandfather had stormed out without so much as a word to her and she was left standing there with Chris, both of them stretched thin with tension.

‘Well, guess that didn’t work as planned.’ Chris had said, hands on hips. ‘How was your day?’

That had been when Allison had finally burst into tears and thrown herself into his arms and let herself cry until she was hoarse. Her father had gently guided her to the couch and let her cry, rocking her like he had when she was little and making soothing nonsense noises.

Afterwards he’d sent her to have a bath, and when she’d come downstairs he’d had her favourite spaghetti cabonara made and Tangled cued on the tv. They’d sat and eaten and watched the film until she was so tired her eyes didn’t want to stay open anymore. She’d gone to bed, but now she was here her brain just didn’t want to switch off.

There was a knock at the door before it opened a crack and Chris leaned in.

‘I’m going to bed.’ he said. ‘You going to be okay for tomorrow?’

‘Yeah.’ Allison gave him a thin smile. ‘Thanks, Dad.’

‘I love you, sweetie.’ Chris looked every bit as tired as she felt. ‘Try and get some sleep.’

‘I will. Love you too.’ Allison replied and he closed the door.

She sighed heavily and then turned over and reached for her phone, tapping out a quick message.

*You awake?*

The screen lit up not even five seconds later.

*I’m awake.*

Allison felt tug at her heart.

*Did u talk?*

*Can’t get hold of him. He’s turned his phone off.*

Allison bit her lip until it hurt. She dialled the number and listened as it was answered.
‘I’m sorry.’ she whispered.

There was silence and then a long drawn out sigh.

‘I’m not.’ Lydia finally replied, her voice so soft and quiet it didn’t even sound like her, and then hung up.

Allison stared at her screen for what seemed like forever, trying to ignore the way her heart was pounding. She put her phone back and lay down, closing her eyes and trying to forget what Lydia’s mouth had tasted like.

***********

Isaac stood in front of his bedroom mirror and looked at himself. He usually never did this, didn’t want to see the evidence of his father’s hands on him. The bruises from the weekend were still fresh, the purple marks mottling his chest and upper arms where John had grabbed him and then punched him for good measure. He was clever though, never did it where it was too visible and Isaac had become adept at hiding the abuse. He never showered with the other boys at school, choosing the closed cubicles instead. He never went out or socialised with people or went on dates, knowing it could mean being exposed. Lacrosse was good because he could write off his injuries as being caused by that, and the teachers had never picked up on it.

He wasn’t quite sure what had surprised him more, the revelation that Stilinski and his weird broody boyfriend were werewolves or that there was something that had been stalking him at the graveyard or the simple fact that it had taken someone he’d never really spoken to to finally pick up that there was something going on with him.

When Camden had still been at home, he’d taken the brunt of the beatings to spare Isaac. His grand plan had been to enlist, earn enough money and be stable so that he could apply for guardianship and then Isaac could have gone to live with him. Unfortunately, he’d died before that could happen and now it just Isaac all alone and with no big brother to take care of him anymore. He’d never been very good at defending himself and he believed his father’s assertions that he was worthless and lazy and weak.

Derek’s offer bounced around in his head. Isaac had thought they were crazy, but the longer he considered it the more he was starting to think it wasn’t as crazy as he’d thought. Stiles had certainly benefitted. It was no secret that he’d gone from hopeless nerd to first line hero in a couple of months and Isaac’s bi-curious heart was well able to see that Derek was smoking hot. Stiles had definitely scored there too, and they were both offering him friendship and belonging. Those were things he’d always craved but never sought out because who would want to be friends with the sad kid whose father beat him.

He remembered how effortlessly they had lifted the backhoe off the grave he’d fallen into. If he was that strong, he’d never let his father touch him again. He’d be able to defend himself on his own terms.

Sure there had been disadvantages. Derek had been at pains to explain that there was a chance he could die, that the Bite would kill him. There was also all he shit that came along with the supernatural. They’d explained what had really been the cause of the deaths and Stiles had told him about Derek’s family while Derek had been at the truck ordering their food. He got that there were people that would kill him if they had a chance purely because he was a werewolf but as far as Isaac could tell, the odds of his dad finally flipping out so badly he killed Isaac himself were pretty damn good already.
No real difference there, then.

He sighed and undressed completely, pulling on Cam’s old lacrosse shirt and getting into bed.

It would be nice to have people that wanted him around, that would have his back and take care of him. He’d missed that so much it was like a physical pain. And as far as he could tell, Stiles and Derek both knew about loss in the same way he did. They understood the bone deep grief that came with losing someone who was your world.

Maybe it would be a good thing to let someone in for a change. It certainly couldn’t be any worse than what he was dealing with now.

***********

Stiles woke with a jolt, rubbing his eyes when he realised that someone was scratching at the window.

‘It’s Scott.’ Derek mumbled into his back.

‘Goddamnit.’ Stiles wriggled out from under his arm and went to open the window. ‘What the hell dude?’

‘I’m sorry.’ Scott practically fell in through the window. ‘I’m just really upset about what happened today.’ He sighed and went over to sit on the edge of the bed, wiping at his eyes. ‘I know it’s supposed to be a fake break up, but it feels really real.’

‘I know, buddy.’ Stiles put a commiserating hand on his shoulder. ‘You guys really didn’t think this out properly, did you?’

‘What if Jackson’s right?’ Scott was disconsolate. ‘What if Allison realises she likes Lydia more than me while they’re fake dating? What if she dumps me?’ His lower lip started to wobble and Stiles gave Derek’s back a pointed look.

‘You could help you know.’ he said and Derek snorted and burrowed further under the covers.

‘Literally the last person you should ask for dating advice.’ His words came out muffled. ‘See psychopathic murdering ex-girlfriend who burned my family alive.’

‘But...but...I love her.’ Scott’s sad eyes were at Defcon 3. ‘I can’t live without her.’

The door slammed open and Noah was standing there in his sweats and threadbare army t-shirt.

‘I swear, it’s like you’ve all turned into foghorns since you got furry.’ He jabbed a finger at Scott. ‘Why are you in my house?’

‘I fake broke up with Allison so she can steal a beastiality from her grandfather and so she kissed Lydia but Jackson said it looked real and now they’re going to be dating and I want to die.’ Scott all but howled and fell back on the bed, face in his hands.

‘Jesus fucking Christ.’ Noah muttered. ‘I’m going back to bed because I didn’t get any of that. Stiles, sort this shit out. It’s a frigging school night.’

‘Yes, my pater familias.’ Stiles saluted him and then glared at Scott as Noah shut the door. ‘Hey asshole, you can’t sleep here.’

‘The bed’s huge though.’ Scott whined, already working his shoes off. ‘You just have to not have
sex while I’m here.’

‘No promises.’ Derek snickered from under the covers and Stiles wanted to strangle both of them. He finally managed to get Scott out of his jeans and into sweats and curled up at the bottom of the bed. Stiles didn’t point out the obvious canine connection, just threw his spare comforter over him and crawled back in next to Derek.

‘It’s natural.’ Derek snuggled up against him, one arm pulling Stiles back in. ‘When one wolf is distressed, they automatically seek out the pack.’ There was a flicker of red, illuminating a pleased grin. ‘It also means Scott’s accepted us as his pack.’

‘Oh?’ Stiles glanced down the bed and shoved Scott with his free foot. ‘You part of the pack now, dumbass?’

‘Guess so.’ Scott grunted and pulled the comforter over his head. ‘Well, that was easy.’ Stiles steeled back down again. ‘Should we tell him about Isaac?’

‘In the morning.’ Derek was already back on his way to being asleep. He pawed at Stiles until he wriggled back into his previous position.

‘Morning, got it.’ Stiles yawned. At the bottom of the bed Scott let out a snore that reverberated around the room. Stiles snickered and half turned.

‘Do you think his paws twitch when he dreams?’ he asked and Derek snorted a laugh into the back of his neck and tightened his arms around him.

‘I have the two lamest betas ever.’ he murmured and Stiles elbowed him in the ribs.

‘I think you mean awesome.’ he replied. ‘And soon it’s going to be three.’

‘God help us all.’ Derek huffed and bit him on the back of the neck. He held on and Stiles submitted to his new instincts and sighed happily. He shifted, pressing his ass back against Derek’s groin.

‘No.’ Scott growled from the bottom of the bed. ‘No sex.’

‘Fuck off, Scott.’ Derek growled. ‘In fact, both of you go the fuck to sleep.’

‘You’re not the boss of us.’ Stiles retorted, but his eyelids were already drooping, Derek’s warmth lulling him deeper and deeper until he couldn’t stay awake anymore.
Wednesday's Children are full of Woe

Chapter by HaleHathNoFury (My_Trex_has_fleas), My_Trex_has_fleas

Chapter Summary

Time for the chickens to start roosting. On the other hand, Derek finally has a good day :)

Chapter Notes

T/W for child abuse and the flagrant use of cremains as a comedy plot.

Breakfast saw two sleepy betas and one equally lethargic alpha eating their way through two packs of bacon and almost a whole loaf of bread. Noah watched them demolish their food and shook his head as he filched a piece of Derek’s bacon and drank his coffee.

‘So what are you going to do today if you’re not on funeral watch?’ Stiles asked with his mouth half full and Noah gave him an admonishing look.

‘Close your mouth, son.’ he shook his newspaper out. ‘And I’m staying right here and babysitting your boyfriend.’

Derek snorted in amusement, still ploughing his way through his fourth bacon sandwich. Next to him, Scott was similarly occupied. Noah had noticed how the vibe between them all had changed. They seemed to mirror each other in a way that was almost eerie, their movements more synchronised than they had been and something had flickered in the back of his memories of a group of dark haired children at the playground who had done the same, including a lanky boy with pale green eyes that was now a grown man sitting at his breakfast table.

What many people didn’t know about Noah was that Stiles had gotten his overwhelming sense of curiosity from him. Claudia had gifted Stiles with generosity and kindness and that wonderful goofiness that she’d had, but that dogged need to know everything had come from Noah. Now it was tempered by experience, but that didn’t mean Noah didn’t know when he needed to do some in depth reading and the kindle next to his side of the bed had more than one book on wolf behaviour downloaded on it. He knew more about pack dynamics now that he’d ever thought he would, but it was turning out that while Derek and his new pack walked on two legs, they often behaved the same way as the wolves that ran on four. He had also spoken to Deaton and been informed that more betas would balance Derek out and make him a more stable alpha. It was certainly showing in the way he was acting that morning, calm and even relaxed at the breakfast table, in spite of the fact that they were interring the woman who’d murdered his family that morning.

He was about to remark on their new strangeness when his cell rang and they all stopped eating and tilted their heads in a way that was so completely wolf-like that Noah had to stifle a chuckle.

‘Stilinski.’ he answered and then frowned. ‘No, slow down Haigh. He what?’ He listened, his mouth
falling open when he heard the outlandish story Haigh was telling him. ‘Yeah, I’ll be there. So much for my day off.’ He hung up and then fixed all three with a stern look.

‘Dad?’ Stiles was doing that shift thing with his face that told Noah he knew exactly what had gone down at the Beacon Hills Cemetery.

‘We’re talking about this when I get back.’ He glared at them. ‘And so help me if I don’t get any straight answers out any of you.’

‘Huh?’ Scott was looking bemused and Noah realised that whatever had happened, he was obviously not yet in on it.

‘Apparently someone dug up Mr Daniels.’ He got up and swiped another piece of bacon, brandishing it in judgement at Derek and Stiles. ‘Not only that but they decided to use him as a midnight snack.’

‘I knew that thing was going to come back and bite us in the ass.’ Stiles muttered.

‘Crap.’ Noah wanted to strangle someone. ‘One goddamn week, that was all I wanted.’

‘Don’t look at us.’ Stiles waved his hands around in protest. ‘We didn’t eat him.’

‘You mean there’s something else running around out there?’ Noah asked and watched how they looked at each other.

‘How bad would it be if there was?’ Stiles tapped his fingertips together and pulled that weird face of his.

‘Bad enough that Mr Lahey puked up his breakfast when he found it, a fact he was at pains to inform Haigh of.’ Noah told them and yes there it was again. He was getting quite good at reading the looks between his son and his erstwhile son-in-law. ‘Spit it out boys, what do you know?’

‘So here’s the thing…’ Stiles was already hedging.

‘We don’t actually know what it was.’ Derek clarified. ‘But it wasn’t a wolf.’ He gave Stiles the eyebrows when Stiles glared at him. ‘What? We said no more secrets.’

‘I know but he doesn’t need to go running off into the middle of that.’ Stiles hissed. ‘He’s a human, Derek.’

‘I’m also the sheriff and I have extensive experience of firearms and how to use them, son.’ Noah said, unimpressed. ‘And might I add that I saved your dumb asses from Peter more than once.’

‘Ugh, fine.’ Stiles slumped in his seat. ‘Just don’t get eaten.’

‘I’ll try not to.’ Noah rolled his eyes and then looked at Scott, who was still staring between them in confusion. ‘And fill Scott in please, that face is hurting my head.’

**********

‘So that’s it?’ Allison looked at the simple wooden box on the kitchen table. ‘That’s all that’s left?’

‘That’s all that’s left.’ Chris looked uncomfortable in his sombre black suit. She couldn’t actually remember the last time she’d seen him in one.

‘It just seems so…’ Allison frowned. As much as she now hated Kate and who she had been, it was
tied up with all kinds of conflicting feelings not least how vibrant her aunt had been in life. It didn’t seem right to have all that zest now confined to the simple wooden box with the brass plaque on top. She traced one finger over the inscription.

*Katherine Genevieve Argent
1980 - 2012*

‘She wasn’t always like that, was she?’ she asked and Chris sighed heavily.

‘I’d like to say she wasn’t, that it was our father and the training that made her what she was but I’d be lying.’ He moved to stand next to Allison, his arm around her shoulders. ‘One of my most enduring memories of my childhood is going to your great-grandparents chateau in France and catching her torturing rabbits.’ He took a step back from the table. ‘No, she was always wrong. I was just too much of a coward to go against my family and my instincts and call them out on it.’

‘Not anymore though.’ Allison turned to face him. ‘Now we make things right. Now we truly hold to the Code.’

‘Yes.’ Chris met her look without any sign of hesitance. ‘Are you ready?’

‘I am.’ Allison drew herself up as she heard the sound of a car outside. ‘I guess this is it.’

Chris smiled at her.

‘Show time.’ he said and they began.

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Stiles parked the Jeep and creaked open the door, his head coming up when he caught a familiar scent. To his amazement, he saw Isaac standing and waiting for him at the side of the lot. He looked tired, his face drawn and his blue eyes guarded, backpack over one shoulder and his hands shoved deep into his pockets.

‘He looks like shit.’ Scott remarked. Stiles and Derek had filled him in before they’d left for school and his dark eyes were filled with sympathy.

‘He has a reason to.’ Stiles relied and slammed the door shut before walking over. ‘Hi.’

‘Hi.’ Isaac shifted from one foot to the other and looked extremely nervous. ‘So you know you said that thing last night? Is it still on offer?’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles gave him a reassuring smile. ‘Of course it is.’ He turned to beckon Scott over. ‘You know Scott, right?’

‘Not really.’ Isaac was now looking at Scott with open curiosity. ‘Is he…?’

‘He’s one of us, man.’ Stiles threw an arm around Scott’s shoulders. ‘You’re not going to be alone, I promise.’

‘That would be...nice.’ Isaac got the word out but it was clear that it was taking everything he had to do so. He was so much like Derek had been, so closed and hurting so badly that Stiles could smell it all over him. It made him feel very protective, especially now they had made the offer of being pack.

‘Cool.’ He decided to make the first move and went to Isaac’s side, a gentle hand on his shoulder. ‘We’ve all got Chem first, right? You ready to face the joy that is Harri’s eternal scowl?’
‘Harris is an asshole.’ Isaac muttered and flinched.

‘You’re not fucking wrong.’ Scott laughed, going to his other side and steering him in the direction of the building. ‘Safety in numbers, dude.’ He was still a little anxious about what would happen when they ran into Lydia, but the fact that Allison had called that morning to clear the air had put the smile back on his face.

They went in, spotting a pale faced Jackson at the front entrance, He took off like his ass was on fire and Stiles frowned. For the wronged party, he was acting awfully guilty.

‘What’s up with Whittemore?’ Isaac asked and Scott growled under his breath.

‘Maybe you ask Lydia.’ he muttered and Isaac looked at Stiles in question.

‘There was an incident yesterday.’ He noticed that there were people now looking at them as they passed through the corridor. ‘And by the looks of things, the gossip machine is in gear.’

‘Dammit.’ Scott glowered. ‘Why the hell did I agree to this?’

‘Because you didn’t consult me first.’ Stiles snorted. ‘I have no sympathy dude. You want to come up with harebrained schemes and leave me out the loop, this is what happens. And you should have a little more trust in her. Believe me, Allison is as crazy about you as you are about her. She’s not going to fuck you over.’

‘God, I hope not.’ Scott grumbled and followed them into class. Lydia was already there, and jackson was skulking at the back of the room so Stiles went to her desk and sat down, gesturing at Scott to sit with Isaac.

Lydia gave him a cool look. She was as immaculate as normal, but her smile didn’t quite reach her eyes.

‘Good morning, Stiles.’ She glanced at Scott and Isaac over her shoulder. ‘Are you two on a break too?’

‘Nope, just trying out something new.’ Stiles replied, looking back at them. ‘You okay?’

‘Of course.’ Lydia flipped her hair over her shoulder. ‘Tomorrow I’ll be coming to school with my new girlfriend, and boy hasn’t all the extra attention this morning been fun. I’ve been called a slut, a dyke and a whore all in the space of an hour. Apparently being bisexual, even if it’s just for show, gets you a whole lot of abuse from small-minded assholes.’

‘I guess I was lucky being a nobody.’ Stiles said. ‘No-one actually cared when I did, but then I could probably die in the corridor and people would step over me.’

‘I wouldn’t.’ Lydia huffed. ‘But I think if you’re super popular, it’s different.’ She gave a couple of giggling girls in front of them such a magnificent death glare that Stiles thought he could hear Derek weeping in jealousy in the distance. ‘Suddenly because I supposedly stole Scott’s girlfriend that means I can’t be trusted around anybody. Like I’d want any of their loser boyfriends anyway.’

Stiles was about to answer when Harris came storming into the room.

‘Pop quiz.’ he snapped and everyone groaned. His eyes landed on Stiles and he curled his lip in a way that Stiles did not like at all. ‘Mr Stilinski, may I ask as to why you are sitting next to Miss Martin, or have her standards fallen so low that she’s letting anyone take that space.’ There was an ugly undercurrent to his words and Stiles bit his lip to keep from growling. To his surprise, Lydia
was the one to lose it.

‘What exactly are you insinuating, Mr Harris?’ she asked, her clear and carrying through the entire classroom.

‘I’m not insinuating anything.’ Harris’ eyes were narrowed in anger. ‘Although it doesn’t surprise me that students of your persuasion stick together.’ His voice was filled with distaste.

‘Hey!’ Stiles couldn’t let that slide. ‘Just because you’re pissed for whatever reason, don’t take it out on us!’

‘Yeah!’ Scott added from behind him and Stiles could have both kissed him for being supportive and kicked him for getting himself into trouble. ‘I’m not even mad, and I’m the one that got dumped.’

‘Mr McCall, I’ll thank you to stay out of this.’ Harris raised a warning finger, but then Danny chimed in.

‘I’d be very careful about what you say next, Mr Harris.’ he said. ‘Stiles and Lydia aren’t the only LGBT kids in class, and I can tell you that my parents are not going to take kindly to any homophobic comments made in class.’

‘Thin ice, Mr Mahealani.’ Harris snapped. ‘All of you, in fact!’

‘Maybe if you started treating students with a little respect, this wouldn’t happen.’ Isaac’s soft voice was the last one Stiles had expected to hear.

‘Enough!’ Harris bellowed. ‘You’re all in detention!’

‘For what?’ Danny had that wonderful mocking grin plastered on his face, dimples all over the place. ‘For pointing out that you’re discriminating against us?’

‘For blatant insubordination!’ Harris yelled, his face going an unhealthy shade of red. He looked like he was about to have an aneurysm and Stiles threw Lydia a look, when suddenly Jackson was on his feet and bolting from the classroom.

It was enough to stop all of them in their tracks, and Lydia started to get up to go after him but Danny beat her to it, leaving without so much as a backwards glance at Harris.

‘That’s a suspension!’ He wheeled around, his eyes bugging out behind his glasses. ‘For all of you! Get the hell out of my classroom!’

‘Don’t have to tell me twice.’ Stiles grabbed his backpack. ‘You’re seriously losing it, dude.’

‘GET OUT!’ Harris roared and Lydia followed him, Isaac and Scott in tow as they all fell out the door into the corridor. Harris slammed it shut behind them and they heard him bawling out the rest of the class.

‘Jesus.’ Stiles leaned against the wall. ‘What the fuck was that?’

‘I don’t know.’ Lydia looked livid. ‘But I’m going to the principal.’ She stalked off down the corridor, leaving the rest of them behind.

‘Shit.’ Scott looked horrified, as did Isaac. ‘What now?’

‘We let Lydia do her thing.’ Stiles said. ‘Anyone want to go check on Danny and Jackson?’

‘Not particularly.’ Isaac said. ‘Is this what you meant by weird shit last night?’
‘Kind of.’ Stiles shrugged. ‘To be honest, this isn’t too bad.’

‘Hey.’ Scott brightened up. ‘So if we’re suspended, does this mean we can go check on Allison?’

‘I don’t think that’s a good idea.’ Stiles wrinkled his nose. ‘And my dad said to stay away. He’ll be royally pissed if we don’t.’

‘Oh, come on.’ Scott wheedled. ‘Please?’

‘Fuck.’ Isaac was looking at him, one eyebrow cocked. ‘Those are some serious puppy eyes.’

‘They’re fucking lethal.’ Stiles muttered. ‘Okay for this lesson only and study hall after. Then we come back. I’m sure Lydia will have the whole thing sorted out by then.’

‘Yes!’ Scott grabbed Isaac by the arm and hauled him along. ‘Come on, we can get there before it starts.’

‘Before what starts?’ Isaac threw a bemused look over his shoulder at Stiles.

‘We’re going to a funeral.’ Stiles told him and snickered at the horrified look on his face.

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Danny cracked open the door to the boys’ locker room and peered inside. He’d tracked Jackson’s scent down here and he stepped into the dim room and looked around.

‘Jacks?’ He moved to the first bank of lockers. ‘Hey are you okay?’ He could hear the sound of panicked breathing, high and soft, so he followed it until he got to where the line of cubicles and sinks.

Jackson was standing at the furthest one, staring at himself in horror. Danny got a little closer, an odd smell hitting his nose. When he got next to him, his own face mirrored Jackson’s as he looked at the stream of black oozing from his best friend’s nose and ears.

‘What the hell is that?’ he asked and Jackson laughed, pitchy and bordering on hysterical.

‘The fuck if I know.’ He had a handful of scrunched up toilet paper and he dabbed furiously at the sticky fluid. He threw Danny a baleful look. ‘What, you’re not with your new friends? You can all be in gay club together.’

‘Jackson.’ Danny could hear the fear and panic in his voice, ignoring the hurtful remark because he could smell and see how terrified Jackson was. ‘What is going on?’

‘I don’t know.’ Jackson’s voice cracked and his hands were shaking so hard he dropped the toilet paper in the sink. ‘Fuck, what if I’m dying?’

‘No.’ Danny gave him a stern look. ‘I’m not going to let that happen. Whatever this shit is, we’re going to figure it out.’

‘You can’t.’ Jackson’s head drooped. ‘The one person I thought would know about this actually hasn’t got a fucking clue.’

‘Who? Derek?’ Danny managed a small smile. ‘He might not be the only person who can help, you know.’

‘What are you talking about?’ Jackson looked up at him.
‘So, I might have something to tell you.’ Danny replied and transformed.

He liked to think he was more mature than the average high school student, but even he had to admit that Jackson’s shriek was very gratifying.

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‘Okay so, here’s the plan. We’re going to need a distraction.’ Stiles squinted through the windscreen, watching the line of cars edging through the police cordon that had been set up. He was parked far enough down the road that they wouldn’t be seen but Scott was bouncing in the seat next to him, nervous tension seeping out of every pore.

‘Can we get closer?’ he interjected and Stiles rolled his eyes.

‘Yes, we’ll get closer.’ he said. ‘Hence me explaining the plan.’

There was an amused snort from the back seat and Isaac leaned forward to look between them.

‘You two do this often?’ he asked and the dry edge to his voice reminded Stiles more than a little of Derek.

‘Ha ha, Lahey.’ he growled. ‘You want to add your two cents?’

‘Yeah, why don’t we go through the back.’ Isaac said and then dangled a set of keys between them.

‘I have an in.’

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‘For Christ’s sake, Chris!’ Gerard was incandescent with anger. It really hadn’t helped that the plan to get him onside had flown out the window the second he’d started extolling Kate’s virtues as a hunter and praised her wiping out what he referred to as the ‘Hale vermin’. She may have said too much to ever get into his good graces ever again, particularly when she’d called his views antiquated and delusional and sworn that she’d rather die than be part of his world.

‘No.’ Chris was equally emotional, his ice blue eyes alight with righteous fury.

‘Um…’ Allison raised a finger, desperate to caution what was going to end up being a terrible accident. ‘The memorial is due to start in like ten minutes.’

They ignored her and the very undignified tug of war continued over Kate’s ashes. It had started with a screaming match because Chris had had her cremated, and then turned into insults and curses and wishes that people had never been born and culminated with Chris screaming that he’d always been ashamed of his family and that he’d fallen in love with Peter Hale and that he regretted ever turning his back on him. It had been very impassioned and Allison had been ridiculously proud of him.

‘I’m taking her with me!’ Gerard bellowed and Chris tightened his grip and snarled in his face and Allison wanted to step in between them because their grip on the box was tenuous at best.

‘She’s going to the fucking ground here!’ Chris hissed at him. ‘And I’ll be by every fucking day to piss on her grave!’

‘Dad, maybe coming on a little strong there.’ Allison was strangely fascinated by the whole thing. She’d never really thought about her family dynamics but boy was she getting a crash course in dysfunction right there.
They were still struggling when the door to the sanctum opened and someone came in. For a moment
she thought it was the funeral director, but when she looked over she saw the last person she’d
expected to see.

‘Holy shit.’ Gerard said succinctly and let go of the box. His sudden relinquishing of the tension
between them had Chris floundering and Allison watched in horror as Kate’s box flew gracefully
through the air, hit the ornamental coving and burst open like a pinata at a birthday party, showering
her mortal remains all over her father and brother.

‘Oh crap.’ Allison put her hands over her mouth, not sure whether she wanted to laugh or cry.
Footsteps sounded behind her and then Derek was standing next to her, immaculate in the suit he’d
bought to take Stiles to prom. She had to hand it to Lydia, the pistachio green tie she’d picked out for
him really made his eyes pop.

‘Derek?’ Chris blinked through the grey dust that coated his face. ‘What the hell are you doing
here?’

Derek smiled, all blinding white teeth and wolfish danger.

‘I’ve come to see you put the bitch in the ground.’ he replied. ‘Although I’m guessing you’re going
to need a vacuum for that now.’

‘What is he doing here?’ Gerard was more animalistic than she’d ever seen Derek or Stiles or Scott
had ever been and even though it was a cliche, she had never been more sure of who the real
monster was.

‘Oh, haven’t I mentioned him?’ She gave her grandfather a winning smile. ‘He’s Derek Hale, the
new Alpha of Beacon Hills and the last remaining member of the pack that you tried to wipe out.
I’ve reinstated the treaty between him and our clan and I believe that now Aunt Kate is dead, I’m in
charge so what I say goes. Is that about right?’

She glanced at Derek and saw that he was looking at her with something akin to respect and knew
that she’d done it. She’d earned his trust and cemented their agreement.

‘Yeah.’ His eyes met hers and then he winked, throwing her off completely. ‘That sounds about
right.’

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Isaac let them in the back gate of the cemetery, and they snuck as close as they could and then took
refuge behind a tombstone, although it was a bit difficult to conceal all of them.

‘So what’s going on?’ he asked and they both shushed him.

‘So you know about the hunter that killed Derek’s family.’ Stiles jabbed a finger at the gathered
people. ‘It’s her funeral. She was killed by Peter and then he got shot by Allison’s mom and so he
died but before he did he passed the alpha power on to Derek.’

‘Sounds complicated.’ Isaac peered at the people. ‘Who are they?’

‘Good question.’ Stiles muttered. He didn’t like the look of them. They all struck him as being too
Hunter-like for comfort.

‘Where is she?’ Scott whined. He was watching the assembling attendees and gnawing on a
fingernail.
‘She’s probably inside.’ Stiles frowned and then lifted his head, catching something on the air. ‘Oh fuck, tell me he didn’t.’

‘He didn’t what?’ Scott asked but Stiles was tuning into the bond between him and Derek, feeling nothing but smug satisfaction and a gleeful sense of schadenfreuden.

‘Oh no.’ He stared at the cemetery sanctum. ‘Derek’s here.’ He scrabbled for his phone and shot off an angry text.

You’re supposed to be anywhere but here, asshole.

‘Why is he here?’ Isaac asked and Stiles didn’t even have to analyse Derek’s actions to understand his motivation.

‘Closure.’ he replied and then his phone buzzed.

To quote you and Scott - you’re not the boss of me.

‘Wait, so he gets to be here and I can’t go?’ Scott pouted. ‘That’s not fair.’

‘Shut up, Scott.’ Stiles mind was racing.

What the hell is happening in there? Is Grandaddy Argent freaking out?

Yeah. He and Chris threw Kate’s ashes everywhere. It’s kind of funny.

‘What the fuck?’ Stiles glared at his phone, feeling like everything was descending into madness.

Also tell Scott that the plan to make Gerard think Allison is on his side is off so he can calm the fuck down. She just called Gerard a very bad word.

Stiles could feel the humour rippling down the bond and he was so shocked by the turn of events unfolding in front of him that he was well and truly speechless.

Guess that means no bestiary.

It was all he could think of to say.

Fuck the bestiary. This is the best thing since your dumb ass landed in my life that has happened to me in the past six years. That includes the time Laura got fucked up on wolfsbane, shifted and chased rabbits in Central Park until she got picked up by the dog catcher and I had to go rescue her equally dumb ass from the animal shelter.

Stiles stopped worrying and started smiling. Maybe there was something to this whole closure deal after all.

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‘It’s times like this I wish I could get drunk like a normal human.’ Derek said and Allison snorted next to him. ‘This situation is screaming for some kind of chemical assistance.’

‘That it is.’ she replied.

Gerard and Chris were both in the restroom, trying to make themselves presentable. A funeral assistant was busy sucking Kate out of the carpet, the small red machine trailing along behind him, and they were sitting in the front row of seats watching him.
‘So on a scale of severely pissed to he’s going to wipe us all out how do you think he is?’ Derek finally asked and Allison sighed.

‘I have no idea.’ she said. ‘But I get the feeling I’m about to be excommunicated from the hunting world before I even get a chance to set foot in it.’

‘You know you’re better than they are, right?’ Derek was now looking at her directly. ‘You’re the first hunter I’ve ever met who’s actually a human being at the same time.’

‘Thank you.’ Allison was touched. ‘And I’m sorry for all the shitty things my family did to yours.’

‘Not your place to apologise.’ Derek said easily. ‘Before I might have thought so, but I mean it. We’re good.’ He checked his phone and grinned. ‘By the way, our boyfriends are out in the graveyard hiding behind a tombstone.’

‘What?’ Allison frowned. ‘How do you know that?’

Derek chuckled and showed her the picture Isaac had sent him, showing the two aforementioned idiots peering over the top of a granite slab. She snorted with laughter and slumped back in her seat.

‘Does it make me a bad person if I don’t want to be here?’ she asked and he shook his head.

‘Just makes you human.’ he replied and grinned at her. Allison snorted louder this time and hit him in the arm, instantly regretting her decision. It was like hitting a brick wall.

‘Can we get out of here?’ she asked and this time, Derek’s eyebrows did the dance of the sceptical.

‘You’ll get in shit.’ he said and Allison got to her feet.

‘It’s not like I’m not there already.’ she replied, stomping down the central aisle.

‘Fair enough.’ Derek said and followed her.

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‘There they are.’ Stiles pointed at where they could see Derek and Allison coming out the building. They didn’t stop though and Stiles was confused as to why they were coming their way until he fell over on his ass and ended up shielding his eyes from the sun while his mate stood over him and snickered.

‘Hey there, Nancy Drew.’ he drawled. ‘See you brought the Hardy Boys with you.’

‘Fuck off.’ Stiles scrambled to his feet. ‘And what the hell do you mean they threw Kate everywhere?’

‘It was interesting.’ Derek glanced at Allison and they shared a grin.

‘They had to vacuum her out the carpet.’ she said and the grin turned into a shared snicker.

‘Are you both on crack?’ Stiles asked, pulling a bemused face at them. ‘Can werewolves even get high?’

‘No, dumbass.’ Derek looked at Isaac and Scott and then back at him. ‘So why the fuck aren’t you in school?’

‘Harris.’ Isaac said. ‘He’s a douchebag.’
‘Truth.’ Scott added and gave him a fistbump.

Derek bared a fang at them and looked at Stiles, his expression clearly demanding an explanation.

‘It’s a long story,’ he muttered and then jumped about a foot in the air when he heard his father yelling behind him.

‘What the hell is this?’ he demanded, storming across the grass towards them with Mr Lahey behind him. ‘I get here to take a statement from Mr Lahey and get accosted by Gerard Argent who informs me that there’s been some sort of weird ass altercation involving the cremains of Kate Argent and an unexpected guest.’ His grey eyes were fixed on Derek, who was looking all kinds of unrepentant.

‘Isaac? What are you doing here?’ Mr Lahey was looking equally unimpressed and Stiles was early smacked in the face by the sudden wave of fear that swamped him. Judging from the way Scott’s face changed, he could smell it too, although he was still working on his senses and probably didn’t really know what it was.

Derek, however, did and he stepped up, moving to stand in front of Isaac.

‘It’s because they were concerned.’ He directed his words at Noah and Stiles could see the tick of the muscle in his jaw and knew that he was struggling to control himself, even if he hadn’t been able to smell it.

‘Yes.’ Allison had moved to next to Scott. ‘I told Scott that I wasn’t doing well and asked him to come and Stiles and Isaac came with him to check on me.’

‘And it has nothing to do with you mouthing off in class?’ Mr Lahey’s face was contorted with anger and Stiles threw his father and desperate look. He was now regretting not telling Noah about Isaac and the abuse and what they were planning because there was no way they could wrestle Isaac away without making it extremely suspicious.

‘Dad…’ Isaac started but Mr Lahey simply pointed a finger in the direction of the house on the far side of the cemetery.

‘Get your ass home, I’ll deal with you later.’ His voice made a chill run down Stiles’ spine and he opened his mouth to say something but Derek put a hand on his arm and he shut it abruptly.

‘I’m sure he meant no harm. His intention was good.’ Noah was now looking at him curiously and Stiles could have kissed him. One thing his father certainly was, was good at his job and Stiles knew he’d picked up on the tone Isaac’s father was using as well as the way Isaac’s shoulders dropped and he all but slunk off to stand next to him.

‘I’ll thank you not to give me parenting advice, Sheriff.’ Mr Lahey sneered. ‘Seeing as you can’t even control your own kid. Maybe you should be using a firmer hand.’ He put a hand on Isaac’s shoulder and Stiles saw the very subtle way he dug his fingers in and smelled the bright flare of panic in Isaac’s scent before he was steered home. He looked back once over his shoulder and the corners of his mouth were so turned down that Stiles wanted nothing more than to run after him and drag him away.

Noah waited until hey were far enough away and then rounded on all four of them.

‘You, get back to your father. He’s a goddamn mess and you should be there with him.’ he ordered and Allison nodded and practically ran off.
‘Um…’ Scott raised a hand. ‘I’d just like to point out that she might need someone to support her.’

‘Scott, I swear to God I’m about ready to kick your ass.’ Noah said. ‘Why the hell you let Stiles talk you into half the shit he does, I’ll never understand.’ Then he glared at Derek and it was a testament to his ferocity that Derek blanched and stepped back. ‘And you were told to keep the hell away from here. Gerard Argent is practically foaming at the mouth. I thought we agreed that you were going to keep a low profile.’

‘Sorry.’ Derek did that thing with his eyebrows that said he was suitably embarrassed about his behaviour and Stiles marvelled at Noah’s ability to turn everyone, including hardened criminals, into a chastened teenage boy. ‘I didn’t mean to cause problems. I just wanted to…’ He trailed off and Noah’s face softened.

‘I know what you wanted.’ He sighed and and then grinned. ‘I’m sure seeing Kate’s ashes scattered across the viewing room floor probably helped.’

‘It did.’ Derek’s chin dipped but it wasn’t quiet enough to hide how pleased he was. ‘More than you know.’

‘In that case, you’re off the hook.’ Noah told him and then turned the force of his disappointed face on Stiles and Scott. ‘Now, you two. Why are you here and not in school?’

‘Harris was being a homophobic asshole.’ Scott said and Stiles was so proud of him he shoulder bumped him.

‘Biphobic, but thank you.’ He gave Noah a winning smile. ‘What he said. Anyway he threatened us with suspension because we called him out and Lydia’s gone to go yell at the principal so we thought we’d take the opportunity of skipping study hall to come and see what was happening. We’re not even officially missing school because we still have like half an hour to get back.’

‘I swear that man is going to regret everything.’ Noah muttered. ‘Fine, go back to school and stay the hell away from here. Gerard Argent is about as unpleasant a piece of work I’ve ever encountered and I don’t want any of you near him.’

‘Got it.’ Stiles said and tugged on Scott’s sleeve. ‘Come on.’ He looked at Derek. ‘You’re okay?’

‘Yeah.’ Derek nodded. ‘I’m good.’

‘Guess I’m back on babysitting duty.’ Noah sighed and waved a hand. ‘I’ve just got to stop in and fill out the incident report for the body and then you and I are stuck together for the afternoon.’ He looked Derek up and down. ‘Although, you do look good. I’m sure my son appreciates the effort.’

‘Hell yeah, I do.’ Stiles smiled at the way Derek’s ears went pink as he gave him a once over. ‘I suppose there’s always senior prom.’

‘Our wedding will be before that so you’ll get to see it then.’ Derek snorted and then realised what he’d said. He froze, green eyes impossibly wide. ‘Oh shit, did I say that out loud?’

‘WHAT?’ Stiles felt like he’d just had a bucket of ice water thrown in his face. ‘Who the fuck is getting married?’

‘Us.’ Derek stammered and it was so out of character and so adorable that Stiles nearly fell over from shock. ‘Your dad came up with the idea.’

‘Yeah.’ Noah was grinning and it was equal parts delighted and evil. ‘Saves me from having to arrest
Derek’s ass and explain to Mrs Jenkins down the road why I’m letting you be corrupted.’

‘Holy shit, dude.’ Scott was goggling at them.

‘Later.’ Stiles waved an accusing finger in both his father and Derek’s direction, voice shaking. ‘You’re explaining all this shit later.’

‘Okay.’ Derek was smiling, warm and real. ‘Now go to school.’

Stiles let out an exasperated noise and grabbed him by the lapels, kissing him hard just the once before letting him go and dragging Scott with him.

‘Did he just fucking propose?’ Scott’s voice came out stuttered as they jogged back to the wall, this time just vaulting over instead of being civilised.

‘I have no fucking clue what that was.’ Stiles laughed, knowing he just couldn’t wipe the smile off his face.

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‘Not exactly romantic.’ Noah had his hands on his hips. ‘But he didn’t seem opposed to the idea.’ He grinned at an appalled looking Derek. ‘Oh relax, he’ll be fine.’

‘I fucked it up.’ Derek sounded morose. ‘Shit. I was going to make it perfect.’

‘Yeah, well. I asked Claudia to marry me while we were fucking so it’s not as bad as you think.’ Noah chuckled. ‘So there’s that.’

‘Okay.’ Derek was now looking at him in mild horror. ‘Putting that under things I really didn’t need to know.’

‘Son, I had to help you take out the bed you and Stiles broke because you had so much sex on it.’ Noah narrowed his eyes at him. ‘You don’t have a leg to stand on.’

‘True.’ Derek blew out a breath and folded his arms. ‘So, the station? Then what?’

‘Then we go look at what you’ve got in the bank.’ Noah said. ‘Because don’t think I haven’t noticed how you’ve been avoiding that.’ He moved and put a hand on Derek’s shoulder. ‘It took me forever to out her things away and once I did, I couldn’t look at them again. It was literally this year that I even managed to go up into the attic. I figure that maybe you just need someone to hold your hand while you do it, and I can give you that.’

Derek looked at him with gratitude and Noah thought about how he was only twenty-two and still grieving.

‘Okay.’ He nodded. ‘You’ll come in with me?’

‘Of course.’ Noah smiled and gave him a gentle shake, like he did with Stiles, before leading him down the side way and far from the Argent funeral.

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Isaac knew what was coming the moment they got to the house. All he could do was weather it out, cringing in a corner under his father’s blows and praying that the pain would stop soon. Thankfully his prayers’ were answered but then it got worse, his after dragging him bodily to the door of the basement and throwing him down the stairs hard enough that Isaac felt something in his wrist snap.
He made no sound, conditioned to hide his agony because noises meant that the beating would keep going and the time in the freezer would be long enough that he’d end up pissing himself and so dehydrated that he couldn’t stand on his own.

So he did what he always did and cowered and pleaded until the lid came down and he was shut in the dark, the sound of the chains making him flinch and curl in on himself until finally his father’s muffled footsteps faded away and he was left to cry into his folded arms. It had never been this bad, but then again it had been Cam who’d taken the brunt of the anger. The freezer had only started when Cam had been killed and his father had blamed him for every bad thing that had happened in their lives.

Normally Isaac would try and blank everything out but not today. Today he focused on the way Derek had stepped forward, his green eye alight with anger. He focused on the way Stiles had tried to say something, the way they sheriff had attempted to intervene. Normally he would be ashamed of what had happened, but instead it gave him hope. He had somebody that cared enough to worry and that meant that he had someone who would protect him, even if they hadn’t been able to do anything right then.

It didn’t matter anyway. As soon as his father let him out and Isaac could get away he knew exactly where he was going and that was to Derek to become part of the pack.

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Lydia was waiting at Stiles’ locker when they got back to school, her pink lips curled in a triumphant smile.

‘The fucker’s been cautioned and no suspensions for any of us,’ she declared. ‘It’s the best I could do, but it’ll be enough to scare him.’

‘Thank God for that,’ Scott said, relieved. ‘I’m already having trouble passing without missing any school.’

‘How is Allison?’ she asked and fell into step with them.

‘She’s going to be okay,’ Scott was suddenly all smiles. ‘And Stiles said that she’s fallen out with her grandfather so you and her don’t have to pretend to be dating anymore.’

‘Oh. Well that’s good news.’ Lydia’s sparkle lost its edge a little bit and Stiles gave her a look at the skip in her heartbeat. She blanked him completely though and he decided he was going to tackler her later. It was clear that this was something that needed discussion. ‘Too bad my reputation’s already fucked and so is hers.’

‘Oh,’ Scott frowned. ‘I didn’t think about that.’

‘Hey,’ Stiles decided to intervene and threw an arm around Lydia’s shoulders. ‘You know that this whole fucking school and what they think of you doesn’t count right? You’re the smartest person here. In ten years’ time everybody else is going to be on like minimum wage and working for you.’

‘I’d never pay my employees minimum wage.’ Lydia’s mouth quirked and Stiles grinned.

‘See.’ He hugged her hard enough to make her squeak. ‘You’re the baddest bitch here and everybody knows it.’

‘Except I pissed off Jackson for nothing.’ Lydia huffed, but she didn’t smell every sad.
‘So what?’ Stiles said. ‘It’s not like he didn’t need a kick in the ass. Where is he any way?’

‘He didn’t come back after he ran out the classroom.’ Lydia said. ‘Danny told me he went home sick.’

‘And Danny?’ Stiles asked. ‘Did he tell you anything else?’

‘Oh you mean his little secret?’ Lydia snorted. ‘Yeah, he did. He also said that Jackson is going through something super weird right now but he wouldn’t elaborate. That means I’m going to have to get it out of you.’ She poked Stiles in the ribs and made him flail.

‘No way.’ Stiles shook his head. ‘If you want to know, you need to talk to him.’

‘Fuck that.’ Lydia tossed her head. ‘You’ll break eventually.’

‘She’s right, dude.’ Scott said. ‘You know you’re going to tell her.’

‘Excuse me, I’m extremely trustworthy.’ Stiles protested but all that got him was laughter. ‘What I am?’

‘Loyal to a fault, yes. Smart and ingenious, absolutely. Unable to resist me when I want something, I don’t think so.’ Lydia told him, her eyes glinting. ‘I expect to know by the end of the day.’

She ducked out from under Stiles’ arm and trotted down the corridor, heels clacking.

‘She’s scary.’ Scott said, sidling up and bumping shoulders with him. Stiles had noticed that since the bite, Scott was being a lot more tactile. He bumped back and the reassuring growl came out instinctively.

‘Come on, we’re going to be late for History.’ he said.

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Derek sat and stared at the box, his nerves getting the better of him with his leg jiggling under the table and the beds of nails and gums itching to shift. He was very glad to have brought Noah along, the sheriff’s presence calming him and lending an air of gravitas to his enquiry that had resulted in them being ushered into a private room and the box in question put on the table in front of them once the bank staff had cleared Derek’s identification and checked in with the lawyer that had handled the estate of the Hale family.

‘Well?’ Noah was looking equally unsettled, probably because it was bringing up unhappy memories. ‘Are you going to open it or just look at it?’

Derek sucked in a deep breath and reached out, his hands trembling. He got as far as touching the lid and then he pulled them back, folding them in his lap and biting his lip to keep his claws in.

‘What if it’s nothing.’ He looked at Noah. ‘What if it’s just legal shit.’

‘You won’t know until you open it.’ Noah replied. ‘And there might be something in there that is worth all the anxiety.’

‘Okay.’ Derek blew out the breath he’d taken and leaned over, resting his hand on the box for a moment before pulling it towards him and opening it on one movement before he could change his mind.

At first it didn’t seem like much but then he gasped because he recognised the book on the top. It
was rough leather, wrapped in a red paisley bandana to keep it closed and when he picked it up it released a wave of scent that made him tear up in a second.

‘Derek?’ Noah was visibly concerned. ‘Hey, it’s okay.’ He looked at the book in Derek’s hands, cradled gently as he brought it up and inhaled deeply. Talia Hale had never been fond of perfume, and her own natural smell had saturated both the book and bandana. It was so powerful, but at the same time it brought back so many memories of love and pack and someone who’d been not only his alpha but his mom as well. A mom just like any other that had complained when he’d tracked in mud from outside or neglected to pick up his clothes from the floor. A mom that had held him and chased away his fears when he was little, who’d helped him learn to be a wolf and control his shift.

‘It’s her journal.’ he explained and looked up to find Noah was blurry. He swiped at his eyes once, sniffing and then setting it down gently to examine the rest of the contents. Underneath there was a silver necklace with a pendant of dark wood that matched Laura’s, the same triskelion that he had between his shoulder blades, and he recognised it instantly as the one his grandmother had worn.

‘Alpha, beta, omega.’ he murmured and placed it next to the journal. The next thing was another book, this one thicker and older and he nearly howled when he saw that it was a bestiary. It wasn’t the one his mother had owned, the cover black rather than the red morocco leather hers had been. He opened the front cover and stared at the name inscribed inside.

Peter Theodore Hale

‘It’s Peter’s bestiary. I had no idea he had his own one.’ Derek frowned. ‘Or why it would be here.’

‘Maybe he knew something you didn’t.’ Noah was looking at the items with interest.

Derek frowned when he looked at the final item. It was a thick envelope, the stock still a pristine creamy white. He opened it carefully and started taking out the documents. The first was a marriage certificate, his parents’. Then there were the birth certificates for himself, Laura and Cora. Finally there was another smaller envelope and that contained the best surprise of all. Inside were seven cd-roms, all labelled in black marker and Derek spread them out and looked at them. Three were labelled with his name and his sisters’. There were another 3 labelled Home Vids and finally one named Vacation Pics.

‘Wow.’ Noah’s voice was full of emotion and Derek knew that of anyone, he and Stiles would be able to understand just how precious these things were. ‘Now that was worth opening the box for.’

‘Yeah.’ His voice was rough with everything he was feeling. ‘I remember her saying that we needed to do this. She made my dad sit down one afternoon and they went through all our photos and home movies and transferred it onto disc. They laughed all afternoon and kept calling us to come and look at stuff until we all got annoyed and went out for a run.’ He laughed in disbelief. ‘I can’t believe she put it in here.’

‘Be thankful that she did.’ Noah was smiling wistfully. ‘Those pictures and videos will mean the world to you. I know mine do.’ He nodded at the journal. ‘That’s something else though?’

‘It’s the history of our pack.’ Derek replied and stroked a finger over the soft leather. ‘Every alpha has one. They transcribe the laws and history into it when they become alpha and add as they go along. My mom had my grandmother’s and I remember her writing in this one all the time.’ It felt so good to even look at it, a little piece of his past that he’d thought was gone forever. He broke out into a wide smile, a bone-deep happiness filling him. ‘It even still smells like her.’

‘I’m glad.’ Noah said. ‘But I would maybe keep all that away from Stiles unless you want to have it
examined thoroughly."

‘He can look at the bestiary.’ Derek cuddled the journal to his chest. ‘But this one will be mine.’

‘Good.’ Noah sat back in his chair. ‘I’m also thinking that maybe we need to have a little picture show later. If you’re up to it.’

‘I’d like that.’ Derek stuck his nose in the folds of the bandana, Talia’s scent now filling his senses completely.

‘You missed something, though.’ Noah was looking in the box. He took out a slip of paper and frowned. ‘What do you think this means?’

Derek looked at the polaroid in Noah’s hand.

‘It’s a picture of the sign at the school.’ He was bemused by why it would even be in there. ‘I don’t understand.’

‘Is there some kind of connection between your family and the school maybe?’ Noah asked and handed it to him.

‘Not that I can think of.’ Derek replied. ‘I mean, we all went there apart from Cora and my younger cousins but I don’t know why that would be important enough to put a picture of it in here.’

‘Hmm.’ Noah looked thoughtful. ‘Well, I’d still hang on to it in case. Maybe there’s something in your mom’s journal about it.’

‘Maybe.’ Derek said, taking the picture and sliding it between the pages.

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Stiles was in a self-congratulatory mood at the end of the day. He and Scott had managed to successfully evade Lydia, and he’d manfully ignored the screed of annoyed texts she’d sent him. Now they were hurtling across the parking lot to the Jeep, throwing themselves in and ducking down to make sure she hadn’t seen them.

‘You need to go.’ Scott made frantic urging motions at him. ‘Before she catches up.’

‘Good thing banshees aren’t as fast as werewolves.’ Stiles cackled and started the car. He pulled out and put his foot flat, narrowly missing Greenberg and tearing onto the road. ‘Now for the rest of my cunning plan.’

‘Which is?’ Scott asked, one hand braced against the roof to stop himself from sliding around.

‘We go over to the cemetery, check on Isaac. Then I drop you at Allison’s to check on here and then I get my ass home and use my interrogation techniques to find out what the hell Derek and my dad were talking about earlier, because I think there might have been some kind of mind altering substances at work.’ Stiles explained, driving at way more over the speed limit than he should have.

‘Got it.’ Scott gave him a thumbs up. ‘Good plan. Can I suggest you slow the fuck down though so we survive long enough to actually do it?’

‘Fine.’ Stiles huffed, but he did slow down to a more appropriate speed. He gave Scott a sidelong look. ‘Do you think Isaac’s okay?’

‘I hope so.’ Scott replied. ‘He’s kind of a cool guy. I can’t figure out why we’re not friends with
‘Me too.’ Stiles dug out his phone and chucked it at Scott. ‘Message Derek and tell him what we’re doing. And put his number in your phone while you’re at it, now he’s also your alpha.’

Scott did as he was told, chuckling and showing Stiles the screen where he’d saved Derek’s number under BBW.

‘For Big Bad Wolf.’ he said and Stiles snickered.

The drive to the cemetery was uneventful and when they got there, he saw that the parking lot was empty. He went through and followed the road around until it got to the stand of trees that hid the Lahey house from view. He checked but the truck that Isaac’s father drove was nowhere in sight.

‘Let’s go.’ He got out his side and Scott came around to join him. Together they jogged over the the house, keeping a lookout and pressing themselves against the wall.

‘Why are we hiding?’ Scott hissed.

‘Good point.’ Stiles said and walked around to get to the front door. He wrinkled his nose, smelling alcohol. It was stale and lingered, almost disguising the other scent that permeated the air. It was the same smell that Isaac carried, but this time it was fresh.

Stiles snarled instinctively, his eyes flashing and his fangs dropping as he went straight to the front door, trying it before he even knew what he was doing.

‘Dude!’ Scott was right behind him. ‘You can’t just go in like that.’

Stiles ignored him, almost throwing the door off his hinges. The smell was stronger inside, and he growled and prowled through the front hall and into the kitchen. That was when he smelled the blood and he tracked it immediately to the back wall, dropping to one knee and zeroing in on the line of droplets that had dried on the floor. There was also tiny bits of glass scattered around.

‘Jesus.’ Behind him Scott was lisping and Stiles knew he was wolfed out as well. ‘Is it his?’

‘Pretty sure it is.’ Stiles stood up. ‘Go look upstairs, I’ll take down here.’ He wanted Scott far away because he could already smell which way Isaac gone and he was pretty sure that it wasn’t going to be pretty. Thankfully, Scott took off out the kitchen and Stiles heard him climbing the stairs. He steeled himself, taking a deep breath and pulling the air in through his nose and exhaling through his mouth to pick up the scent just like Derek had taught him to.

He moved slowly to the door at the back of the kitchen, fairly sure it would lead to a basement. When he opened it, he saw that his suspicion had been correct. There was a light switch to his right and Stiles considered it, then descended into the dimly lit room using only his eyes.

The basement was crowded with the usual detritus of home life. That wasn’t of any interest to Stiles. Instead he focused on listening and the soft whimpering sound he heard drew him through until he was standing in front of an old freezer placed against the wall. It was padlocked and he reached out without hesitation and wrenched the lock apart. He lifted the lid, easing it back slowly and looking to see Isaac lying there like he was frozen. The lid of the freezer was deeply scored with nail marks and the stink of tears and blood that came from inside the freezer made Stiles want to recoil but he refused to give in. Instead he leaned in and gathered as much of Isaac as he could into his arms and lifted him right out, sliding him to his feet and moving to stand in front of him. He was still wolfed out but the blank look on Isaac’s face showed that he had dissociated enough that he was past being afraid.
'Hey.' He kept his voice as soft as possible. ‘Isaac, it’s me. It’s Stiles.’

Isaac finally managed to focus on him and he started shaking violently. That was when Scott came crashing down the stairs and Stiles frantically shushed him.

‘Fuck.’ Scot’’s own eyes were glowing gold. ‘What the fuck is that?’

‘His father locked him inside it.’ Stiles felt sick to his stomach. He moved to get Isaac’s arm over his shoulder. ‘I’m taking him home with me. There’s no fucking way he’s staying here.’

‘No.’ Isaac protested weakly. ‘He’ll just find me. Bring me back.’

‘Fuck that noise.’ Stiles was livid. ‘Dude, my dad’s the fucking sheriff. He’ll make sure he never gets to you again.’ He turned to Scott. ‘I’m taking him to the car. Go upstairs and grab him some shit to wear and whatever else you think he needs.’

‘Got it.’ Scott took off again and Stiles more or less carried Isaac to the base of the stairs and hauled him up them as gently as he could.

Outside the day was still the same and Stiles took Isaac to the Jepp, settling him in the passenger seat and then taking out his phone. He could now see the blood was from a gash in Isaac’s cheek and he remembered the glass that had crunched underfoot.

He waited for the call to be answered and had never been happier to hear his own father’s voice.

‘Hey kid.’ Noah sounded happy and Stiles wondered at what kind of afternoon he’d had. ‘You on your way home?’

‘Yeah.’ He swallowed hard. ‘Dad, I’m at Isaac Lahey’s house. I…Jesus I can’t even explain.’ He had to stop and get himself under control. ‘Isaac’s dad had him locked in the fucking freezer in their basement. He looks like he’s been hit too.’

‘What?’ Noah’s attitude changed in an instant. ‘Stiles, that’s a serious accusation.’

‘I know.’ Stiles growled. ‘Look, I’m bringing him home. I’m not leaving him here. Tell Derek. When we get there, Isaac can explain but he’s not safe here.’

‘Bring him.’ Noah sounded determined and in that moment Stiles loved him more than anything. ‘I’ll call the station, get a social worker to come over. If this is abuse, he’ll need somewhere more permanent to stay.’

‘Okay.’ Stiles saw Scott come round the corner with a duffle bag and a backpack over his shoulders. ‘Look we’ll be there in a minute. Just, tel Derek that it’s bad and he’ll need to do what we talked about as soon as possible.’

‘Stiles?’ Noah was moving through the house. ‘What are you up to?’

‘We’ll explain, I promise.’ Stiles said and hung up as Scott got in the back. He looked at Isaac, seeing how the taller boy was curled into himself. ‘We’re going to my house, Isaac. Derek is there and he’ll look after you.’

Isaac gave him a ghost of a smile.

‘Still want me as pack?’ he asked. ‘I’m pretty pathetic.’

‘Bullshit.’ Stiles started the car. ‘It’s more a case if you want in on this craziness.’
‘Yes, I do.’ Isaac’s face was pale, the blood clotted on his cheek stark in contrast. ‘I want to be pack. I’m tired of being helpless and alone.’

‘That’s okay, dude.’ Scott leaned over the seat and gave him a one-armed hug. ‘You’re not going to be alone anymore.’ His dark eyes met Stiles’ in the rearview mirror. ‘I can call my mom. Have her come over when she finished work.’

‘Good idea.’ Stiles replied and put his foot down.
New Arrivals

Chapter Summary

People are starting to come into town and they do not have good intentions.

Derek lay still and listened to his pack. He could hear them all, their heartbeats slow and even in sleep. Noah was snoring, probably sleeping on his back. Down the hall, Scott and Isaac were breathing deeply. Melissa had allowed Scott to stay over because he’d explained the need for pack to be close to establish their bonds. She had come straight from the hospital to check Isaac over and write an official report that had been the basis of an emergency order to remove Isaac from his father’s custody. Noah had called Whittemore’s office and it had been surprisingly easy to get it done. The fact that he was the Sheriff had helped but apparently there had been something else too. It had transpired that Jackson had told his parents that something wasn’t right at the Lahey’s before and so that tied in to the accusations of abuse.

Derek had wanted to go over to the graveyard and rip Coach Lahey’s throat out with his teeth for what he’d done to his son. But Stiles had talked him down and they’d ended up sitting on the bed in the spare room, now made up for Isaac, and that had been where he’d explained everything once more in Noah’s presence to make sure Isaac was still consenting. He’d felt the pack bond snap into place almost immediately, the intent behind his bite and Isaac’s desire to be part of the pack making it easy for him to turn. Scott had been a surprise though. His protectiveness had taken Derek by surprise and he’d insisted on staying with him all night, both of them squeezed into the three quarter bed in the spare room.

Stiles had smirked all night at that and whispered that maybe Allison had some competition and to Derek’s astonishment, he’d been right. Isaac smelled smitten and Scott seemed to be returning his feelings, even if his brain hadn’t quite caught up with his scent yet.

He looked over at where Stiles was sleeping, one arm flung above his head and his mouth slightly open. His face was lax in sleep and his scent curled up warm and comforting. Derek watched him for a while longer and then got up, careful not to disturb his mate. He walked out the room, heading to the bathroom to piss and drink some water before going to the guest room. He cracked the door and peered in, smiling at how Scott and Isaac were a tangle of limbs on the bed. It was perfectly natural for wolves to behave like this and he was pleased to see them acting as their natures required them too. It would make it much easier to form the kind of tight knit pack he wanted and missed so badly.

The sound of Noah waking up made him turn and listen. He was on day shift and Derek took the opportunity to go downstairs and get the coffee started. He tracked Noah into the shower and then down the stairs once he was dressed, handing him a mug of coffee as he came in.

‘Morning.’ Noah took the mug gratefully and took a long drink. ‘The boys all right?’

‘Sleeping like cubs.’ Derek smiled when he realised he’d used the word without thinking. ‘You know what I mean.’

‘Cubs.’ Noah smirked at him. ‘It fits.’
‘He’s a good kid.’ Derek said. ‘He doesn’t deserve what happened to him.’

‘Sounds like someone else I know.’ Noah smiled. ‘And while I don’t necessarily get all this werewolf stuff, I think he’s smart enough to have weighed the pros and cons and made a decision that’s best for him. And he can stay here or at Melissa’s. She’s offered to take him in if the court approves.’

‘Thank you.’ Derek replied. ‘It will be his decision but it’s good to know he has options.’

‘He’s welcome here.’ Noah put his mug down. ‘We can sort out the details later. We’ve got an appointment with a family lawyer this morning to see what the legalities are. He’s seventeen already so that does help his case for emancipation.’

‘I have money.’ Derek offered. ‘So whatever he needs, I can pay for it. That’s what pack does.’

‘Noted.’ Noah checked his watch and was about to get up when there was the sound of yelling from outside and they both went into alert mode. Derek heard Stiles fall out of bed with a loud what the fuck and then the sound of his feet as he came running down the stairs. Noah was already in the front hall, opening the door and trying to reason with the person outside.

‘Mr Lahey, you need to calm down.’ His voice was completely professional but Derek heard the spike in his heartbeat. He looked at Stiles, poised on the stairs in his pyjamas and with his hair a mess and brown eyes still hazy with sleep, and waved him back before moving to flank Noah at the door. He knew he probably didn’t pose the most threatening figure in his own sleep pants and a three moon wolf t-shirt that Stiles had bought him because he found it wildly funny, but he wasn’t about to ignore a threat to his pack, especially not the newest member who would be jumpy anyway and didn’t need the stress.

Coach Lahey looked terrible, his eyes wild and bloodshot and his whole self reeking of alcohol. He was still wearing his clothes from the previous day, judging by the smell. He glared at Derek over Noah’s shoulder, waving his finger at them.

‘You’ve got my boy in there.’ His voice was ugly with threat. ‘I want him back, now.’

‘That’s not going to happen.’ Noah said evenly, folding his arms and straightening up to fill the doorway. It was a very effective way to block entry to the house and Derek made a mental note to keep that in mind.

‘You have no right to keep him from me!’ Mr Lahey bellowed. ‘Isaac! Get your goddamned ass down here!’ He yelled it at the windows above them and Derek tuned in to hear the way Isaac’s heart was galloping with fear.

‘I have a court order that allows me temporary custody of your son.’ Noah stated. ‘You will have the chance to defend yourself against the allegations against you but I have to say that all the evidence collected last night from your home doesn’t help your case at all.’ Derek could smell the anger on him and marvelled at his control. ‘Now I suggest you go home and sober up. This is not going anywhere and if you persist in harassing my family, I will be forced to arrest you.’

‘Fuck you, Sheriff!’ Lahey spat. ‘I’ll see you in court and I’ll get my boy back where he belongs.’

‘Not today, you won’t.’ Noah replied and stepped back inside, shutting the door. He turned and saw Stiles lurking at the back of the hall. ‘Go and check on isaac. I’m going to make a couple of quick calls. Derek, would you mind keeping an ear out for our visitor?’
‘He’s leaving.’ Derek could hear the truck starting up.

‘Good. I’m thinking a temporary restraining order might be a necessity.’ Noah had his phone out. ‘Look, get the kids to school, would you? Then come find me at the station and we can start the ball rolling with this.’

‘Okay.’ Derek said and watched as Noah grabbed his jacket and keys and headed out, already talking to someone. He waited to see him get into the cruiser and on the road before he closed and locked the door and went upstairs. He found all three of his betas crowded on the bed and sighed when he saw the fear in Isaac’s eyes and smelled how it tainted his natural scent.

He went over, hoping that what he was about to do would work. His mom and Laura had used the same trick on him and he climbed in between them and got hold of Isaac, pulling him against him. Isaac resisted for only a second and then succumbed, curling up into Derek’s side and getting comfortable. Derek stuck one hand in Isaac’s curls and rumbled softly. Scott moved to curl up on Isaac’s other side, one arm around him, and Stiles moved to Derek’s back. He snuggled down and started up the same low growl that Derek was using and Isaac relaxed incrementally. Scott gave them both a curious look and then tried his own version. It was a bit pitchy at first, but it soon smoothed out and then all three of them were harmonising. Isaac went limp, all the tension leaving him in a rush and his heartbeat levelled out again.

They lay like that until Scott’s phone alarm went off. He was the first to get up, going to grab a shower while Stiles peered over Derek’s shoulder at a now dozing Isaac.

‘We’ll look after him.’ he murmured into Derek’s ear.

‘I know.’ Derek smiled back over his shoulder at him. ‘But if you need anything, just call me.’

Stiles smiled back and leaned in to give him a quick kiss, then got up as well. He bounded off to go use the bathroom in Noah’s room and Derek sighed.

‘You feeling okay?’ he asked and Isaac looked up at him.

‘I think so.’ he replied. ‘I feel a bit weird.’

‘It’ll take a couple of days for you to settle into it.’ Derek replied. ‘But we’re all here for you so if you need anything, ask us.’

‘I will.’ Isaac said and then his face changed, the sadness so profound that it made Derek’s heart ache in recognition. ‘He wasn’t always like that. When my mom was alive, he was a good dad.’

Derek growled softly and flashed his eyes at him and Isaac’s eyes flashed back, beta gold and trusting in a way that made Derek’s wolf very happy.

‘We’re going to make it so he doesn’t hurt you anymore.’ he said. ‘Maybe this is the wake-up call he needs.’

‘I hope so.’ Isaac settled back down again. ‘At least I’ve healed.’

‘One of the benefits.’ Derek said and then winced when he heard the sound of Scott shrieking in the shower because Stiles had flushed the toilet in the other bathroom. Isaac’s face was also scrunched up and Derek knew his new wolf ears were sensitive.

‘If they get too much today, tell them to lay off.’ he told him and Isaac grinned.
‘I kind of like it.’ he confessed. ‘It feels good to have someone care about me again. I missed that after Cam got killed.’

‘I know how that feels.’ Derek said. ‘But take it slow, okay. This is going to be a little overwhelming at first and your senses are going to be out of whack for a while.’

‘It’s cool though.’ Isaac ventured. ‘I feel good, much better than I did.’

‘You’ll get stronger too.’ Derek told him. ‘And it’s full moon in a week, so we’ll have some time to get you an anchor and help you with your control.’ Then he noticed the look on Isaac’s face.

‘What?’

‘I know we talked about it last night.’ Isaac’s eyes flickered towards the door. ‘Can it happen that quickly?’

‘Oh.’ Derek realised that Stiles might have been onto something. ‘You think...Scott?’

‘I’ve always kind of liked him.’ Isaac admitted. ‘Even before he even knew who I was. And last night, it just felt like something clicked into place when you said that anchors ground you.’

‘Yeah.’ Derek was at a bit of a loss. ‘They do.’

‘Is it like that with you and Stiles?’ Isaac asked. ‘He’s your anchor and you’re his?’

‘Yeah.’ Derek replied. ‘But we’re also mates so it’s natural for us to be like that with each other.’

‘Mates?’ Isaac’s eyes lit up. ‘Like...you’re kind of werewolf married?’

‘That’s a good way to put it.’ Derek said and then sat bolt upright, remembering what else had happened the day before. ‘Oh fuck.’

‘Chill out sourwolf.’ Stiles snickered as he walked past the doorway, wet and gorgeous in a towel and a smirk. ‘My answer’s yes.’

************

Lydia pulled up outside the Argent’s house and got out. She’d decided to embrace her new identity and so she strode up to the front door and rang the bell. It opened a moment later to reveal Allison looking ridiculously cute in skinny jeans, her leather jacket and combat boots and Lydia found herself asking why it had taken a kiss to get her to look at her that way.

‘Hi.’ she said brightly and then put one arm around Allison’s waist and pulled her close. ‘I thought I’d take you to school.’

Allison’s expression of complete astonishment melted into something that was rather more wicked and Lydia’s heart kicked up a notch.

‘Only if you kiss me good morning.’ she countered and Lydia smiled.

‘Is this something?’ she found herself asking and Allison’s face went soft. She lifted her hands and cupped Lydia’s face.

‘I don’t know.’ she said. ‘Maybe?’

‘What about Scott?’ Lydia asked. ‘Just three days ago you were crazy in love with him.’
‘I…’ Allison looked pained for a second. ‘I don’t know. I feel like that’s still true, but I also feel like this is a door that I never expected to open and now I really want to go in and see what’s through it.’

‘Oh.’ Lydia inhaled sharply. ‘So that remark about the kiss wasn’t just you being flippant.’

In reply, Allison smiled and leaned in just enough to brush her lips lightly over Lydia’s. It was like being kissed by butterfly wings and when she pulled back, Lydia felt oddly light headed and flustered in a way she’d never been before. She cleared her throat to cover up her feelings, well aware of the flush in her cheeks, and held out a hand to Allison.

‘So, school?’ she asked and Allison laughed and ducked back in for her backpack before coming out and taking her hand firmly.

‘School.’ she replied.

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Derek drove them to school, Scott and Isaac crammed in the back of the Camaro.

‘I’ll be back to get you all later.’ he said. ‘Don’t get into shit.’

Yeah, whatever.’ Stiles snarked and leaned over the centre console to kiss him, ignoring the exaggeratedly disgusted noises from the back seat. In retaliation he opened his mouth and Derek took the invitation, catching him by the back of the neck and giving him a deep filthy kiss that had the noises turning choked. He finally let Stiles go, looking far too pleased with himself at his slightly breathless state, brushing his nose against Stiles’ and smiling at him in a way that made his knees weak.

‘Look after the cubs.’ he said and Stiles snorted and swatted at him, blushing at the way that made him feel hot and shivery all over. Definitely something to be revisited when they were alone.

‘I do what I want.’ he said and almost fell out the car. Derek grabbed him, stopping him from faceplanting on the curb and laughed.

‘Jesus, Stiles.’ Scott said, him and Isaac already on the grass and judging him.

‘Yeah.’ Isaac’s eyebrows were raised. ‘I thought you were supposed to be in control of those.’ He nodded at Stiles’ legs. ‘I’ve seen baby deer with more coordination.’

‘Fuck you, Isaac.’ Stiles righted himself and then immediately felt bad for swearing at someone who’d just been taken out of his house. ‘Shit, sorry. I didn’t mean to…’

‘Hey.’ Isaac came in close and then bumped their shoulders together. ‘It’s cool. I’m okay.’

Stiles sighed in relief and leaned back into the Camaro to grab his bag.

‘I’ll see you later, sourwolf.’ he said and Derek gave him the finger and then peeled out once Stiles had closed the door. They watched him leave the lot and then turned to look at the building behind them.

‘It’s going to be noisy.’ Stiles said.

‘And you’re going to smell so many things you wish you couldn’t.’ Scott added. ‘Like how half the guys here don’t wash their hands after they’ve taken a dump.’

‘Or that the mystery meat actually smells like it’s been lying there for about a week.’ Stiles grimaced.
‘Hey, there’s Danny.’ Scott raised a hand in greeting but Danny was looking right past them and they all turned around and Scott’s jaw dropped so hard and so low it nearly hit the ground.

Lydia and Allison were getting out of Lydia’s car. She came around from the driver’s side and then they were approaching, and all eyes dropped to where they were holding hands.

‘Oh crap.’ Stiles threw Scott a panicked look. ‘Hey, how about we get inside.’

Isaac frowned and then looked back at the girls.

‘Is he okay?’ he asked, leaning around a still speechless Scott.

‘I don’t think so.’ Stiles moved to stand in front of Scott. ‘Hey, keep it together man. You can’t w-o-l-f out here.’

‘They’re...together.’ Scott looked like his heart was breaking.

‘Yeah, that was the point.’ Stiles said, wincing on his behalf. ‘You remember?’

‘But they don’t need to anymore.’ Scott protested. ‘Allison said that she pissed off Gerard and Derek’s got his own beastiality now.’

‘Huh?’ Isaac looked at Stiles in confusion.

‘He means bestiary.’ Stiles told him. They waited until Lydia and Allison got to them and then Allison gave Lydia a look that spoke volumes and let go of her hand.

‘Hi Scott.’ she said. ‘I think we need to talk.’

‘Oh fuck.’ Stiles blurted out. Lydia glared at him and he ducked behind Isaac.

‘Okay.’ Scott’s voice wavered but he nodded at Stiles and Isaac and followed her towards the side door of the school. Lydia watched them go and Stiles was surprised by the possessiveness evident in her every line and curdling through her scent.

‘Damn.’ He met her eyes and saw that there was wariness there too. ‘So maybe this is a thing.’

‘It wasn’t meant to be.’ She was very defensive, folding her arms and looking more disconcerted than Stiles had ever seen her. ‘It’s not like we planned this.’

‘No, I know you didn’t.’ Stiles thought about how much of a whirlwind his and Derek’s relationship had been so far. ‘And things happen sometimes.’ He watched Scott and Allison sit down at one of the tables far away enough that they wouldn’t be overheard. He sighed and then realised that Lydia and Isaac were busy sizing each other up.

‘New wolf, huh?’ Lydia said, her eyebrow arched.

‘How did you…?’ Isaac looked astonished.

‘I’m a banshee.’ Lydia replied, brushing past him with her nose in the air. ‘Keep up.’

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‘I don’t know how it happened, but now it has.’ Allison was looking down at the table, regret in her voice but not unhappiness. Perhaps that was what really drove it home. Scott was dumb but not stupid and he had enough intelligence to realise that she was being serious.
‘So you’re going to go through with it?’ he asked and Allison nodded.

‘I’m not going to be selfish about asking you to wait and see if it works out,’ she replied. ‘I’m trying to be a better person and I know that it would be wrong to do that to you just like it would be wrong to lie and say that this is just for show when what I’m starting to feel is real.’

‘Okay.’ Scott was at a loss. Everything he’d been terrified of happening was happening and he couldn’t think of anything to say to try and change her mind, even though he knew that it would be impossible. ‘So now what?’

‘I want to be friends,’ Allison told him, picking at her nail varnish. ‘But I understand if you don’t. This is going to be hard for you to understand, but I think it’s for the best. Also right now, after what happened with Gerard, I don’t want you to have a target on your back. I’ve gone and made things worse and it’s going to have consequences and I don’t want you to have to be faced with them just because you and I are together.’

‘I could handle it.’ Scott protested and she smiled, but there was an edge to it.

‘No, you couldn’t,’ she said, her voice going flat. ‘I’ve been doing a lot of research, Scott. There’s things my family has been responsible that no amount of penance is going to set right. And now I’m the one who’s in the line of fire and I can’t afford to have to look after you as well. Nobody knows about Lydia but us.’

‘So you’re saying that being a werewolf is what’s really the problem.’ Scott snapped, suddenly furious.

‘It’s not the reason, but it’s a contributing factor,’ Allison replied. ‘But you knew that it would be. I’m a hunter, Scott. I have to face that. I have to train and be as true to my Code as I can be. I’m the one who’s going to be protecting this town along with Derek.’

‘And I’m just some dumb asshole.’ Scott slumped in defeat. ‘I’m not even a alpha or anything like that.’

‘Would you want to be?’ Allison frowned. ‘You weren’t so sure about even being a wolf.’

‘I don’t know!’ Scott threw his hands up and his control slipped just enough that his eyes flashed at her. She flinched and he immediately looked contrite. ‘Fuck, sorry.’

‘Don’t be.’ Allison steeled herself and got up. ‘Let’s just leave it for now. We can always talk more if you want to, but I need to get to homeroom and so do you.’

‘Yeah, fuck that.’ Scott got up as well, grabbing his backpack and slinging it over his shoulder. He stormed off towards the sports field and Allison was torn. She grabbed her phone and fired off a message to Stiles, hoping that he would be able to talk some sense into his friend before he did something stupid.

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The man watching through his binoculars, turned to his passenger and raised an eyebrow.

‘That’s one of the betas?’ he asked and Gerard nodded, his lip curling in a satisfied smile.

‘It is,’ he replied. ‘And he’s all alone.’

‘We’ll have to make it look like an accident.’ The man shifted in his seat, taking out a pack of gum
and popping three in his mouth, nicotine stained teeth just visible. ‘Or we’ll have the damn Council on our backs. They’re watching this place like a bunch of hawks.’

‘I have a few tricks up my sleeve.’ Gerard tracked the boy as he crossed the lawn at the back of the school and took the pathway that would lead past the fields and into the trees. ‘We’ll take him, then we can have a little fun before we take on Hale and exterminate his pack.’

************

Stiles felt his phone buzz and reached for his pocket only to freeze when a new teacher walked into their classroom. She was tall and slender, her warm brown skin and eyes perfectly set off by the burgundy velvet jacket she was wearing over a long black dress and flat leather boots. Her long straight hair framed a face that was young looking, but Stiles knew better than to trust what he saw. Call it a cop kid thing, but he took nothing at face value now.

It wasn’t so much the fact that she was new so much as it was that she walked with a quiet confidence that he recognised all too well from Deaton and that her eyes immediately found him, her mouth tipping up at the edges. She also smelled like wolfsbane and herbs and magic just like Deaton did, and he immediately knew that they had trouble.

‘Good morning.’ she said, her voice pleasantly modulated. ‘My name is Miss Morrell, and I will be your new homeroom teacher as well as having the pleasure of instructing you in class if you take French. I am also the new guidance counsellor so I am looking forward to getting to know you all very well.’

He looked across at Lydia and saw that she was keeping a perfectly neutral face, but there was trepidation in her scent. Isaac was also quietly freaking out behind him and Stiles sat back in his seat and wondered just who she was.

Miss Morrell leaned back against her desk but just as she was about so speak again, the door flew open and Allison burst in. She stopped as soon as she saw the new teacher and her face fell.

‘I’m sorry I’m late.’ she stammered. Morell just waved a hand towards an empty seat and she almost ran to take it. There was a lost look on her face that told Stiles that the little talk she’d had with Scott obviously hadn’t been as amicable as she’d wanted it to be.

He waited until Morell had her back turned to write on the board and caught Allison’s eye, mouthing what happened at her. Allison nodded down at his side where his phone was and he got the drift.

He was about to reach for it, but then Morell turned back around and the look she gave him skewered him to the chair.

‘I hope you’re not going to give me any trouble, Mr Stilinski.’ she said. ‘I’m afraid your reputation precedes you.’

There were a few snickers around the class and Stiles frowned and then folded his arms.

‘No.’ he replied and her smile was the same fucking sphinx grin that Deaton used on him when he felt Stiles was asking too many questions. There was absolutely no doubt that she was a druid.

‘Excellent.’ she said and went back to the board.

************

The bell on the front door of the clinic jingled and Deaton checked his watch. His first patient wasn’t due for another hour so he went to hover at the closed door to the reception area. He heard Chris
Argent’s voice and opened the door, waving him through.

‘To what do I owe the honour?’ he asked as they moved through the examination room to his office.

‘I’m sure you’ve been keeping abreast of current events.’ Chris said with a resigned twist of his mouth. ‘My father is in town.’

‘I had heard.’ Deaton replied and offered him a seat. ‘You want some coffee?’

‘Please.’ Chris sat while he made their drinks and handed him a mug. ‘I am not happy with the situation but it’s a free country.’

‘Anyone who believes that is either helplessly naive or incredibly stupid.’ Deaton sat down as well. ‘Will he be a threat to the pack?’

‘I think that goes without saying.’ Chris sipped his coffee. ‘Alison pretty much burnt every bridge she might have built with him at the funeral.’

‘Ah yes.’ Deaton knew he shouldn’t smile but for once he didn’t want to hide it. ‘I heard from Noah that it was quite a spectacle.’

‘She didn’t deserve any dignity.’ Chris sneered. ‘And I think having cremated was rather fitting, don’t you? Unfortunately, I also managed in making myself extremely unpopular. I’ve been keeping an eye on things, and there’s been a few new arrivals in town. I’m heading over to the station to tell Noah and Derek after this, but I thought you’d also appreciate a heads up.’

‘Thank you.’ Deaton debated for a moment and then continued. ‘And while we’re disclosing movements, I think you should know there’s been an incursion.’

‘By who?’ Chris asked.

‘My sister.’ Deaton replied. ‘She’s also a druid and also the emissary for…’

‘Deucalion.’ Chris finished. ‘The Demon Wolf. There isn’t a hunter on the western seaboard that doesn’t know that name. He’s the one who bit my Uncle Alex. Every Argent knows that story.’

‘I know.’ Deaton sighed and leaned back in his chair. ‘I don’t know what she’s doing here, but I would imagine that Derek’s recent ascension to alpha status is the likely cause. It isn’t unheard of for emissaries to come into other territories to assess potential threats or try to establish treaties. Talia and he were allies, before that business with your father and the betrayal he inflicted on them. It’s what deprived Deucalion of his sight. The fact that he’s now also in town, could also be why she’s here.’

‘Jesus.’ Chris put down his coffee. ‘What the fuck do we do? This could turn into a very violent situation with them here.’

‘She’s more than likely a precursor to something.’ Deaton told him. ‘I’m keeping an eye on her. She’s gotten a job at the high school, and she is well aware of the pack. This will be how she assesses them. How may hunters had Gerard bought with him?’

‘So far I’ve seen four.’ Chris replied. ‘I don’t know any of them, so I’m betting they’re not friendly or used to following the Code.’

‘No.’ Deaton said. ‘But then Deucalion’s pack is not used to always working within the rules either.’

‘This going to turn into a clusterfuck.’ Chris muttered.
‘Not necessarily.’ Deaton said. ‘But we’ll need to work together to make sure it doesn’t.’

**********

The bell finally went for first class and Stiles immediately went to Allison. Scott hadn’t turned up for registration and worry niggled at him. Isaac was already on his phone trying to get hold of him but Stiles was betting that Allison had an idea of where he’d gone.

‘He went to the fields.’ she said as soon as he got to her without prompting. ‘He was upset.’

‘Of course he’s upset.’ Stiles snapped. ‘Why didn’t you stop him?’

‘I…’ Allison close her mouth and looked stricken. ‘I fucked up. He got angry when I tried to reason with him.’

‘It’s Scott, he doesn’t do reason.’ Stiles huffed and took out his own phone, dialling Derek and then almost snarling in frustration when he got his voicemail. ‘Hey, it’s me. Scott’s bailed from school and I’m worried. Can you try track him down with that super sniffer of yours. I’ll try and keep things kosher here.’ He hung up and looked at Isaac. ‘Anything?’

‘No.’ Isaac did the same and he looked even more worried than Stiles did. ‘Do we go after him?’

‘No.’ Lydia chimed in. ‘We’re all on probation at the moment and if we cause shit, we’re going to get suspended. He’ll come back.’

‘What if he doesn’t?’ Stiles asked. ‘You know what he’s like when he’s emotional. He’s an idiot.’

‘Derek will find him and make sure he’s okay.’ Lydia hissed. ‘Now stop freaking out and tell me who the fuck she is.’ She threw a disparaging glance over her shoulder at Morell. ‘Because if she’s a guidance counsellor, I’m the fucking queen of England.’

They all looked at Morell and eventually she looked back at them, her dark brows drawing down. Stiles was gratified to see that she looked a little thrown by their hostile expressions, especially when she noticed that Lydia had joined them.

‘She smells strange.’ Isaac said, his voice low.

‘That’s because she’s a druid.’ Stiles raised his voice enough for her to hear, deciding to call her bluff now that the classroom was empty. ‘So whose emissary are you exactly, Miss Morell?’

Morell’s smile was more genuine than it had been when she’d introduced herself.

‘Well done, Stiles.’ she said, coming towards them. ‘You’re every bit as intelligent as Alain said you are. Derek’s picked a fine mate.’

‘Shit.’ Allison’s eyes were wide. ‘You’re an emissary?’

‘I am.’ Morell replied. ‘But I mean you and your alpha no harm. I am here merely to observe.’

‘Like hell you are.’ Lydia snorted. ‘Emissaries don’t just come into other territories unannounced unless they’re up to something.’ She caught Stiles eye. ‘What? I do research too, you know.’

‘So do we.’ Morell said. ‘And I know you’re in this as well, Miss Martin. Peter Hale targeted you too. It’s just a mystery to us as to why you didn’t turn.’

‘And it will stay a mystery.’ Lydia said pertly. ‘I’m not handing you any ammunition.’
‘And just what authority do you have to speak for the pack?’ Morell’s eyes narrowed. ‘Only emissaries can do that and Deaton’s not here.’

‘Deaton’s not our emissary.’ Stiles blurted out, not sure why he did. It took Morell completely by surprise though and her entire expression changed to one of bemusement.

‘But…’ She looked between them. ‘He’s been helping you.’

‘Only until our own emissary is trained.’ Stiles declared, thinking on the fly and hoping like hell he was doing the right thing. ‘Ask Derek if you don’t believe me. But as Alpha mate, I’m pretty sure whatever I say carries as much weight in his absence as his own would.’ He grinned as her scent soured with displeasure. ‘I’m also thinking that you’re trying to sneak in the back door here because you sure as hell haven’t been to see Derek to tell him you’re in town.’

Morell drew herself up, her dark eyes glinting.

‘I don’t need to announce myself.’ she said, her voice haughty. ‘I’m the emissary for a very powerful pack.’

‘Still Hale territory though.’ Stiles grinned, letting his eyes flash. ‘And you’re in our school, pretending to be someone you’re not.’

‘Very well.’ Morell folded her arms. ‘In that case, would you introduce me to your mysterious emissary so I can let them know I’m here?’

‘You already did, honey.’ Lydia’s voice was like ice and Stiles could have kissed her for catching on and backing him up. ‘And I have to say, I’m not very impressed.’ The look she was giving Morell was scathing. ‘Those boots are knock-offs and that dress is from three seasons ago.’

‘You?’ Morell didn’t bother to hide her derision. ‘You’re not a druid.’

‘Not exactly.’ Lydia smiled. ‘But I’m who you’re going to have to deal with, so get used to it. Now, unless you have anything else to say, we have class. Now if you want to talk to any of my pack, get in touch with me or my alpha or stay out of our way.’ She flipped her hair over her shoulder, took Allison’s hand and stalked out with so much as a backwards glance.

Stiles snickered at the look on Morell’s face.

‘Guess that answers that.’ he said, smirking as he walked past her with Isaac and out of the room.

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Derek felt the twinge in his chest and then gasped as the bond took hold. It felt completely different to anything he’d ever experienced, like a clean white hot stab of pain before it faded and then he knew. He fumbled his phone out of his pocket and called the only person that it could be.

‘What did you do?’ he asked and Lydia’s silvery laugh came down the line.

‘What needed to be done.’ she replied. ‘We need to talk, Alpha.’ Then she hung up on him and left Derek staring at the screen.

‘Shit.’ he looked at where Noah was watching him with raised eyebrows over his glasses. ‘I think Lydia just decided she’s going to be my emissary.’

‘I don’t know if we should take that as a good thing or be completely terrified.’ he said, going back
to his case file. ‘That girl is frightening in her intelligence. I suppose you could do a lot worse.’

‘That’s true.’ Derek smiled to himself. ‘I do wonder what prompted it.’ Then he frowned when he realised that he had a voicemail. He had had his phone turned off while he was driving and had forgotten to turn it back on. He listened to Stiles voice and then heaved a sigh.

‘Problem?’ Noah asked and he shrugged.

‘Scott.’ he replied, getting up. ‘He’s skipped school. It’s the whole thing with Allison.’

‘Better you than me.’ Noah waved him off with a grin. ‘Teenagers, huh?’

‘I guess.’ Derek shrugged into his jacket. ‘Sorry.’

‘No, go find the wayward cub.’ Noah chuckled. ‘Chris said he’s coming by. He wants to talk to both of us. How long will it take to find Scott?’

‘Hopefully not too long.’ Derek grumbled and walked out the office.

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Scott trudged along, feeling morose and sighing heavily to himself. When he looked up he realised that he’d walked a lot further from school than he’d intended and was now deep into the woods. The preserve wasn’t far from where he was and he decided to head in the direction of the Hale house, hoping that he could hide out there for while.

He broke into a jog, a small thrill at how he didn’t get out of breath making him smile before it all came crashing down again how the fact that he was a werewolf was why Allison was doing this. His smile faded quickly and he slowed, finally stopping to lean against a tree and then slumped to sit against the base of the truck. He felt miserable, his heart aching in a way that made him want to curl in on himself and whimper.

Half of him was urging him to take out his phone and call Stiles, to cry on his shoulder but Scott knew he’d be in class. That was when the full impact of what he’d done hit him and he felt even more unhappy. His mom was going to kill him when she found out he’d skipped again. It wasn’t like he could afford to miss school either. Unlike Stiles, who was academically brilliant even without studying, he had to graft hard for his C average.

‘Goddammit.’ he muttered and kicked at the ground.

He didn’t know how long he sat there but the sound of someone approaching had him lifting his head and peering at the person coming through the trees. When he saw who it was, again part of him was relieved but the other part was irrationally angry because if he’d never met Derek fucking Hale none of this would have happened and he would still be with Allison.

He stubbornly refused to look up, even when Derek’s boots appeared in his line of sight.

‘If you’re here to tell me to go back to school, then you can fuck off.’ he grumbled and heard Derek huff. Then to his complete surprise, the boots moved and Derek sat down next to him.

There was silence for a while, but the sound of Derek’s steady breathing calmed him down. That really irritated Scott, but it felt like he was being pulled in. Eventually he gave in and whined, leaning his head on Derek’s shoulder.

‘It’s not fair.’ he muttered. ‘I hate this.’
‘I know.’ Derek said. ‘You never got a choice in this and I understand that. But what Allison is doing is not just because of the fact that you’re a werewolf. You get that, right?’

‘It certainly doesn’t help.’ Scott huffed. ‘I just want to be normal. I want my life back.’

Derek was quiet for a while longer and then he sighed.

‘When I was fourteen and I got to high school, I wanted to make the basketball team.’ he said and Scott frowned.

‘I don’t get it.’ he said and Derek glared at him, full on murder brows at work.

‘You will if you shut up and let me tell you.’ he said and Scott went back into a sulk.

‘Fine, tell your stupid story.’ he muttered and Derek growled at him, but then started again.

‘So I wanted to be varsity teams.’ he said. ‘It would be easy. I was stronger and faster than anyone else but when I brought it up at home, my parents told me that there was no way I could try out because I wouldn’t be playing fair.’

‘Because of the wolf thing?’ Scott asked and Derek nodded.

‘I was super pissed because it felt like I was being punished for something I had no choice in.’ He sighed and looked down at his hands. ‘So I stole one of Peter’s magic books and tried to find something that would turn me human.’

‘Seriously?’ Scott was shocked. ‘But you’re all about the werewolf Kool Aid.’

‘Now.’ Derek said. ‘But back then, all I could see it as was something that was stopping me from being normal. I hated being a wolf. I couldn’t do what I wanted, I had to be in control all the time. But she was my alpha and my mom so I towed the line and waited until sophomore year before I got on the varsity teams. But I never really forgave her for telling me I couldn’t do it and every time I played, I had to hold myself back. I had to be slower, act like I couldn’t run rings around every person out there. It sucked but after the fire, I got why. I got that I wasn’t normal, I never have been and giving myself away was what got my family killed. I was arrogant and stupid and thought that taking what I wanted was all that mattered. And then Kate burned it all down and I realised that all that stuff was bullshit anyway and the one thing I wanted, I was never ever going to get back.’

‘Fuck.’ Scott was floored. ‘That’s like the most you’ve ever said to me, dude.’

‘It’s not something I break out all the time.’ Derek bared a fang at him. ‘But I get why you’re angry. I understand not having a choice. The shitty thing is, is that you can’t go back. Peter is dead and you’re stuck like this forever. So you can either suck it up and deal with it, or become an Omega and go your own way. But I really don’t want that to happen and I know for sure Stiles would kick my ass if I let that happen to you.’

‘So what?’ Scott leaned forward, head on his arms. ‘I just let her go?’

‘Yeah.’ Derek sighed. ‘You let her go. It sucks but it’s the right thing to do.’

Scott huffed and thumped his head against the tree, huffing a little bit at the brief flare of pain.

‘No more asthma at least.’ he finally said and Derek snorted next to him.

‘There’s that.’ He gave Scott a sidelong look. ‘And you’re going to make a good wolf. You’ve got a
good heart, even if you’re a dumbass most of the time.’

Scott was about to rebut that particular statement when he heard something and noticed that Derek was suddenly alert as well, his pale eyes fixed on the trees.

‘What is it?’ he whispered and Derek held up a hand and growled softly.

‘Listen.’ he murmured and Scott did, straining his hearing until he picked up the footsteps. They didn’t sound like someone walking normally, rather they were the steady soft footfalls of someone not wanting to be heard. He looked at Derek and Derek mouthed hunters at him and got up, reaching down to haul Scott to his feet.

Scott made a helpless gesture at him and Derek raised a finger to his lips and then nodded in the direction Scott had been walking. He nodded and they moved, going as quickly and as quietly as they could towards the Hale house.

It took about ten minutes to get there, alternating between creeping along and then bursting into a run. Derek didn’t take a direct route, preferring to move at an angle before doubling back. They finally made it to the clearing and he followed Derek into the house and up the stairs so they could look out the windows and watch for the people who were after them.

‘Why?’ he whispered and Derek snorted.

“They’re hunters.’ he growled. ‘It’s what they do.’ He moved and pulled Scott away from the window as three people came into sight. There were two men and one woman, all dressed like they were stalking deer and Derek took out his phone and dialled. Scott watched him, amazed that he was taking the time to call when they were about to be caught.

‘Chris.’ Derek sounded far too calm. ‘We’ve got some visitors.’ He listened and then answered, peering out the window. ‘We’re at the house. I’ve got Scott with me. There’s three of them and I’m guessing they’re not affiliated with you and Allison.’

Scott chanced another peek out the window, seeing how the three hunters were moving towards the porch. He was scared but then Derek put a hand on his shoulder and he felt himself relax.

‘Okay.’ Derek hung up and then turned to Scott. ‘Okay, so you’re going to head out the back. Go along the edge of the roof and drop down, then haul your ass back to the service road. It’s about four hundred feet down the drive, turn left and keep going. Chris is coming along that route and he’ll pick you up.’

‘What about you?’ Scott asked, suddenly worried. ‘There’s three of them.’

‘I know this preserve better than three assholes who just rolled into town.’ Derek said, shifting into his beta form. ‘And I’m faster, remember? I’ll be fine.’

‘You better be.’ Scott muttered, shouldering his backpack. ‘Stiles will actually kill me if I let anything happen to you.’

‘Go.’ Derek shoved him and Scott went. He moved down the back of the house where the former corridor ran until he got to the section that had fallen away. He got to the edge and took a deep breath, then jumped. He landed easily, bouncing back to his feet and taking off through the trees. He skirted around and then heard gunshots, wincing as he ran with his head down in the direction Derek had told him to go. He passed the black SUV that obviously belonged to the hunters and followed the drive down until he found the road and turned down, yelling as he almost got mown down by another SUV. He jumped on instinct, sliding across the hood until he fell off the other side and then
looked up to see Chris staring down at him.

‘Scott?’ He looked back towards the house when more shots rang out. ‘What happened?’

‘Derek.’ Scott waved a hand in the direction of the house, panting with exertion. ‘He’s still there.’

‘Get in.’ Chris ordered and Scott scrambled into the passenger side, barely managing to sit down before Chris was also back in and putting his foot flat.

They tore along the drive, skidding into the clearing and then Chris was out the car with his rifle raised and his voice ringing out as he ordered the three to stand down.

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Derek ducked as a bullet hit the window and shattered the remains of it. He had to chuckle to himself at how being shot at in what had been his home seemed to be a thing he was doing.

His phone rang and he answered it to hear Stiles yelling at him down the line, the echo identifying his location as the bathroom at school.

‘What the fuck?’ he roared. ‘Derek, get your goddamn ass out of there!’

‘How the hell did you even know?’ Derek grinned when he heard Chris yelling from outside.

‘Scott just texted me, the asshole.’ Stiles was pacing, he could hear it. ‘I had to fake nausea to get the hell out of class.’

‘It’s okay, babe.’ He was feeling more than a little cocky and had been running from window to window like some crazy arcade game. ‘Chris just arrived to save my ass.’

‘Good.’ Stiles sounded a little choked, his feelings flooding their bond. ‘Because I happen to love that ass.’

‘And my ass loves you back.’ Derek said and then hung up, getting to his feet as he heard Chris going off at the hunters outside. He was about to credit him with having one hell of a convincing argument when he realised that there was another voice with him and he looked out the window to see Noah was next to him, merrily handcuffing the three hunters while Chris watched on. That would explain why they were not trying to take Chris down and he grinned and headed downstairs.

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‘We have permits for those.’ the man closest to him snarled and Noah gave him the stink eye.

‘And you just used them to fire on an unarmed sixteen year old boy, and on land where hunting is strictly prohibited.’ he informed them, glancing up when he heard the front door open. Derek came out, human in form and looking halfway between pissed and amused. ‘You all right?’

‘They can’t shoot for shit.’ Derek folded his arms and eyeballed them. ‘They Gerard’s?’

‘Yeah.’ Chris looked disgusted. ‘I know both of these pieces of shit personally and they’re about to get their asses extradited back to Texas for murder.’ He nodded at the man and the woman at the end.

‘They’ve got nothing on us.’ the man hissed. ‘And you’re a goddamn disgrace to your name, Argent.’ He spat at Chris’s feet and Chris huffed, a humourless smile on his face.
‘Tell that to the FBI.’ he replied and moved to look at the other man, much younger than his two companions. ‘This one’s new.’

‘We’ll take him downtown.’ Noah grinned and looked at Derek. ‘Chris can take Scott to school and I’ll show you how we process perps.’

‘Sure.’ Derek came over to stand in front of the hunters. ‘Just one thing though.’

‘What?’ Noah asked, but the words were barely out of his mouth before Derek was shifted and roaring in their faces, fangs bared and eyes red and looking like something out of a nightmare. The hunters all fell back as a group and there was the unmistakable acrid stink of urine from the young one as he tried to wriggle away.

‘Derek.’ Chris’ voice was mildly reproving. ‘Was that entirely necessary.’

‘No.’ Derek’s fangs were still out and his eyes were glowing. ‘But it’s fun.’ He looked at the hunters. ‘This is my territory.’

‘Yeah, yeah.’ Noah hauled the shaking hunter to his feet. ‘But now I’ve got to ride with piss boy here in the cruiser.’

‘At least you don’t have my nose.’ Derek was still smiling and it was unnerving. The other hunters seemed to get their wits about them and realised that the county sheriff wasn’t even the least bit surprised that Derek had shifted.

‘You’re in on it?’ the woman spat and looked utterly disgusted.

‘Lady, I’m in so deep it’s no longer even funny.’ Noah said as he put her in the cruiser next to the young man. ‘My kid’s his freaking mate.’

‘Shit.’ Her eyes went wide as the implication set in. ‘Oh fuck.’

‘Oh fuck is right.’ Noah smiled. ‘You just tried to shoot the ass off my son-in-law. Now, normally I wouldn’t abuse my position of power, but my kid is awfully attached to that ass and the werewolf that it belongs to. So believe me when I say I am going to be throwing all the books at you that I can and making sure I hand deliver you to the FBI myself.’

‘Not to mention that the Hunter’s Council is going to hear about this.’ Chris told them as he manhandled the final hunter into the cruiser.

‘You have no credibility left with the Council.’ the older man sneered. ‘You think they give a shit about you and your kid? They’re going to hang you both out to dry.’

‘Maybe.’ Chris smiled at him. ‘But if they send anyone else here, they’re going to run into a shitstorm of trouble from me and my kid. We have a treaty with the Hale pack now, and that still counts for something.’ He slammed the door in the man’s face.

‘I’ll book them on the charges and get the feds in to come pick those two up.’ Noah said. ‘Derek, you go get your car and I’ll see you at the station.’

‘I’ll take that one to school.’ Chris was glaring at Scott.

‘Go easy on him.’ Derek said softly. ‘He’s pretty cut up about Allison dumping him for Lydia.’

‘Great.’ Chris rolled his eyes. ‘Okay, I’ll go let him cry on my shoulder.’
'I don’t envy him that talk.’ Noah gave Derek a look once the SUV had pulled off. ‘You sure you’re not hurt?’

‘No.’ Derek said, looking past him to the car. ‘Gerard’s going to be pissed.’

‘Let him be pissed.’ Noah opened his door. ‘He need to watch his own ass if he’s going to take pot shots.’

He got in and Derek jogged off into the trees. Noah waited until he was out of sight and then looked at the three sullen faces in his rearview mirror.

‘So?’ He started the cruiser. ‘Which one of you assholes wants to tell me about Gerard Argent?’
Realisations

Chapter Summary

Suddenly things start adding up.

Noah was feeling smug. He’d had a good week so far, getting Isaac away from the abusive asshole that was his father and getting Gerard’s hunters out of town. All it had taken was a few well-placed threats and the reminder that the hunters had been carrying firearms on private property, not to mention a couple of outstanding warrants. He’d happily handed them over to the marshalls, although now he had more on his desk because it turned out that they had very little loyalty to the man who’d recruited them when Gerard had pretty much ignored their calls.

Now he was elbow deep in paperwork related to the man, and he was turning out to be a very unpleasant character. He had never been arrested or convicted, not even for so much as a parking ticket, but there was enough circumstantial stuff to make anyone suspicious. There were plenty of cops out there willing to talk off the record and Noah was finding a trail of murder, disappearances and assault a mile wide that had Gerard’s name coming up too frequently. Not just his, but Kate’s as well. Her death seemed to be loosening people’s tongues and Noah was appalled at how they seemed to have been leaving havoc in their wake for a good decade already, and longer in Gerard’s case.

His phone rang and he answered, still focused on the information in front of him.

‘Stilinski.’ he said and then frowned at the frantic sound of Haigh on the other side. ‘Just calm down, Lou.’ He listened and then sighed heavily, scrubbing one hand down his face. ‘Yeah, ill be there in a bit. Give me about twenty.’ He put the phone down and got up, muttering as he put his jacket on and then took out his cell and dialled. When the person on the other side picked up, he grabbed his keys and headed out the door.

‘So here’s a question. What kind of thing kills people and eats their liver?’ He gave a mirthless chuckle as he walked through the office. ‘Yes I am serious, Chris. Look, just get to the cemetery. You’re now officially consulting to the Beacon Hills PD. I’m going to call derek and get him over there too. I’m hoping he can sniff something out.’

He hung up as he got into the parking lot just as Tara was coming in, telling her to hold down the fort, and then got into the cruiser and dialled again.

***********

‘Holy shit.’ Scott said. He and Isaac were sitting on the living room floor, their eyes as big as saucers as they stared at the alpha in front of them.

‘Told you.’ Stiles gave Derek a proud grin and Derek’s tail swished gently in response. It was kind of funny to see, considering that he was currently a seven foot monster with claws and fangs that were something out of a horror movie, his eyes glowing red.

It had been Stiles’ idea to show the other two betas what Derek’s alpha form looked like after they’d spent the morning playing games and laughing at each other’s beta shifts and ferociously debating
where Derek’s eyebrows went. That had lead to talking about the alpha form and then Derek shedding his clothes so he could demonstrate. Now he was standing in the living room on his hind legs, letting them all examine him although it was only Stiles who was willing to get in touching distance.

He hadn’t really had a chance to get a good look at Derek’s alpha shift the night he had mated and he took full advantage now. He ran his hands across inky black fur, thin and silky on the insides of Derek’s arms and across his belly and thickening to a heavy ruff across his neck and shoulders. His head was similar to his full shift with pointed ears and full muzzle, but larger and with massive fangs. He sighed as Stiles slid his fingers under his lips to lift them up and have a look, then swiped at him with a long pink tongue and making a weird chuffing noise that was obviously a laugh when Stiles flailed at him in protest. He went to Derek’s fore paws next, taking one in his hands and checking the shape and number of bones, the way his claws curved like obsidian razors that Derek couldn’t retract in this shape.

‘You look like the werewolves from Underworld.’ Scott observed. ‘Except for the tail.’

Derek woofed softly and dropped to all fours, padding over to where Isaac was sitting with bright eyes. Stiles could smell the curiosity on him but also the trepidation and he and Scott looked at each other. They had all been looking after him, with Scott staying over the night before again so they could bond. Derek had said it would be important to establish their pack connections and Stiles could actually feel how they were getting stronger. It also made his dad and Melissa happier, knowing they were all in the same place and safe.

Isaac was still wary, but as Derek sat down next to him he lifted a hand and held it out. Derek rolled his eyes and shoved his huge head under Isaac’s hand, pretty much demanding to be petted. Stiles had been astonished by how physically affectionate he’d become in only a few days towards Isaac, but then again he was a broken boy like them. He was touch starved and his new wolf instincts lapped up the attention. Now he was smiling and rubbing between Derek’s ears. Derek looked up at Stiles, eyes faded back to green and with a wolfy grin all over his face.

‘You’re such a fucking lap dog.’ Stiles laughed and then frowned when he heard Derek’s phone start ringing in the kitchen. He trotted through to grab it, then saw it was Noah.

‘Hey.’ he answered. ‘What’s up Pops?’

‘Hey kiddo.’ Noah sounded strained. ‘Is Derek around?’

‘Um.’ Stiles grinned at the alpha, now spread out across the floor like a gigantic fur rug. ‘Kind of.’

‘I need to talk to him.’ Noah said. ‘It’s important.’

‘Shit.’ Stiles knew that voice. It was the bad news voice. He flapped a hand at Derek and his mate rolled over onto his stomach and shifted as he got to his feet. He took the phone from Stiles, ignoring the way Scott and Isaac had gone red at being confronted with their alpha’s bare ass.

‘Noah, what’s wrong?’ Derek’s voice was low and he walked out the room. Stiles heard him go up the stairs and knew something bad had happened.

‘What is it?’ Isaac was now sitting up straight and Stiles knew that he had caught the tone in his father’s voice too.

‘I don’t know.’ he replied and went over to sit on the couch behind him, one hand on Isaac’s shoulder. They all stared at the ceiling, listening to Derek moving around. He came down a few
minutes later, now dressed and looking very serious.

‘I’ll be back soon.’ he told them all. ‘Noah wants my help with a crime scene.’

‘Okay.’ Stiles’ ears pricked up. ‘What kind of crime scene?’

‘Not sure, but it’s supernatural.’ Derek grabbed his jacket from the coat rack and shrugged into it, then came over and kissed him. ‘Stay put, all of you. I’ll call when I get there and tell you what’s happening.’

Stiles got up, walking with him to the front door. He could feel the undercurrent of anxiety and fear in their bond and knew that Derek wasn’t happy. He opened the door and then caught Derek’s arm, raising his eyebrows at him.

‘Just keep an eye on them.’ Derek said and kissed him again, this time lingering before pulling away. ‘I love you.’

‘I love you too.’ Stiles replied, his heart now picking up speed. ‘Be fucking careful.’

He watched Derek go to the Camaro and get in, the wheels screeching as he peeled it and took off.

‘Stiles?’ Scott spoke from the living room.

‘Yeah, I’m coming.’ he replied and closed the door.

******************

Noah felt ill. He hadn’t puked on a crime scene for a very long time but he was extremely tempted now. Haigh was pale and shaking and standing well away from where what was left of Coach Lahey was sprawled in the grass of the cemetery and Noah sighed and then dismissed him with a wave of his hand.

‘Noah?’ Chris’ voice came from behind him and he turned to see the hunter striding across the grass. He got to the patch of bloodstained grass and stopped dead. ‘Jesus Christ.’

‘Yeah.’ Noah said, tilting his head to get a better angle and then deciding better of it. There was no angle that would make this any better. It was even worse than finding Laura Hale. At least she hadn’t been as badly mutilated as the thing that had once been a an lying in front of him.

‘It ate the liver.’ Chris observed, crouching down and peering intently at the remains. ‘And pretty much gutted the rest.

‘Yeah.’ Noah followed the trails of intestines along the grass, making a face at the way they were covered in ants. ‘Jesus, what a mess. You got any ideas?’

‘Maybe.’ Chris replied. ‘Derek on his way?’

‘Yeah.’ Noah said and then heard the distant purr of the Camaro, now as familiar to him as the grinding couch of Stiles’ Jeep. He watched Chris move around to inspect Lahey from all angles as Derek came jogging through the cemetery over to them. His nose was already wrinkled in distaste and Noah was grateful that he wasn’t a werewolf because he could only imagine what Lahey must smell like to someone with a nose as sensitive as Derek’s.

‘I left the boys back at the house.’ he said by way of greeting. ‘Stiles is going to pester the shit out of us later though. He reeked of curiosity when I left.’
‘Really?’ Chris looked up, his own curiosity clear in his face. ‘What does it smell like?’

‘Green apples.’ Derek replied, frowning at the corpse. ‘Is that…?’

‘Yeah.’ Noah replied. ‘Looks like your little friend came back and decided to have a live meal.’

‘Fucking hell.’ Derek looked green. ‘Whatever it was, the smell is a lot worse than when Stiles and I saw it the first time.’

‘Probably because of that.’ Chris pointed to the ragged tears in the soft tissue and Noah saw that there was a viscous clear fluid dripping from the flesh.

‘What the hell is it?’ he asked and looked at Derek. ‘And what the hell does it smell like?’

‘I can’t really explain.’ Derek’s eyebrows were in full-on frustrated mode. ‘It smells...corrupted somehow. Like it’s not supposed to be.’ He shrugged. ‘It smells wrong.’

‘Hmmm.’ Chris stood up. ‘I have an idea. It’s probably wrong but…’

‘It’s better than nothing.’ Noah finished. ‘What are you thinking?’

Chris looked at Derek.

‘Noah told me about your mother’s bestiary. Do you remember seeing anything in it about something called a kanima?’

‘No.’ Derek’s frown deepened. ‘Actually...maybe? It’s been such a long time and Stiles has kind of hijacked it ever since I got it out the safe deposit box.’

‘Not much of a surprise.’ Noah said. ‘What is it?’

‘It’s...’ Derek looked a little flustered. ‘Okay, so not every shifter is a wolf. Some are foxes or tigers. It varies from culture to culture and geography. But sometimes it’s said that if you are turned, you take the form you are.’

‘Yeah, not making much sense there son.’ Noah said. ‘Care to explain it to a lay person.’

‘The kanima is not like other shifters.’ Chris replied. ‘It’s like Derek said. It comes out wrong. I’m not saying that’s what this is, just that it could be.’

‘One way to find out.’ Derek took out his phone and started texting. ‘Stiles can look it up.’

************

‘Huh?’ Stiles crinkled his nose and got up. ‘What the hell?’

‘Stiles?’ Scott and Isaac were watching him and he shook his head and bolted for the stairs, taking them two at a time until he got to his room and grabbed the bestiary from the nightstand. It had been his bedtime reading since Derek had brought it back and he started flipping through it, looking for the thing that Derek had asked about.

When he found the entry, he read through it in growing horror and then called Derek back.

‘Hey.’ Derek said and Stiles could hear his father and Chris talking in the background. ‘What have you got?’

‘Okay, so according to this the kanima is an aberration of the normal werewolf shift.’ Stiles told him.
‘It happens when someone is bitten but the shift is compromised by the person’s emotional and mental issues. It happens when there’s a serious questioning as to the person’s identity.’

Derek relayed the information on his side and then huffed down the phone.

‘This is bad.’ he said. ‘Stiles, it’s Isaac’s dad. Whatever the thing was that we saw, Chris thinks it’s a kanima.’

‘Shit.’ Stiles went to close the door and lowered his voice. ‘Did it kill him?’

‘It didn’t just kill him.’ Derek replied. ‘It gutted him and ate him.’

‘Oh God.’ Stiles was appalled. ‘Fuck, what do we tell Isaac?’

‘I don’t know.’ Derek sniped, his worry coming out as snark. ‘I’ve never had to tell someone that their dad got eaten by a werewolf gone wrong before.’

‘Fuck.’ Stiles chewed on a nail, wincing when he bit down too hard. ‘Okay. You want me to do it?’

‘No.’ Derek said. ‘I’m his alpha, I’ll do it. Just wait until I get back, okay? And find out everything you can about the kanima.’

‘On it, big guy.’ Stiles said, the awful feel in his stomach easing. Research was familiar, his thing that he did well. He hung up and started reading.

**************

Derek came back over and the three of them looked down at Lahey’s body.

‘I better get the forensics in.’ Noah sighed.

‘I’m going to head over to Deaton’s.’ Derek said. ‘Maybe he knows more about this.’

‘Yeah.’ Chris looked at him. ‘You heard about his sister being in town, I take it?’

‘I did.’ Derek’s mouth quirked. ‘I also seem to have landed myself an emissary because of it. In fact, she should be there too. Deaton’s going to start training her.’

‘Yeah, Allison told me.’ Chris gave him a hesitant smile. ‘Why do I get the feeling that those two are going to make our lives very difficult?’

‘It could be worse.’ Noah said. He huffed and put his hands on his hips. ‘So we’re calling this one a wild animal attack, right?’

‘Sounds like a plan.’ Chris replied. ‘I’ll go call some contacts I have overseas. See if I can find anything out.’

He said goodbye and walked off and Noah turned back to Derek.

‘Entrance exam is in three weeks.’ he said in all seriousness. ‘Your ass better be ready to take it because I’m too old for this shit.’

It was worth it for Derek’s low huff of laughter as he walked off and left Noah making a face at having to babysit the corpse.

**************
Stiles was equal parts horrified and fascinated. He’d taken the bestiary downstairs, careful to keep his face and scent neutral when he went back into the living room. Scott and Isaac were playing Mortal Kombat and he left them to their trash talk and trying to cheat by bumping each other while he read the pages on the kanima. When he was done, he turned to the Internet and started falling down a search engine hole that he knew he wasn’t going to recover from anytime soon.

‘Hey.’ He looked up from his screen and Isaac was looking at him. ‘You want to play?’

Stiles met his eyes, thinking about what Derek had said and shook his head, trying to sound like everything was okay, at least for the time being.

‘No, I’m good.’ he replied and took out his phone tapping out a message to Derek.

This is not good.

It pinged a second later.

I know. Am at Deaton’s now then coming right back.

Stiles dropped his phone in his lap and went back to his research.

*************

Derek stuck his phone back in his pocket and jogged across the lot to the front door of the clinic. He went in and through to the back, finding Deaton and Lydia in his office.

‘Derek?’ Deaton frowned at his unannounced arrival. ‘What’s wrong?’

‘Isaac’s father is dead.’ Derek told them. ‘He was ripped to pieces and eaten. Chris told me he thinks it’s a kanima.’

‘Oh no.’ Deaton’s face changed immediately. ‘That is very bad news if it’s true.’

‘What do you know about them?’ Derek asked, coming over to the table they were sitting at and giving Lydia a quick nod. She replied with a smile but said nothing.

‘That if it is a kanima, it’s going to not stop at just one.’ Deaton replied. ‘It’ll be at the mercy of it’s master, and what they tell it to do.’

‘It’s master?’ Derek frowned. ‘It has a master?’

‘The bestiary.’ Deaton said. ‘Talia’s one. It should have all the information we’ve got on it.’

‘Yeah, Stiles is working on that.’ Derek sat down. He noticed that Lydia had a very old book open in front of her and reached across but she pulled it out of reach and glared at him.

‘Emissary stuff.’ she said. ‘Not for wolves.’

‘How does that make any sense.’ Derek asked. ‘I’m your alpha.’

‘Maybe, but still not for wolves.’ Lydia told him and looked at Deaton. ‘What is a kanima? I haven’t seen it mentioned anywhere.’

‘No.’ Deaton sat down. ‘It’s a werewolf that has lost their way during the transformation. They are lost in themselves and cannot find their way to the wolf. It’s very rare. I have only heard of it happening once before and the end result was not good. The kanima got out of control and had to be
killed, along with the person controlling him.’

‘So how does that work?’ Lydia’s eyes were bright with interest. ‘The master thing?’

‘The kanima needs to have a master.’ Deaton replied. ‘Just as wolves have an anchor. The master can control and guide the kanima to do their bidding. As you can probably tell, the potential for abuse is massive.’

‘Shit.’ Derek blew out a deep breath. ‘So someone in Beacon Hills is controlling it.’

‘Yes.’ Deaton said. ‘But how they knew what it was and how to control it is something I can’t fathom.’

‘It must be someone familiar with the supernatural.’ Lydia mused.

‘Maybe Gerard.’ Derek suggested. ‘It wouldn’t be out of his realm of experience.’

‘No that makes no sense.’ Deaton said. ‘If it was Gerard, he would have gone after bigger targets, like yourself. Why would he want to kill Lahey? The kanima is used for personal vengeance. The master is linked to Lahey in some way.’

‘So we figure out who has a grudge against Lahey and that will lead us to the master?’ Derek asked and Deaton nodded.

‘And then if we find the master, we’ll find the kanima.’ Lydia added. ‘But where do we start?’

‘I’ll ask Isaac.’ Derek said. ‘I’m going to have to tell him his dad’s dead anyway so might as well find out if there could be anyone who would have done this.’

‘Yes, that’s a good place to start.’ Deaton replied. ‘Lydia can help me with trying to come up with a way to neutralise it.’

Derek thought about molotov cocktails and smirked at her.

‘Your favourite thing.’ he said and she snorted and held up her middle finger, the nail immaculately painted in iridescent green.

‘Don’t you sass me while I’m trying to learn how to be your emissary.’ She narrowed her eyes at him. ‘This is going to play havoc with my plans to go to MIT.’

‘I’ll send you to MIT, Lydia.’ Derek said, hiding his smile. ‘And I am eternally grateful you’re going to be my emissary.’

‘Good.’ Lydia tossed her hair over her shoulder. ‘Because Deaton says I’m a natural.’

‘She is.’ Deaton smiled at her. ‘She’s already got pack law memorised and is working on full moon rituals.’

‘Really?’ Derek couldn’t help but be impressed.

‘Natural genius.’ Lydia said, looking pleased with herself. ‘And lucky for you, this is all extremely interesting. I think I’m going to enjoy being your emissary.’

‘Well, that’s good to know.’ Derek gave her a bemused grin. ‘I’m really not on control here anymore, am I?’
‘Like you ever were.’ Lydia snorted. ‘Now, you go talk to Stiles and Isaac. Try and see if there’s anyone at all who would have had a problem with Coach Lahey. I’m sure if his treatment of his only living son is anything to go by, he could have all kinds of skeletons in his closet. I’ll try and find out how we deal with the kanima.’

Derek looked at Deaton and got a shrug.

‘She’s basically teaching herself here.’ he said and Derek huffed and shook his head.

‘I’ll call when I get back to the house.’ he said but Lydia’s nose was already back in her book. She gave him an absent little wave and he left, smiling to himself at how things turned out.

************

Chris got back to the house and called for Allison. She replied from upstairs and he went up to her, finding her busy doing schoolwork.

‘Is that important?’ he asked and she smiled and put it aside.

‘Nothing that I can’t do later.’ she said and gave him a quizzical look. ‘Why?’

‘Get dressed.’ he told her. ‘Tactical gear. We’re going on patrol.’

‘Oh?’ Her dark eyes sharpened immediately. ‘What is it?’

‘Isaac Lahey’s father has been killed. I think it’s supernatural and so does Noah and Derek.’ Chris said. ‘That means your training is about to officially start. You and Derek talked about a treaty, right?’

‘Yes, we did.’ Allison stood up. ‘And I’m ready for this, Dad. You know I’m taking this seriously.’

Chris stood and looked at her, smiling at her obvious eagerness. He walked over to her and pulled her into a tight hug, kissing the top of her head.

‘I’m so proud of you, you know that?’ he said.

‘Thank you.’ Allison sounded a little bit choked but he didn’t blame her. He was feeling it himself. He let her go and put his hands on her shoulders.

‘Time for you to really learn about what we do.’ he said and Allison smiled at him and followed him from the room.

************

Derek pulled up outside the Stilinski house and turned the Camaro off, sighing as he thought about what he had to do. His mind jumped back six years and he closed his eyes, fighting the shift as he remembered.

He had felt the bond break as he and Laura left school. He’d had late basketball practice and she’d been at her debate meet and she’d been teasing him about something when it happened, a terrible pain lancing through them both and then the feeling of the pack bonds stretching further than they ever had. By the time they made it into the car and Laura was racing through the streets in the direction of home, they were starting to snap one by one.

He’d never felt such immense pain before, such anger at what was happening. He’d shifted in the car and Laura’s eyes had blazed at him as she tried to keep them both calm enough to be human when
they pulled in and saw the house burning. They’d run for the flames, only to be caught by a deputy and the sheriff. He remembered that as clear as day, Noah’s blue eyes so full of sympathy and his own pain. Derek hadn’t made the connection at the time, but now he thought about it he recalled Talia talking about Claudia dying a couple of months before.

‘Derek.’ His voice had been so gentle. ‘You can’t go in, son. They’re gone.’

Now Derek had to go inside and do the same for one of his betas, one of his pack. It wasn’t going to be pleasant but he owed it to the man who’d done it for him and who’d taken him in like a part of his own family. The man who was the father of his mate and part of his new pack, even if he wasn’t a wolf.

He got out and started walking towards the house, the front door opening before he’d even got there. It was Stiles, his scent thick with that distinctive smell Derek remembered. Like father, like son it seemed.

‘He’s in the living room.’ he told Derek. ‘He knows something’s up.’

‘Take Scott and go get something to eat.’ Derek dug his wallet out and handed it to him with the car keys. ‘He’ll need privacy for this.’

‘Got it.’ Stiles turned his head towards the house. ‘Scott, pizza run.’

Scott came trotting out a few moments later. He and Stiles had a moment’s silent conversation and then got in the Camaro without a word. Derek waited until they had pulled off before he went inside and found Isaac sitting on the couch, his hands folded in front of him and reeking of nerves.

‘It’s my dad, isn’t it?’ he asked. ‘Stiles has the shittiest poker face ever.’

Derek sighed and went to sit next to him.

‘He’s dead.’ he said and pain bloomed in Isaac’s scent even as his expression never changed. ‘The thing from the other night got him.’

‘When?’ Isaac asked and Derek moved in just a bit, just enough for their shoulders to make contact.

‘Last night.’ he replied. ‘For what it’s worth, I’m sorry.’

‘Me too.’ Isaac wasn’t crying but Derek knew that was just his way of dealing with things. He hadn’t cried either once the first shock had passed, just shut down like Isaac was doing now. He thought about Laura and how she hadn’t been able to help him because if her own grief, but he was the one here without the pain. He could help.

He put one hesitant arm around Isaac’s shoulders and pulled him in, nosing at his hair and scenting him the same way his parents used to when he or his sisters had hurt themselves or needed comforting.

‘You don’t have to say or do anything.’ he said. ‘There’s no right or wrong way to do this.’

‘I hate him.’ Isaac’s whisper was fierce. ‘I’m glad he’s dead.’ Then his whole body slumped and he started crying, great heaving sobs that made him shake violently until Derek caught him in his arms and held him still, Isaac’s tears wetting his shirt at the shoulder.

‘It’s okay.’ He murmured, folding Isaac into him and back onto the couch. ‘You’re pack now. We’ve got you.’
Stiles paid for the pizzas and turned to see Scott looking like someone who had just seen his puppy get run over.

‘What’s wrong?’ he asked and Scott put a hand over his heart.

‘It hurts.’ he said, his voice so confused and lost that it nearly broke Stiles’ heart. He went over and gently guided Scott towards the door.

‘Go wait in the car.’ he said. ‘We need to talk.’

Noah came in early in the evening to the rather unexpected sight of Derek and Isaac cuddled up on the couch. Isaac had his head tucked under Derek’s and he was sniffling quietly while Derek was making a soft growling noise that sounded almost like a purr. It was weird as hell but then again, Noah was learning to take anything that came at him so he just walked in and sat down in the chair opposite.

‘Isaac?’ He kept his voice soft and calm. ‘We need to talk.’

‘I know.’ Isaac sounded clogged. ‘Derek told me everything. You think he was targeted.’

‘There’s no other reason for that to have happened.’ Noah said. ‘Derek and Deaton have both said this thing is controlled by somebody and that it’s sole existence is down to vengeance. And after the whole debacle with Derek’s uncle, I will look for any connection I can. Now, can you think of anyone that might have had a grudge against your father?’

‘You mean besides me?’ Isaac was bitter, his mouth twisted in a mocking smile. ‘I’d be the prime suspect.’

‘You would except for the fact that I know you were here last night and Derek could tell if you were lying about anything.’ Noah said. ‘But in light of what I’ve learned, and the fact that your father was in a position of authority at the high school, could it be possible that this wasn’t the first time he’d done it?’

‘He used to hit Cam too.’ Isaac confessed in a small voice. ‘I don’t know about anyone else.’

‘Okay.’ Noah put a gentle hand on his knee. ‘I know you’re in shock right now, so we’ll leave the formal statement until tomorrow. Derek can bring you in in the morning.’ He sighed and then looked at Derek. ‘I am going to be recommending that Derek assumes guardianship of you to Child Services. You’re seventeen, so it should be fine but there still needs to be a responsible adult and I can’t do it, not now. I think that seeing as he’s now your alpha, that will be more fitting anyway. Would that be alright?’

‘Yeah.’ Derek agreed instantly. ‘Isaac?’

‘It’s okay with me.’ Isaac said. He looked suddenly exhausted. ‘Can I go up?’

‘Sure.’ Noah nodded and he and Derek watched Isaac leave the room. ‘Where are the boys?’

‘Gone to get dinner, if you want to stay.’ Derek replied.

‘Thanks, but I need to get back.’ Noah got up. ‘I just wanted to check in. Keep an eye on them, will
‘No problem.’ Derek looked at the ceiling and Noah assumed he was tracking Isaac’s movements. ‘But I’m going out later to see if I can track it.’

‘I’ll call Chris.’ Noah said. ‘I don’t want you doing it alone. I’ll call Melissa and let her know that Scott will probably be staying over.’

‘Okay.’ Derek said and followed him to the door. ‘What you said earlier, about someone having a grudge against Lahey and if he’d been violent with anyone before.’

‘What?’ Noah asked. ‘Do you know something?’

‘Coach Lahey was the swim coach when I was at Beacon High.’ Derek shoved his hands in his pockets. ‘Camden was two years above me. I never put two and two together, but there were plenty of times I saw him with bruises in the locker room. Swim practice and lacrosse used to be the same afternoon so we were often in the showers at the same time. I was just so caught up with my own stuff that I never questioned it.’

‘Isaac said that he protected him.’ Noah said and Derek shrugged.

‘There were rumours.’ He sighed heavily. ‘The swim team used to meet at Lahey’s house. He’d buy them alcohol, let them get drunk there. I know because the other guys on the lacrosse team were mad because Finstock would never let us do anything like that. I could also smell it on them, sometimes during the week.’

‘It’s unethical, but it still doesn’t warrant murder.’ Noah replied. ‘Unless he was also disciplining the swim team in the same way he did his sons.’

‘They won that year.’ Derek shrugged. ‘Finstock was so pissed off because they got to Nationals and won and we didn’t. I don’t know, it’s probably nothing.’

‘I’ll check into it anyway.’ Noah said, squeezing his shoulder and walking out the front door. The Jeep was just pulling in and he stopped to talk to Stiles. Derek stood and watched in bemusement as Scott got out and all but ran past him and thumped up the stairs without even saying hello.

Derek stared at where he’d disappeared to, listening as the door to the spare bedroom was thrown open and then the sound of Isaac breaking down and Scott climbing on the bed next to him. That was the time he stopped listening, giving them their privacy.

‘Hey.’ Stiles came up onto the porch, pizza boxes in his arms and a couple of plastic bags slung over his elbows.

‘Hey.’ Derek took them from him. ‘So what was that all about? You two gone for a long time.’

‘We may have had a talk.’ Stiles said. ‘When we were at the pizza place, Scott started feeling weird. Like pains in his chest weird.’

‘Oh.’ Derek suddenly understood. ‘That wasn’t what I was expecting.’

‘Me either.’ Stiles shut the front door behind them. ‘Scott’s never ever even looked at another guy that way.’

‘Well, like I said wolves don’t really make the distinction.’ Derek said. ‘It’s kind of quick though.’
'No quicker than us.' Stiles pointed out. ‘Also, I should maybe mention that Scott is very much a shoot first, ask questions later kind of guy. Exhibit A - look how he became a werewolf in the first place.’

‘True.’ Derek sat down on the couch and flipped open the first pizza box. Stiles sat down next to him and changed the channel until he found a documentary on sea otters, then grabbed another box and started eating.

‘You think they’ll fuck before Monday?’ he asked and Derek choked on the sip of soda he’d just taken.

‘I don’t really want to know if they do.’ he muttered and Stiles snickered and kicked him in the ankle.

‘So this kanima bullshit.’ he said. ‘I figure two things. First, we try to find the damn thing and that leads us back to the master. Or we find the master and it leads us to the kanima.’

‘Easier said than done.’ Derek huffed. ‘You find a way to kill it?’

‘Not really.’ Stiles said. ‘It’s dangerous though. It’s stronger than even an alpha and it’s got razor sharp venomous claws that paralyse you. Also, apparently it’s like a pokemon. It evolves.’

‘Fuck.’ Derek stopped eating, looking and smelling very concerned. ‘Into what?’

‘You don’t want to know.’ Stiles gave an exaggerated shiver. ‘It didn’t look pretty. There is a cure, but it’s serious fairytale bullshit.’

‘What kind of bullshit?’ Derek asked. ‘It might be our only shot.’

‘Would you believe true love is the saving factor.’ Stiles snorted. ‘Like that will fucking work? If the person who turned into a kanima was that fucking lost they mutated in the first place, chances aren’t good someone loves them a hell of a lot.’

‘I’m more worried about the fact that there’s another wolf in Beacon Hills.’ Derek said. ‘Not to mention how I didn’t know they were even here.’

‘Because it’s not a wolf, it’s a kanima?’ Stiles pointed out. ‘Although the transformation is pretty instantaneous.’ He frowned. ‘Maybe Peter bit someone we don’t know about?’

‘Or maybe, it’s someone whos’ been showing signs of being bitten and rejecting the bite.’ Derek was sitting bolt upright, his eyes glowing red. ‘Fuck. How did we miss it?’

Stiles looked at him quizzically and then nearly slapped Derek in the face when he figured it out and waved his arms around in realization.

‘No.’ He raised his eyebrows at him and Derek glowered back. ‘You think…?’

‘I think.’ Derek was up and grabbing his jacket. ‘Will he be at home?’

‘Honestly, I have no clue where he’ll be.’ Stiles was on his feet as well and going to the stairs. ‘Hey, we’re going out for a bit! Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do!’ He came back and grabbed his own jacket and Derek snorted at him.

‘You do realise that your definition of things you wouldn’t do and Scott’s are probably not the same, right?’ he asked and Stiles shoved him playfully.

‘Asshole.’ He walked to the passenger side of the Camaro. ‘So if it’s Jackson, what the hell do we
‘Well, we can’t just accuse him.’ Derek said, getting in his side. ‘We’re going to have to prove it.’

‘Okay so how do we do that?’ Stiles asked.

‘I don’t know, you’re the one who read the bestiary.’ Derek replied, pulling out the drive. They were quiet for a moment as Derek drove down the street and then both looked at each other.

‘Lydia.’ They said it at the same time and then both snorted with laughter.

‘We’re turning into one of those couples, aren’t we?’ Stiles asked.

‘Hey, my parents were one of those couples.’ Derek huffed, but it was fond.

‘So were mine.’ Stiles felt a twinge. ‘So should we go there first.’

‘Already on it.’ Derek said, taking the turn.

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‘I need to get my hands on that bestiary.’ Lydia muttered. ‘But Stiles is being a book hog. He hasn’t let it out of his sight.’

‘Yeah, well he’s like you.’ Allison sounded tinny and distant but her and Chris were still in the preserve and the reception out there was patchy at best. ‘You’re both such nerds.’

‘Boo, you whore.’ Lydia retorted and Allison laughed. ‘So how’s the hunt going?’

‘It’s quiet.’ Allison said. ‘Nothing out here at all.’

‘Hmmm.’ Lydia looked at her laptop screen. ‘Well, I’ve managed to dig up nothing at all about Isaac’s dad apart from the fact that he ran the swimming team very successfully until Cameron Lahey was killed in Afghanistan and then he quit. From what I can read between the lines and what happened with Isaac, I think he was obviously drinking on the job.’

‘Damn.’ Allison was walking around and Lydia could hear leaves crunching under her feet. ‘I feel really sorry for him. I mean, my family is fucked up but they never hurt me.’

Lydia smiled when she heard Chris make a sarcastic comeback in the background and then told Allison to get off the phone.

‘You better go.’ she said and Allison huffed.

‘I’ll see you tomorrow?’ she asked and Lydia smiled.

‘Yeah, I’ll come by after I’ve been to Deaton.’ she said. ‘He’s got me coming over every weekend from now until forever so I can train. Thank God most of my AP work is already done.’

‘You are terrifying and incredible.’ Allison was smiling, judging from her tone of voice. ‘Bye.’

‘Bye.’ Lydia hung up and put her phone down, frowning when it buzzed not a second later.

Stiles and I are on our way. Need to talk about kanima.

‘Hmmm.’ Lydia put the phone back down and then winced as the ache in her temples flared. She’d
been getting it on and off since she’d gotten home and she sighed and closed her laptop. Maybe reading and research on top of all the concentrating Deaton had been making her do on her powers that morning hadn’t been such a good idea. She rubbed at her temples, closing her eyes and flopping back onto her bed. She just needed a couple of minutes before the werewolf hurricane that was Stiles came crashing into her house.

She lay there, breathing in and out deeply like Deaton has showed her during their sessions and that was when she felt herself drifting. It was almost like going to sleep, except Lydia was still conscious of everything. She tried to move but found she couldn’t, almost as if paralysed and her heart rate started to climb and then everything went black.

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‘So if it’s Jackson, that means we have to convince her to get back with him.’ Stiles was gesticulating violently and Derek growled at him when one hand narrowly missed his face. His mate was far too emotive for his own good some days.

‘Good luck on getting that to happen.’ He checked his mirrors. ‘Lydia is not going to do anything she doesn’t want to.’

‘I know.’ Stiles slumped down in his seat. ‘But we can’t just leave him like that if it is him. I mean, he’s obnoxious enough as a human. Being a murderous super-lizard is just going to make him that much more of a douche.’

‘Noted.’ Derek pulled into Lydia’s road. ‘But we have to prove it’s him first. I don’t think your dad is going to go for flat out murder.’

‘But it would be a mercy killing.’ Stiles pouted and Derek rolled his eyes at him. ‘Fine. But exactly how are we going to do that, smartywolf? It’s not like we can just ask him.’

‘No.’ Derek stopped and turned off the Camaro. ‘There’s got to be some way to test. He doesn’t smell like a wolf, but he also doesn’t smell human anymore. And there’s the fact that his body was acting like it was rejecting a bite. Maybe it wasn’t rejecting the bite per se, but the wolf. That would make sense.’

‘Ugh, I hate it when you’re all logical.’ Stiles muttered and got out the car.

They walked up to the front door and Derek knocked. Stiles tuned in, hearing a single heartbeat inside the house. It was slow, almost like Lydia was asleep.

‘Dude, she’s napping.’ he said and derek frowned.

‘She can’t be.’ He showed Stiles his phone. ‘She answered my text like ten minutes ago. Listen.’

Derek tilted his head and the frown deepened.

‘She’s not sleeping.’ he said. ‘Her breathing is too quick.’

Stiles knocked again, but there was still no answer.

‘Where’s her room?’ Derek asked and he glanced up at the roof.

‘We can’t break in.’ he squeaked. ‘She’ll kill us.’

‘I’m her alpha.’ Derek said but it sounded like he was trying to convince himself more than anything. ‘It’ll be fine.’
‘Okay.’ Stiles grumbled, watching as Derek moved off the porch and took a flying leap to catch the edge and haul himself up. ‘But it’s your funeral, buddy.’

‘Ha ha.’ Derek hung upside down off the edge of the porch roof. ‘Now will you get your ass up here?’

‘Asshole.’ Stiles huffed and jumped up to join him.

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Lydia opened her eyes and looked around her. She was in the main hall of Beacon Hills High but it looked somehow different to her.

She walked over to the trophy case, her heels clicking on the floor the only sound. When she got there, she recognised none of the pictures in the case and she peered at them, her fingertips brushing the glass as she tried to figure out what was happening. It was only when she spotted a familiar face amongst the players on the lacrosse team that she gasped, reading the name below to confirm her suspicions.

‘I look kind of different, don’t I.’ The voice behind her was younger but Lydia knew who it was without looking.

‘You’re dead.’ she said, her voice shaking ever so slightly. ‘Derek killed you and buried you under the Hale house.’

‘Yes, he did.’ Peter’s voice came closer but she didn’t hear any footsteps to signify he’d moved. ‘But then again, you’re a banshee. Talking to the dead is kind of your thing.’

Lydia took a deep breath and turned around. The boy behind her was tall and slender, not quite grown into his adult body. The brown hair and sharp features were Peter’s, albeit a much younger version, but it was the piercing blue eyes that convinced her.

‘What do you want?’ she asked, backing up against the trophy cabinet. ‘I can’t help you.’

‘Oh yes you can.’ Peter’s smile was every bit as predatory as it had been when he was alive. ‘You’re Derek’s new emissary and, as much as he may not want it, I’m a member of his pack.’

‘That’s impossible.’ Lydia protested. ‘Or did you miss the whole thing where I said you’re dead.’

Peter chuckled.

‘My darling girl.’ His voice was rich with amusement and his eyes flashed electric blue. ‘Death is simply another state of being. One I would dearly like to get out of. Now, I know that Derek has been to the safety deposit box and retrieved my sister’s bestiary. All you need to know about how to bring me back will be in there.’

‘And of I don’t want to help you?’ Lydia asked, lifting her chin in defiance. ‘You were psychotic the last time we met. What’s to say you just won’t try and kill us all again.’

‘Well, I’m going to be offering you something to give Derek to show him I have no ill intentions.’ Peter purred. ‘Well, this time.’

‘And what might that be?’ Lydia sniped. ‘I doubt you have anything he’d want.’

‘Tell him, if he lets you bring me back I’ll give him Laura.’ Peter said. ‘I’ll show him how to get her
Bullshit.’ Lydia scoffed. ‘There’s definitely no way you’ll be able to do that.’

‘Try me.’ Peter gave her a beatific smile. ‘You think Deaton knows magic? I know more than he could possibly teach you. I know the old wolf magic that my grandmother taught me and which I would have taught to Stiles if I’d lived. That boy had the Spark as a human and would make a fine draoidh. If this works and I come back, I’ll definitely be talking to Derek about that.’

‘You’re still insane.’ Lydia said, shaking her head in disbelief. ‘Dying did absolutely nothing for that.’

‘Lydia.’ Peter was suddenly serious. ‘Just deliver the message for me. Please. Tell your alpha that I wish to come back and that I would like to be accepted into the pack again. In exchange and to demonstrate the depths of me remorse, I will help bring back Laura. It’s the only thing I can give him to make up for what I did.’

‘Oh my God.’ Lydia huffed. ‘All right, I’ll tell him. But don’t blame me when he doesn’t believe what I’m saying.’

‘Thank you.’ Peter said and then his big hands were cupping her face, the skin warm. ‘Now you need to go. He and Stiles are busy standing outside your bedroom window trying to wake you up without drawing attention to the fact that there are two werewolves on your roof.’ His voice was full of affection. ‘Idiots.’

Lydia came back to herself still lying on her back and staring at the ceiling. She could hear the frantic rapping on her window pane and sat up slowly, still feeling a little disorientated. It took a minute or two for her to get up and go over to the window to open it.

‘What the hell are you two doing on my roof?’ she hissed and they had the decency to look sheepish.

‘We thought you’d fainted.’ Stiles tried to explain as she grabbed his arm and yanked him through the window. ‘We were worried.’

‘What he said.’ Derek added, stumbling in after him.

‘Well, I wouldn’t be if your uncle hadn’t decided to pay me a visit from beyond the grave.’ she grumbled. ‘It’s given me the worst fucking headache ever.’

‘Um.’ Stiles said, his face all scrunched up. He and Derek were exchanged looks. ‘Did you just say that Peter came to visit you?’

‘Yes, I did.’ Lydia sat back down on the bed, rubbing at the back of her neck. ‘He sent a message through me because apparently the talking to the dead part of being a banshee is literal.’

‘Fuck.’ Derek looked at a loss for words. ‘What did he say?’

‘Just that he wants to be resurrected and in exchange he’d help bring Laura back from the dead.’ Lydia told him, gratified when Derek’s eyes went impossibly wide. ‘Nothing major.’

‘Holy shit.’ Stiles looked torn between being horrified and delighted. ‘Zombiewolf.’

‘Shut up, Stiles.’ Derek growled, his eyes blazing red. ‘Go back to the part about Laura.’

‘So it might be the case that your sister doesn’t have to stay dead.’ Now Lydia was smug. ‘I can
bring her back. Or at least I can help him to bring her back.’

‘Jesus.’ Derek’s mouth was hanging open, bunny teeth just visible. He moved to sit down next to her and Lydia rolled her eyes because he was being ridiculous.

‘Derek?’ Stiles came to crouching in front of him, cupping Derek’s face in his hands. ‘You okay?’

‘No.’ Derek said. ‘I am very much not fucking okay.’ His hands were in his lap, claws out. ‘I am as far from being fucking okay as it’s possible to be.’

‘Shit.’ Stiles threw Lydia a pleading glance.

‘Fine.’ Lydia got up, heaving a sigh. ‘I’ll get him some water.’

She stomped off, bemoaning the fact that she seemed to have hitched herself to the most incompetent alpha ever, not to mention the fact that she was now a conduit for the undead.

It was turning out to be a most inauspicious day.
Chapter Summary

It's the full moon and the pack gets a new member.

Chapter Notes

So there's some f/f smut in this :) Lydia and Allison got tired of the boys having all the fun. Also T/W for Jackson using homophobic language.

‘Um.’ Noah raised a finger and then lowered it and then raised it again. ‘So now I’ve had a couple of days for this to sink in, I think I have some questions?’

‘Hah. How the hell do you think I feel? He’s going to get Lydia to raise him from the dead.’ Stiles said, well aware that they were really no closer to feeling any better about the situation. ‘Then they’re going to raise Laura from the dead.’

‘Jesus, Stiles.’ Noah put his face in his hands. ‘I told you that if it involved necromancy or time travel, I was out. I’m really not comfortable with any of this.’

‘I know, but...well we kind of need some help with this.’ Stiles said. ‘Because obviously we can’t just go Oh look, Laura Hale has just turned up alive because that’s going to be one hell of a thing to explain.’ He got up to refill their coffee mugs. ‘So we’re going to have to come up with something else. Like an alternate identity maybe. I don’t even know right now. And besides, it could turn out to be all hypothetical. Lydia’s had nothing else since the weekend.’

‘I can’t believe this.’ Noah looked through the kitchen window to where Derek was standing in the backyard, shoulders hunched. ‘I can see he’s still not taking it very well.’

‘I don’t really know.’ Stiles waved a hand. Derek had been in full on brood mode since Saturday and showed no signs of coming out of it. ‘His feelings are all fucked up. It’s like being on an emotional trampoline at the moment and I can’t really blame him.’

‘One quiet week.’ Noah implored the ceiling. ‘Just one.’

‘I don’t think that’s happening anytime soon.’ Isaac said, shuffling into the kitchen. He was dressed for school and Noah and Stiles exchanged glances.

‘You still okay to go in, son?’ Noah asked and Isaac shrugged. He’d taken Monday off so he could go see the social worker for his case and sort out the paperwork that gave Derek full guardianship. It had been a rough day but his eyes were clear and he was calm.

‘Might as well get it over with.’ he said, coming to the table and taking a piece of toast from Stiles’ plate. ‘People are going to talk regardless of when I go back. At least this way I can control the conversation a bit.’
‘Truth.’ Stiles said and shoved him gently when he sat down. ‘But if anyone gives you shit, you just come find us and me and Scott will kick their asses.’

‘Thank you.’ Isaac’s shy smile was weary and Stiles wondered just how much sleep he’d gotten. He knew Derek hadn’t had much, tossing and turning and waking up shaking more than once the night before. Stiles could sympathise. If someone had told him he could have his mom back, he’d be feeling just as confused.

‘Derek’s going to talk to Deaton about this?’ Noah asked and he nodded.

‘He’s going there this morning.’ he replied. ‘But can you still hold off on telling Chris anything? Derek’s not so sure what the implications would be just yet and he doesn’t want to cause trouble where there might be nothing.’

‘Sure.’ Noah said. ‘I have no idea what Chris’ reaction would be to getting Peter back.’

‘Why?’ Isaac asked and Stiles made a face.

‘Let’s just say it’s really fucking complicated.’ he replied and Isaac huffed a laugh.

‘When it it not?’

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Jackson parked the Porsche and looked around. He was early so the number of kids filtering in was minimal and he got out, searching for the person he was going to meet. He locked the car and jogged over, head down. When he got there, Matt gave him a sly grin.

‘So what exactly do you need this for?’ he asked, nodding at the black camera bag next to him. ‘You and Lydia planning on doing some after hours filming?’

Jackson glared at him.

‘Where the hell have you been Daehler?’ he sneered. ‘Haven’t you heard. She’s with Allison Argent now? Apparently being a dyke is her new thing.’ The hurt he felt saying it aloud was mitigated by the look of utter shock on Matt’s face, so at least that was something.

‘You’re kidding me.’ He looked like someone had just slapped him in the face. ‘Her...and Allison?’

‘It was all over school last week.’ Jackson made a grab for the bag and huffed when Matt intercepted him.

‘No, go back.’ He seemed to be having a hard time computing what he’d just heard. ‘She’s with Lydia?’

‘Yeah.’ Jackson stared pointedly at the bag. ‘You going to hand that over or what?’

‘Yeah.’ Matt picked up the bag and all but threw it at him. ‘Look it’s pretty easy shit to set up. I got to go.’ He took off, leaving Jackson frowning after him.

‘Thanks for nothing, jackass.’ he muttered and then shouldered the bag. He’d have to get someone else to help and he knew exactly who he could ask.

***********

‘So the pack is going to be pretty big, huh?’ Scott said, leaning in between the front seats of the Jeep.
'If it works.'

‘Yeah, but it can’t hurt to keep an eye out for candidates.’ Stiles said, pulling into the school lot. ‘A bigger pack means a more stable pack. And right now, I think Derek needs all the stabilising he can get.’

‘So what are we looking for?’ Isaac asked. ‘I mean, I kind of fell into your lap.’

‘True.’ Stiles pulled into a space, grinning at Greenburg who’d had to jump out the way. ‘The same as you, I guess. People who need it. Someone whose life would get better by being part of the pack.’

‘Someone cool though.’ Scott suggested. ‘Maybe a girl this time. Seeing as it’s kind of a sausage fest at the moment.’

‘Are you saying you don’t like sausage?’ Isaac said, giving him a knowing smile in the rear view mirror and Scott went scarlet, much to Stiles’ extreme amusement.

‘I think he’s starting to.’ he cackled and gave Isaac a high five then nearly jumped out of his skin when someone rapped loudly on his window. It was Lydia, looking extremely focused.

‘Crap.’ Scott grumbled. ‘That’s never a good look on her.’

‘Don’t I know it.’ Stiles wound down the window, leaning away from her reach. ‘Lydia, my tender oozing blossom. To what do we owe the pleasure?’

‘Stow it, Stilinski.’ she said and then looked past him to Scott and Isaac. ‘I need you to help me do some research. I decided I’m not going into this deal without knowing what the hell I’m going up against.’

‘Fair.’ Stiles said. ‘But where the fuck do we start?’

‘Well, that’s why I need you, dipshit.’ Lydia told him and flounced off.

Allison was waiting for her at the steps and as they approached she gave Scott a shy smile. Stiles couldn’t help but notice that Isaac’s eyes were glued to the interaction and the sharp tangy note that pervaded his scent told Stiles just how he felt about it.

‘Hi.’ Allison said and she blushed prettily when Lydia took her hand. ‘So I hear there’s all kinds of shit happening.’

‘Yeah.’ Scott was giving her his usual puppy grin when Isaac made his move, sidling up next to him and taking Scott’s hand in an unmistakably possessive manner. He threw Allison a smile that was just a hint too sharp and Stiles stifled a cackle at the bemusement on Scott’s face.

‘So, I’m going to go and do something that gets me out of the awkward.’ he declared and jogged off before they could stop him, snickering at the standoff happening behind him as he took out his phone and texted Derek. He was so engrossed though that he didn’t see the person in front of him and unceremoniously walked right into her.

She toppled over and Stiles managed to grab her and hold her up in one arm, realising too late it looked a little rom-com and he blushed furiously and set her back on her feet. The bitter chemical scent of medication assailed him, mixed with soft floral perfume and what could only be described as deeply entrenched melancholy and Stiles identified her even before he took in the baggy clothing designed to disguise and the stringy dirty blond hair that hung in curtains around her face.
‘Hey, Erica.’ He gave her a little wave of apology. ‘Sorry. I’m being extra klutzy today. You okay?’

Erica Reyes gave him a tiny smile, ducking her head to hide eyes that were as big and brown as his own. He’d known her since grade school, knew she was sweet and shy and sick. Back then they’d all been terrified when she’d had one of her episodes and he remembered his mom sitting him down and explaining how sometimes people’s brains fought against their bodies and made them ill. When he was older, he’d lost himself one evening in an internet spiral of sites devoted to epilepsy and now he had a much better appreciation for what she lived with. She’d been more outgoing until she’d had an episode in class that someone had recorded and then put on the internet and from that day she’d tried to lose herself as much as possible.

Now she stood and looked at him and Stiles felt that weird little thing inside him go click once again. Now that he thought about it, she was pretty much perfect.

‘Stiles?’ Her soft voice jerked him out of his train of thought and he returned her smile, maybe a bit too enthusiastically judging from the way she took a step back.

‘Hi.’ He stuck his phone back in his pocket. ‘How are you?’

‘Okay, I guess.’ Erica was frowning a little. ‘Um...I don’t want to sound ungrateful, but why are you smiling at me like that?’

‘Oh, no reason.’ Stiles toned it down a little. ‘Look, are you hanging with anyone at lunch time?’

‘No.’ Erica tucked a strand of hair behind her ear and went pink. ‘Why?’

‘I figured maybe you’d want to come sit with us.’ Stiles said and her eyes flicked to over his shoulder where he could hear the others approaching.

‘I don’t know.’ She sounded and smelled wary. ‘Maybe.’

‘Okay then.’ Stiles started to wave again, realised it was making him look a little frantic and dropped his hand but Erica was already scuttling off, her head down and her bag hugged to her chest.

‘What was that?’ Scott asked and he turned to see that apparently whatever had happened outside, it seemed to have resolved itself because his hand was firmly folded into Isaac’s. Not only that, but Isaac was beaming and the girls were both smirking like crazy.

‘Nothing.’ Stiles waved a hand at him. ‘Am I to assume things are cool?’ He gave them all a questioning look and then made a face when they laughed at him.

‘All cool.’ Allison said and pulled Lydia along with her. Scott gave him a wicked smile and let himself get towed past by Isaac and Stiles found himself gaping at the about face that seemed to have just happened.

‘What the hell?’ He picked up his backpack and trudged after them, shaking his head at the madness.

**************

Danny closed his locker to find Jackson standing behind it and gave him a raised eyebrow.

‘So.’ Jackson’s mouth twisted in a not-quite-smile. ‘I have the camera.’

‘Good.’ Danny wasn’t quite sure what Jackson wanted to do with it but he was prepared to be a good friend and find play along. ‘So?’
‘It’s full moon tonight.’ Jackson said. ‘I have suspicions. I mean, I know I’m not a werewolf but maybe I’m something else.’

‘Maybe.’ Danny sighed. ‘Look, you want me to be there with you? I can.’
‘No, just help me set this shit up and let me do this.’ Jackson replied. ‘I need answers but right now, I kind of feel like I need to see it for myself first.’

‘Okay.’ Danny threw an arm around him. ‘But if you need me, just call me.’

************

On the other side of town, Deaton looked as perplexed as Derek had ever seen him.

‘I don’t like it.’ he finally said, still gently palpating the abdomen of the extremely fat golden retriever on the examination table. Derek sighed and let the dog lick his fingers as he scratched around and under her muzzle.

‘Neither do I.’ He tugged on one silky ear and the dog pushed her whole head into his hand. ‘I don’t even know if it’s possible.’

‘Ordinarily I would say no.’ Deaton said. ‘But I think as far as Peter is concerned, all bets are off. As for bringing back Laura, it could be done. But it would require a great amount of power and you’d need to make sure that you’d be ready to kill her again if she comes back wrong.’

‘Lydia said her and Stiles are going to start researching anything they can find to do with this today.’ Derek scratched behind the dog’s ears and she rolled to expose her belly to him.

‘How is that going?’ Deaton asked and Derek gave him a half-smile.

‘She’s so much like Laura sometimes.’ he admitted. ‘It’s kind of scary.’

‘Things sometimes happen because we need them to.’ Deaton said. ‘Lydia’s learning extremely quickly too. She’s become well versed in pack law and basic druidic magic. It doesn’t work quite the same way for her as it would for a human, but she’s going to be a fine emissary.’

‘Actually, I wanted to ask about that.’ Derek shifted on his feet. ‘If Laura comes back, will she be alpha again?’

‘I honestly don’t know.’ Deaton folded his arms and met his eyes directly. ‘Logic says that the Hale alpha spark has passed to you and it will only be passed on in the event of your death as it always has. On the other hand, Laura coming back isn’t something we can possibly quantify. I’ve never done this. I’ve never heard of this. But then again, I’m not a wolf. What did Satomi say?’

‘Pretty much the same thing.’ Derek’s mouth quirked. ‘And if she’s never heard of it in all the time she’s been alive, then I don’t hold out much help that it will work.’

‘Yes, but you and Laura were siblings. The pack bond between you was strong.’ Deaton countered. ‘And now you’re a grounded alpha with a mate to anchor you. Your pack is coming together. If anyone is going to stand a good chance then it would be you, especially if Peter’s is going to be helping. He’s more powerful than you think.’

‘He was also insane.’ Derek reminded him. ‘Hence the reason I don’t trust him to be telling the truth about this.’

‘And you would be wise to be wary.’ Deaton agreed. ‘However, you can mitigate this by making
sure that when you bring him back, Chris is there. Mate bonds are able to do a great deal in stabilising a feral wolf.’

‘He wasn’t just feral though.’ Derek kept his eyes on the dog’s smiling face. ‘He was murderous, out of control of anything that made him who he used to be.’

‘And that’s something you’ll have to reconcile.’ Deaton said. ‘Your uncle as he used to be is no longer the same man you knew and remember. You’ll have to learn him all over again.’

‘Shit.’ Derek leaned heavily against the table. ‘Okay. I guess we’ll have to cross that bridge when we get to it.’

‘Now, let’s talk about tomorrow night.’ Deaton moved to stand across from him. ‘What are your plans for Isaac?’

‘I think he’ll be okay.’ Derek didn’t know why Isaac was adapting so quickly, but he was grateful that he showed none of the loss of control of Stiles or Scott when they had been bitten and said as much. Deaton chuckled.

‘I would have thought it was obvious.’ He smiled at Derek. ‘It’s you. You’re anchored and you’re, dare I say it, finally moving on with the trauma you’ve been dealing with. Stiles makes you happy, you’re living somewhere you can relax and feel safe and you have for all intents and purposes an older alpha figure so advise you. You have an emissary and your pack is remarkably stable considering the circumstances. I think all that is transmitting itself to Isaac’s wolf. Don’t forget that he’s now also experiencing the same changes you have and he’s going to be feeling more secure than I would bet he has in a very long time. Lydia said that he’s also establishing a close bond with Scott. I would suggest that maybe you attempt a run tonight. It will strengthen your bonds and let you blow off some steam.’

‘What about the kanima?’ Derek asked. ‘I can’t just let that slide.’

‘You can for one night.’ Deaton said sternly. ‘Go run with your pack, Alpha Hale. I will make sure that Chris and Allison are on the alert. This treaty of yours works both ways, you know. You protect them and they protect you.’

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They got through the morning without incident until History when the PA system crackled and then the sound of the school administrator came through calling Isaac to go to the guidance office. They all swung around to look at him and Isaac gave them a shrug and a resigned expression before getting up and leaving the class.

‘Do you think she’s going to interrogate him?’ Scott hissed at Stiles when the teacher went back to the board.

‘Well, she knows he’s one of us.’ Stiles replied. ‘Maybe this is a divide and conquer strategy to see what he knows. I mean, it was his dad who got killed.’

‘I don’t like it.’ Lydia had her arms crossed and her eyes narrowed. ‘She’s a sneaky bitch.’

‘It’s not like we can do anything now though.’ Allison demurred. ‘Let’s just get through class and then we can go get him.’

‘You think you can shut up for five minutes?’ This was from Danny, sitting in the row in front of them. ‘Also why the hell is Morell a problem?’
‘She’s an emissary.’ Lydia pointed out. ‘For another pack.’

‘Oh.’ Danny made a face. ‘Not good.’

‘Actually do sharks have packs?’ Stiles frowned. ‘I mean, hammerhead swim in those big groups.’

‘Technically we call ourselves ohana.’ Danny replied. ‘So yeah, kind of.’

‘Do you also run on the full moon?’ Scott looked fascinated.

‘No, we swim.’ Danny grinned at him. ‘Sea dog here, not land dog.’

‘Cool.’ Stiles threw Scott a delighted look. ‘Are you swimming tonight?’

‘No.’ Danny shook his head. ‘Not with that thing out there. I’m actually going to keep an eye on Jackson.’

Stiles kept a straight face. He and Derek had spoken about their theory that Jackson was the kanima to Lydia but they had all decided to keep it amongst themselves for the time being until they had a better grip on the situation. There had been no sight of it since it had killed Coach Lahey and there was nothing about it being compelled by the full moon, unlike normal wolves. Next to him, Lydia was doing the same and he admired her ability to be completely unfazed by everything.

‘I think that’s a good idea.’ she said. ‘He needs you, even if he won’t let any of us in.’

‘I don’t think you can really blame him for that.’ Danny gave her and Allison a meaningful look. ‘You kind of cheated on him, Lydia.’

For a second Lydia seemed like she was going to bluff it out and then her face softened. She looked almost human as she nodded.

‘You’re right.’ she replied. ‘But then again, it just means that he’s now free to find someone he can really love and who can make him happier than I did.’

The way she said it made Stiles prick up his metaphorical ears. He also didn’t miss the way Danny’s eyes flashed black for just a second and sat back in surprise. Now this was a twist he hadn’t seen coming.

He was about to add his two cent’s worth but then the teacher turned back and yelled at them for talking and they all shut up and tried to look like they were paying attention.

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‘So, Isaac.’ Morrell had her legs crossed, her chin resting on one hand as she looked at him. ‘How are you? Really?’

‘Better.’ Isaac replied truthfully. ‘I’m doing okay.’ He watched her, trying to use his senses like Derek had been teaching him to. He could hear Morell’s heart, thumping away steadily, smell her light dry perfume and see the way she regarded him and knew he had to be on his guard.

‘I know you’ve been through a lot of changes recently.’ Morell tapped her pen on her notebook. ‘I believe that Derek Hale is now your official guardian until the courts take steps to either emancipate you or make the situation permanent. I have to say that I am surprised that they allowed a young man not much older than yourself and with no familial ties to do that.’

Isaac kept his mouth shut. He knew that Noah had pulled some serious strings and given all kinds of
assurances to make that happen. He would be eighteen in under a year and then he’d be an adult anyway so it really was only a temporary fix and they had all felt that Derek should take the responsibility, being Isaac’s alpha.

Not that he could tell Morell this, of course.

‘The Stilinskis are looking after me and Derek is too.’ He tried not to sound defensive. ‘It’s a whole lot better than what I had.’

‘No, of course. I am not suggesting that they aren’t.’ Morell replied smoothly. ‘Just that maybe you could have been misguided in your choices seeing as this has been a very traumatic time.’

Isaac grinned as he realised that she was fishing for any grievances he might have. He certainly wasn’t going to give her any ammunition.

He stood up and saw the astonishment on her face when he leaned on the desk and faced off against her.

‘I’m not going to give you what you want.’ he said. ‘I know who you are. I know that you want me to turn on my pack. But just so you know, they saved my life and I’m not going to return that loyalty by telling you anything about them. You want to talk, contact my alpha.’

‘Isaac…’ Morell started but he ignored her and walked to the door. When he opened it, he found the rest of his pack standing in the hallway waiting for him. He smiled and walked over to Scott.

‘Isaac.’ Morell was at the door now, falling back a bit when she saw the rest of them. ‘Oh. I see the welcoming committee is here.’

‘More like his guard dogs.’ Lydia snapped. She threw Morell an arch look and herded them away from her office, looking like she’d bitten a lemon and Isaac laughed. He’d always wished his brother could still be with him but now he seemed to have picked up a bunch of siblings, all of them weird. Cam would have pissed himself laughing and dived right in.

‘So, I got a message while you were incarcerated.’ Stiles said, falling into step with him and Scott. ‘Derek says we’re running tonight.’

‘Oh?’ Isaac looked at Scott. ‘What does that mean?’

‘It means your first full moon is going to be a lot more fun than ours were.’ Stiles laughed. ‘We’re going into the preserve.’

‘And my dad and I are going to patrol town.’ Allison added. ‘Make sure the kanima doesn’t go after anyone else.’

They walked along to the locker rooms and spilt up to get changed for gym class. Isaac stuck close to Scott, stealing glances at him as he got undressed and then catching Stiles’ eye when Scott bent over to untie his sneakers. Stiles gave him a knowing grin and Isaac returned it. He’d been overcome with possessiveness earlier but ever since Scott had told Lydia and Allison they were a thing, he’d felt nothing but affection and the slow building need to pin Scott down and rub himself all over him.

Stiles hung back a little and caught his arm.

‘So tonight.’ He kept his voice low. ‘The full moon is going to mess with your hormones, dude. Have you two had the talk?’
'Not exactly.' Isaac glanced over his shoulder. 'I mean he said we were together this morning so I’m kind of thinking that he’s okay with this.'

'Hey, that’s great.' Stiles was all smiles. 'Okay so can i just give you a heads up? This right now is mild. It’s not even midday yet, but later you’re going to feel some changes. It’s going to get worse as the moon gets higher, but one of the things that happens is that you get like mega horny and you’re probably going to jump all over him.'

'Yeah, I know.' Isaac smiled. 'Derek already warned me about this.'

'Good.' Stiles glanced past him. 'It’s just that Scott's never really even thought about being with a guy before you, so I mean he’s probably going to be hella awkward.'

'Nothing has to happen that we don’t want to happen.' Isaac replied. 'But I promise that we’ll sit down and talk about before we go tonight, okay?'

'Cool.' Stiles gave his shoulder a squeeze and jogged off, bouncing around because the other thing the full moon brought was unbridled energy and in the hands of Stiles Stilinski that meant hurricane levels of enthusiasm. He laughed softly to himself and followed him into the gym. Today Finstock had decided they needed to push their limits and there was a climbing wall set up and ready to go.

The man himself was marching back and forth, whistle blaring as he waved his arms.

'Hustle up, nerds!' he yelled. 'I want you in pairs so grab yourself a partner, cats and kittens in a line!'

'Cats and kittens?' Isaac asked and Stiles and Scott snickered.

'He’s so freaking weird.' Lydia sniffed and took hold of Isaac’s arm. 'Got mine.'

'Got mine.' Allison grinned, taking Scott’s arm and that left Stiles looking around. His face lit up and then he was moving with purpose across the gym until he got to Erica Reyes. She was standing at the back, her head down like it usually was and Isaac saw the astonishment on her face clearly when he spoke to her.

'So that’s new.' Lydia’s eyes were narrowed and she had her thinking face on. ‘Anyone want to explain that?’

'Nope.' Allison was already dragging Scott to the front of the line. 'I want to climb.'

***************

Chris was catching up on business, sending emails and calling in orders. He’d let the business slide a little but now things were now calm enough during the day that he’d finally been able to get things running properly again. He missed Victoria’s deft touch and how she’d handled their clients and not for the first time he considered trying to find her. Her actions had been deplorable but maybe he’d be able to bring her around. After all, He knew how much she loved Allison and knew that the separation must be killing her.

His hunter connections had been very careful to make their loyalties clear and he knew none of the big families would dare go against the Council. They had given Chris their blessing to pursue the treaty with Derek’s pack but told him in no uncertain terms that they were watching him closely. Gerard had melted into the woodwork, and he was keeping a very low profile since his goons had been run out of town but Chris knew his father and suspected he was just biding his time.

He needed to be ready for whatever came next.
The light over his desk that indicated his front doorbell was ringing flashed and he sat back and contemplated just ignoring it before finally getting up and going upstairs. When he opened the door and saw Derek standing there, his first thought was that something had happened. Certainly Derek looked unsettled but it was the full moon and there was a kanima on the loose so Chris cut him a little slack.

‘Come in.’ He stood aside to let Derek go past. ‘Everything okay? You’re worried about tonight? I know it’s Isaac’s first moon but he seems to be adjusting well and…’

‘It’s about Peter.’ Derek said and Chris felt his stomach lurch.

‘Right.’ He headed for the kitchen. ‘I think I need a drink for this.’ He came back with a couple of beers and Derek raised an eyebrow at him. ‘What. It’s past twelve.’

Derek looked at his watch, the eyebrow going higher.

‘By a minute.’ he said and Chris chuckled and handed him his drink.

‘So Peter.’ he said. ‘What about him?’

‘He wants Lydia to bring him back from the dead.’ Derek replied and Chris promptly choked on his mouthful of beer. It took a few minutes before he felt like he wasn’t going to cough up a lung and he gaped at Derek.

‘Say what now?’ He couldn’t believe his ears.

‘Yeah so Lydia can talk to him, wherever the hell he is.’ Derek shrugged. ‘I’m guessing Purgatory. Seems like Peter’s kind of place. Anyway he said there’s a way to bring him back. Laura too. So I thought maybe you’d like to know.’

‘Why?’ Chris was at a loss.

‘Why does he want to come back? Or why I told you?’ Derek’s mouth quirked and suddenly Chris couldn’t breathe. He stumbled over to the couch and sat down heavily.

‘He could come back.’ His heart ached with a fierce longing, the same longing he’d been battling since he’d walked away from Peter the first time. ‘Jesus fucking Christ.’

‘Yeah.’ Derek sat down next to him. ‘That was kind of my first feeling.’ His face was filled with an uncertainty Chris had never seen on him. ‘But apparently it’s legit. Even the thing about Laura.’

‘Fuck.’ Chris slumped back against the couch. ‘How?’

‘Lydia and Stiles are trying to figure that out.’ Derek said. ‘I’m not even pretending to understand.’

‘More brawn than brain.’ Chris laughed but it was flat. ‘Me too.’

‘So Deaton said that it would help.’ Derek folded his hands. ‘For you to be there if we can bring him back.’

It took a second for Chris to catch on.

‘The mate bond.’ he sighed. ‘Of course.’

‘You reinstated it before he died.’ Derek said. ‘I felt it.’
‘I don’t know if it ever went away.’ Chris replied. ‘You want me to be there to anchor him.’

‘I think maybe if he’d had you there the last time he woke up, it might have helped.’ Derek looked at him. ‘Laura might still be alive.’

‘You’re right.’ Chris admitted. ‘I could have helped then and I wasn’t around to. If you need me this time, I will.’

‘Even thought this sounds like the craziest fucking thing you’ve ever heard?’ Derek huffed. ‘Because believe me, right now I’m questioning my sanity for going along with this.’

‘When?’ Chris asked. ‘When is this all happening?’

‘I don’t know.’ Derek replied. ‘I just needed to tell you it would be.’ He leaned forward and picked up the beer, cracking it open.

Chris sighed, knowing that his day was pretty much done. He needed to process, so he leaned forward as well and grabbed the remote. He flicked through until he found a ball game and settled in. Next to him, Derek’s shoulders eased and he sipped his beer, looking for all the world like a man lost in a maze that kept changing on him.

Chris knew just how he felt.

***********

Stiles was almost wriggling in anticipation. He couldn’t wait to get up the wall, but when he paid attention he noticed how the smell of unhappiness and fear was coming off Erica.

‘Hey.’ He gently bumped her with his elbow. ‘You okay?’

‘I hate this shit.’ Erica muttered, arms wrapped around herself. ‘And I don’t like climbing walls.’

‘Well, don’t think of it like that.’ Stiles smiled at her. ‘Think of it more like you’re a superhero that’s scaling the side of the Empire state building.’

‘What? Like Batman?’ Erica ventured and he nodded.

‘Sure.’ he replied. ‘Although I think you’d make a better Catwoman.’

Erica’s mouth turned up a little.

‘So you’d be Batman.’ she said and he nodded and held out his hand.

‘Right next to you.’ He waited until she took it and tugged her forward with him. ‘Ready?’

He helped her get herself strapped up after he was set and they started to climb. Before Stiles knew he wouldn’t have been the most graceful of creatures, but wolf strength and agility certainly helped. It also meant he could keep an eye on Erica next to him, keeping pace with her as she made slow progress up the wall.

‘You’re doing great.’ he told her and she gave him a small smile.

The whispers started only a second later and Stiles frowned and tuned in. He picked out a couple of people giggling and then the ripple of laughter as he heard the tell-tale sound of a phone camera. He looked over his shoulder, glaring at a knot of more popular kids on one side all watching them and then there was another and another and Erica stopped.
‘What…?’ she asked and turned and that was when the flashes went off.

‘Fuck.’ Stiles was torn between yelling at them for being douchebags and taking care of Erica. She had frozen and her brown eyes were wide and panicked. ‘Erica? Hey, it’s okay. Look at me.’

‘I…’ She started to pant, her breathing high and fast and he could smell something coming through her scent, something unpleasantly and acridic and the next thing he knew she was starting to spasm violently, getting twisted in her ropes.

‘Goddammit!’ Finstock was charging towards the wall, the other four members of Stiles’ pack right behind him. ‘Get her down!’

‘Erica!’ Stiles could see her eyes rolling back and decided that he had to do something, swinging across to grab her and take her down with him, conscious of the fact that he couldn’t just jump down as much, as he wanted to.

He got close enough to the ground to hand her off to Finstock and Scott and they laid her down, Finstock going into first aid mode and shooing everyone away from her as Stiles stripped off his hoodie and folded it to put under Erica’s head. In the background he could hear Lydia ripping the kids that had used their flashes a new one and smiled as he stroked Erica’s hair out of her eyes. She looked up at him, her face pale and grabbed at his hand until he gave it to her. He felt Isaac’s hand on his shoulder and it reassured him, having his pack close. He tried to push the feeling out of himself and into her, while Allison came back.

‘I got the office to call an ambulance.’ she told Finstock and he nodded. Erica’s spasms were slowing but not gone yet and they waited until the paramedics arrived and took her away on a stretcher. Everyone else had huddled in small groups and Stiles got up, watching as they left. Erica was holding onto his hoodie and he gave her a little wave. Isaac and Scott were on each side of him, low rumbles coming from them and Stiles knew they were thinking the same thing he was.

‘So Erica?’ Lydia asked as she came over to them. ‘That’s what you’re thinking.’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles looked at her. ‘Thoughts?’

‘I think it’s god idea.’ Lydia replied. ‘But it’s the alpha’s decision.’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles nodded. ‘I’ll call him.’

*************

Derek lifted his phone and saw Stiles number on the screen.

‘I need to take this.’ he said and Chris nodded. They were a few more beers in, sitting and watching the third innings in silence that was far more comfortable than Derek had ever expected it to be.

He strolled through to the kitchen, looking around at the room and comparing it with what he remembered of his old home. The Hale house had looked like a disaster zone most of the time, a jumble of books and sports equipment and discarded clothing as befitted a pack of werewolves. The piano, a family heirloom that every Hale learned to play on, had legs that were scratched and chewed on by errant teething cubs and the couches had been strewn with throws to hide the shed fur and muddy paw prints of the ones that could do a full shift and footprints for those that couldn’t.

The kitchen had been so different to this sleek modernist picture, all mismatched crockery (plates never lasted long with cubs) and his father’s extensive collection of cookbooks. When he rebuilt the house, he wanted that and not something that looked gorgeous but was clearly not used that often. It
was with that in mind that he answered the call and frowned at the serious tone in Stiles’ voice. Their bond was vibrating with something that was a combination of trepidation and excitement though so he listened as Stiles explained his train of thought and then smiled.

‘So what do you want me to do?’ he asked and then nodded. ‘I can be there.’

‘What’s going on?’ Chris asked when he came back in and picked up his jacket.

‘In the interests of keeping you informed, I might be getting a new pack member.’ Derek replied and Chris raised an eyebrow.

‘Make sure you do it correctly.’ he warned. ‘You know we’re both under scrutiny right now.’

‘Got it.’ Derek said and walked out the front door.

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Stiles waited until the bell rang, but he was up and on his feet before it had stopped. He bolted from the classroom, a strange urge driving him to get out as quickly as possible. Isaac was going home with Scott and the girls were going round to Allison’s to do the research he’d skipped out on, which meant he didn’t have to wait for anyone as he all but ran, chucks skidding in the linoleum as he made his way out the school.

He drove like a bat out of hell until he got to Beacon Memorial. He knew from eavesdropping outside the secretary’s office after lunch that Erica was there having tests and being kept in overnight. Derek was going to meet him there so they could go in and see her.

The Camaro was at the end of the lot and Derek was waiting for him, arms folded and looking expectant.

‘Hey.’ He leaned in and gave Stiles a quick kiss, the bond between them now thrumming with anticipation. ‘So, what do we do?’

‘I’ll get us in.’ Stiles said. ‘Then you can talk to her. I really think she’ll go for it though.’

They strode across the parking lot, Derek curling his fingers through Stiles’.

‘You move really fast.’ he said as they went in. ‘I mean, we only got Isaac last week.’

‘She needs this, Derek.’ Stiles insisted. ‘She’s a cool person. I think you’ll like her.’

They strolled through the corridors, both of them keeping well clear of anyone official looking until they got to the general wards. To Stiles’ delight, Melissa was on duty there and he immediately went over. She saw him and Derek and gave them both a sunny smile.

‘What are you two doing here?’ she asked and then edged away, her voice dropping. ‘Is it about tonight?’

‘No.’ Derek gave her a reassuring smile. ‘They’ll be fine. We’ll keep an eye on them.’

‘Good.’ Melissa gave them a questioning look. ‘Then why are you here?’

‘We wanted to check on Erica Reyes.’ Stiles interjected. ‘She had a seizure at school today while we were doing the climbing wall and I just wanted to see if she’s okay.’

‘Oh yes.’ Melissa’s brown eyes were full of sympathy. ‘That poor girl. She’s in and out here all the
damn time and it just breaks my heart. Nobody should have to live with that.’

Her words had an astonishing effect on Derek. Stiles could feel any uncertainty he was feeling simply melt out of the bond altogether as he came to the realisation that they were doing the right thing.

‘She’s had it a long time?’ he asked and Melissa nodded.

‘Since she was in elementary school.’ she replied. ‘I remember her coming in when she was just an itty bitty thing. It must have hurt so much and scared her so badly but she’s always been a trooper.’

‘Can we go in and see her?’ Stiles asked and she smiled at him.

‘She’s just down the hall, Room 107.’ she replied. ‘But don’t stay too long. She’ll be very tired.’ She came around the reception and beckoned to them and they followed her to one of the single rooms. Erica was in the bed, her face turned to the window. Stiles could smell the sour tinge of deep sadness and the salt of tears on her and he knew Derek could too, his nostrils flaring as he took in Erica’s scent.

‘Erica, honey?’ Melissa knocked softly on the door frame. ‘You’ve got some visitors.’

‘Tell them to go away.’ Erica said, her voice rough from crying.

‘Hey now.’ He leaned in the doorway. ‘Is that any way to greet Gotham’s greatest hero?’

Erica looked at him and there was a brief flare of something in her eyes, even though her small smile was utterly defeated. Melissa looked at him and Stiles nodded, coming in as she left and going to Erica’s bedside.

‘Batman.’ She tried to sit up and Stiles went to her side, helping her until she was comfortable.

‘I just wanted to check on you.’ he said and she glanced over his shoulder, going pink with embarrassment when she clocked Derek.

‘Who’s he?’ she whispered.

‘My boyfriend, Derek.’ Stiles said and the sour tinge intensified for a second.

‘Yeah, I heard you had a hot boyfriend.’ She winced as she shifted, clearly in pain. ‘Why are you here though. I’m okay.’

‘No, you’re not.’ Derek said, taking a step inside the room. ‘I can smell you’re not.’ His eyes were fixed on her and Stiles knew that his protective urges were kicking in something fierce.

‘I don’t understand.’ Erica looked at Stiles. ‘What does he mean he can smell it?’

‘We need to talk to you about something.’ Stiles told her. He looked back at Derek and he moved to close the door. ‘We’ve got a proposition for you.’

‘What kind of proposition?’ Erica started to smell suspicious. ‘It’s not like some weird sex thing, is it?’ Her eyes drifted over Derek. ‘Not that your boyfriend isn’t super hot but that would be really weird.’

‘Nothing like that.’ Stiles sat down next to her. ‘So I know that we’ve never really talked and this is probably coming out of nowhere, but we’d kind of like you to be in our club.’
‘What club.’ Erica scoffed. ‘The loser who can’t do anything because her body fucks up and pisses itself club? That’s really the only club I could be part of.’ She ducked her head and the salt got stronger. ‘I know what they were doing today. They were laughing at me because I was so slow. They think I’m a freak. And they’re right, I am.’

‘No.’ Stiles shook his head vehemently. ‘You’re sick. That’s nothing you can control.’

‘Doesn’t make it any better.’ Erica sniffled.

‘What if it could be.’ Derek asked and she lifted her head, disbelief all over her face.

‘Unless you’ve got a miracle cure, I doubt it.’ she replied and then gasped as Derek came closer, his eyes glowing red.

‘What if I did?’ he asked and Stiles smiled as he saw the disbelief turn into astonishment. ‘What if I said we could make it so you were better. That you didn’t have to have another seizure ever again?’

‘I’d say you were lying.’ Erica stared at him. ‘What the hell are you?’

‘The same as me.’ Stiles said, flashing his own eyes. ‘What do you know about werewolves?’

‘Jesus.’ Erica breathed. ‘You’re shitting me.’

‘No.’ Stiles said. ‘We’re not. And you know the cool thing about being a werewolf? No more epilepsy. No more being sick.’

‘Holy shit.’ Erica fell back against the pillows. ‘Are you serious?’

‘Very.’ Derek said, coming around the other side of the bed. ‘But, there are disadvantages.’

‘Like what?’ Erica was clearly fascinated by them both, looking between them.

‘There’s chance that the bite could be fatal.’ Derek told her. ‘And there’s some other stuff too.’

Stiles held his breath as she considered and then her face changed, determination written all over it.

‘Tell me.’ she said.

Stiles watched and listened as Derek did just that. He told her about his family and Laura and Peter and how Paige had died. He explained everything to her and Erica listened intently, her scent clearing as she stopped crying and started to look hopeful. Even after hearing all the terrible things that could happen, she smiled when he finished and looked at Stiles.

‘Would you take it back?’ she asked and Stiles thought about his life before and after the bite and shook his head.

‘Not a chance.’ he replied and she nodded.

‘Good enough for me.’ she declared and looked at Derek. ‘Do it.’

‘I have to ask one more time.’ Derek said and her eyes were defiant as she looked at him.

‘I could die tomorrow.’ she replied. ‘I’ll never be able to drive or swim or do anything that could kill me if I have a seizure while doing it. I can’t go the cinema, I can’t go clubbing. I’ll probably never find someone who understands enough to have a relationship with me. I want this. Give it to me.’
Derek nodded slowly and gestured at her side.

‘I need to get to your hip.’ he said and Erica wriggled around for a moment, exposing her side under the thin hospital gown. Stiles went to keep lookout, listening to her gasp quietly when Derek bent his head to her side, eyes glowing red as he bared his fangs and bit her.

“How long?” he asked and Derek smiled, blood between his teeth.

‘Not long at all.’ he said and then Stiles felt it. It was a little overwhelming, the brilliant golden chime of Erica’s pack bond snapping into place. He had no idea that was what she was like on the inside but her brilliant smile said it all.

‘It worked.’ Her eyes were shining. ‘I can feel it already.’

‘Jesus, that was fast.’ Stiles frowned at Derek. ‘That didn’t happen with me.’

‘Because you’re weren’t willing.’ Derek tucked the blankets back around her. ‘And Erica’s a lot stronger than she looks.’ He smiled at her and Stiles wondered if that was what he’d looked like when he’d smiled at his sisters.

‘What now?’ she asked and he took her hand.

‘You stay here tonight.’ he said. ‘It’s full moon but your full transformation won’t be complete until tomorrow. Then we need to sit down and have a talk about the pack and get you assimilated.’ He threw Stiles a look when Stiles snorted a laugh. ‘You’re one of my betas now. That means being part of the pack like Isaac and Scott.’

‘But not Stiles?’ Erica’s eyes were sharp when she looked at him. ‘He’s different, right?’

‘He’s my mate.’ Derek’s voice was tinged with pride and Stiles wanted to puff up and preen at that.

‘So you’re dad and he’s mom?’ Erica grinned. ‘I can work with that.’

‘Get some rest.’ Derek pushed her to lie back and gently pulled her hair away from her face. ‘We’ll come get you tomorrow after school.’

‘Wait.’ Stiles took out his phone. Erica gave him her number and they left her to sleep, stepping out into the corridor and seeing Melissa waiting for them.

‘Did it work?’ she asked and Stiles knew that hadn’t gotten anything past her.

‘It did.’ Derek replied. ‘She’s never going to have to go through that again.’

‘Good.’ Melissa smiled. ‘Just make sure you look after her.’

They left via the side door of the hospital and Stiles felt a warm glow inside him as he sifted through the emotions running through the bond. Derek’s was deeply satisfied, the alpha inside him happy at their choice and the successful bite. He moved so they were close, linking their fingers as they walked back to the car.

‘Happy alpha?’ he asked when they got there and Derek backed him against the side and leaned in to nose at his cheek, rumbling in his ear.

‘Very happy alpha.’ he replied and the feelings through the bond changed, making Stiles’ heart speed up.
‘Oh.’ He pulled back to see that Derek’s eyes were flickering red. ‘Horny alpha?’

‘Sunset is coming.’ Derek smiled at him and it made Stiles’ knees want to give out. ‘I want to fuck you under the full moon tonight.’

‘Is this because of Erica?’ Stiles grinned at him.

‘You chose a good wolf for our pack.’ Derek’s face was in his neck. ‘She’s perfect.’

‘Careful.’ Stiles laughed. ‘You’ll make me think that I’m replaceable. After all she’s got bits I don’t have.’

‘No.’ Derek pulled back to cup Stiles’ face in his warm hands. ‘You’re my mate. The fact that we can’t have cubs doesn’t matter. You’re the one I want.’ He came back in, kissing Stiles firmly and the weak knees were back with a vengeance, especially when Derek licked along the line of his mouth and Stiles whimpered and opened up for him.

‘Like the last time?’ he whispered and Derek nosed at him.

‘I want to chase you.’ he growled. ‘I want to catch you and pin you down and mount you in the trees.’

‘Keep saying that and we’re going to have a problem.’ Stiles was already hard, his cock aching as he tried to hump Derek’s leg. ‘You might have to do me right here in the car.’

Derek laughed, getting hold of Stiles’ wrists and pushing him away.

‘Not yet.’ He grinned at Stiles’ unhappy noise. ‘First food, then we can let the betas go run themselves out and only then can we go play.’

‘Spoilsport.’ Stiles pouted. He could smell that Derek was just as turned on though so it didn’t sting to be put off. ‘I’m so going to make you work for it now.’

‘Good.’ Derek swooped in for a quick kiss. ‘I like it when you run.’ He sent Stiles over to his side of the Jeep with a swat to the rear and got the Camaro, chuckling at Stiles’ outraged squawk.

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Lydia lay back and let the feelings wash over her, her breathing light and erratic. Down the bed, Allison’s dark head moved with purpose and Lydia found herself swearing that she’d never felt anything like this. It may have been that Allison was just incredibly gifted but the fact that she knew what felt good for her was also a definite bonus. It had started out as just the two of them messing around while Chris went out to get take out for dinner. Lydia had made an off colour remark and before she’d known what was happening, Allison had her pinned to the bed, her dark eyes sparkling wickedly. That had degenerated into a feverish make out session and Allison’s hand sliding up her inner thigh and now Lydia was stretched out with her shirt flipped up and bra pushed aside to expose her nipples, now pink and peaked from Allison sucking on them. Her panties and skirt were somewhere on the floor, leaving her bare from the waist down while Allison held her clit between her lips and tongued it until she was ready to scream.

‘Fuck.’ It came out breathy. ‘You’re so good at that.’

Allison laughed and lifted her head. Her lips were shiny and her cheeks beautifully flushed.

‘Beginner’s luck.’ She smiled and lowered her head again and Lydia fought her way onto her
elbows to watch as she licked over her clit again, slow and soft as she held Lydia’s gaze. Her fingers were teasing at Lydia’s entrance, already wet and sensitive.

‘Do it.’ she panted and Allison eased two in, the slickness making it easy. She moved them almost tentatively, rubbing along Lydia’s walls until she hit something and Lydia arched up into her hand. ‘Okay enough. Come up here.’

Allison obeyed, moving up the bed until Lydia could get her hands on her jeans, undoing them and shoving them down until she could get her hand between Allison’s legs, feeling the wetness soaking the neatly trimmed dark triangle as she found her clit and rubbed her thumb over it.

They lay like that, face to face as they kissed and worked each other, fingers sliding in and out and over until Allison started to buck against Lydia’s hand and then came with a startled cry that made Lydia feel insufferably smug. She wasn’t far behind, her climax taking her by surprise and far more satisfying than she’d anticipated it would be.

They fell back onto the bed and Allison laughed, her delight obvious.

‘Okay so that was good.’ she smirked. ‘We should definitely do that again.’

‘We should do that everyday.’ Lydia smiled. ‘I’m starting to think that full moon might affect us as well.’

‘Mmmm.’ Allison was on her side now, wet fingers still trailing over Lydia’s cunt. ‘So have you ever done the multiple thing before?’

Lydia locked eyes with her and spread her legs, shuddering when Allison slid her fingers back inside again.

‘Do your worst.’ she said and let her head fall back.

***********

Dinner was a grand spectacle. They’d gone to the store and Derek had dragged him from aisle to aisle to show him what his family had used to do on full moon nights. Now the kitchen was awash with the smells of mac and cheese, loaded with bacon pieces and made with double cream and four kinds of cheese. There were foil wrapped loaves of garlic bread to go with it and a green salad as a concession to Noah, all to be followed by a batch of double chocolate brownies for afterwards. He’d gone off to work the night shift with a packed dinner for him and one to drop off for Melissa as a thank you, along with an extra tray of brownies for the station.

Scott and Isaac were setting the table, both of them practically drooling as they sniffed the air and dodged Derek swiping at them when they tried to get too close. They’d confirmed that they could feel the pack bond with Erica too and Derek’s happiness at that seemed to infect them all. Stiles watched him move around the kitchen, all agile grace and barefoot with a dish cloth over one shoulder. It made his stomach lurch in the best way possible, all his buttons merrily being hammered by his mate’s domesticity. For a brief moment he wondered what it might be like to be able to have cubs and watch Derek carrying a fat happy baby in the corner of his arm and that made his cock so hard he had to excuse himself and go jerk off upstairs while the betas laughed their heads off at him.

When he got back downstairs, the food was on the table and he took his seat next to Derek. His mate gave him a knowing look and made a show of breathing in his scent, his face in Stiles’ neck. He licked over Stiles’ pulse and across the table, the betas watched with red faces. Stiles could see they were starting to be affected by Derek’s arousal and then it was his turn to laugh when they couldn’t
They ate until they were fit to burst, the food disappearing as if by magic. After that, Derek made them clean up as he’d done the cooking and it turned into a water fight that he broke up with a roar that rattled the windows. The three of them froze, Scott still with the sponge that Stiles had shoved down the back of his shirt making it’s way down until it hit the floor with a wet splat.

‘Enough.’ Derek flashed his eyes at them. ‘Time to go.’

They piled into the Jeep and Stiles drove them to the preserve. It was dark now, the moon hidden by clouds, but they could all feel it. In the back, Scott and Isaac’s eyes were lit up gold all the way there and Stiles could feel his own blood catching fire.

Derek directed him to a hidden road that led deep into the preserve, far deeper than they’d been before. Stiles parked and Scott and Isaac barreled out, eager to get started. The whole Jeep stank of male musk and the deep animal scent that Derek was giving off and Stiles fell out his side, already feeling drunk on moonlight and want.

‘Shoes and shirts.’ Derek instructed and the betas stripped them off, throwing everything in the back. ‘Now stay away from anything remotely human and have fun.’ His fangs glinted when he smiled. ‘Just go with what feels good.’ It was all they needed to hear, both of them bolting off into the trees whooping and laughing until their voices faded away. Derek chuckled and then started undressing, turning red eyes on Stiles and arching an eyebrow at him.

‘Take your clothes off.’ he ordered. ‘All of them.’

Stiles shivered at the authority in his voice, the wolf inside close enough that it was low and rough. He stripped eagerly, giving himself a perfunctory stroke when he was naked. His cock was already wet and he watched as Derek’s nostrils flared.

‘Your fault.’ he snickered when Derek started to prowl towards him, moving around the Jeep. ‘Who knew you cooking would get me this hard.’

‘It’s the fact that I’m providing for you.’ Derek shifted into beta form. ‘You find that very attractive as a wolf.’

‘Better than bunnies on my doorstep.’ Stiles grinned, also shifting. His wolf eyes could see clearly how Derek was eyeballing him, trying to figure out which direction to pounce.

‘I could always do that if you wanted.’ he offered and then lunged and Stiles laughed and jumped right onto the roof of the Jeep. He snarled playfully and then backflipped of the other side for the hell of it and took off, running hell for leather into the trees. He heard Derek’s howl behind him and then the beat of four feet and knew that his mate had gone to his full shift. The smells and sounds of the forest were heady, rich loam under his feet and crisp cold air making his head spin. He ran and ran, not really caring which way he was going, just that he wanted to stay ahead of the wolf behind him. Derek was breathing hard, speeding up and coming close enough to nip at him every now and then as Stiles laughed and hurdled a fallen log. He landed soundly and kept going, zigzagging through the trees until he got to the drop off, skidding to a stop.

He turned and saw the darker outline of Derek in the shadows cast by the trees, eyes two red embers in the dark. He came closer and the eyes lifted as Derek shifted back, mostly human when he stepped into the clearing. He rolled his shoulders, scenting the air and smiling at Stiles, all fangs and attitude.

‘You’re not going to run anymore?’ he asked and Stiles bared his own fangs and moved towards
him. He could smell Derek, the earthiness of his body cut through with the sharpness of the precome leaking from his erect cock.

‘Maybe I just want you to catch me.’ he replied and Derek growled as Stiles reach out to touch him, fingers dragging through the thick hair on Derek’s chest. It felt different from their frantic first time, more deliberate and controlled even if it was no less passionate. He smiled as Derek lifted his hand to his lips, licking over Stiles’ clawed fingers.

‘You’re beautiful.’ he purred. ‘You know that, right?’

‘No.’ Stiles ducked his head, absurdly pleased. ‘Tell me again.’

‘Flirt.’ Derek got one strong arm around him and pulled him in, the heat from his body making the air steam. ‘I fucking love you so much.’

It was enough to make Stiles’ breathing stop and he went willingly into the kiss, licking at Derek’s canines and shaking with need. It was like every inch of his skin was hypersensitive and he shivered as Derek took his weight and bore him to the ground, blanketing him with his body.

‘Ask me for anything.’ he breathed into Stiles’ skin. ‘I’ll give you anything you want.’

‘I want you.’ Stiles panted. ‘Inside me.’

Derek smiled and licked over his mouth, wet and slow before kissing him deep. Stiles met him with everything he had, fistling one hand at the back of Derek’s head, inky black hair between his fingers and his legs hiked up on Derek’s thighs. The scratch of the ground beneath him disappeared as Derek got an arm under them and flipped them over so Stiles was on his knees with his ass in the air and then he was gone, hot breath ghosting over him before he dived right in. Stiles yelped at the first hot drive of Derek’s tongue, bracing himself until he could push back into it and spreading his legs as far apart as he could. Behind him, Derek was growling and licking up a storm, agile tongue going deep. He stank of arousal now and Stiles took it all in, riding the high of their combined pheromones and throwing his head back to snarl when Derek’s claws caught on his skin and held him still.

He was getting closer to the edge, whining when Derek pulled back and flopped down next to him. He hauled Stiles across his body, manhandling him into position. Stiles went easily, shifting to line Derek up and then sinking down, Derek’s thick saliva and the natural wetness of his cock easing him inside. He fell forward, bracing on his hands as he moved to get the angle right and then started to move, bouncing hard when he got it right and arching back. Derek planted his feet into the ground, grabbing hold of Stiles by the hips and letting him ride.

It was rough and fast, both of them snarling at each other with fangs out and eyes glowing hot. Stiles felt like he was on fire all the way inside out and he threw his head back, giving himself over to the wolf inside him and howling into the night. Below him, Derek sank his claws in hard enough to break skin and thrust up, bucking hard enough that Stiles felt it all the way up to his throat. The night air moved over his sweat sleek skin and he reached out to sink his own claws into Derek’s chest, anchoring them together as he rode the edge up and up and up until it broke through and he came harder than he ever had and without a single touch.

Derek let out his own howl, the stripes of Stiles’ come a stark contrast with his dark hair and shadowed skin. He sat up, arms tight around his mate and sank in as deep as he could go. Stiles felt him come, the way his whole body tightened up as he latched onto Stiles’, fangs buried in his shoulder and his knot filling him up and stretching him out until Stiles could do nothing but come again and again. He threw his arms around Derek’s shoulder to anchor himself, their eyes locking the very air crackling between them.
It felt like forever and no time at all, Derek’s growls finally ebbing away until he was panting into Stiles’ open mouth and Stiles smiled and kissed him, tasting blood where their fangs had nicked each other. He blinked to clear his vision and watched Derek’s eyes fade back to green, his smile hazy and loving as he licked softly at Stiles’ mouth.

‘I love you too.’ Stiles was still breathless and Derek laughed.

‘So that was fun.’ he smirked. ‘What do you want to do for the rest of the night?’

Stiles raised his eyebrows at him.

‘Smartass wolf.’ he snorted and then stopped as a triumphant howl went up from somewhere in the preserve. ‘What the fuck was that?’

‘Should have taken that bet about them fucking.’ Derek snickered, far too smug for his own good. ‘Sounds like Scott likes to top.’

‘Oh, ew.’ Stiles laughed and let himself be rolled back to the ground.
Thursday morning saw Stiles’ mouth hanging open as he waited for his new passenger to come down the drive from the modest house that she frequented. The reason for his impression of a goldfish was because what he was looking at was so far removed from what Erica had been before that it was like looking at two completely different people. She’d been with him, Derek, Scott and Isaac the afternoon before when they’d had a long talk about being pack, but she’d only been out of hospital for the day and still keeping up the pretence that she was recovering, but they could both smell the way she had changed and the sparkle in her eyes was nothing like the defeated way she’d looked lying on the hospital bed.

Erica met his eyes, grinning a wide scarlet smile at him and adding a little extra wiggle to her walk. The leopard print stiletto pumps she was wearing already gave her a bombshell gait, the black miniskirt showing a mile of leg and a fitted leather jacket framing a very impressive cleavage.

‘Jesus.’ Isaac said next to him. ‘What the hell happened to her?’

‘I don’t know.’ Stiles grinned to see the confidence practically oozing out of her. ‘But I like it.’

Erica got to his window and leaned in, all perfect white teeth that managed to perfectly convey the predatory menace that Derek had and that Stiles had not quite managed to master yet.

‘Hello boys.’ she purred. ‘You ready to watch me wreck the male population of Beacon Hills High?’

‘Christ.’ Stiles snickered. ‘Why do I feel like all we did was let you out of your cage?’

Erica opened the back door and chucked in her bag, climbing in with perfect grace and settling herself in the seat behind Isaac. She ruffled his curls and he made an outraged noise and tried to swat her off but his scent was happy. She gave him a pleased little growl and sat back, crossing one slender leg over the other and giving Stiles an arch look.

‘Onward noble steed.’ she declared and he growled at her.

‘What it you.’ He met her eyes in the rearview mirror, flashing them at her. ‘I outrank you.’

‘Only because you’re fucking the alpha.’ she countered.
‘Still counts.’ Stiles grinned and she gave him the finger as he pulled out into traffic.

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Derek came into the sheriff’s station and gave Tara a little wave as he got to the desk. She smiled back at him and held up a manila folder.

‘You ready?’ she asked and he nodded, blowing out a breath that betrayed the fact that he was feeling a lot more nervous than he wanted to let on. He’d been working hard to get ready, Stiles helping him to study between the craziness of the past couple of weeks following his transition to alpha and Peter’s death. But he was smart and not unfamiliar with getting shit done under adverse conditions and the addition of Isaac and now Erica to his pack had gone a long way to making him feel more settled. It had also helped that he’d slept with his mate wrapped around him the night before and with one of his pack in easy reach. Scott had been chased home after dinner with a red face after he and Isaac had been caught making out in the kitchen when they were supposed to be getting more soda.

It had been clear that there was a mating bond forming the morning after full moon, the stink of sex and semen and each other all over the pair and it had been funny to see how they were now side eyeing each other and trying hard to keep their affection to normal PDA levels. Derek knew that Scott was freaking out far more than Isaac was about the fact that he’d had sex with someone who wasn’t Allison but he’d come around soon enough as the bond strengthened.

‘Derek.’ Noah hung his head out his office. ‘I’ve got you in one of the back rooms.’

‘Okay.’ Derek waited for him to grab the paperwork he needed and followed him down to the interrogation room he would be sitting in to do the exam while Noah sat in the corner to invigilate. Tara would be observing them using the security camera so he could work in solitude while the rest of the station went about its business.

‘So you’re all set for the written part.’ Noah said as he got himself seated. ‘We’ll do the fitness portion afterwards.’ He gave Derek a conspiratorial wink facing away from the camera and Derek had to smile. Noah was more excited about this than he was, although he was pretty sure that it was in part due to the fact that Noah would finally have someone to vent to about all the supernatural horseshit as he referred to it. ‘You need anything else?’

‘No, I’m good.’ He accepted the pencil Noah gave him. ‘It feels kind of weird to be doing this again.’

‘Yeah, I can imagine.’ Noah got himself settled in, the stack of case files he would be working on on the desk in front of him. ‘Haigh will bring us some coffee in a minute.’

‘Do all candidates get coffee?’ Derek asked, hiding his smile. Noah snorted at him, looking mildly offended.

‘Not all candidates are my prospective son-in-law.’ he pointed out and tapped the table. ‘Now get started. You’ve got an hour.’

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Danny managed to corner Jackson after third period. He leaned against the locker next to him, raising his eyebrows in question.

‘Well?’ he asked, keeping his voice down. ‘Did you get get?’

Jackson looked shofty for a minute and then nodded.
'He gave it to me this morning,’ he replied. ‘You want to come round after school? We can watch it then.’

‘Yeah.’ Danny felt more than a little odd about all the skulduggery but Jackson was being insistent. He’d sat outside Jackson’s house on the full moon but there had been no sign of Jackson turning into something or escaping to go attack anyone so Danny felt a little heartened by that. He’d been hurt that Jackson hadn’t asked him for help but Matt had the equipment and he’d burned the footage, which was what was on the pen drive that Jackson was now holding up. Apparently he hadn’t trusted anyone else to take it off, although the fact that Matt hadn’t given any indication to Jackson that there was anything weird on it had also been reassuring.

Jackson closed his locker and they started walking down the corridor, passing Stiles and Isaac Lahey talking to a very hot blond with a tangle of glossy curls and a killer pair of legs that had Danny doing a double take when he realised that he knew her. Erica caught him looking and smiled back, the curl to her lip not quite hiding the sharpness of her teeth and the scent of newly turned wolf hit Danny’s nose.

He looked directly at Stiles and got a sheepish grin and a half shrug before he hustled both Erica and Isaac along the corridor and Danny immediately made a note to corner him later and get an explanation. Stiles was far too smart for his own good and could be very slippery when he was trying to get out of telling the truth. It did surprise Danny that he’d turned out a wolf and not a fox, but then you could never tell what would happen with bitten shifters, not that sharks did that. The teeth for one thing made it very difficult not to nick anything that would result in the prospective person bleeding to death.

‘Danny!’ Jackson’s annoyed voice got his attention back and he fell into step with him.

‘Sorry.’ he resisted looking back over his shoulder. ‘It’s just that Erica’s looking really good today.’

Jackson snorted and rolled his eyes at him.

‘Well, duh.’ he replied. ‘She’s a wolf now.’

Danny gave him a quizzical look.

‘You know?’ he asked and Jackson huffed.

‘I can fucking smell her.’ he snorted and kept walking. Danny meanwhile tripped over his own feet at that revelation. He really needed to see that footage because something definitely wasn’t adding up.

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‘Dammit!’ Stiles hissed as he all but galloped down the corridor. ‘Danny knows.’

‘Why is that a problem?’ Erica asked and Isaac shrugged.

‘He’s a wereshark.’ he replied and Stiles glared at him. ‘What? Scott told me.’

‘Scott needs to learn to keep his mouth shut.’ Stiles snorted.

‘Like he’s not going to tell the guy he’s banging.’ Erica cackled and flicked Isaac’s ear, making him swipe at her. ‘And don’t bother denying it, I can smell him all over you.’
‘So what?’ Isaac gave his scarf a particularly sassy flip. ‘You’re just jealous because you don’t have a mate.’

Stiles stopped and glared at them.

‘Enough.’ He dug his phone out. ‘I need to grab Danny and explain about Erica. Scott’s going to babysit you two for the rest of the day.’

‘We don’t need babysitting.’ Isaac said.

‘It’s literally your second week and Erica’s first day.’ Stiles narrowed his eyes at him. ‘At least Scott’s got a little more control.’

‘I wouldn’t bet on it.’ Isaac’s smile was smug. ‘You should have seen him on Wednesday night.’

‘And, I’m leaving.’ Stiles stomped off in the direction Danny and Jackson had gone, rolling his eyes at the snickers that followed him down the corridor. It certainly didn’t help that he almost walked smack into Lydia and Allison when he rounded the corridor.

‘Stiles!’ Lydia had a manic gleam in her eye and so he did the only thing he could and flailed wildly.

‘Don’t do that!’ He slumped against the wall, clutching at his heart. ‘I wonder if wolves can have a coronary?’

‘Don’t be so dramatic.’ Lydia sniffed. ‘I found out something.’

‘Oh good.’ Stiles tried a strategic retreat but she took his arm very firmly. ‘Did I mention, I really need to speak to Danny?’

‘What a coincidence.’ Lydia replied. ‘Because I happened to overhear him and Jackson talking this morning and I found out that Jackson borrowed a video camera from that creeper Matt and taped himself the night of the full moon.’

‘And by overhear, she means she followed him.’ Allison grinned. ‘I helped.’

‘Do I even want to know how?’ Stiles shook his head. ‘And?’

‘And so they have a USB with the footage on it.’ Lydia said. ‘That means we could get it and watch it and see if our suspicions are correct.’

‘Okay, but what does that have to do with me?’ Stiles did not like the way the conversation was going.

‘You’ve got practice this afternoon.’ Lydia said it like she thought he was an idiot, which was probably a fair assumption because it was Lydia. ‘You can steal it from Jackson’s bag, and give it to us. We’ll copy it while you’re on the field and then give it back to you to put back in his bag. After our last little fiasco, Allison and I are banned from being in the boys’ locker room.’

‘No way!’ Stiles tried to back up. ‘Nope, not going to happen.’

‘Look it’s either that or we send our newest pack member after him.’ Allison countered. ‘And God knows what Erica would do to him.’

‘Jesus.’ Stiles contemplated the alternative with a mild horror. ‘She’ll probably kiss him and then eat his face off. Okay, I’ll help. But if I get caught, you’re in charge of getting me off any charges.’
‘So how long until I know?’ Derek asked and Noah grinned.

‘Only a day or so.’ He nodded at where Tara was now in sweats and running shoes. ‘Take it easy on her, okay.’

‘Sure.’ Derek went off to join her and Noah watched them leave for the fitness part of the test. He was feeling very happy about the way things had gone. Derek had plowed through the test with the determination of someone who’d studied hard and knew all the answers, and they both knew he’d ace the physical. In a couple of weeks, with no unexpected glitches, Derek would be going to the academy in Sacramento. Once he was certified in summer, he would be joining the department and Noah would be happily handing over everything even remotely supernatural for him to work on, although he was also looking forward to Derek’s super senses making an impact on the regular crimes they investigated as well. He was going to pair him with Tara, seeing as the two already had a good rapport and she was already pleased that they were getting a new deputy, especially seeing as how she and Haigh were often at loggerheads when they were paired.

He went back to his office and started going through the paperwork for the day. Lahey’s autopsy report had come back, the cause of death being ascertained to have been exsanguination due to multiple injuries that had been determined to be of animal origin. Noah knew he’d have to put in a call to the Forestry service at some point, because as far as the town was concerned their mountain lion problem was still a thing. Unfortunately, releasing the cause of death meant that there would be another rash of articles about their rogue mountain lion once again, something he could live without.

************

Lunchtime was busy and Stiles peered down the table at the people that now made up his group. At the beginning of the year it had been him and Scott only, the two of them ignored by everyone else. Now Scott was next to Isaac, who was whispering something in his ear that had Scott grinning like crazy. Stiles had yet to pin him down long enough to get what had happened on Wednesday out of him, what with the two of them being stupidly loved up the day after.

Allison and Lydia were across from each other, eating matching salads and playing footsie under the table. Erica was across from him, but as Stiles oversalted his fries he noticed that she was staring at someone over his shoulder. He turned around and saw that her line of sight was directed at the last person he’d expected it to be. He turned back and grinned at her and Erica bared her teeth at him.

‘Not a damn word.’ she hissed and Stiles couldn’t have asked for a more perfect setup than if he’d managed to make it so himself.

‘You like him.’ he said and Erica’s scent bloomed with embarrassment briefly before she tossed her head and bluffed her way out of it.

‘I just think he’s hot.’ she airily declared but Stiles was much better at reading things and he heard the stutter of her heart clearly.

‘No.’ He couldn’t stop smiling. ‘You like him.’

Erica’s eyes flashed once and she kicked him right in the shin and jabbed a crimson nail at him.

‘So what? You’re all paired off. Why can’t I look?’

Stiles glanced back over his shoulder again to where Boyd was sitting all alone, reading and methodically eating his tuna fish sandwich. An idea pinged in his head and he looked back at Erica.

‘What if I said, I had a plan.’ He wagged his eyebrows at her and she immediately looked
suspicious. ‘Nothing bad, just maybe a little quiet time at the rink. We could all have some fun and you could pull some sweet moves on him.’

‘You could do that?’ Erica asked, her brown eyes widening.

‘Sure.’ Stiles smiled. He’d actually had the idea for a while and had been planning to use it on Lydia before Derek had fallen into his lap. ‘Wait here.’

He got up and walked over to the table, falling into the seat opposite Boyd. Boyd lifted his head, one eyebrow raised.

‘What do you want, Stilinski?’ he asked, sounding less than pleased at having his lunch disturbed.

‘So you know a couple of months back I asked about getting some time at the rink?’ he asked and Boyd nodded.

‘So?’ he asked. ‘You never came back to me.’

‘I know.’ Stiles gave him a winning smile. ‘But now I need it. Tonight.’

He waited as Boyd finished his sandwich and wiped off his hands.

‘Fine.’ he finally said. ‘But the price just doubled.’

‘Okay.’ Stiles frowned. ‘So what, forty?’

‘Sixty.’ Boyd grinned and it was mercenary. ‘Call the rest a late booking fee.’

Stiles huffed but reached into his pocket and pulled out his wallet. Now that Derek was picking up a lot of the costs at home, he had extra cash and it easy going towards something for the pack anyway. He handed over the money and then played his ace.

‘You’ll be there though, right?’ he asked. ‘Scott wants to see how the zamboni works.’ He was expecting to have to argue Boyd into it, but the mention of the zamboni had Boyd’s normally passive expression lighting up for a bit.

‘I can do that.’ he said. ‘I’ll let you guys in after eight. Now go away, Stilinski. You’re ruining my view.’

Stiles frowned and glanced behind him, realising that Boyd had a perfect line of sight right to Erica. That delighted him and he had to refrain from fistpumping.

‘She’s something, huh?’ he asked.

‘Go. Away.’ Boyd repeated.

Stiles did as he asked, nearly skipping as he returned to his table. This was going to be easier than he thought. He did notice Lydia glaring at him when he sat back down, but he ignored her. She was the Emissary but not the boss of him and he could matchmake if he wanted.

‘So?’ Erica hissed. ‘What did he say?’

‘How are you at ice skating?’ Stiles asked and popped a fry in his mouth.

************
When Derek and Tara got back, Noah could see that his plan was in full swing. Derek was actually laughing at something Tara was saying as they came in, and when they saw him standing there there was a brief conspiratorial glint in their eyes before Tara pulled herself together, all professionalism as soon as she spoke.

‘He did well.’ she announced. ‘Kept up easily and passed all the tests.’

‘I expected nothing less.’ Noah said and grinned when Derek ducked his head in that way that Noah had learned signalled that he was pleased and trying to hide it. He thought about the shy boy that had once been and was heartened that he was making a reappearance. Talia and James would be proud to see how much progress Derek was making. ‘So all that is left is a medical and your psych interview. Melissa will do the first and you’ll have to see a court appointed person for the second.’

‘Sounds doable.’ Derek replied. ‘When?’

‘We can head over to the hospital now if you like for the physical.’ Noah replied. ‘But the interview needed to be set up so that will be next week.’

‘I’m going to change.’ Tara told them. ‘I’ll see you later, Boss.’

‘I should probably do that too.’ Derek said. ‘I’m all sweaty.’

‘Call me when you’re done.’ Noah replied and went back to his office. He gave Derek’s written exam another read, pleased that it was practically perfect and then started the email to the training academy. He’d just finished when Derek reappeared in his doorway.

‘So maybe lunch first?’ he asked. ‘I’m buying.’

‘Derek, are you attempting to bribe the Beacon County Sheriff?’ Noah asked with a grin.

‘I figured seeing as it works on your son, it might work on you too.’ Derek countered, the little bite in his words delighting Noah with its playfulness. This was the Derek he’d come to know and appreciate as someone who could more than keep up with the Stilinski way of thinking.

‘I have no idea what you’re referring to.’ He grabbed his jacket. ‘But while we’re talking we can go to that taco place down on Main.’

‘Fine by me.’ Derek stood aside to let him pass and then fell into step with him. ‘I need to talk to you about the firearm training to.’

‘Ah, yes.’ Noah opened the door. ‘I talked to Chris. He’s going to take you down to the range next week, if that’s okay.’

‘A hunter teaching a werewolf to shoot.’ Derek chuckled and shook his head. ‘Will wonders never cease?’

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Stiles peeked out from behind the bookshelf he was hiding behind. Danny was at a table a few shelves down, busy doing his econ prep for the midterm that was coming up the following week. He was trying to think of a good way to bring up Erica’s new transition to wolfdom, when Danny looked up and made a face at him.

‘Just come here.’ he muttered, his voice reaching Stiles’ wolf ears easily. ‘You look like a bad rendition of Spy Vs Spy doing that.’
‘Fine.’ Stiles stomped over and threw himself into a seat. ‘So you know.’

‘Why her?’ Danny asked. ‘Any particular reason?’

‘She needed it.’ Stiles replied. ‘And Derek could help her.’

‘Okay.’ Danny went back to his book and Stiles frowned.

‘That’s it?’ he asked and Danny shrugged. ‘That’s all I wanted to know.’ he replied.

‘Okay.’ Stiles fidgeted, wondering if he should bring up the thing with Jackson and then deciding against it. Unfortunately, Danny was now looking at him again.

‘What the hell is wrong with you?’ he asked. ‘You’re hella jumpy. Even for you.’

‘Nothing.’ Stiles chewed a nail. ‘You’re going to be at practice, right? Jackson too?’

‘We’re always at practice.’ Danny replied. ‘Why?’

‘Um.’ Stiles tapped the table and then pretended to see someone. ‘No reason, Got to go.’ He bolted from the table and ran off into the stacks.

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Lydia stopped outside the door of the guidance office and looked back at Allison. Allison gave her a reassuring smile and Lydia lifted her head and knocked, putting on her best and most superior expression when Morell opened the door.

‘Lydia.’ Her face gave nothing away. ‘I don’t recall us scheduling an appointment for today.’

‘I already know you don’t have anyone to see for the rest of the afternoon.’ Lydia replied. ‘Which is why I thought it would be a good idea to have a little talk.’

‘Oh really?’ Morell said. ‘In that case, please come in.’ She stood back so Lydia could enter and then closed the door behind them. ‘Did you have a particular subject in mind or is this just a friendly chat.’

‘There’s nothing friendly about this.’ Lydia took a seat. ‘But I need advice and you’re an emissary. Deaton has been helping me, but I think sometimes he’s reluctant to be as honest with me as he needs to be.’

‘That sounds about right.’ Morell smiled. ‘My brother has always been less than forthcoming, even when we were children. I think he just enjoys being mysterious.’

‘Whereas you’re the poster child for openness and candour?’ Lydia snorted. ‘Please. I can see it runs in the family.’

She didn’t know what she expected but Morell bursting into laughter wasn’t it.

‘You.’ She gave Lydia an appreciative look. ‘You’re going to be utterly terrifying when you grow up.’

‘I should hope so.’ Lydia retorted. ‘I am taking this very seriously. I want to be the best emissary I can be for Derek. He deserves nothing less than that, and quite frankly Deaton didn’t do a wonderful job on that front.’

‘No.’ Morell settled back into her own chair. ‘Then again, one can’t always predict what will
happen. The deaths of the Hale pack were not in the cards.’

‘How much do you know about them?’ Lydia was curious.

‘Just that they were murdered by the Argents.’ Morell said. ‘That was of course something that I only learned when Laura’s death was solved and the facts came to light. I can assure you that neither myself nor my brother were aware of it before then.’

‘And yet you showed up here of all places just as it was all coming out.’ Lydia smiled.

‘Coincidence?’

‘Not exactly.’ Morell replied. ‘I was aware when Laura Hale came back. This land is tied to them, the Hale wolves. The second she stepped back on her pack’s territory, I felt it. Her death left a power vacuum.’

‘Peter stole her alpha power.’ Lydia said. ‘But you know that, right?’

‘I suspected.’ Morell replied. ‘And then Derek took it back. I know the press at large are saying that Peter is missing, but that’s the only way Derek could have become an alpha.’

‘I’m not going to give you details.’ Lydia thought about Peter’s message. ‘I just want to know what you’re doing here.’

‘My pack were allies of Talia Hale.’ Morell said. ‘They have a vested interest in this territory and its stability. While Laura and Derek were gone, things were quiet. When they came back, hunters were suddenly back in town again. Hunters aren’t good for any wolf, so you can see why they’re anxious to make sure that Derek has things under control.’

‘Then why all the secrecy?’ Lydia asked. ‘Why not approach through the proper channels? Derek would have been happy to meet with your pack, I’m sure.’ She affected inspecting her nails, but it didn’t escape her attention that Morell looked uncomfortable for just a second.

There it is, she thought to herself. You’re hiding something.

‘My alpha was reluctant to meet with someone who was only a boy the last time they saw each other and who was never meant to be the alpha in the first place without letting me vet him first.’ Morell replied. ‘This is me getting the lay of the land, and there’s been quite a lot of incidents here since the return of the Hales. Not least of which, is that you have something new running around.’

‘Yes, we do.’ Lydia leaned forward. ‘So what I’m proposing is a trade.’

‘A trade?’ Morell frowned. ‘I don’t understand.’

‘We have a suspicion that we have a kanima in Beacon Hills.’ Lydia said. ‘I need your help to find out who it is.’ She reached into her bag and took out a sheaf of papers. ‘I’ve read the Hale bestiary and it’s been very useful, however, it doesn’t tell us how we can be sure if someone’s the kanima.’

‘A kanima?’ Morell looked moderately disturbed, which Lydia took for complete shock knowing the propensity for understatement she shared with her brother. ‘There hasn’t been a kanima in California in living memory. It’s exceedingly rare for that to happen and requires an almost perfect set of circumstances. Who do you suspect?’

‘I’m not saying.’ Lydia smiled. ‘But I need to know how to test if they are what I think they are.’

‘All right.’ Morell’s own mouth curved up. ‘The kanima produces a neurotoxic venom from its
claws.’

‘Yes, I’m aware of that.’ Lydia replied. ‘It uses it to paralyse its victims.’

‘First tell me about this trade.’ Morell tapped her pen against the desk. ‘What are you offering?’

‘A meeting with my alpha.’ Lydia replied. ‘Just you and your pack doesn’t have to know about it. I also have my suspicions that you’re not entirely happy with the way you’ve come here.’

It was a gamble and for a second she thought it wasn’t going to pay off, then Morell heaved a sigh and her shoulders lowered a little.

‘I accept.’ she said. ‘I agree to a good faith meeting with your alpha. In exchange I will tell you that the kanima is unaware by who or what it is while transformed. The person who is afflicted will have no knowledge of what they do while in that form and will obey every behest of their master. The bond grows so strong that they can in fact take on characteristics of the person that controls them.’

‘Well that’s no help at all.’ Lydia considered her options and came up with nothing. ‘So the master can just tell it who to kill and it will do it without question.’

‘Within reason.’ Morell said. ‘There are rules, after all. If the master breaks them, they will in turn become the kanima.’

‘Interesting.’ Lydia replied. ‘I know that to cure it, they need to be brought back by true love.’

‘Not the kind you’re thinking of.’ Morell corrected. ‘It doesn’t have to be romantic in intention. The kanima became the kanima because they felt rejected, unworthy. For each person the roots of that differ. You need to understand what they need in order to change.’

Lydia was about to ask what she needed to do in order to find that when the phone rang and Morell looked apologetic.

‘I have to take this.’ she said and Lydia stood up, taking her papers with her.

‘Thank you. I’ll talk to Derek tonight.’ she said and Morell answered the phone and waved her off.

Outside, Allison was still waiting, busy texting when Lydia got to her.

‘We’re going ice skating tonight.’ she announced. ‘Pack bonding apparently.’

‘Oh.’ Lydia was pleased. ‘You know I almost made nationals when I used to skate.’

‘Really?’ Allison smiled and slipped an arm around her. ‘You going to show me your moves?’

‘I might.’ Lydia replied. ‘But I have a little of research to do first.’

***********

Stiles hovered at his locker, glancing around nervously every now and then. He couldn’t tell Scott and Isaac what he was doing because they didn’t know about Jackson, and he couldn’t tell Danny because he didn’t want him to tip Jackson off so he was left trying to grin as the other two wolves chattered on about going to the rink later.

‘I bet you fall on your ass.’ Isaac laughed and Scott shoved him hard enough that he fell into the locker door, leaving a slight dent.

‘I bet you fall on your face.’ he countered and Isaac snorted.
‘My face is too pretty for me to fall on.’ His blue eyes were glinting and the telltale scent of horny teenage boy started to fill the air and Stiles glared at them both. They were unrepentant, although he noticed that they kept the horseplay to what would be acceptable in a locker room. Only he was privy to the sexual tension underlying it.

Finstock came in, clipboard in hand and blew his whistle, yelling at them to get their asses outside. Stiles managed to get lost in the herd until they were all out and then fell back, ducking back into the locker room as stealthily as he could.

Jackson’s locker was on the other side of his, and he got back and quickly put in the combination. His ADHD had the odd side effect of making him particularly good at memorising number combinations and he’d had pretty much everyone’s codes memorised since freshman year. Jackson never changed his combination, unlike Greenberg who seemed overly paranoid and did it every week, so it was a moment’s work to get his locker open. His leather messenger bag asat the bottom, and Stiles rifled through it quickly. Lydia had texted just before he got changed that she and Allison were waiting for them outside and when his fingers closed around the USB he grinned in triumph and ran to the door.

They were there waiting for him and he chucked the USB over, not waiting before he was back inside the locker room. He nearly ran into Finstock as he went to the door leading out.

‘Bilinski!’ he yelled and Stiles winced at the assault on his ears. ‘What in the blazes are you doin?’

Sorry Coach. Had to pee.’ He ducked past Finstock and jogged down to the fields, trying to wrestle on his helmet and see at the same time. The others were already warming up when he got there and Stiles stopped for a minute to scan the field, smiling as he felt amusement through his mate bond. Sure enough, there was a tall figure lurking in the trees and there was a brief flash of red.

‘Bossman’s here to watch Mom.’ Erica’s voice drifted down from the bleachers. She was sitting right at the top, long legs crossed and busy filing her nails. ‘That’s so cute.’

‘Shut up, Erica.’ Stiles muttered, going to take his place in the scrimmages. All the same, the feeling amusement only got stronger.

‘It is though.’ Scott bumped him with his shoulder. ‘And you’ve got your stupid grin on.’

‘Yeah.’ Isaac materialised on his other side. ‘And I can smell all your happy hormones and I’ve only been a wolf for a week.’

‘Fuck off.’ Stiles deliberately tripped him up, feeling a perverse sense of joy when Isaac went face first into the dirt. He cackled and took off, both of them in hot pursuit until Finstock blew his whistle at them and made them do suicides for being ‘overenthusiastic’.

Derek’s low laugh from the trees made it all worthwhile though.

Practice went off without a hitch, Erica yelling encouragement and getting more than her fair share of approving looks from the other players. Derek eventually decided to act like a real boy and went to sit with her and Stiles smiled at how Erica immediately started talking to him. Derek had no choice but to engage, something that Stiles knew he needed even if he protested. By the end of the hour, she had insinuated herself against his side, using Derek as a windbreak. His sourwolf looked pained, but the bond was thrumming with low level happiness and satisfaction and Stiles felt a little twinge at how lonely Derek had been before with his sister dead and no more pack.

Finstock was getting ready to blow time and Stiles realised he still had to get back in before the
others. He took off from the field, yelling about needing to pee again and ignored Finstock bawling him out for having the world’s tiniest bladder. Thankfully, Lydia was waiting for him at the door again, looking pissed.

‘You’re cutting it fine.’ she hissed and he grabbed the Usb and hurtled back inside. He’d just managed to lam Jackson’s locker closed when the rest of the team started coming in. He got a weird look from Isaac and Scott and he knew he’d have to explain later, but only after they’d confirmed their suspicions. Instead he ducked his head and avoided their looks as he grabbed his washkit and headed for the showers.

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‘So we’re going skating tonight.’ Erica kicked her heels against the stand below her. ‘I haven’t been skating since I was eleven. It was a birthday party but then I had a seizure because they put on the disco lights and i ended up in hospital. Again.’ She sighed happily. ‘No more of that for me.’

Derek watched her, thinking about how vibrant she was like this. He’d never seen such a transformation before and he could smell how happy she was, although it was a sharp edged happiness that came with bitterness and resentment for the years wasted. He understood that all too well and so he leaned into her space a little and she looked at him.

‘You know not everyone survives the change.’ he said. ‘You did because you’re strong.’ He met her eyes. ‘I knew that you’d make a good wolf the second I saw you. You may have been sick but it couldn’t hide what you were.’

‘I used to have the biggest crush on Stiles.’ Erica said. ‘I never told him that. I thought he would never see me because nobody else did but he was the one who spoke to me that morning and asked me to have lunch with him. I knew he had a boyfriend and for a hot minute I hated you because you got what I wanted. Then I looked at myself in the mirror this morning and knew that it didn’t matter anymore. My epilepsy won’t control my life anymore and I can have whoever I want.’

‘I guess.’ Derek his a smile. ‘Or you can have no-one. You shouldn’t think that this…’ he waved a hand at her, ‘...makes you any more valuable.’

‘That’s just because you’ve probably never been anything but gorgeous.’ Erica snorted.

‘Not true.’ Derek felt the memory rise and he felt his heart clench at the boy who had once been and how he’d looked at himself in the mirror every day and hated what he’d seen. ‘I was skinny and awkward and had huge ears and bunny teeth. Trust me, my sisters were merciless about teasing me. My point is that what you look like wasn’t why I chose to turn you. It was because even after all you’ve been through, I could still smell the defiance on you, the courage. That’s what will make you indispensable to the pack.’

‘So I’m going to be your enforcer?’ Erica grinned with a flash of fang.

‘Something like that.’ he replied, taking out his phone. ‘Look, I’m going to go grab some food for Stiles and Noah and me. Do you want to come have dinner with us before we go skating?’

Erica looked a little taken aback and then he got a real smile, genuine in it’s shy happiness.

‘Yeah.’ she replied. ‘I would.’

‘Come on, then.’ Derek stood up. ‘I’ll tell you about how my sisters used to torture me on the way home.’
Erica followed, cackling as she bounded down the stands in her eight inch heels without a care in the world.

*************

Stiles pulled into the drive, revelling in the quiet in the Jeep. He’d dropped Scott and Isaac off at Scott’s house to do whatever they were going to do before heading to the ice rink. He found Noah in the kitchen, off duty and dressed in jeans and a sweatshirt that had seen better days, glasses perched on his nose.

‘Hey, dad.’ He went over and his instincts kicked in, prompting him to rub his face all over his dad’s shoulder. Noah chuckled and patted him on the head.

‘You have a good day, kiddo?’ He let Stiles go and went to the fridge.

‘Eventful.’ Stiles replied. ‘I’m starting to appreciate how much time goes into police work.’

Noah laughed and retrieved a pack of chicken breasts from the fridge, considered them and then put them back.

‘I always thought you’d make an excellent detective.’ he said. ‘By the way, Derek passed the exam with flying colours.’

‘He did?’ Stiles felt jubilant. ‘All that studying paid off, even if I had to bribe him with…’

‘And we’re stopping that sentence right there.’ Noah narrowed his eyes at him. ‘I do not need to know how you bribe him.’

‘I was going to say with chocolate.’ Stiles snickered. ‘Get your mind out of the gutter, old man.’

‘Too late.’ Noah peered back into the fridge. ‘What is Derek getting you for dinner?’

‘Thai.’ Stiles replied. ‘I may have asked him to get you something.’

‘Bless you.’ Noah planted a kiss on top of his head. ‘So ice skating huh?’

‘It will be good for pack bonding.’ Stiles said. ‘Plus it has the added benefit of putting two people together in the same place.’

‘Oh?’ Noah raised an eyebrow. ‘Which two people.’

‘Erica and Boyd.’ Stiles replied, ears pricking up as he heard the Camaro.

‘Vernon Boyd?’ Noah asked and he nodded.

‘You know him?’ He was a little surprised at how Noah’s face turned grave.

‘I remember him from when Alicia went missing.’ he said. ‘She was his little sister. It was tough on the whole family.’

‘I didn’t know about that.’ Stiles frowned.

‘It happened the year after your mom passed.’ Noah explained. ‘I hid it because you were having a hard enough time as it was. Alicia was seven at the time and Vernon was looking after her because their mom worked two jobs. They were down at the park when she went missing. That poor kid blamed himself, even though he was only twelve at the time. They never found her.’
‘Shit.’ Stiles said, realising that was what he’d picked up and why Boyd had struck him as so much like Derek. He was obviously carrying the same guilt and his loner tendencies were a reaction to that. ‘That’s awful.’

The front door opened and closed and Derek came into the kitchen with Erica in tow. She gave Noah a shy look, at odds with her appearance. Derek had obviously stopped to let her change and she was now in black skinny jeans and two tank tops, black and blue. Her stilettos had been swapped out for spike heeled boots and she still looked amazing.

‘Hi Sheriff.’ she said and Noah smiled at her.

‘You look much recovered.’ he said and she beamed. ‘Being a wolf suits you.’

‘So I keep saying.’ Derek came over and set the bags on the table, leaning in to give Stiles a brief kiss. He was content, the sweetness of it like fresh baked cookies in Stiles’ nose. ‘Hey you.’

‘Hey back.’ Stiles let himself drown in those green eyes for a moment until it was shattered by Erica making puking noises.

‘You two are so gross.’ She started digging around in the bag and Noah chuckled behind her.

‘She’s not wrong.’ He held out a hand and Derek passed over a container. ‘Thank you, Derek.’

‘You’re welcome.’ Derek sat down and pulled Stiles into the chair next to him. They distributed the food, Erica chatting to Noah about her family. He knew her parents and the conversation was easygoing. Derek ate with his usual efficiency, one hand going to the back of Stiles’ neck every now and them, thumb rubbing small circles just below his ear and making Stiles want to purr.

They finished up and Noah retired to the lounge with a beer and complete power over the remote control. Erica went with him, and Stiles helped Derek clean up before they went upstairs. It was ostensibly to get changed but Stiles found himself bounced onto the bed with what felt like two hundred pounds of werewolf on top of him. Derek growled happily and licked him from sternum to chin and then kissed him stupid.

‘I like this happy you.’ Stiles remarked when Derek let him breathe.

‘I like him too.’ Derek crinkled his nose at him. ‘I haven’t felt this settled since my pack died.’

‘I’m glad we could help.’ Stiles smiled and then sighed when the front doorbell went. ‘Here come the partycrashers.’

‘This was your idea, remember?’ Derek rolled off of him and went over to the dresser, digging around for a clean t-shirt before he stripped off his one. He pulled it on and then grumbled because it was obviously Stiles and fit like a crop top. ‘None of these fit.’

‘Yours are next drawer down, asshole.’ Stiles told him. He got up and there was a brief shoving match before they finally each got a clean shirt that fitted. When they got back downstairs, Allison and Lydia were curled up on the couch together and Lydia was talking to Noah.

‘I was kind of hoping you might remember something’ she was saying. ‘I mean I know it was long ago.’

‘I didn’t actually work that night.’ Noah was apologetic. ‘I can just tell you what I remember from the traffic report.’
‘Well, I can do one better.’ Erica piped up and they all turned to look at her. ‘My dad’s the adjuster that did that case. It was really sad. His mom was pregnant and she had to be kept on life support so that they could deliver him.’

‘Holy shit.’ Stiles flopped down on the couch next to Allison. ‘That’s really terrible.’

‘It was a weird accident too.’ Erica added. ‘I know that it seemed like they’d been run off the road.’

‘I remember that much.’ Noah said. ‘It was assumed they’d swerved to avoid something.’

I also know that Jackson is going to be super rich when he turns eighteen because of the settlement.’ Erica stated. ‘But I guess money doesn’t bring back your parents, right?’

‘No.’ Lydia looked thoughtful and Stiles knew she’d reached the same conclusion he had. ‘I remember how badly he was affected when he found out he was adopted.’

‘Certainly sounds like an identity issue to me.’ he said and they all looked at him.

‘Yeah.’ Derek turned to Lydia. ‘This makes it even more likely.’

‘What?’ Erica demanded. ‘I’m missing something here.’

‘I’ll explain in the car.’ Derek said, getting up. ‘I have a feeling tonight’s not going to be as much fun as we thought.’

***********

Boyd hadn’t known quite what to expect but two cars full of people turning up wasn’t it. Not only that, but one of the people filing past him into the ice rink was Erica Reyes, her big brown eyes made up in sparkly blue and looking more beautiful than he’d ever seen her. He’d been a bit of a loss for words, but now he was sitting at the side of the ice, watching them all make idiots of themselves.

Isaac and Scott were trying to hold each other up, both of them a wobbly as a pair of fawns on a frozen lake. Lydia turned out to be a very experienced skater and was now doing complicated spins and twirls as she made her way around the ice. Allison was going well, not flashy but more than able to hold her own as she followed in Lydia’s wake and laughed as she passed the flailing boys, Erica next to her and keeping up with no problems. Finally there was Stiles and his weird broody boyfriend. Stiles was laughing like a drain, one arm linked in with Derek, who skated like he was on a Sunday stroll with both hands in his pockets.

They eventually took a break and Boyd took the opportunity to eavesdrop a little. He glanced at Erica and caught her looking at him, thankful that she wouldn’t see him blushing from that far away. He’d always liked her, even when she thought she wasn’t worth liking. He tuned in, trying hard to look like he wasn’t paying any attention.

‘So there was nothing on it?’ Stiles sounded disappointed.

‘Just him sleeping.’ Allison replied. She had a lollipop from the vending machine in her hand. ‘Not much to report.’

‘That can’t be it, though.’ Isaac said. ‘It’s too many things adding up.’

‘Maybe I should have a look at it.’ Stiles waved his hands around for emphasis. ‘I know my way around shit like this.’
‘Well, if something was on there, it’s been taken out.’ Lydia was not happy. ‘Which means that Matt knows something.’

‘He’s such a creep.’ Allison added. ‘He’s been stalking us all day.’

‘Really?’ Scott growled and Boyd was using that literally. He’d never heard a person sound like that before. ‘Do you want us to take care of him.’

‘No.’ Lydia was stern. ‘You’ll just put him onto us. We need to either confirm or deny. Morell said that the kanima wouldn’t be able to know itself, that it’s in some kind of fugue state when its transformed.’

‘So he wouldn’t know anyway.’ Erica said. ‘Look, you said that Danny is able to hack all kinds of stuff right? Maybe we could ask him to hack Matt’s computer. I’m betting if he did alter the footage, that it would be on there.’

‘That is actually quite brilliant.’ Stiles grinned at her. ‘Way to go, Catwoman.’

‘Thank you, Batman.’ she said and fistbumped him.

Boyd had no idea what they were talking about, but he did know that suddenly he wanted to be there with them. He’d always been lonely, but now it was like a knife cutting through his heart. More than anything, he wanted to be part of something.

‘You can be.’ a voice sounded behind him and Boyd nearly jumped out of his skin. He looked over to see that Derek had somehow managed to leave the group without him noticing and sneak up on him completely unheard.

‘I can be what?’ He forced his voice not to shake.

‘Part of something.’ Derek replied and Boyd realised that he’d obviously spoken his thoughts aloud. ‘Part of us.’

‘I don’t understand.’ He looked back and found he was suddenly the focus of everyone’s attention. ‘What are you talking about?’

‘We’re not just friends.’ Derek said and his eyes lit up with an eerie red glow. ‘We’re pack. And we’d like to ask if you want to join us.’

Boyd could feel that his mouth was hanging open, but he was unable to stop himself.

‘You’re…’ He pointed a finger at Derek’s newly sharp teeth. ‘You’re…’

‘A werewolf.’ Derek lisped the tiniest bit around his fangs. ‘So are Isaac, Scott, Erica and Stiles. It’s a really long story, but if you’re interested, we can tell you all about it.’

Boyd felt like he should be terrified. Instead, he felt intrigued and the friendly grins he was getting from everyone else, even if the aforementioned people all had golden glowing eyes and teeth that matched Derek’s, put him more at ease than he should have been. Something inside him kicked him in the ass and told him to take a chance.

‘Okay.’ He met Derek’s glowing red eyes. ‘Lay it on me.’
Chapter Summary

Stiles knew he shouldn’t have gotten out of bed.

‘Goddammit!’ Stiles snarled and stomped in a circle, arms flailing. ‘How is this my life?’

‘Calm down, Stiles.’ Noah was standing looking at the engine, coffee mug in hand. ‘It’ll just have to go to the garage.’

‘Yeah.’ Derek was on his other side, arms folded. ‘I think maybe you need to get the fuel pump replaced.’

‘No shit.’ Stiles grumbled. ‘I know that. It’s just that I hate taking Roscoe there. The guy’s an asshole.’

‘Well, this isn’t a job you could do yourself.’ Derek replied. ‘And it’s not like I know anything about cars.’

‘Pity.’ Noah remarked. ‘You’d save him a hell of a lot of money.’

‘And contribute to any number of dirty mechanic fantasies.’ Stiles said without thinking and then went red. ‘Not that we needed to know that.’

‘Laura was the one interested in cars.’ Derek said, a soft sad smile on his face. ‘She used to help my dad with the Camaro and the cars before that. I wasn’t interested in anything that wasn’t sports related.’

Noah and Stiles exchanged a look but said nothing. It was good to hear Derek peaking about his family. It happened so rarely and he would clam up if anyone pointed it out so they kept quiet and let him reminisce when he wanted.

Isaac came bounding out the front door, phone in hand.

‘I called Erica.’ he told them. ‘Her mom’s going to drop her off.’

‘Guess that means I’m on the school run.’ Derek was already going to get his keys and Stiles shouldered his backpack and snorted in annoyance.

‘I’ll call a tow.’ Noah patted Stiles on the shoulder. ‘We may have to admit defeat on this one, kid.’

‘Never!’ Stiles yelled after him and pouted at the Jeep. ‘Fuck my life.’

Isaac snickered at him and looked back at Derek, now reappeared with keys and shrugging into his jacket.

‘Can we pick up Scott?’ he asked, blue eyes wide and pleading and Derek shoved him in the direction of the Camaro.

‘Only if you two don’t stink it out.’ he replied and now it was Isaac’s turn to pout.
‘You don’t complain when Stiles makes it reek like horny teenager.’ he retorted and Stiles bared his teeth at him.

‘Alpha mate’s privilege, asshole.’ he snarled and Isaac stuck his tongue out at him, prompting Derek to roll his eyes.

‘Get in the car, pup.’ he growled and Isaac obeyed instantly. Stiles glared at him through the window and got in the passenger side. He was busy kicking his backpack into the footwell when Derek coughed softly, a sure sign he was about to make an announcement.

‘So I was thinking...’ he started and Stiles frowned.

‘What?’ He could read him well enough to see that Derek was uncomfortable but he wasn’t sure why.

‘It’s just that the Jeep breaks down nearly all the time.’ Derek replied. ‘But I get that it was your mom’s. I would never get rid of the Camaro either, but maybe we could get the whole engine block fixed. That way the you can keep her going but she’ll be far more reliable.’

‘Um...’ Stiles was lost for words. He’d often dreamed of having the money to fix Roscoe so that she would never break down again, but it was usually one thing after another. It was easier now with Derek’s contribution but this was so much that it caught him completely off guard.

‘I mean, only if you want to.’ Derek was quick to add. ‘I know how you feel about being independent, it’s just I would be happier knowing that you were not likely to get stranded.’

‘Okay.’ Stiles drew it out, thinking about the expense. ‘That’s a fuckload of money though. And it would mean having no car for a couple of days.’

‘Well, how about you get them to fix what needs doing tonight and then we can think about it.’ Derek countered. ‘We can get them to tell us exactly what needs doing.’

‘Thank you.’ Stiles beamed at him. ‘That’s seriously nice of you to do that for me.’

‘You’re my mate.’ Derek’s ears were going a charming shade of red. ‘I’d literally give you anything I could afford to buy you.’

‘Hmmm.’ Stiles grinned. ‘Don’t say shit like that, I have quite an imagination. What if I said I wanted season tickets to the Mets.’

‘Do you want season tickets to the Mets?’ Derek had a slightly manic look in his eye and Stiles was surprised to find that their bond was starting to thrum with something he recognised all too well.

‘Are you getting off on this? Does providing for me turn you on, big bad?’ he asked and now Derek’s blush was heading down the back of his neck.

‘No.’ He didn’t sound even remotely convincing and behind them, Isaac burst out laughing.

‘Here we go again.’ he snickered and opened the window.

************

‘So how do I look?’ Erica squinted at herself in the mirror. She was nervous as hell, even though their little ice rink escapade had gone even better than she could have imagined with her and Boyd tentatively exchanging numbers. He was even nicer than she’d thought, with a dry sense of humour.
and a deep seated gentleness that made her want to swoon in his general direction.

‘You look good.’ Lydia gave her a critical once over. ‘A little slutty, but that’s never a bad thing.’

Erica smiled at her, reapplying her lip gloss and checking that her cleavage was suitably exposed. She was in a white tank over a black bra, her jeans skin-tight and making her legs look a hundred miles long in her bright red heels. She gave Lydia a quick glance, appreciating the floral mini and suede ankle boots combo the other girl was working, her rust coloured cardigan making her coppery hair gleam.

‘I would kill for your wardrobe budget.’ she said and Lydia smirked.

‘The benefits of being the only child of a highly dysfunctional marriage.’ She flicked a strand of hair out of her eyes. ‘Do you know, I told my mom that I’m fucking Allison over dinner last night and all she could think about was whether my father was screwing the tennis coach at the country club.’

‘I get that.’ Erica huffed. ‘My mom is so detached from everything that happens in my life that she doesn’t even pay attention to where I am. I came home after the ice rink and she hadn’t even realised I’d gone out. I think she started out doing it as like survival tactic to deal with the fact that I could die, but now she really doesn’t care anymore.’

‘That’s rough.’ Lydia sighed and then pulled herself together and gave her a brilliant smile. ‘But now you’re pack so that’s something.’

Erica turned and leaned back against the sinks.

‘I never ever in a million years thought we’d be here like this.’ she said and Lydia raised an eyebrow at her.

‘I never thought I’d get bitten by a psychotic werewolf that now haunts my daydreams.’ she replied. ‘Or that I’d be the emissary of this little ragtag bunch of assholes, but here we are.’ She smiled and Erica was astounded to see that she was sincere, affection colouring her voice.

‘I always thought you were such a bitch.’ she admitted. ‘But I kind of like you.’

‘You’re not so bad yourself.’ Lydia smirked. ‘And honey if I’m a bitch, so are you. Literally now.’

Erica laughed, feeling happier than she ever had. Her pack bonds were like a warm pulse in her chest and she felt well and whole and filled with anticipation knowing that Boyd was going to be somewhere in the halls, waiting to talk to her with that shy half smile he wore and which made her want to kiss it right off his face.

The door slammed open and Allison all but bounded in, smiling when she saw them.

‘Hi.’ Her dimples were on display as she came over and cupped Lydia’s face, kissing her soundly. ‘You look beautiful today.’

‘So do you.’ There was a genuine softness to Lydia’s voice and her green eyes were dreamy when she looked up at her girlfriend. Erica had been convinced that they were doing it just for the controversy but she’d had to change her mind when she’d seen how affectionate they were with each other at the ice rink.

‘I thought maybe you’d like to come over tonight.’ Allison brushed Lydia’s hair off her shoulders. ‘Econ mid-term is on Friday.’
‘God, don’t remind me.’ Lydia muttered. ‘And Finstock sets the most ridiculously random questions.’

‘Yeah, but you’ll ace it.’ Allison replied. ‘I’m the one that needs remedial instruction. And Scott.’

‘Um, maybe me too?’ Erica ventured and got a beaming smile from Allison.

‘Of course.’ she said. ‘Actually maybe a group study session is just what we all need. My dad hasn’t met you yet, not officially.’

‘Pack study session.’ Lydia mused, her eyes lighting up. ‘That’s actually a really good idea.’ She gave Erica a knowing smile. ‘And of course tonight is when Boyd’s going to get the bite.’

Erica was well aware of that. A large part of her and Boyd’s text conversations had been about the bite. She knew he’d also traded numbers with Isaac as well, grilling them both about their experiences. It felt good to be consulted and Derek had encouraged her to get to know Boyd as a prospective packmate as well as someone she was clearly interested in.

‘He’s nervous.’ she said. ‘But Derek and him have been talking a lot.’ She knew that Boyd had been out with Derek on Saturday, mostly because Stiles had been complaining via their group texts like a stuck pig for almost the entire time they were gone.

‘I know.’ Lydia took Allison’s hand. ‘Deaton’s been helping our socially awkward Alpha work on his communication skills.’

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‘So I was thinking training tonight.’ Derek glanced at Isaac in the rear view mirror. ‘It’s time for you and Erica to start working on your senses.’

‘Aren’t you doing the thing with Boyd, though?’ Isaac asked. ‘You know...like grrrr.’ He made a wolfy face back at him.

‘Yeah but before then.’ Derek replied. ‘He got to see us having fun on Friday, but he also needs to see that we take being a pack seriously. And we do need to train. The next full moon will be here before we know it and one of the conditions of the agreement I have with Allison and Chris is that you are all under control and not a threat.’

‘I think I did pretty well.’ Isaac ventured and Derek nodded, feeling a sense of pride at how well his fledgling beta had in fact done.

‘You did,’ he confirmed. ‘But we’ll have Erica and Boyd as well next time and it will be good to establish hierarchy and pack roles. Lydia’s busy reading up on everything and she’ll help us figure it out.’

‘Yeah, you may have to take a rain check on that.’ Stiles snickered, looking at his phone. ‘Lydia’s just called a study group for our Econ mid-term.’

‘Fuck.’ Isaac slumped in the back seat. ‘Ugh, I kind of forgot about that. It’s been a couple of crazy fucking weeks.’

‘Understandable.’ Derek thought about how he’d been little more than a zombie when he and Laura had left beacon Hills. Not that Isaac’s situation had been the same, but he’d still lost his father in violent circumstances.
‘We need somewhere we could do both.’ Stiles said. ‘Somewhere out of the weather and where we can get our wolf on without worrying about breaking shit.’

Derek ran through options in his head. He had somewhere in mind, a place that he’d considered crashing in before he’d been informally adopted by the Stilinskis.

‘I think I might have the perfect place.’ he replied, pulling into the school lot. ‘You’ll still need to go get your car after school though.’

‘No problem.’ Stiles replied. ‘You can pick us up after school and drop me off and then I can swing by once I’ve got my Jeep back.’

‘Got it.’ Derek leaned over and smiled against Stiles’ mouth when Isaac made disgusted noises and got out the Camaro like his tail was on fire.

************

Erica made her way down the stairs and lifted her head, scenting the air for the scent that would lead her to what she was after. Boyd smelled like rich earth and spicy warmth to her new wolf nose and it hit her like a ton of bricks when she got into the corridor. He was at his locker, broad shoulders under a black and white raglan t-shirt, and she felt a flutter in her stomach as she approached.

‘Hey.’ She kept her voice purposely casual and Boyd turned to look at her, dark eyes lighting up when he saw her smiling at him.

‘Hi.’ His smile was so beautiful and Erica melted in the inside, what she now knew was her inner wolf whining eagerly. She didn’t know why, but he smelled so right to her and all she wanted to do was rub up against him, maybe bite at the strong line of his jaw and lick at his mouth.

‘So, how are you today?’ she asked and then lowered her voice. ‘Nervous?’

Boyd looked around them and then slammed his locker shut, falling into step next to her.

‘A little.’ he confessed. ‘But I’m also really kind of excited about it.’

Erica beamed at him, her heart picking up speed at the thought of him being in their pack. She was so busy admiring him that she completely missed what he was saying.

‘Huh?’

Boyd smiled at her, this time shy and boyish.

‘I asked if I could walk you to class.’ he said. Erica felt like her heart was about to burst and she took his offered arm feeling like she was about to float away.

‘Absolutely.’ she replied and let him lead her through the crowd of students.

************

BY the end of school, logistics had been discussed and Lydia had approved of combining training and studying. Her texts to Derek were business like and he chuckled as he read the latest one before shoving his phone in his pocket.

The subway station had been part of an ill fated vanity project from back in the early eighties. He’d played here when he was a cub, him and Laura and their other cousins using it for extended games of hide and seek after school. They’d caught hell when Talia had found out and never been allowed
back but he’d remembered it and found it pretty much unchanged.

‘This place is a goddamn death trap.’ Chris came around from behind the abandoned subway car. Derek had always wondered how the hell they’d gotten down into the space when there were no tracks to be seen or even a tunnel leading out. Not that he was fond of tunnels. Not anymore, at least.

‘It’ll be a good place to train though.’ he replied. ‘And if they trash it, nobody will give a shit.’

‘That’s about all it’s got going for it.’ Chris snorted, dusting off his hands. ‘So what did you have in mind?’

‘I need to get them all using their noses.’ Derek replied. ‘That’s what we learned first.’ He could see the curiosity in Chris’ eyes even though the hunter was being far too polite to mention it.

‘I’ve been doing advanced marksmanship with Allison.’ he said. ‘But it would be really good to have some wolves to spar with. It’ll give her an idea of what this all really entails.’

Derek nodded. He had never been serious about what his parents had wanted to teach them until it was too late. Laura had been too preoccupied with getting them places they wouldn’t be tracked to really teach him anything either, which led him to his ulterior motive for asking Chris along. He wasn’t quite sure how to ask but then he noticed the Chris was watching him intently.

‘What is it?’ he asked.

‘I think it would work both ways.’ Derek said. ‘I’m the Alpha now. I need to know how to defend my pack.’

‘Oh?’ Chris gave him a searching look. ‘You’d trust me to do that?’

‘I think you’ve proven your commitment to keeping the truce between us.’ Derek replied. ‘I trust you.’

He wasn’t expecting the sudden rush of emotion across Chris’ face or the way his scent shifted through astonishment and confusion to what was easily identified as satisfaction.

‘And I you.’ he replied, his heartbeat perfectly steady. ‘I trust you enough to let my daughter be in your pack and ally myself with you. I know how badly my family has wronged yours Derek, but I sweat that as long as I’m alive the Hale pack will count us among your allies.’

‘Thank you.’ Derek gave him a half smile and Chris returned it, his ice blue eyes taking on a mischievous glint.

‘Besides, I always wondered what it would be like to kick a werewolf’s ass one on one.’ he said and Derek’s shocked laugh burst right out of him. He let his eyes flare and growled for the full effect.

‘What makes you think you’ll be able to take me?’ he asked and it was Chris’ turn to laugh, oddly full bellied for a man that Derek hadn’t been convinced even held a shred of humanity a mere two months previously.

‘I’ve been doing it a long time.’ he said. ‘I know what my skill level is.’

‘So you’ll be here tonight?’ Derek asked. ‘To help us?’

‘Yes, I will.’ Chris looked around and wrinkled his nose. ‘I’ll even bring the first aid kit. This place is probably crawling with tetanus.’
Derek nodded, then frowned when his phone rang. It was Stiles’ ringtone (The Cramps, something he’d laughed about forever) and he answered it as he followed Chris out into the overgrown lot that surrounded the derelict station.

‘I’m on my way,’ he said, preempting the anticipated whine about being late to pick them up.

‘Well, hurry up,’ Stiles told him. ‘I’m getting sick of watching Isaac and Scott suck face.’

‘Where’s Erica,’ Derek waved to Chris as he drove off to get the equipment and other things he’d offered to lend Derek for training.

‘She’s getting a ride with Boyd,’ Stiles sounded impossibly smug. ‘I think we may have a match made in heaven there. They were so freaking cute at lunch.’

Derek laughed and continued the conversation all the way to the school. Isaac and Scott were sitting with Stiles on the grass outside the school, all of them engaged in conversation. Stiles was pontificating on the horrors of the coming mid-term, his voice strident even from that far away. Derek honked a couple of times to get their attention and they trotted over.

Armor Tire was about a ten minute drive away and Stiles continued his strangely soothing stream of consciousness as they drove. Derek listened with half an ear before tuning back in when his mate asked him where they would be training.

‘The old subway station,’ he replied. ‘You know where it is?’

‘There?’ Stiles snickered. ‘That’s a little Bond villain, don’t you think?’

‘It’ll be fine for throwing each other around,’ Derek replied. ‘And I don’t want any of us in the preserve until we are sure the kanima isn’t going to be a threat.’

‘Nothing happened over the weekend though,’ Scott pointed out. ‘Maybe it’s moved on.’

‘I doubt it,’ Derek growled. ‘If this thing has been called out to take revenge, I doubt the person that’s acting as its master will stop at just the one person.’

‘I agree,’ Stiles said. ‘If this dude is serious enough about their revenge to use a supernatural lizard to kill people, then they’ve probably got a whole revenge plan laid out. Sticking together is a good idea.’

His words suddenly made Derek aware that he was about to do just that. An unpleasant lurch in his stomach had Stiles looking at him as his misgiving surged through their bond.

‘No,’ he shook his head. ‘It’ll be fine. I’m literally going in to pick up my car and then I’ll be following you to the wolfy lair of doom.’

‘Oh shit.’ Now Scott had picked up on the change in mood. ‘Hey, I can go with him.’

‘Jesus,’ Stiles rolled his eyes and Derek was just a little bit proud at how his mate managed to look so blatantly annoyed. ‘I don’t need a babysitter. I’m also a wolf in case you all missed the memo.’

‘Not the point,’ Derek glanced at Scott. ‘Go with him, please.’

‘Sure,’ Scott replied and Stiles gave Derek an outraged look.

‘What?’ he refused to be cowed. ‘You just said it was a good idea for us to not go anywhere alone. That means you too.’
‘Fine.’ Stiles threw up his hands. ‘Scott can come with.’

Derek felt a rush of relief and smiled when Stiles snorted at him. He didn’t object further though and when they got to the garage, he kissed Derek at the corner of his mouth and swapped places with Isaac.

Derek watched them walk into the garage and approach a thin man in overalls with stringy blond hair. The Jeep was up on the lift and it looked like it was still being worked on. Derek hesitated before Stiles lifted his head and looked at him.

‘Another half hour.’ his voice came through loud and clear to Derek’s ears. ‘Go on, we’ll be fine.’

‘Okay.’ He put the Camaro in gear, pulling out of the lot even though something as prickling at him to stay. Next to him, Isaac grinned.

‘You’re so jumpy.’ His voice was teasing. ‘He’ll be fine. If the kanima shows up, Stiles will just annoy it to death.’

Derek huffed a laugh in spite of himself and turned out into traffic.

‘That’s if he doesn’t chase it away with his constant babbling first.’ he countered and Isaac snorted.

‘Yeah. You know that today he actually made Mr Westover facepalm because he started an argument about the Normandy offensive that used Star Trek as an analogy.’ He gave Derek the side-eye. ‘You have terrible taste in mates.’

‘Fuck off.’ Derek swatted him gently in the arm. ‘Speaking of, how are things going with you and Scott?’

‘Good.’ Isaac looked very pleased with himself. ‘The knot thing is weird, but apart from that it’s like finding something I never knew was missing until I got it.’

‘Yeah, I get that.’ Derek smiled to himself. ‘I’m glad you’re happy.’

‘Me too.’ Isaac’s face changed, his smile turning melancholy. ‘I never thought I’d get a second chance. Thank you.’

Derek reached over and awkwardly patted his knee.

‘You’re welcome.’ he replied.

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‘It’s getting dark.’ Scott peered through the window of the waiting area. ‘How long did he say?’

‘Half an hour.’ Stiles was pissed. He huffed and slid down further in the chair he was sitting in. ‘And I bet your ass and mine that the fucker is going to try and overcharge me. Maybe I can eat him if he does.’

‘Don’t even joke about that.’ Scott came back to sit next to him. ‘This whole kanima thing gives me the creeps.’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles checked his phone. Derek had messaged to tell him everyone was there and they were going to start with some sense training first so they didn’t miss the actual fight training that Chris and Allison were going to help them with. After everything was done, they were all going back to the Stilinski house to study.
‘Shit.’ Scott shifted in his chair. ‘I need to pee.’

‘You shouldn’t have drunk all the water then.’ Stiles kicked at his foot.

‘Whatever.’ Scott grinned and then affected a terrible Schwarzeneger voice. ‘I’ll be back.’

Stiles gave him the finger and went back to his phone. The wifi signal was pretty shit so he got up and ambled over to the office to see if it was any better and then froze when he heard something scrape the door to the workshop area. He frowned and looked over but didn’t see anything through the glass window in the door. He listened more carefully, hearing Scott pissing a steady steam in the restroom and the godawful electronic synth that the mechanic was listening to. Derek had impressed on him that he needed to trust his sense so Stiles took a deep breath and focused.

It was hard to pick out, but then he heard it again. It was a metallic scratching sound and Stiles immediately went on alert. He sidled to the restroom door and hissed, trying to make sure he wouldn’t be overheard.

‘Scott.’ He heard the sound of a zipper and then a hiss of pain. ‘Scott. Get your ass out here now!’

‘What?’ Scott cracked the door, looking suspicious. It was his default look when confronted with an agitated Stiles, but this certainly warranted it.

‘Listen.’ He grabbed Scott by the arm and yanked him out. Scott gave him his confused face and then his dark eyes widened.

‘Is that…?’ He made a weird gesture that could only be interpreted as something chicken related and Stiles rolled his eyes.

‘I think so.’ He tugged on Scott’s sleeve. ‘Come on.’

‘Noooo.’ Scott tried to back away. ‘Why don’t we go back in the restroom and call Derek and the others. That would be the sensible thing to do.’

Stiles opened his mouth to protest, but the shriek that came from the workshop put paid to that.

‘Fuck.’ He bolted for the door to the workshop, grabbing the handle and throwing it open, catching it on the other side to make sure it didn’t smack Scott in the face, but as he let it go he noticed that his hand came away covered in a clear slimy substance that certainly hadn’t been there before. He flicked it off his hand and froze when he spotted a sinuous shape atop the Jeep. He recognised it immediately and when Scott barrelled in behind him, he pointed and shoved him to the left.

‘That way.’ He broke right, vaulting over the prostrate mechanic, but just as he was gearing up to shift and take on the kanima, now spitting at him from the roof of his Jeep, he felt a bizarre lethargy take over his limbs and then he was falling flat on his face on the concrete floor.

‘Stiles?’ Scott yelled, looking between him and the kanima. ‘Dude, what the hell?’

Stiles tried, he really did, but he was completely paralysed and he recalled the paragraph in the bestiary that detailed the effects of the kanima vemon. He’d been under the impression that it had to be administered by the creature’s claws but the joke was clearly on him.

‘Fuck.’ He tried to roll, but nothing happened. ‘Scott, get him!’

Scott looked completely alarmed for a second but then the kanima fixed yellow reptilian eyes on Stiles and the mechanic, who was also obviously paralysed as well, and he immediately shifted and
jumped at the Jeep. Stiles winced at the thought of the damage that they would be doing but the kanima was wily and strong and it met Scott halfway, knocking him back to the ground and then leaped down, claws extended. In the light of the workshop, Stiles could now get a fairly good look at it from his vantage point on the floor and saw it was scaled like a crocodile with a spiny ride that ran the length of it’s back and down along a long tail that was reminiscent of a lizard.

‘Shit!’ Scott scrambled to his feet, getting between the kanima and Stiles. ‘What do I do?’

‘Don’t let it scratch you!’ Stiles was furious as being so helpless.

Scott snarled, eyes glowing gold and it was echoed by the kanima in a drawn out hiss. It was circling, trying to get past Scott but he was giving it all he had. Stiles was desperately worried though, knowing that Scott was about as good at fighting as he was at shutting up at inappropriate moments and just hoped like hell Derek could feel something was off.

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‘Good.’ Chris smiled encouragingly and Derek had to admit that asking him to help was definitely one of his wiser decisions.

The older hunter’s experience was proving to be invaluable in helping the betas to understand what they would be facing and how to fight against it. He had Erica and Isaac facing off against each other, going through a series of moves that had elements of martials arts and the kind of military combat techniques that Derek recognised from the eighties action movies Noah watched late at night. The wolves were picking them up surprisingly quickly and he’d found that even he was enjoying the precision of it. Wolves generally relied on their natural strength and agility to fight, but he’d only been taught the rudimentaries. He wished that he’d learned more from Peter, who’d been considered the most skilled fighter in the pack by far.

‘Jesus, just hold still so I can kick your ass!’ Erica yelled and Isaac cackled and evaded her again. He was turning out to be a really sneaky opponent, his natural speed compensating for his lack of killer instinct. Erica was the opposite, courageous and aggressive but also reckless in her attacks. Lydia shared a similar instinct, something Derek had been astonished by.

His emissary had come dressed in sweats and bearing a can-do attitude that had seen her flipping Allison to the ground far more quickly than anyone had expected her to, including her girlfriend. There had been a really awkward moment when Lydia had ended up straddling Allison and pinning her to the ground and the scent of arousal had bloomed when their eyes had locked for just a little too long. The fact that Chris had clearly not known where to look had only made it better and Derek had found himself hiding a smirk. Now he was sitting on the open doorway of the subway car with Boyd and watching how his prospective beta’s eyes were glued to Erica’s ass.

‘She’s doing really well.’ he said. ‘She’s such a natural wolf.’

‘She’s beautiful.’ Boyd murmured and the complete sincerity in his words and his heartbeat made Derek feel very pleased with the decision to offer him a place in the pack. Boyd was stoic and steady, something that would blend so well with the energy of Erica and Stiles and Isaac’s emotional flightiness. It was also so settling, having someone who would blend with his own personality. Sure, he’d gone through a cocky little shit phase in high school (and look at all the shit that had brought him) but Derek had always been on the quieter side. He took after his father that way and James Hale had exuded the same kind of energy that Boyd had.

There was a whoop when Erica managed to grab Isaac around the waist and flip him to the ground, growling happily while he slapped at her and snarled back. It reminded Derek of the cubs in his lack
play fighting and something warm filled up his chest that he recognised as a deep sense contentment. He was actually happy and it was so unexpected that Derek felt himself choking up a little bit.

It just made the sense of complete and utter fury and indignation charging through the bond that much greater and Derek’s head snapped back as it nearly floored him.

‘Derek?’ Boyd caught hold of his arm, steadying him. ‘What’s wrong, man?’

‘Stiles.’ he gritted out. ‘Something’s wrong.’

‘Shit.’ Boyd helped him to his feet and the others cam over instantly, their faces filled with worry.

‘What happened?’ Chris was all business.

‘I don’t know.’ Derek batted Boyd’s hands away, needing to run and get to his mate. ‘But it’s bad.’

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‘Fuck, fuck, fuck.’ Stiles was at the point where he wanted to chew off his one arm if it meant kickstarting his healing so he could move. He’d just watched the kanima lift Scott like a rag doll and hurl him across the workshop into the far wall. He was still slumped there and Stiles was frantic with worry that he was seriously hurt. That and the fact the kanima was now prowling across the floor towards him and the mechanic. The poor man was whining in fear and Stiles wrinkled his nose at the sudden stench of ammonia next to him.

The kanima pulled its lips back, showing off razor sharp teeth that were more like a shark’s than a reptile’s. It crawled low to the ground and Stiles was now more convinced than ever that it was Jackson. There was just something in the way that it moved, a fluid arrogance that he recognised all too well. The knowledge that Jackson was clearly unaware of what he was doing didn’t make it any better either.

‘Oh come on.’ he muttered as the kanima came to a stop over him, its eyes boring into his. ‘Dude, seriously?’

On the other side of the workshop, Scott groaned. He was trying to push himself up but fell back down again. The kanima lifted its head to look at him and then slithered over Stiles to the mechanic.

‘No.’ the man whimpered. ‘No, no, no…’

It ignored his protests, picking him up easily and then carrying him over to the Jeep. Stiles was outraged for a hot minute that the damn croco-lizard-thing was going to steal his beloved Roscoe but then it did something he hadn’t been expecting at all and tossed the terrified mechanic into the pit below. He landed with a thump and the kanima turned so it was looking right at Stiles. It hissed in triumph and then reached for the remote and Stiles yelled as he caught on to what it had planned.

‘Scott!’ he bellowed. ‘Come on, wake the fuck up!’

Scott raised his head, eyes flickering like a broken light and growled, barely audible over the awful inevitable grind of the lift going down. The further it got, the more muffled the mechanic’s screams became until it landed and the sickening crunch of bones shattering drowned out everything else until there was no more noise. It made Stiles feel sick to his stomach.

‘Oh man.’ he moaned. ‘That is so gross.’

‘Stiles.’ Scott was on his feet, wavering but determined and Stiles wanted to kiss him. The kanima
seemed to realise that now would be a good time to beat it and it exited stage left, climbing the wall and slinking into the darkness.

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Derek was finding it very hard not to panic. That translated into him breaking land/speed records while avoiding Boyd’s mildly horrified face. In the seats at the back, Erica and Isaac were practically vibrating with distress and if he’d been any more lucid, Derek would have been proud of how emotionally connected they were to their alpha pair already.

As it was, all he cared about was getting to that damned garage and getting Stiles out of danger.

He put his foot down a little more and Boyd’s eyes widened. He glanced over his shoulder at Erica and Isaac and they growled at him, eyes lit up like flashlights. He turned back and Derek felt a slight sinking feeling that maybe he was going to change his mind about taking the bite but he couldn’t hide what this was. One of the things he needed to give his pack was honesty, something both Stiles and Noah had impressed on him, so he’d rather Boyd back out than pretend this was anything other than serious.

Thankfully, the lights of the garage were in sight and Derek threw the handbrake, drifting into the lot and throwing open the door before the car had even completely stopped. He could smell the reptilian stink of the kanima and it was mixed with blood, thankfully not Stiles’ or Scott’s but human and that made his stomach roil.

He got to the doors and nearly ripped them off their hinges to get inside. The Jeep was in the pit and next to it Scott started to stumble towards him.

‘Get Stiles.’ He sounded winded. ‘He’s been paralysed by the kanima.’ He wobbled on his feet and then went down as Isaac bounded past Derek and threw himself at Scott.

‘Derek?’ The pissiness in Stiles’ voice instantly made him feel better. ‘Can you get the fuck over here and help me the fuck up if it’s not too much trouble?’

Derek found him face down on the floor, huffing like a steam train as he snarled in frustration. He grabbed Stiles and turned him over, burying his face in his mate’s neck and breathing him in to soothe the overwhelming sense of panic that he’d felt coming into the garage.

‘Fuck.’ He could hear how broken he sounded. ‘What the hell happened? Are you okay?’

‘The kanima happened.’ Stiles spat. ‘It left venom on the door handle and I fucking ended up like this. Then he threw the mechanic in the pit and used my fucking car to squish him like a bug.’

That explained the blood, and Derek shivered to think of being slowly crushed to death. Maybe there were worse things than burning. He heaved Stiles into his arms, lifting him up easily.

Erica and Boyd came over, both of them side eyeing the Jeep.

‘Well that’s gross.’ Erica muttered. ‘What do we do, Boss?’

‘Call Noah.’ Derek looked at Scott and he nodded, still shaking as he got his phone out. ‘This needs to be a police matter.’

‘Guess the quiet spell just got broken, huh?’ This was from Boyd and Derek saw that he wasn’t freaked out like he’d expected him to be. Instead he was serious but there was undeniable interest in his scent, in spite of his poker face.
‘No shit, Sherlock.’ Stiles was still pissed, his scent curdled and his eyes glowing. The fact that he was paralysed made him look a little like a really angry kitten. Derek was overwhelmed with an urge to nuzzle him but knew that he’d probably get his nose bitten off. Stiles in a snit was not to be messed with.

‘So where did it go?’ Erica asked. She was peering into the pit, making a face.

‘It climbed up the goddamn wall.’ Stiles growled. ‘The fucker is like a gecko.’

‘It’s also really strong.’ Scott was leaning on Isaac’s shoulder, looking much better. ‘I pretty much took me out when it threw me against the wall. I’ve never been hit this hard.’

There was the sound of more cars and Chris, Allison and Lydia came in.

‘Anyone hurt?’ Chris had his firearm at the ready. Allison did too, but Lydia was hanging back. She looked pale and Derek could smell her unease.

‘The mechanic.’ Stiles snorted. ‘He got Wile E. Coyotied.’

‘Lydia screamed in the car.’ Chris holstered his gun and went to stand next to Erica. ‘The kanima?’

‘Yeah.’ Derek cuddled Stiles close to his chest and Stiles whined softly and finally let go, then tension bleeding out of him as he tucked his face into Derek’s neck.

‘It was so gross.’ His voice was muffled. ‘You could hear him being crunched.’

‘It was.’ Scott’s mouth was turned down. ‘I never want to hear anything like that again.’

‘Why him though?’ Allison looked thoughtful. ‘The kanima is for revenge, right? The master must have wanted this guy dead so what is his connection to Coach Lahey?’

‘Good question.’ Chris said. ‘Look, you kids need to get out of here. We don’t know how long the venom will take to wear off and you can’t be caught at a murder scene. I’ll call Noah and we can come up with a cover story.’

‘You sure?’ Derek asked and he nodded.

‘Get Stiles and your betas home.’ he replied. ‘Allison, you take Lydia back to our house. I don’t want anyone alone tonight.’

‘What about you?’ Allison asked and Chris smiled reassuringly waving the phone.

‘I have the Sheriff’s office for backup.’ he replied.

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A couple of blocks away a car stood parked in the dark. As its occupant waited, a shadow detached itself from the alley wall and oozed along the ground until it got level with the driver’s side window. Inside, the figure turned and acknowledged the kanima as it raised a scaled hand and pressed it to the window.

Unbeknownst to both though, there was another figure. This one stood a little way away, carefully observing the scene before disappearing back into the dark.

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‘Fuck. He’s not picking up.’ Scott hung up and gave Stiles an apologetic look. ‘Dude. Any change?’

‘No.’ Stiles was ready to rip the kanima to shreds and hand the leftovers to Lydia to make shoes out of. He was still paralysed, although at least the horrible pins and needles feeling in his extremities was wearing off and he could at least moved his fingers and toes, although if he was being honest he’d been able to do that while on the floor too.

Next to him, Derek was driving way too fast and having difficulty keeping his eyes from shifting. Stiles could feel and smell how agitated he was and was touched by how gently Derek had handled him when putting him in the Camaro. He wasn’t used to being looked after, always being the one in that position and having someone that had come to him first made him feel happy, even in such awful circumstances, but then Stiles knew the value of appreciating something before it was too late. He wished he could lean forward and wrap his arms around Derek’s neck but that would have to wait.

They got to the house and Derek pulled up and looked back at him.

‘I’m going to go look around with Isaac.’ he said. ‘Boyd and Erica are coming with. This isn’t quite the training I had in mind but I guess baptism by fire probably isn’t a bad thing.’

‘What about me?’ Scott asked, giving Isaac a worried look. ‘I can help.’

‘I need you to look after Stiles.’ Derek replied and then his face softened. ‘Like you did at the garage. Thank you for that. You’re the only one I would trust with this.’

Stiles could see the way Scott puffed at the praise and was secretly impressed that Derek had clocked that was how to get Scott on side. He was also happy that Scott would be with him rather than running around after the kanima if he was completely honest with himself. Isaac was far quicker on the uptake and more accepting of being a wolf and it showed, while Scott was still learning. He’d also had his ass kicked by the kanima and Stiles could still smell pain on him.

Derek came round to pick him up and carry him to the house while Scott unlocked the door and Stiles couldn’t resist a snicker as they got to the threshold.

‘Guess this makes me your child bride.’ he said and Derek snorted in amusement. He turned to wedge them through and take Stiles into the living room to deposit him on the couch.

‘Next time I carry you like that will be for real though.’ he said and then winced as something crashed in the kitchen. ‘Scott, stop breaking shit!’

‘He’s just excited.’ Stiles snickered. ‘He’s been dying to let the cat out of the bag.’

Derek smirked and leaned in to kiss him, lingering longer than he should have.

‘Stay out of trouble, cub.’ His voice hit a deeper pitch in Stiles’ ear and he shivered.

‘He doesn’t move from there.’ He gave Stiles a pointed look. ‘Also keep trying to get Deaton. He must have something that can help.’

‘Got it.’ Scott replied and came over to the couch, hands full of drinks and snacks. He waited until the door slammed shut and the Camaro pulled off before fixing Stiles with a surprisingly shrewd look. ‘So I had some ideas about you getting married.’
‘Oh fuck.’ Stiles muttered and slumped down as much as he could.

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Erica sat next to Boyd in his truck and looked at her hands. She was sweating like a horse, her heart thumping madly and from what she could hear, Boyd’s heart was doing the same tango-esque beat.

‘So.’ She glanced over at him. ‘Guess you’re rethinking the whole turn-hairy-at-the-full-moon thing.’

‘No, actually.’ Boyd replied. ‘I’m more thinking that you guys could use another hand in this fight.’

‘Really?’ Erica frowned. ‘So the death-lizard isn’t making you want to run in the opposite direction?’

‘Hell no.’ Boyd grinned. ‘Besides, if it means I get to hang out with you death lizards are a small price to pay.’

He delivered it with such a deadpan expression that Erica giggled.

‘I bet you say that to all the girls.’ she simpered, fluttering her eyelashes at him to cover up the way her stomach was fluttering.

‘Only the best ones.’ Boyd replied. ‘You know, I always thought you were cool. You’re smart and you think nobody saw you, but you’re wrong. I always did.’

Erica smiled, ready to just fling herself at him but then there was a rap at the window behind her and she jumped.

‘Think you two can stop making eyes at each other and help us?’ Isaac smirked through the window. Erica growled at him and threw the door open, whacking him hard enough to knock him over before she leaped on him and pummeled the daylights out of him. Isaac growled back, eyes lit up, and then it was on.

‘Jesus.’ A shadow fell across them, red eyes and disapproving eyebrows identifying their alpha. ‘Get up and stop behaving like children.’

They scrambled to their feet and fawned on him, rubbing their faces on his shoulders. Erica had been surprised by the strength of her new instincts and that rubbing herself all over someone that looked like Derek came with no sexual feelings attached. Instead it was distinctly familial and when Derek rumbled a deep reassuring growl at them it was like the best kind of praise.

‘I want you and Isaac to start this side of the street.’ He nodded to the flash of police lights still visible down the block. ‘I’ll take Boyd and go round the back of the buildings. Keep an eye on the roofs. It fucking climbs.’

‘Crap.’ Erica deflated. ‘If it comes for us, I’m so letting it eat Isaac.’

‘Hey!’ Isaac looked unspeakably hurt but she just gave him the finger. That boy knew how to work those baby blues as well as Scott did the puppy eyes.

‘Come on.’ Derek said to Boyd and they disappeared into the shadows leaving her to scamper off after her packmate.

************

Danny was having trouble sleeping. It didn’t help that he’d just finally started dropping off when a loud scratching noise had him on alert and starting at his window. He frowned and sat up, shifting to
take advantage of his enhanced senses. His sight wasn’t the best but he picked up the sound of someone’s frantic heartbeat and felt the electromagnetic signature that told him the person outside his window was not human.

At least he thought it wasn’t human, but when he bolted from bed and looked out he was astonished to see a very naked and very scared looking Jackson huddled outside his window. The fact that they were floor up from the ground just brought up other questions that needed to be answered.

‘What the hell…?’ He reached out and dragged Jackson in through the window. ‘Jacks?’

Jackson was shaking so hard that he was practically vibrating. His eyes were panicked and he stank of fear, his skin clammy to the touch.

‘I think there’s something really really wrong with me.’ he stuttered and then promptly threw up all over Danny’s floor.

‘Fuck.’ Danny got him over to the door to the ensuite and shoved him towards the shower, ripping door open and turning on the water. ‘I think you’re in shock.’

Jackson let himself be herded under the spray, arms wrapped around himself and looking pathetic. Danny was horrified. Even at his self-loathing worst he’d never seen Jackson look so defeated and distressed and before he knew what he was doing, he was climbing into the shower with him. Jackson took that as permission and attached himself to Danny like a limpet, and Danny let him. He sniffed at Jackson’s bare shoulder, wrinkling his nose at the stench coming off of him. It was almost rancid, smelling of blood and corruption even though Jackson appeared unharmed.

‘What’s going on, Jacks?’ he asked softly and Jackson shuddered in his arms.

‘I don’t know.’ he whispered and then started crying, great heaving sobs that had Danny holding him tighter and wondering just what had happened that had broken his best friend so badly. He was very good at keeping his feelings under wraps, but this was testing him like nothing else ever had.

He managed to get Jackson warmed up enough that he stopped shaking and could be dried off and put into a pair of Danny’s boxers and an old t-shirt. He allowed himself to be tucked into Danny’s bed and when danny slid in next to him, Jackson moved back into his space and curled up against him.

‘I’m cold.’ he whispered and Danny didn’t hesitate to cuddle him. Eventually Jackson’s breathing evened out and his heart rate slowed enough to tell Danny he was sound asleep.

‘What’s going on with you.’ he murmured, gently brushing Jackson’s damp hair back from his face. It hurt to see him in so much pain and Danny felt a fierce need to protect him that had nothing to do with altruism. Sharks didn’t mate the way wolves did, but he knew he wouldn’t be able to hide how he felt forever. Maybe it was finally time to confess. Lydia wasn’t in the picture anymore and he really didn’t have a reason why he shouldn’t, apart from being rejected. Then again, it could also blow up in his face and Danny would lose his best friend if Jackson took it the wrong way.

‘Goddammit.’ he muttered and then leaned over to grab his phone, careful not to dislodge the boy sprawled on him. He fired off a text as best he could with his left hand and hoped that the person on the other side would understand and be able to help.

************

Stiles woke up when he heard the Camaro at the end of the street. He flexed experimentally and found that he was now back to normal, all signs of paralysis gone. Scott was passed out in the
armchair, snoring like a drunk and Stiles snickered at him and went to the door.

Derek looked tired but happy and Stiles returned his smile. He could feel it now, the newest bond still faint but silvery bright.

‘You did it.’ he said and Derek nodded and pulled him into his arms.

‘He’s gone home to sleep it off.’ he replied. ‘Isaac went home with Erica. Her parents are away and he didn’t want her to be alone but I think it was the fact that she smack talked him all the way back about how much better she is at Battlefield. I’m guessing they’re not going to get any sleep tonight. How are you feeling?’

‘Better.’ Stiles yawned. ‘But it’s definitely not something I want to repeat.’

‘Okay.’ Derek nuzzled his cheek. ‘Next time, I’ll be the one to get paralysed.’

‘Don’t even joke.’ Stiles muttered and dragged him up to bed.
Romantic Midnight Swims Should Come With A Warning

Chapter Summary

The pack chase down the kanima and Stiles has an epiphany.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Noah was about dead on his feet and looking forward to falling onto his bed face first when the phone rang. It was his direct line which meant that it was obviously important so he sighed and picked up the receiver, looking longingly at his open doorway.

‘Stilinski.’ He listened to the caller, his face falling. ‘Good morning, Mr Whittemore. What can I do for you?’

Tara came to the door, a quizzical look on her face and he waved her in, scribbling frantically on a notepad before handing it to her. ‘No, sir. We’ll get on that straight away. We take missing teenagers very seriously in this town. You say the last time you saw him was at dinner? And his car’s still there? And you’ve called Lydia Martin’s house? I know, but it’s something to try. I’ll be there as soon as I can.’ He huffed and hung up the phone and Tara raised an eyebrow at him, holding up the piece of paper.

‘Jackson’s missing?’ Her face was a picture. ‘Jesus, Boss. We’re going to catch shit if we don’t find him.’

‘Don’t I fucking know it.’ Noah muttered, grabbing his jacket. ‘Do me a favour and call Haigh, get him out of bed. Laurence and Kilby too. I need all hands on deck for this.’

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Danny sighed and looked at the empty side of the bed. He didn’t know when Jackson had bailed but there was no sign of him at all. He got up, scenting the air. The rancid scent that underlay Jackson’s natural odour was still lingering and he went to open his window before he hit the shower.

He rang Jackson’s cell while he was getting dressed and was surprised to have it go straight to voicemail, something very unlike Jackson. It was only when he was pulling his covers straight that his foot collided with something just under the edge of the bed and when Danny knelt to retrieve it, he found himself looking at Jackson’s phone.

‘Goddammit.’ He got to his feet, mentally adding a detour to give Jackson back his phone before school. By the time he got downstairs, he was already half convinced that the night before had been Jackson acting out his shit. That was until he was busy having breakfast and Leeah Mahealani came in, the house phone in hand and in her dark blue paramedic uniform. Like him, she was tall and broad shouldered, her muscles a combination of her wereshark genetics and a long and very successful swimming career that had carried her through college and that she now did as her keep-fit regime. His other mom, Marissa, was also a were although her family were Leopard sharks. Her different species meant that she and Leeah had been able to have him without the intervention of a man, something that was fairly normal for weresharks.
‘Did you see Jackson last night?’ she asked and Danny frowned.

‘Why?’ He expected her to say that Jackson had gone back home and was in trouble for being high or hungover or whatever had been wrong with him. He wrinkled his nose at the memory of cleaning up the black sticky puke from his floor while Jackson was in the shower.

‘Because he’s missing.’ his mom said and Danny promptly choked on the piece of raw seabass he’d just put in his mouth. Leeah thumped him hard on the back until it came out, rolling her eyes at him.

‘Chew your food.’ she admonished, her eyes blinking black for a second to drive the instruction home. ‘His mom just called. He went to bed but when she went to call him for school it was empty. His car is still there, but the whole room looks like it got turned upside down. The thing was that they heard nothing. Is there something you want to tell me?’

‘Um.’ Danny knew he couldn’t lie to her. When he’d gone through his hacking phase at thirteen she was the one who’d caught him and made him turn himself in. ‘So it turns out that Jackson might be going through something.’

‘Is this because of what happened with Lydia?’ Marissa asked, coming into the kitchen. Like her were form, she was tall and lithe with a scattering of dense freckles across her tanned face and thick sun-kissed blond hair. There was a very romantic story about how she and Leeah had met while surfing and she was still every bit as enthused now she was in her forties, hence the tan and trim physique. It was kind of scandalous how hot Danny’s moms were.

‘No.’ he sighed. ‘So you know the Hales?’

‘Who doesn’t?’ Leeah shivered. ‘That poor family. I know Derek’s back in town.’

‘Well, he’s the alpha now.’ Danny replied. ‘And he’s making a pack.’

‘So?’ Marissa asked, stealing some of his fish. ‘We don’t mess with the wolves. Live and let live.’

‘Yeah, about that.’ Danny made a face. ‘I might not be able to anymore.’

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Across town, Derek woke up to the feeling of Stiles’ tongue making its way down his spine. It made him shiver all over and he spread his legs instinctively as Stiles lingered over the dimples just above his ass, dropping gentle kisses there before lifting his head. His eyes were golden and Derek gave him a sleepy smile.

‘Before school?’ He flashed his eyes just to see Stiles bare his teeth at him. ‘Isn’t that kind of kinky?’

‘Like you don’t love it when I go off to school smelling like you came all over my face.’ Stiles retorted. ‘Actually that’s a really good idea. I want you to come all over my face.’ He dropped his head and Derek went cross eyed as he felt Stiles’ tongue track over his balls. He let his head fall back into the pillow, whimpering when Stiles went to town trying to get his tongue all the way inside him and thanked every deity he knew that the sheriff was still at work.

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‘Ugh.’ Isaac made a face and turned over to reach for the ear plugs Noah had given him. They were certified for use with heavy equipment. ‘They’re fucking again so I’m going to go.’

‘Jesus.’ Scott sounded both mortified and impressed. ‘I guess I’ll see you at school then.’
‘Okay.’ Isaac hesitated and then chickened out. ‘Later.’

Scott hung up and he stared at the blank screen while working the ear plugs in. He was about to try and grab another half hour’s sleep when his window slid open and someone fell through, cackling wildly. Isaac yelled in alarm and backed up against the wall then hissed as Erica managed to pull herself off the floor and onto his bed, still giggling. She waved at him and he very reluctantly pulled out the earplugs, wincing when he heard Derek let out a particularly loud grunt which meant he was clearly getting dicked down by Stiles.

‘They’re so loud.’ Erica’s brown eyes were sparkling. I could hear them in the yard.’

‘Don’t remind me.’ Isaac muttered. ‘What are you doing here?’ He rubbed the sleep from his eyes and saw that she was all dressed for school.

‘I wondered if you wanted to go get breakfast?’ Erica smiled at him. ‘I may have already sent a text to Boyd and asked him to meet us at the diner. I was also going to ask the Bossman and Mom but they’re clearly busy.’

‘I thought you liked Boyd.’ Isaac got up, stretching and feeling his spine pop. ‘Why do you want me there being a third wheel?’

He was surprised to see Erica go pink. She shrugged and rubbed a hand along her arm and Isaac recognised the gesture from before she became a wolf and knew from her scent that she was feeling discomforted.

‘I’ve never actually been on a date with anyone before.’ she confessed. ‘I thought if I made it look like a pack thing, it would be easier to get him there. Besides, I’d kind of like it if you could be my wingman.’

That made Isaac feel all warm inside. He remembered what it had been like when Cam would do things for him to make him happy and he nodded.

‘Okay.’ He gave her a gentle shove. ‘Give me twenty minutes.’

There was another deep moan from the room across the hall and then the sound of something heavy, like oh say a bed, being shoved rhythmically into the wall. Stiles was swearing up a storm and Derek was starting to make a litany of happy canine related noises.

‘Damn.’ Erica’s mouth was hanging open. ‘Derek takes it up the ass?’

‘Make that five minutes.’ Isaac said and started fighting his way into his clothes. He was busy tying his shoes when all their phones went off.

‘Motherfucker!’ Stiles’ yell was loud enough to wake the dead. ‘One fucking morning!’

‘Shut the fuck up, Stiles.’ Derek growled and then Stiles let out a squawk and the bed picked up speed.

‘Do we wait for them to finish?’ Erica was looking at the door.

‘Might not be able to.’ Isaac said. He was looking at his phone, his face all creased up in concern. ‘Jackson’s missing.’

‘Fuck, no way.’ Erica pulled out her phone and saw the group chat message. ‘Shit. Like for real?’
Isaac made a face and left the room, stomping over to Stiles’ bedroom and rapping on the door. Inside the grunts and growls were reaching fever pitch and he wished fervently that he could just turn off his hearing.

‘Guys, come on.’ he pleaded. ‘Just fucking come already so we can go. Jackson’s missing and Lydia’s on a mission.’

‘One more second.’ Stiles gritted out. ‘Yeah, fucking take that bitch!’ His words made Derek snarl and then there was the sound of something heavy being thrown around.

‘Call me a bitch again and I’ll bite your fucking cock off.’ Derek sounded strained and Isaac’s shoulders slumped. He thumped his head against the door but was shoved aside by Erica, who threw it open with no warning, giving them the perfect view of Stiles being pinned to the bed, fangs and claws out and eyes gold while a naked, sweaty and beta shifted Derek rode him into the mattress. They both roared at Erica and she backpedaled, grabbing Isaac’s arm and hauling him down the stairs with her, giggling frantically at his horrified expression.

It took a cup of black coffee and three Pop Tarts for him to get over the shock and for Derek to come down, looking far too smug and with his hair still damp and spiky from water. He even ruffled Isaac’s hair as he went past and Isaac gagged.

‘Jesus.’ He sniffed. ‘How do you still smell like that after a shower?’

‘I like it.’ Erica smiled. ‘It smells like both of you.’

‘Alpha pair.’ Derek went over and nuzzled the top of her head and she all but purred. ‘What’s this about Jackson missing.’

‘You got the message too.’ Isaac huffed. ‘That’s all Lydia’s said.’

‘Look’s like things are escalating.’ Derek frowned. ‘Okay, you need to on alert.’

‘We can keep an eye out at school.’ Erica offered. ‘What do you think happened?’

‘I think he’s having a break.’ Stiles came in, pulling on his flannel and stealing Derek’s coffee. ‘It’s Jackson. He wasn’t exactly stable to begin with.’

‘Holy fuck.’ Isaac stared at them. ‘You think he’s out there being all lizardy?’

‘Not one hundred percent, but close enough.’ Derek replied. ‘The thing is, according to the lore he doesn’t know he is. So if he’s had some kind of episode, he won’t know it.’

‘Damn.’ Erica said. ‘Sucks to be him then. So the fact we were chasing him all over last night is kind of redundant because he’s doing it by day too?’

‘Looks like.’ Stiles grimaced. ‘I got a message from my dad. He’s going over to talk to Jackson’s parents. His room was tossed and they think he’s been taken. I told him to keep a lookout for anything suspicious.’

‘Well that could be anything.’ Isaac muttered. ‘So what do we do?’

‘You two go to school.’ Derek jabbed a finger at them. ‘I need your eyes there in case he turns up.’

‘What about you?’ Erica asked Stiles and he grinned.

‘I can afford to skip a day. My grades are good, in spite of my father’s worries. We’re going to do
some digging. I already called Lydia and she’s going to come over and bring the footage. We need an expert opinion.’

‘In that case, why are you looking at it.’ Erica sniped and cackled when he growled at her, eyes flashing.

‘Allison is picking up Scott.’ Derek stuck his phone back in his jeans. ‘Move your asses. You can take the Camaro.’

‘Hey!’ Stiles looked offended. ‘You never let me take the Camaro.’

‘Erica drives.’ Derek said, giving his mate a toothy grin.

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Noah surveyed the room and sighed. It wasn’t exactly tossed, but it seemed that the maid kept it spotlessly clean and perfectly tidy, so the bedclothes being ripped from the bed was enough cause for alarm as was the open window. He knew enough to look for things out of the ordinary and he did notice the scratches on the sill that looked like they’d been made by large claws. While he hadn’t seen the kanima personally, Stiles had delighted in showing him the illustrations in the bestiary and it was enough to give Noah nightmares. He snapped a few pictures with his phone, hoping it would give Derek and Stiles something to work with. They had told him they were doing some investigating of their own and Noah had dutifully called Stiles in sick.

He took a deep breath, knowing that downstairs there were two parents who were worried sick. David and Lillian were good people, all their arrogance aside, and they really cared about their son. Still, the conversation with Erica about Jackson’s adoption had niggled at him for the past couple of days and he decided that the file needed another look. All traffic accidents were reported and investigated by the Sheriff’s department as a matter of course and maybe there was something in there that would come up with a connection.

He left Tara in charge of the scene and drove back to the station. He’d sent a message to Chris and the hunter was waiting for him when he got there. Noah walked him into his office and shut the door.

‘Anything?’ he asked and Chris shook his head.

‘I sent Allison to school armed to the teeth.’ He sighed and fell into the chair offered to him. ‘Jesus Christ. What the hell are we doing letting out kids fight this out?’

‘The best we can.’ Noah tapped his fingers, a steady rhythm that the aforementioned son used when he was unsettled. Noah remembered how Stiles had done it when he was little, watching him work on files at the dinner table. It had been cute as hell to see his son mimicking him like that but now it was just a reminder of how much he’d grown to be like him.

‘What did you find out about the victim?’ Chris asked and Noah handed him a file.

‘His name’s Tucker Cornish.’ He nodded at the papers inside the folder. ‘No record, no fines. He was a mediocre student who started working at the mechanic when he graduated, and the only link he has with Lahey is that he was on the swim team that won the Nationals. Apart from that, they didn’t socialise or have any other contact. Lahey didn’t even take his car there.’

‘That that’s got to be it.’ Chris replied. ‘But that still leaves us in the dark as to who would be directing the kanima.’
‘Someone connected to the swim team, I reckon.’ Noah said. ‘I’m going to check it out, see if there’s anyone suspicious. We can rule out Camden Lahey at least. Boy’s been dead for the past four years.’

‘I hate to say this, but we’re kind of in the dark here.’ Chris said. ‘Knowing what we do about Isaac’s life, can we be sure that he wasn’t also abusing his students? Maybe that’s what the motivation is.’

‘Maybe.’ Noah offered. ‘But nobody ever took him to task for being inappropriate at school. That doesn’t mean he wasn’t, just that he wasn’t being outed.’

‘If they were being beaten like Isaac, maybe they were too afraid.’ Chris pointed out and that thought didn’t make Noah feel any better at all.

************

Derek opened the door to a very unhappy looking Danny. Lydia had already arrived and told him that Danny would be coming to help and also that he had some information that he didn’t want to talk about over the phone.

‘Hey.’ he stepped aside and Danny came in. He had a laptop bag over one shoulder and a cardboard holder with four cups in it. ‘You know we have coffee here.’

‘Good.’ Danny breezed past him. ‘Because these are all for me.’ He went straight into the living room where Lydia and Stiles were already sitting at the coffee table. ‘Move over amateurs.’

‘Anyone ever tell you, you’re a bitch in the mornings.’ Lydia sniped and Derek hid a smile. He sat down behind Stiles, reaching for him automatically and Stiles butt-walked until he could lean against Derek’s legs.

‘How much has Lydia told you?’ he asked and Danny took a long pull of his coffee, much in the same manner he might from a bottle of alcohol and looked him in the eye.

‘You think Jackson’s a kanima.’ he said. ‘The same kanima that killed Isaac’s father and that’s been desecrating graves.’

‘Yeah.’ Derek held his gaze. He could smell Danny was other now that he was looking for it, although Danny hid his scent under several layers of expensive cologne although that was surprising considering his sense of smell was probably as sensitive as Derek’s, if not more so.

‘What do you think?’ Stiles asked and his eyes were bright. Derek watched Danny look at Lydia and she gave him a small nod.

‘I think you might be right.’ he said and recounted how Jackson had turned up at his window the night before, as well as what he said. At the end of it, Stiles blew out a deep breath.

‘Fucking hell.’ He tilted his head back to look at Derek. ‘So maybe he’s lost it.’

‘Whatever is happening, he’s unravelling.’ Danny agreed. ‘But the footage he showed me didn’t have anything suspicious on it.’

‘That’s because we think Matt might have tampered with it.’ Lydia replied. ‘And if he’s tampered with it…’

‘He could be the one behind this.’ Danny finished and Derek was secretly impressed with how quickly he’d caught up. He looked at Danny with fresh eyes, thinking about what it might mean that
he was helping them.

‘Which is where you come in.’ Lydia replied. ‘We need you to hack into Matt’s laptop and see if you can find any footage that might be original.’

‘Piece of cake.’ Danny said. ‘And if he’s the one responsible for fucking with Jackson, I want in. Nobody messes with my best friend.’

‘Deal.’ Derek found himself saying.

‘Okay then.’ Stiles grinned and scooted over so he was sitting next to Danny and got a look for his trouble. ‘What? I want to learn.’

‘Then keep your mouth shut and watch.’ Danny retorted and Derek shared a grin with Lydia at Stiles’ outraged noise.

He had to admit it was fascinating and far outside his personal realm of knowledge. He’d never been very technologically minded because although most wolves used computers, they preferred books. Peter had had a laptop that he had used for work and there had been a family computer for homework, but Derek didn’t have the first clue on how to hack anyone. He watched Danny’s fingers dancing over the keys and considered just how useful that skill would be.

It hadn’t even been twenty minutes before Danny was making a triumphant noise and poking at his screen.

‘I’m in.’ he announced. ‘And it looks like our boy Matt is very much into his photographic media. There’s like a bazillion jpegs on here and numerous video files. They’re all coded though so we’re going to have to sort by date and then go through them.’ He clicked to turn the file names into icons and then frowned. ‘Hang on a second.’

‘What?’ Derek and Stiles both leaned forward.

‘These are all…’ Danny’s eyes went wide. ‘Shit.’ He threw Lydia a worried glance. ‘They’re you and Allison.’

‘Told you he was a creepy little pervert.’ Lydia snorted. ‘He’s been stalking us at school.’

‘Not just school, Lyds.’ Danny was now starting to look really concerned, clicking through the pictures. ‘There’s ones of you two at the shops, at the coffee place downtown and at your homes.’ He opened one and then quickly closed it, his face flaming. Derek felt just as embarrassed and he clapped both hands over Stiles’ eyes. Neither of them needed to see the look on his emissary’s face while she was being eaten out by her girlfriend.

Lydia’s eyes narrowed and she grabbed the laptop and opened the picture again. Her green eyes widened and her scent saturated with anger when she saw what it was.

‘That little fucker.’ she hissed. ‘I’m going to eviscerate him.’

‘Jesus, that’s a whole new level of stalking.’ Stiles said. ‘This is felony level stuff.’

‘That it is.’ Danny muttered. ‘Unfortunately we can’t do anything about it, not like this.’ He gave Lydia an apologetic grimace. ‘Sorry, Lyds.’

‘Don’t worry.’ Lydia’s voice was flat. ‘I’ll get him for this somehow.’
Danny scrolled past and started looking at the video files instead. They were random clips of people around town but then Derek saw something familiar.

‘That one.’ he said and Danny let it play. It showed the cemetery parking lot and sure enough there was his Camaro pulling him.

‘Dude, that’s you.’ Stiles said and Derek watched himself get out, dressed in a his suit.

‘It’s Kate’s funeral.’ he said. ‘Keep going.’

They watched further and the point of view changed, still hiding in the trees as the person behind the camera moved deeper into the cemetery until it focused on the tall thin man with glasses working among the headstones.

‘That’s Coach Lahey.’ Lydia sounded surprised. ‘Why would he be stalking him?’

‘I think it’s starting to look like Matt is the kanima master for sure.’ Stiles said. ‘But you’re right. I don’t get the link. He’s too young to have been coached by Lahey and as far as I know he’s never been on the swim team. Isaac said the other night at the rink that they were friends at grade school but that they stopped speaking when he was like twelve.’

‘It might have been that Lahey did something to Matt?’ Lydia suggested.

‘No, I asked.’ Stiles replied. ‘Isaac said Matt was never there without him and he never saw anything weird.’

‘Doesn’t mean it didn’t happen though.’ Derek knew from experience that things were not always what they looked like. ‘It’s a start.’

‘Hey.’ Danny got their attention. ‘I found it. The file is bigger than the one Jackson was given.’

‘So he cut something out.’ Stiles nudged him. ‘Way to go Sharkman.’

‘Jesus Christ, Stiles.’ Derek shook his head at him. ‘Not everyone needs a nickname.’

‘Shut it, Sourwolf.’ Stiles grinned at him. ‘They most certainly do.’ He looked at Lydia and she glared at him.

‘Don’t even think about it.’ she said and he shut his mouth.

‘Can we do this?’ Danny asked and clicked on the file. They all watched as Jackson was getting ready for bed. Then he went to sleep and it was a long stretch of nothing but him snoring and being boring for the camera.

‘Well this is a whole lot of nothing.’ Stiles huffed and wiggled his bony shoulder blades against Derek’s knees. ‘Can’t we fast forward?’

‘Hang on.’ Lydia’s voice was strained. ‘What’s that?’

‘Yeah.’ Danny was looking at the screen intently. ‘He looks...odd.’

On screen, Jackson was starting to twitch in his sleep. Then it turned to restless movements and they all leaned forward for a better look and then flailed back as he started to thrash violently, the image onscreen blurring in a way that was distinctly not normal.

‘Holy fuck!’ Stiles was pressed right up against Derek. ‘What the name of Batman’s jockstrap is
Derek stared at the image of Jackson onscreen. He was now sitting bolt upright, eyes glowing and his body wracked with convulsions that twisted him into something else. Something scaled and toothy and able to crawl off the bed and onto the ceiling.

They sat in silence as the video clip ended with him slithering out the window.

‘Okay.’ Danny finally said. ‘That was unexpected.’

‘Jesus.’ Lydia looked sick. ‘What the fuck?’

‘That looked like, super painful.’ Stiles was a little green and Derek could feel his disgust through the bond. ‘I’m not Jackson’s biggest fan, but nobody deserves that.’

‘No.’ he agreed. ‘We need to find the master and put a stop to this.’

‘Is there any other way we can help him?’ Danny asked. ‘Preferably before he does something else, like kill another person?’

‘That is a very good plan.’ Lydia nodded vigorously. ‘Okay, so the logical place to start is with the first two victims.’

‘Ooh, I got that.’ Stiles was already on his phone. He waited, tapping the case impatiently until a reply came through. ‘Okay so Dad says that the mechanic was a guy called Tucker Cornish and that he was on the swim team with Camden Lahey.’

‘Bingo.’ Lydia raised a coppery brow. ‘More ducks in a row.’

‘But what does that have to do with Matt?’ Danny asked. ‘He was Isaac’s friend, not Camden’s.’

‘Maybe nothing but it’s the first solid lead we’ve got.’ Stiles replied. ‘And if Matt’s not above making creepy and highly illegal home pornos of Lydia and Allison, then he’s probably not got much of a moral compass to begin with.’

‘We need to find him.’ Derek said. He was furious on Lydia’s behalf and also Jackson’s. Sure, the little shit was a first class jackass but he had helped with Peter and kept his mouth shut when he didn’t have to and Derek owed him and he wouldn’t be the one to turn away.

‘Where do we start looking though?’ Lydia said. ‘He could be anywhere.’

‘If he’s going after people on the swim team, we need to find them first.’ Stiles added. ‘Maybe give them a heads up.’

‘There’s another problem.’ Danny told them. ‘This is going to be all over the news. His dad will want to get him back and he won’t be above using the media.’

‘Shit.’ Derek stood up. ‘Then we need to get started as soon as possible.’

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Erica tapped her pen against her bottom lip. She’d chewed all her gloss off already and glanced at Isaac. He was lost somewhere else, his face towards the window and his eyes glazed over. She turned to look at Boyd and he gave her a quizzical frown. Erica shrugged and tore a corner off her page, scrawling on it and then lobbing it onto Isaac’s desk, startling him out of his daze. He read it and gave her a small smile, nodding reassurance.
She knew he was thinking about what Stiles had texted earlier, that they had found out that Matt knew about Jackson being the kanima and that he had the original footage to confirm it and that it was likely he was the one controlling Jackson. Not only that, but Matt had clearly been stalking Isaac’s father. It was enough to make anyone feel like they’d been hit by a truck.

Derek had asked them to keep an eye on Matt and they had as best they could without looking too suspicious. She’d heard Stiles cackling like mad in the background when Derek had told them not to draw attention to themselves, something about your leather wearing puppies are about as subtle as a brick to the face but she was taking her duty seriously, especially after Derek had told them what Matt had been up to. She was filled with rage at how he had filmed Lydia and Allison, taking pictures without their permission. It hit far too close to home and she growled under her breath.

A gentle hand touched her arm and she looked at Boyd. He was watching her carefully, his black eyes full of sympathy. She’d never thought about how much he might have seen of her. Certainly, he’d noticed her when she had never thought of herself as thing to be noticed and even though this was his first day as a wolf, he was already eerily in tune with both her and Isaac. That had been evident when they’d sat down to breakfast together. After all, Derek was Alpha and Stiles belonged to him. Scott wasn’t Derek’s to begin with so he felt strange to them, but the three of them had been chosen and bitten by Derek and that made their bond a little stronger, not to mention how they were all damaged in one way or another. She was astute enough to realise that was in part why Derek had chosen them, Stiles too. Stiles may have played the bright, fast-talking clown at school but she remembered the sad little boy who’d lost his mom and how nobody had wanted to invite him over to play or to their birthday parties. Scott had been the only one who’d stuck by him.

As for Derek, well she’d googled the Hales and cried her eyes out when she realised that he was the boy who’d lost his whole family in one night. It was even worse that he’d come to Beacon Hills because his uncle had gone crazy and killed his sister, and then Peter had had to be taken down. Now he was truly alone and he had chosen them to be his new family, his new pack. For someone that nobody had ever wanted, this acceptance and unconditional affection was heady and she basked in it. Derek had been the only boy between two girls and she was determined to be the best little sister he could ask for.

After class was over, she walked out to find Scott and Allison waiting for them. They all kept an eye on Matt, noticing how he seemed distracted.

‘Our shift.’ Allison had a steely glint in her eye and Erica didn’t like Matt’s chances if he ever found himself alone with her. She strode off with Scott, following in Matt’s wake, and Erica waited for Boyd to come up to her. She smiled when he took her hand gently and offered to buy her the best canteen lunch money could offer and Isaac rolled his eyes at them and tagged along.

***********

Stiles read the article on his phone. It had been easy to find. Beacon Hills had online copies of their local papers and the swim team winning the Nationals had been big enough to warrant a spate of articles. The one he was looking at had a black and white picture of the swim team and he was currently snorting while they sat on the back porch and waited for Noah to get home.

‘How sexist is this?’ He waved the phone in Derek’s face. ‘All the guys are in sweats and all the girls are in swimsuits.’

Derek glanced at the phone and frowned.

‘Is that Isaac’s brother?’ he asked and Stiles nodded.
'They look alike.’ His mouth twisted. ‘It’s really sad what happened to him.’

‘Yeah.’ Derek sighed. He reached over and took the phone. ‘So this is a lot of people.’

‘I know.’ Stiles said. ‘I say we start with the ones still in town.’ He typed out a message. ‘I’ll ask Danny if he can get us addresses for those ones and we can maybe tip them off?’

‘How?’ Derek gave him the eyebrows. ‘We leave them a note saying sorry to bother you, but you’re being stalked by a supernatural force for revenge?’

‘Well, not when you put it like that.’ Stiles glared at him. He kicked at the grass. ‘I just hate the thought that he’s going to hurt someone else. Or eat them.’ Stiles looked gleefully horrified. ‘Like you think he remembers the actual eating? Because that is really disgusting to think about.’

‘Well, now that’s in my head.’ Derek pulled a face. ‘Thank you.’

‘Like you don’t snack on the occasional woodland creature.’ Stiles snickered. Derek liked to be high and mighty but both Stiles and Noah had caught him munching raw meat in the dead of night on more than one occasion.

‘Werewolf.’ Derek deadpanned and then tilted his head. ‘Your dad just got to the end of the road.’

Noah eventually came round the back, grocery bags in hand and a thunderous look on his face.

‘Still no sign?’ Stiles asked and he shook his head.

‘It’s all over the news and I believe that the Whittemores are planning some kind of search effort in the morning if there’s no news. I have every damn available deputy out looking and running down leads.’ He handed off the bags to Derek. ‘Anything your side?’

‘Yeah, you could say that.’ Stiles said. ‘We better go inside.’

Noah gave him a piercing look but followed them inside, then shut the back door.

‘What am I missing?’ he asked and Derek sighed, hands on his hips.

‘Jackson’s the kanima.’ he said. ‘We’ve got proof.’

Stiles brought up the video on his phone that Danny had downloaded and showed him. Noah’s eyes went wide and he took the phone from Stiles, peering at the screen.

‘What the fuck?’ He handed it back. ‘So he’s the one that killed Lahey and Cornish.’

‘Not exactly.’ Derek replied. ‘Remember the kanima has no control over itself. It’s literally a tool. Not only that, but Jackson doesn’t know he’s the kanima.’

‘We found out he was at Danny’s last night.’ Stiles said. ‘And he was pretty fucked up.’

‘I’m not surprised.’ Noah muttered. ‘That poor fucking kid.’

‘It gets worse.’ Stiles said. ‘Danny got the footage off Matt Daehler’s laptop. He’s the Master, the one controlling Jackson.’

‘Great.’ Noah put a hand over his eyes, head back in exasperation. ‘And may I ask why he would be doing this?’
‘We don’t know.’ Stiles confessed. ‘But whatever it is, he’s still pissed enough to want to kill people. He’s also been stalking Allison and Lydia so there’s every reason that he could send Jackson after them.’

‘Okay.’ Noah took a deep breath. ‘I’m going to eat and head back. Maybe there’s a way I could work this so we can get a warrant to search Matt’s house.’

‘Allison’s already on that.’ Derek said. ‘Lydia and Danny were going back to her house to show Chris the footage that they got off Matt’s computer. Danny’s going to make it so that it looks like the pictures of them were hacked and then they can make a complaint. That should slow things down a bit.’

‘Good.’ Noah waved a hand at the bags. ‘So who wants to have a hand at that?’

‘I got it.’ Stiles went to unpack the groceries. ‘Unfortunately, it means that Jackson is still running around somewhere.’

‘The pack said he was acting normally at school.’ Derek checked his phone. ‘And half an hour ago, he was still in his house. I’ve got them watching him.’

‘Once we get the call, I’ll get onto Whittemore to get a warrant.’ Noah said. ‘I’m sure once he finds out that his son’s probably been targeted by a stalker who’s obsessed with his son’s ex and her new girlfriend he’ll be all too happy to issue it.’

‘Stiles and I are going out after dinner.’ Derek said. He handed Noah a glass of juice. ‘We’re going to try and track him down with the pack. Danny’s bringing his sheets from last night so we can get a good scent off of them and it’ll be good practice for using their senses.’

Noah chuckled and gave Stiles a highly amused look.

‘You playing sniffer dog tonight?’ His blue eyes were twinkling. ‘Your mother would be giggling at that description, I hope you know.’

‘Hey!’ Stiles couldn’t help grinning. ‘She’d just be pleased that I wouldn’t be whining for my own dog.’ He cackled when Derek’s lip curled, baring one fang at him.

‘Where are you going to start?’ Noah asked and Derek shrugged.

‘We know that Jackson is unaware of what he’s doing when he’s being directed.’ he said. ‘We thought we’d start with the swim team because that’s literally the only link between them.’

‘Yeah.’ Stiles prodded at the chicken breasts in the pan. ‘Isaac knew Matt way back when, but he was too young to be involved with the team itself, so we were thinking it must have been Coach Lahey.’

‘If so, why kill Cornish?’ Noah asked. ‘That doesn’t make any sense. If the Coach was being abusive, I very much doubt the swim team were his accomplices. Cornish didn’t have so much as a speeding ticket.’

‘That’s a problem.’ Derek said. ‘The kanima is a creature for revenge, but that revenge has to be justified.’

‘What?’ Stiles frowned. ‘I don’t remember reading that.’

‘I remembered it last night. Peter talked about it.’ Derek said. ‘Something about the kanima
consuming the master if they use it for selfish purposes. I mean, Lahey was an abusive asshole but now the mechanic doesn’t seem to be guilty of anything but overcharging you.’

‘So does that matter?’ Noah asked. ‘How bad a person does the victim have to be?’

‘I honestly don’t know.’ Derek said. ‘But if Cornish was innocent, then that fucks things up.’

‘In what way?’ Stiles shivered. ‘Like reap the whirlwind shit?’

‘I don’t know.’ Derek repeated. ‘We need to ask Deaton.’

***********

Deaton was no help at all.

Chris had gone through his bestiary too but there hadn’t been anything of note. Just the same information they already had, the same as Peter’s bestiary.

Noah had gone back to the station and they had taken the Jeep and gone to the school. Erica had texted to say she and the other betas were on their way to meet them and pick up Scott from his house, Lydia was at Allison’s while Chris was watching Matt, and Danny had checked in to say he was in for the night after dropping off the bedsheets at Stiles’ house.

Stiles bounced on the balls of his feet, watching as Derek sniffed the night air.

‘Why here.’ he asked and Derek came over. He was partially shifted and his eyes cast shadows on his face.

‘The kanima doesn’t know what it’s doing.’ He leaned against the Jeep, catching hold of Stiles’ belt loops and pulling him in. ‘But there might be enough going on that it will seek out familiar places if it’s not being directed.’

‘Maybe.’ Stiles looked over at the gleam of headlights. ‘The puppies are here.’

Derek smirked at him and held him close while Boyd, Isaac, Scott and Erica got out Boyd’s truck. They came over, and Stiles had to step aside to let Erica and Isaac get their alpha fill. Boyd was standing apart from them, but Stiles could feel a steady contentment radiating through the pack bond. He was probably never going to be as tactile as the other two but that was okay.

His thoughts were interrupted by a bruising hug from Erica followed by another one from Scott.

‘Hi Mom.’ Erica’s brown eyes were mischievous. ‘You miss us today or were you and Alpha too busy fucking?’

‘That was just this morning.’ Stiles retorted and she cackled and hung on his arm. Scott looked horrified and shook his head like a dog with water in its ears.

‘I do not want to know.’ he stated and Stiles snorted with laughter.

‘So what are we doing?’ Isaac asked. He was all gold eyes and keen, curiosity, hands stuffed in his pockets as he ambled over and leaned into Scott.

‘Tracking.’ Derek opened the back door of the Jeep and took out the garbage bag full of sheets. ‘We need to find Jackson before he hurts anyone else. Chris is keeping an eye on Matt’s house but we have no idea how they are communicating so he might be transformed and moving on the next victim.’
‘We didn’t see a thing all day.’ Boyd came closer, wrinkling his nose as Derek ripped the bag open and the stink oozed out. ‘And tonight all he did was go home and eat dinner. The conversation wasn’t even that good.’

‘No calls either.’ Isaac said. ‘So it’s not by phone.’

‘No we know that.’ Stiles replied. ‘Danny hacked it too and found no sign of him having Jackson’s number.’

‘Okay, gather round.’ Derek held the bag out for them to get a good sniff. ‘First one to find Jackson gets to pick the movie Friday night.’

‘Oh I’m all over that.’ Erica gave Isaac a playful shove. ‘I’ll take the playing fields with Boyd.’

‘Fine.’ Isaac shoved her back. ‘We’ll take the parking lot.’

‘Be careful.’ Derek told them. ‘I want you all to howl if you need help.’

‘Yeah, yeah.’ Isaac already had Scott’s hand and was towing him along. ‘We know.’

‘See you later, Boss.’ Erica had Boyd and was going in the opposite direction. Stiles watched them melt into the shadows and grinned.

‘All alone at last.’ He waggled his eyebrows hopefully at Derek.

‘We’re not fucking at your school, Stiles.’ Derek was moving in the direction of the school. ‘We’ll go up on the roof, get a good vantage point.’

‘Isn’t the point to smell him?’ Stiles trotted along behind him, hands in his pockets.

‘Which is why we’re going to be upwind.’ Derek got to the side of the building and looked up, his eyebrows drawn together in what Stiles knew was his calculating expression. He took a few steps back, then a short run up before he jumped and caught the siding above them. Stiles watched in admiration as he pulled himself up and stated scaling the side of the building using the brickwork and windows.

‘Just like Ezio.’ he said and above him, Derek snickered.

‘Prince of Persia.’ he corrected. ‘Sands of Time was my favourite game.’

‘No shit.’ Stiles laughed. ‘But how the hell am I getting up there.’

‘Climb.’ Derek looked down at him from where he was crouched at a second floor window. ‘Just come up the same way I did and trust your body to do what it needs to.’

‘Okay, but it’s going to be nowhere near as stylish as that.’ Stiles replied and true to his word, it wasn’t. Still he made it up to the roof and punched the air when he got over the edge. It was the same place they’d been standing when they were chasing Peter and they stood and scented the air, but no scent drifted over to them.

‘Maybe he’s left town?’ Stiles sidled up to Derek and wormed his way under his arm. ‘Maybe he’s lurking in a sewer somewhere like a flushed baby alligator.’

‘That’s actually not a bad idea.’ Derek grinned. ‘Are you volunteering to go look?’

‘Fuck off.’ Stiles snorted. ‘I don’t even want to know what it’ll smell like down there with the super
Derek sniggered and pulled Stiles around so he was resting against Derek’s chest.

‘I used to come up here with Laura.’ he said and Stiles held his breath, waiting for the story. They were very few and far between but he treasured every one of them. ‘After practice. We’d climb up and watch the moon and get high.’

‘Seriously?’ Stiles looked over his shoulder at him. ‘I didn’t know we could.’

‘Peter used to grow all kinds of shit in the greenhouse.’ Derek replied. ‘You’d be surprised.’

Stiles grinned, trying to picture what a stoned werewolf must be like but then something caught his eye and he froze, Derek immediately going tense behind him when he felt it.

‘What?’ His voice was barely audible.

Stiles moved slowly, lifting a hand and pointing at the stretch of grass below then. It was spotted with trees and something was slinking through the shadows.

‘Looks like your hunch paid off.’ he whispered and Derek let him go so they could both come to the edge and peer down. There was a piece of the closest shadow that detached itself and when it moved into the light cast by the moon, it was easily identified as the kanima.

‘Come on.’ Derek tugged him away from the edge. ‘We don’t want it to see us.’

They listened and then there was the clank of the fire door being pried open.

‘He’s going inside.’ Stiles hissed. ‘Now what?’

‘We follow him.’ Derek was already at the edge, vaulting over like some kind of superhero. When Stiles got to the edge, he had landed and was waiting for him. ‘You coming or what?’

‘Dude.’ Stiles eyed the ground warily. Unlike Derek, he was still a little hesitant to throw himself around. He got one leg over the edge and then hoped for the best and dropped. He was astonished by the fact that the landing itself stuck and jogged over to where Derek was standing at the now open fire door.

‘Can you smell it?’ he asked and Stiles scented the air.

‘Do we call the others?’ he asked and Derek shook his head.

‘We don’t want to spook him.’ he replied. ‘If he’s not under his master’s control right now, he could be easier to subdue and then we take him back with us.’

‘With what though?’ Stiles frowned and then brightened. ‘We could use one of the lacrosse nets. They’re in the equipment room.’

‘Okay.’ Derek said. ‘We can cut through the gym and the pool to get there. Finstock never locks the inside door.’

They went inside, and Stiles wrinkled his nose at the stink.

‘I don’t get it.’ he hissed. ‘My boa smelled nothing like this. Are we sure we want to take him with us? What are we going to do about him anyway?’
‘It’s the corruption of the bite.’ Derek said. ‘Now we know Jackson’s the kanima, he obviously got bitten. I’m betting the time he went missing. Well, the first time at least. As for what we’re going to do about him, I have an idea.’

‘So Peter got in another one before he went all kablooey.’ Stiles thought about that for a second. ‘You want to try and bring him into the pack, don’t you?’

‘It makes sense.’ Derek said. ‘The whole true love cure thing sounds like bullshit to me. And judging from what we’ve found out about him and what Lydia’s told me about Jackson’s issues, I’m betting that being accepted might be the way to go.’

‘Huh.’ Stiles frowned. ‘I hadn’t thought about that. You know, you’re kind of smart for a Sourwolf.’

‘I speak seven languages and have a degree from Columbia.’ Derek smirked at him. ‘Don’t get confused by the wrapping.’

‘Yeah, yeah.’ Stiles stopped as they got to the gym. ‘Hey, just a thought but maybe we should have howled for the others before we got inside?’

Derek stopped dead and then looked sheepish.

‘Okay maybe we’re smart but not necessarily sensible.’ he admitted. Stiles bared his teeth at him and then something clanked down the corridor and they both froze.

Derek jerked his head in the direction of the gym and they started moving towards the source of the noise. Stiles wasn’t as stealthy as Derek was, but they managed to get there without giving themselves away. However, the gym was empty when they looked in and Derek huffed.

‘Guess we lost him.’ Stiles snickered. ‘The slippery bastard.’

‘You’re such an idiot.’ It was accompanied by a majestic eye roll. ‘Come on, let’s go get the net.’

The equipment room was on the far side of the pool. There was enough light that they could see clearly and Stiles had just cleared the far side of the smaller lap pool when he heard it. He turned and startled, seeing the kanima perched on the steel railing of the staircase that led to the pump room.

‘Derek.’ He backed up and the next second the kanima was leaping from the railing right for him. There was a furious roar and the next thing Stiles knew he was being hauled backwards off his feet and out of the way of the kanima while Derek barred its way, beta shifted and spitting angrily. He whirled around quickly, shoving Stiles back further out of harm’s way.

‘Go!’ he roared and that was when the kanima struck, one arm lashing out quicker than Stiles could even see.

‘Derek!’ He stared, wide-eyed. ‘Your neck!’

‘Fuck.’ Derek raised a hand to the four parallel slashes across his nape. The kanima, having done what it needed to, was crawling away although it kept its slitted yellow eyes fixed on them both.

Stiles caught Derek as he stumbled, realising that he was suffering from the effects of the venom the same way he had at the mechanic. He half-carried and half-dragged Derek towards the back of the building, trying to get them away but then the kanima snarled and threw itself back at them from where it was stalking them along the side wall and he was forced to drop Derek as he tried to fend it off, shifting and roaring his own challenge.
The huge splash from behind him, had Stiles panicking when he realised that Derek had fallen in the pool. He dodged the next hit from the kanima and made a decision, diving in from the edge and going straight down to grab his mate. He got Derek by his sweater, pulling him up enough to wrap an arm around his waist and kick off from the bottom of the pool. They broke the surface gasping for air and the look on Derek's face was a picture. His hair was flattened over his forehead and his eyes were blazing but not red and Stiles kicked out to keep them both afloat.

‘Well, that didn’t go to plan.’ he muttered and the glare he got in reply could have peeled paint from the walls.

‘You think?’ Nothing could compete with Derek for sarcasm. Even Stiles’ own delivery couldn’t live up to the near perfect deadpan tone and expression that just screamed I want to rip your throat out with my teeth.

Stiles kept his mouth shut and tread water. Thankfully his werewolf strength meant that they were in no danger of sinking and at least the kanima had retreated, circling the pool and hissing. He frowned, confused as to why it wasn’t attacking anymore.

‘What’s it waiting for?’ he asked and Derek spat out a mouthful of water and growled as it made another pass.

‘Whatever it’s doing, we need to get out of here before we drown.’ His arms and legs were drifting in the water and Stiles got a better grip on him.

‘I’m less worried about drowning than I am about being paralysed as well.’ he replied. ‘In case you hadn’t noticed, you’re paralysed from the neck down in eight feet of water and if I try and get you out, I’ll be a sitting duck as well. At least in here, it doesn’t seem to be able to get to us.’

‘Okay, I guess that makes sense.’ Derek tilted his head back. ‘Does Jackson not swim or something?’

‘No.’ Stiles swung them around so he could track the kanima. ‘He’s like the first one in here, all showing off his six pack and being a douche.’

‘Then why hasn’t it come in after us?’ Derek asked. ‘It’s almost as if…’

‘It’s scared.’ Stiles could have smacked himself in the head of he wasn’t so busy trying to stay afloat. ‘It’s scared of the water.’

‘Damn.’ Derek was watching the kanima as well. ‘You think maybe...if it’s not Jackson then Matt?’

‘Goddammit.’ Stiles was frustrated as hell. ‘I feel like there’s something we’re missing that’s so incredibly obvious about this whole situation but I’m fucked if I know what it is.’

The kanima came a few steps closer, looked at the water and scuttled back. The noise it let out had an edge to it that Stiles knew was fear.

‘Where’s your phone?’ Derek asked and Stiles made a face.

‘Back pocket, dude.’ He was annoyed about that as well. ‘It’ll be fucked. Yours?’

‘Same.’ Derek considered the ceiling. ‘We could howl. Hope the others hear us.’

‘You first.’ Stiles said. He braced himself as Derek took a deep breath and howled, the sound echoing around the building and bouncing back off the walls. The effect on the kanima was
unexpected. Instead of backing off, it crouched down, almost in supplication and the hissing noise took on a plaintive note.

‘It’s acting really weird.’ Derek sounded as confused as Stiles felt. ‘Almost like an omega would.’

‘Well, if Jackson got bitten by Peter he would have needed a pack.’ Stiles replied. ‘Right? Maybe he’s fighting whatever it is that’s keeping him the kanima.’

‘Remember what Lydia said about finding true love.’ Derek said. ‘And what Lydia said about him never feeling like he was accepted by his family because he was adopted. Maybe that’s what he’s looking for. A pack.’

‘Then why the hell doesn’t he just transform already and be part of the pack.’ Stiles huffed. ‘I mean, we’d take him.’

‘Maybe he doesn’t know that, or if he does he feels like he can’t have it.’ Derek’s voice changed a little, getting tight with emotion. ‘I know what it feels like to carry something you can’t shake.’

Stiles looked at him and saw how his mouth had turned down.

‘You shut your damn mouth.’ He pulled Derek close. ‘You are important to me and to our pack and I love your grumpy ass. Got it? We just need to find a way to show that asshole the same thing.’

‘Yeah, easier said than done.’ Derek was giving him the skeptical eyebrows. ‘Lydia is no longer an option.’

‘We might not need Lydia.’ Stiles thought about what he’d seen before, the way Danny had looked at Jackson and the fact that Danny had been the first person that Jackson had gone to. ‘We might have someone better.’

There was a noise somewhere in the school and the kanima stopped its pacing, lifting its head and hissing before it scuttled off, climbing the wall as easily as a gecko might and disappearing into the darkness. A few moments later, the betas all came galloping through the door to the gym and skidded to a stop at the pool’s edge. It was touch and go as Scott teetered and came dangerously close to falling in before Isaac grabbed him and pulled him back.

‘You know.’ Erica was smirking. ‘Skinny dipping is supposed to be done without your clothes on.’

‘Yeah, if you two had wanted to go for a romantic midnight swim you could have just told us.’ Boyd deadpanned and Derek growled at them.

‘Fuck off, all of you.’ Stiles snickered. ‘Now, help us the fuck out. I have a plan.’

Chapter End Notes

Okay so serious talk now. This behemoth is not planning on stopping itself anytime soon. Would we want it to be a continuous fic or broken into "seasons"-ish chunks. Answers on a postcard kids :)
Welcome to The Jungle

Chapter Summary

Just because there's a kanima running around doesn't mean they can't have a good time, does it?

Chapter Notes

For narrative purposes, the drag queens befriend Scott here but Stiles is going to steal them all :D

“You want to what?” Danny looked from Stiles to the betas, his eyebrows nearly shooting off his head.

“Look it’s not a big deal.” Stiles shrugged, poking at his mac and cheese and then shoving it aside. Cafeteria food really wasn’t the same anymore now he could actually smell what went into it. He had no clue how Scott still managed to shove it into his face. ‘But I think we all know that if Jackson freaks out again that he’s going to come to you. I just think that we need to have a plan if he does and that you shouldn’t be alone.’

“So that entails you coming clubbing with me tonight?” Danny’s eyes narrowed. ‘Because I really don’t want a wingman. I mean no offense to Derek and his obvious attraction to twinks with zero dress sense but you’re not even going to get into Jungle. I’d have better luck with Lydia.’

“No.” Lydia was on her phone, one finger held up. ‘I am not going anywhere near that place. The last time you got me there, my Manolos stuck to the floor and I got something unidentifiable on my dress.’

Danny heaved a sigh and then looked at Isaac and a slightly vibrating Erica.

“They can come with me.” he declared. ‘Isaac at least has some dress sense and Erica’s got more cleavage than the drag queens. They’ll do.’

Erica squealed and clapped her hands together and Stiles glared at her. She gave him an unrepentant grin and bumped Isaac’s shoulder with her own.

“We get to go dancing.” Her brown eyes were sparkling. ‘I’ve never been to a club before. I’ll need shoes.’

“We’re not going shopping.” Isaac said, his eyes fixed on Scott. ‘Can I bring him?’

Danny opened his mouth and then closed it again, his brain clearly going into overdrive.

“You two?” he asked and Scott went bright red. ‘I didn’t know McCall swung that way.’

‘Neither did he.’ Stiles cackled and Scott gave him a wounded look. ‘I mean, come on. You thought
you were straight.’

‘Until Isaac got hold of him.’ Allison smirked. ‘Also I don’t think there’s a single straight person at this table.’

‘Over here.’ Boyd had his hand up. ‘But I’m happy to be the token.’

‘Fine.’ Stiles huffed. ‘You two can go with Danny and the rest of us will be on backup.’

‘We’re staking out the Whittemores.’ Lydia said. ‘We’re going over for ‘moral support’ later. I want to get into Jackson’s room and see if there’s anything there that might tell us where he’s lurking.’

‘My dad is going underground.’ Allison added. ‘I told him about the sewers and he thought it was a really likely place Jackson might be hiding.’

‘Is he going alone?’ Isaac asked. ‘That might not be a great idea. Jackson kicked Scott’s ass and he’s a werewolf.’

‘And he got the drop on me and Derek.’ Stiles said. ‘I really can’t believe I’m saying this, but I think my dad needs to go with him.’

‘I’ll go to.’ Everybody turned and looked at Boyd. He shrugged. ‘What? They’ll need a wolf with them to track and my nose is better than y’all’s.’

Stiles knew it was true. Boyd’s sense of smell was ridiculous for a newly turned wolf. He nodded and tapped out a message on his phone to Noah and Derek suggesting the new plan. A few moments later he got a reply saying that they would be contacting Chris to let him know.

‘Okay.’ He looked at them all. ‘So Lydia and Allison are at Jackson’s house. Me and Derek will be outside the club to head Jackson off if he goes there. Erica and Isaac will be backing Danny up inside the club.’ He looked at Scott. ‘Dude, in or out?’

‘In.’ Scott slid his chair a little closer to Isaac and Stiles hid a grin at how possessive he smelled.

‘Okay then.’ He shoved his tray across the table. ‘Anyone want to go get actual food because this shit sucks balls.’

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Derek stood over Laura’s grave and scented the air then knelt down and laid the bunch of white peonies on the ground, seeing how the grass was growing greener and the wolfsbane had sprung up around the edges as it took root.

He stayed there, fingers digging into the grass and closing his eyes as he thought back to the conversation he’d had with Lydia the night before. It had been late and he’d climbed out onto the roof when his phone had lit up. Stiles had been asleep, snuffling in protest when Derek left the bed but he hadn’t woken.

Lydia had sounded exhausted. Derek knew that she wasn’t sleeping. His bond to her as his emissary was a little different to the others in his pack, and he knew the strain she was under. She was studying with Deaton, even as the craziness erupted around her, and she was trying to stay on top of her school work. Derek could feel her determination and was constantly amazed by her strength of will. He’d grown up with a female alpha and surrounded by strong women and knew that they would have approved. Still, Lydia was tired and what had happened the night before had shaken her.
‘I want him to stop.’ Lydia’s voice was rough from sleep or lack thereof. ‘He’s being very persistent and a pain in my ass.’

‘I’m sorry.’ Derek knew how annoying Peter could be first hand. ‘What did he tell you.’

‘The Worm Moon.’ Lydia sighed. ‘You know that’s my birthday? He wants me to bring him back from the dead on my fucking birthday. I have a whole thing planned, Derek. There are caterers.’

‘I promise that you’ll still get your birthday.’ Derek ran a hand through his hair and then tilted his head as he heard the change in Stiles’ heartbeat. ‘What do we have to do?’

‘He’s told me about the ritual I have to perform, but you’re the catalyst.’ Lydia replied. ‘We need your Alpha spark to provide the power. You have to be there with me.’

‘I will.’ Derek assured her. ‘And I’ll be there waiting too when he digs his way out. We’ll have a couple of ground rules to lay down.’

That part came from Stiles. He’d been very clear about what he was comfortable with, along with the rest of the pack, with regards to how Peter would need to behave. Scott wasn’t happy at all about Peter coming back but he’d accepted the terms Stiles had laid down and so had Derek. Peter might be the last family he had, but he’d also killed Laura and Derek was going to be watching him very carefully for anything that might signal a return to his unhinged state from before.

He left Laura’s grave and went towards the house, his hearing picking up the sound of a vehicle coming through the trees just as he got to it. It was Noah’s cruiser and he sat down and waited for it to get there. When it pulled up next to the Camaro, Noah got out and came over to him. He was having a rare day off, having been flat out for the previous three looking for Jackson. He had bags under his eyes and Derek felt bad for how much this was wearing him down.

‘It never really stops.’ he said by way of greeting. ‘I never understood just how much it took to keep this place clear of bullshit.’

‘Your mom?’ Noah asked and Derek nodded.

‘Laura was going to be the next alpha so she was being trained for it.’ He sighed. ‘I’m so out of my depth here.’

‘Stiles said that you could go to Satomi for help.’ Noah sat down next to him. ‘I think that having an older more experienced alpha on your side will be useful. If nothing else, you have someone who understands what you’re going through.’

‘I get that.’ Derek folded his hands in front of him. ‘I just feel like I should be able to do this. My mom was one of the most powerful alphas on the West Coast.’

‘But like you said, this wasn’t meant for you.’ Noah put a hand on his shoulder, squeezing gently. ‘There’s no shame in being bad at something you’ve never learned how to do. But if you become blind to the help that’s being offered then that’s on you, kid.’

‘I’ll call her.’ Derek promised. ‘About tonight though. Are you okay with going with Chris?’

‘Sure.’ Noah grinned. ‘I’ll have a hunter and a werewolf with me. I’m assuming that you’re happy for Boyd to be going with us.’

‘He’s steady and he’s not liable to off if you run into anything.’ Derek replied. ‘He’s a good wolf. He’s taken to it even faster than Stiles did. I trust him.’
‘Where do you think he is?’ Noah looked into the trees. ‘Jackson, I mean.’

‘I don’t know.’ Derek shook his head. ‘I spoke to Lydia last night. She had another vision of Peter and he told her we need to do the resurrection on the night of the Worm Moon. That’s in three weeks.’

‘Have you told Chris?’ Noah asked and Derek sighed.

‘Not yet. But I will. He’s going to need time to adjust to the fact that his mate will be coming back.’

‘What do you think will happen?’ Noah looked concerned. ‘His last miraculous resurrection didn’t go so well.’

‘No.’ Derek leaned back on his hands and wished for a quiet life. ‘Once we find Jackson, we can start preparing. I don’t want to go in blind.’

‘Neither do I.’ Noah did the same thing and they sat in silence for a while, just looking into the trees.

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‘Ugh.’ Stiles pulled a face. ‘I hate chemistry.’

‘No, you just hate Harris.’ Lydia smiled as they walked into the lab. ‘But then, who can blame you.’

‘Why didn’t Peter eat him?’ Stiles muttered, taking a seat at one of the benches at the back. He waited for Scott to come sit next to him, but instead he got Erica. He threw Scott a look, because they were always lab partners but he was sitting with Isaac.

‘Looks like you lost your bestie.’ Erica said cheerfully. ‘Thankfully the position of your most favourite beta is about to filled by me instead.’ She bared her teeth at Scott when he looked back at them.

Stiles grinned at her, but that quickly changed when Matt came in and sat down behind Allison and Lydia. He was still fuming about what Matt had been doing and the fact that two days of surveillance still had given them nothing they could use. The text messages had been brought up but the DA’s office had ignored them in the face of more pressing matters i.e. the missing son of the DA.

Matt seemed to pick up on the fact that Stiles was doing his level best to burn holes in his back and turned to glance at him over his shoulder. Stiles met his look with one of blatant hostility until a screwed up ball of paper hit him in the face from the side. He looked across at Scott and Scott nodded at the paper. Stiles unfolded it and read the familiar scrawl.

DUDE. STOP GROWLING.

He huffed and stuffed it in his pocket while still eyeballing Matt, who was looking bemused. He turned back around and next to Stiles, Erica pulled a face.

‘He’s such an asshole.’ she hissed under her breath, just loud enough for Stiles to hear. ‘Want me to bite him?’

‘Later.’ Stiles turned his attention to Harris, watching as he came in and gave them all a look that bordered on open dislike. He had no idea why a man who hated people so much became a teacher, but could only think it was for the opportunity to torment them all.

‘Good afternoon.’ Harris sneered. ‘Pop quiz.’
The whole class groaned and Erica raised an eyebrow at Stiles. Her face very clearly said that she thought he was an asshole too.

Stiles sighed and resigned himself to an unbearable last period but then cheered up at the thought of getting out, even if it was for stakeout purposes. He needed a little fun in his life.

Chris was waiting for Noah when he got to the Argent house. He saw the Camaro pull in behind the cruiser and raised an eyebrow. Noah knew that he needed to be told about Peter sooner rather than later and had convinced Derek to tag along. He got out at the same time Derek did and they walked up to the porch together.

‘You two look like you’re about to tell me some bad news.’ Chris said, folding his arms. ‘Do I need to have a stiff drink beforehand?’

‘Not exactly.’ Derek shifted, hands in his pockets. ‘Remember the Peter thing? Well, it’s going to happen in three week’s time.’

‘Shit.’ Chris looked stunned. ‘I didn’t realise that it would be so soon.’ He retreated into the house and they followed. Noah noticed Derek’s nose twitching and wondered just what he was smelling coming from Chris. The man had a poker face like nobody’s business.

‘We know this is a shock.’ he said and Chris snorted and sat down.

‘I’ve had some time to get over the idea of him coming back, but it was still in the abstract. Now it’s happening, I guess I don’t really know how to feel about it.’ He looked up, ice blue eyes giving nothing away. ‘When exactly?’

‘The next full moon.’ Derek replied. ‘The 29th. It’s Lydia’s birthday. She’s not happy about the fact she’s got to bring Peter back that night but he’s being really insistent about it.’

‘I’m still getting used to the fact that she can talk to the dead.’ Chris said. ‘And that she’s dating my daughter. Banshees aren’t common but they still fall under things we used to hunt.’

‘She’s not a threat.’ Derek growled. ‘She may be my emissary but she’d never do anything to hurt Allison, you know that.’

‘I do.’ Chris sighed. ‘Her mother would have a great deal to say about the matter though. As would her grandfather.’

‘Speaking of.’ Noah frowned. ‘He’s been awfully elusive lately, ever since I ran his goons out of town.’

‘I think he’s still around.’ Chris’ mouth twisted with obvious distaste. ‘That’s his MO. He bides his time until he can strike and deliver a killing blow. Who knows what he’s up to.’

‘He’ll have to wait.’ Derek said. ‘We need to find Jackson first.’

‘Agreed.’ Chris got up. ‘I have some old city plans that show the tunnels. There’s actually an entrance from the station you’ve been using for the betas, Derek. That’s our way in and maybe the scents would have lured Jackson in, like the school did.’

‘We can hope.’ Noah said and settled into his seat. It looked like it would be a long afternoon ahead.
Lacrosse practice was in full swing and Lydia was only half paying attention as she made notes in her new acquisition. Deaton had told her she would need to begin her own journal as the new Hale pack emissary and she’d bought one, an elegant black leather bound journal that sat comfortably in her hands. She also bought a new pen to write in it, the black ink flowing across the snowy white pages. Deaton had shown her his and she’s admired the hand drawn illustrations of plants and creatures, all annotated in Deaton’s spidery hand.

‘You know, it’s less about the look and more about the knowledge.’ Peter’s voice was warm with amusement and Lydia gritted her teeth to stop herself snapping at him.

‘I told Derek.’ she said. ‘He’s agreed to the Worm Moon. I hope you know you’ll be completely ruining my birthday.’

‘My dear, I will by you whatever your little materialistic heart desires when I am restored to the land of the living.’ Peter smirked. ‘I’m sure you’re aware of just how rich both myself and your alpha are. Not that you can really tell with Derek. He’s always been funny about using the family money and he seems to delight in playing the martyr.’

‘He feels guilty, but then you’d have to have a sense of right and wrong to understand that.’ Lydia snapped. She was tired and sick of the verbal jousting Peter loved to indulge in so she didn’t care if anyone saw her talking to herself, even though he was as clear as day on the bleachers next to her. The only indication that anything was wrong was how the light didn’t hit him in quite the same way it did everything else.

‘What I did was justified.’ He smiled and it was only slightly tinged with madness. ‘My pack deserved to see every Argent wiped from the face of the earth.’

‘Even Chris?’ Lydia raised an eyebrow. ‘You’d kill your mate?’ She was pleased to see his smug mask fall for a second. ‘Also I need to tell you that if I bring you back and you harm a hair on Allison’s head, I will send you back to hell myself.’

Peter chuckled, bright blue eyes twinkling madly.

‘I don’t doubt that.’ He gave her an appraising look. ‘You’d do it too. Derek was very wise to accept you as his emissary. And I promise that both Chris and Allison will be safe. It seems that vengeance doesn’t really agree with me. Besides I have reparations to make and other fish to fry.’

‘What reparations?’ Lydia was curious. ‘Your agenda will have to wait until we’ve sorted out the whole kanima situation.’

‘Ah, yes.’ Peter looked a little sheepish. ‘I feel I should apologise for that one.’

‘You should.’ Lydia scribbled down something and then looked up. ‘You did bite him?’

‘Oh yes.’ Peter’s grin was sharp. ‘But that’s not what I need to apologise for. I thought he’d turn just like Scott did, but I hadn’t factored in just what my poor past decisions would mean.’

‘You’ve lost me.’ Lydia gave him an arch look. ‘If you’re going to insist on babbling in my ear, you could at least make sense.’

‘Jackson.’ Peter replied. ‘I’m the reason he’s the kanima.’

‘Yes, I know that.’ Lydia rolled her eyes and then lamented the fact that she was obviously picking
up bad habits from her alpha pair. ‘You’re the one that bit him.’ She looked at him and then frowned when she noticed that Peter’s eyes were distant.

‘No.’ he replied. ‘Think Lydia, you’re a very smart girl and you know Jackson better than anyone. What does he want more than anything in the world?’

It took a moment for Lydia to realise what he was talking about but when she did, her mouth fell open in astonishment.

‘No.’ she breathed. ‘You’re lying.’

‘I’m not, although I wish I were.’ Peter said, his voice tinged with regret. ‘I’m Jackson’s father.’

‘Fuck.’ Lydia said and then did the only thing she could think of and slapped him.

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Derek frowned. He could feel Lydia’s agitation and stepped away from the table in the basement where Chris was busy arming Noah to shoot her a quick message.

What’s wrong?

Your uncle just decided that a mid-afternoon chat was in order. He told me something that might be relevant to our cause.

What?

I need to tell you in person. You’re going to want to be sitting down for this shit.

Derek frowned at his phone. He didn’t like the sound of that one bit.

‘Derek?’ He looked up to see Noah and Chris looking at him, their faces questioning.

‘It’s nothing.’ He shoved the phone back in his pocket. ‘Sorry.’

‘Okay so as I was saying, these are the ultrasonic emitters. They can be set to a frequency that hurts werewolf ears and used to drive them in whichever direction you want them to go. If we put these down the sewers and Jackson is down there, it’ll chase him out where Derek and the pack can track him and catch him.’

‘That’s all well and good, but how the hell do we slow him down?’ Noah asked. ‘Stiles said that he’s stronger than a wolf and he’s got that nifty venom thing going on.’

‘Yes, that’s true.’ Chris admitted. ‘But even though he’s a corrupted werewolf, he’s still a werewolf underneath. His weaknesses are the same. We’ll use electricity to stun him long enough to get him under control and bring him back here. I’ve got a room that will hold him. Then we can get started on finding something to break the master’s hold on him.’

‘Okay.’ Derek nodded. ‘That sounds good. Boyd will meet you at the station once the sun’s gone down.’

‘We’ll try and get him moving in the direction of the club.’ Chris said. Derek had already told them about the connection Jackson seemed to have with Danny and the chances that he’d track him down.

Noah chuckled.
‘I’d love to see Stiles in a place like that.’ His face was a picture of amusement. ‘He’d probably be the worst dressed guy there.’

‘We’re going to be outside.’ Derek told them. ‘I’ve got Erica, Isaac and Scott looking after Danny.’

Noah burst out laughing at that.

‘Jesus.’ he chuckled. ‘Melissa’s going to laugh her ass off at that.’

‘How is she coping with Scott and Isaac’s...relationship?’ Chris looked at Derek for confirmation.

‘They’re mates.’ he replied. ‘They just haven’t really figured that out yet.’

‘Well, Scott has always been a little slow on the uptake.’ Noah smiled. ‘He’ll get there in his own time.’

************

Stiles hummed as he washed the sweat and grass and dirt off, not really paying too much attention to the other players around him. He certainly wasn’t smelling the low level arousal coming from a couple of showers over where Isaac and Scott were busy trying not to look at each other’s cocks.

He turned the water off and ambled off to get dried and dressed, still humming to himself. He really wasn’t paying attention so when Lydia pounced on him as he came out the locker room, he may have let out a little shriek.

‘Christ, Lyds.’ He clutched at his heart. ‘Don’t scare me like that!’ He then noticed the look on her face and frowned at her. ‘What’s wrong?’

‘I need to tell you something.’ she said and grabbed his arm, practically dragging him down the corridor and making him wonder if banshee super strength was a thing. She found an empty classroom and shoved him inside before turning to face him.

‘Peter is Jackson’s father.’ she announced.

Stiles blinked at her, the words slowly processing before flailing wildly.

‘What?!’ He couldn’t believe his ears. ‘What the fucking fuck, Lydia?’

‘I know, I know.’ Lydia put her face in her hands. ‘He just fucking told me. Christ, this is a mess.’

‘Is that why he bit him?’ Stiles asked and she nodded.

‘Yeah.’ She sat down. ‘Not only that, but I think he’s the way we get to turn Jackson back.’

‘Oh, fuck me.’ Stiles collapsed into the chair next to her. ‘Love and acceptance. What is the one thing poor little rich boy Jackson doesn’t have?’

‘Exactly.’ Lydia flopped forward, burying her face in her arms. ‘I am so done.’

‘So how do we do this?’ Stiles asked. ‘We bring back zombie Peter and he declares himself to Jackson and he magically turns back into an actual werewolf?’

‘That’s the plan.’ Lydia lifted her head and put her chin in her hand. ‘There’s just one glitch. We can only bring Peter back on my birthday.’
‘Your birthday?’ Stiles was aghast. ‘But that’s like three weeks away!’ He caught her look and huffed. ‘Shut up. I don’t stalk you anymore but I still remember everything. I was even going to buy you a TV this year.’

‘That would have been a spectacularly bad idea.’ Lydia told him. ‘And Allison would kick your ass if you hit on me.’

‘Dude, Derek would kick my ass for hitting on you.’ Stiles replied. ‘So we have to chase Jackson’s scaly ass around for another three weeks?’

‘Hopefully not.’ Lydia sighed. ‘I need to get my social life back.’

Stiles laughed, genuinely amused.

‘Fat chance of that happening.’ he cackled and ducked the swipe she aimed at him.

The door opened and Scott and Isaac stuck their heads in.

‘Hey.’ Scott was looking shift as hell and Stiles knew they’d been eavesdropping. Isaac was managing to look completely innocent and he made a mental note to never play cards with him.

‘You can drop the puppy eyes.’ he said. ‘I know you two were listening in.’

‘Sorry.’ Scott said as they came in. ‘Is it true?’

‘Completely.’ Lydia muttered from back inside her arms. ‘The worst part is why I never saw it before. Of fucking course he’s Peter’s son. That explains so much.’

‘I don’t understand though.’ Isaac said. ‘He’s adopted sure, but we know who his parents were.’

‘Peter had an affair with Jackson’s biological mom, Maggie Miller.’ Lydia explained. ‘Her husband, Gordon found out and that’s why the crash. At least that’s Peter’s theory. He thinks they were arguing and lost control of the car. That or maybe the crash was deliberate. He’s not sure.’

‘Holy shit.’ Scott said. ‘That’s like some super soap opera shit right there.’

‘No kidding.’ Stiles got up. ‘Okay so that’s another thing to deal with. You’ve told Derek, right?’

‘Not yet.’ Lydia bit her lip. ‘I really didn’t want to tell him that our little lizard friend just so happens to be his he’s cousin. I thought the least I could do was be face to face with him when I drop that particular bombshell.’

‘Understandable.’ Stiles hefted his backpack onto his shoulder. ‘Maybe I should do it instead?’

‘No.’ Lydia glared at him. ‘You have a about as much tact as the most tactless person in existence. I’ll do it tomorrow. He’s got too much going on tonight. I’ve already got him overthinking the whole bringing Peter back thing.’

‘Okay.’ Stiles nodded. ‘No telling Big Bad about the crazy lizard cousin. Got it.’ He looked at the other two. ‘You can’t say anything either.’

‘Dude.’ Scott held his hands up. ‘I am not fucking touching that.’

‘Right.’ Lydia got up. ‘I’m going to pick up Allison and then we’re going to Jackson’s house. What time are you all going to Jungle?’
‘Around nine.’ Stiles replied. ‘Danny threatened to shoot us if we turned up earlier. With wolfsbane.’

They all shuddered and Lydia snorted at them.

‘You’re the most ridiculous pack ever.’ she declared and walked out the classroom, leaving them protesting in her wake.

************

Derek checked on the casserole he was making for dinner and went to sit at the table where Noah was reading a case file. He peered at Derek over his glasses and handed him a photograph. Derek looked at it, turning it until he could identify the twisted hunk of metal as a car.

‘Is that the Miller’s file?’ he asked and Noah nodded.

‘I thought I would take another look seeing as we’re dealing with all this kanima bullshit.’ he said. ‘And the more I read, the less it feels like an accident.’

‘You didn’t work the case?’ Derek asked and Noah shook his head.

‘Not directly.’ he replied. ‘I was still a deputy back then.’

Derek studied the photograph, lifting his head when he heard the jeep. A few minutes later it pulled up and the front door opened, Stiles and Isaac coming directly into the kitchen and scenting the air hopefully.

‘I swear, it’s like living with sentient garbage disposals.’ Noah chuckled as Stiles came over and rubbed his face on Derek. ‘Or maybe very large cats.’

Stiles growled playfully at him, sitting down and draping himself all over Derek. Isaac went to the fridge, coming back with the soda and four glasses. Noah was pleased to see him comfortable enough to do that. The first few weeks he’d crept around and asked if he wanted anything to eat or drink, like he’d be chastised for it. Noah still got angry enough to want to dig Lahey up and kill him all over again for making his own son afraid to ask for something as simple as a glass of water.

‘Erica’s coming over to dress me.’ he told Derek. ‘So brace yourself.’

Noah smiled at that. He liked Erica enormously, feeling a little twinge of sadness at a long gone conversation when Stiles was eight and Claudia had hinted at having another baby, possibly a girl that time round. Then she’d gotten sick and Noah’s life had collapsed and the dream of a daughter had died right along with Claudia. From what he could tell, Erica’s mother was worn out from looking after her and her father was more absentee than anything else and he felt protective of her. She was such a spitfire, so like Claudia in that respect that it was easy to imagine her with dark hair and Claudia’s moles and fitting right into their family.

‘Do we need to feed her?’ he asked and Stiles growled.

‘She’s not getting casserole.’ he pouted. ‘It’s all mine.’

‘Sharing is caring, Stiles.’ Isaac gave him a shit-eating grin, knowing how easy it was to wind him up. The two of them bickered just like real siblings, knowing which buttons to push.

‘Oh yeah, I forgot.’ Stiles narrowed his eyes at him. ‘You’ll need extra energy to decide which of your thousand douchebag scarves to wear tonight.’
‘Language.’ Noah said but he knew he was flogging the proverbial dead horse. The bickering continued until Derek finally put an end to it with a low rumbling growl and a flash of red eyes.

‘Keep that up and you get nothing.’ he stated, getting a pitch perfect pair of whines.

Dinner was eventually served and Noah even managed to get in a second helping before Stiles and Isaac polished it off. Derek was busy cleaning up when Noah’s phone buzzed. It was Chris, telling him he was leaving for the station and he would be by to collect Noah in ten minutes.

‘You’re going?’ Stiles asked from where he and Isaac were trying to get each other into a headlock, rather unsuccessfully, in their quest for the last piece of chicken in the dish. ‘You need to stay in touch with me, okay?’

‘Stiles, I managed to stay alive the entire time I was in the army and even now.’ Noah replied, going over and pinching the piece of chicken from right under their noses. He saw Derek’s hidden smile and winked at him. ‘And I have Chris and Boyd to look after me. I’ll be fine.’

He gave Stiles a quick kiss on the top of his head, ruffled Isaac’s curls and patted Derek on the shoulder as he left by the back door. He lurked in the shadows by the side of the house for a while, listening to the bickering start again while he waited until the lights from Chris’s SUV showed up at the front of the house. He jogged over and got in, his face lighting up when Chris handed him a coffee.

‘We might be up late.’ he said and Noah chuckled.

‘Better than listening to that lot argue over chicken.’ he replied. ‘Have I told you that they eat like wolves?’

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Danny checked his hair in the mirror and headed for the door. He was meeting the pack at Jungle but he sure as hell wasn’t planning on leaving with them. He wasn’t a shark for nothing and if he couldn’t have the one person he wanted, then he’d find someone else. No pining for him.

‘Text if you’re staying out.’ Leeah met him in the front hall, stopping to give his hair a final flick. ‘So handsome.’

Danny laughed and brushed her hand away. Sharks matured faster than most, something that accounted for the way he managed to look twenty-five when he was only seventeen, and he’d been given a great deal of freedom to find his way. His looks and street smarts got him into Jungle without being carded, although he was going to have to flirt a little to get Isaac in. Erica would be no problem, not with her makeover making her look more Hollywood bombshell these days.

He took his time, driving leisurely through downtown and to the industrial district where the club was, thinking about his current predicament and Jackson. He hadn’t missed Stiles’ little asides at school about how the kanima need to be accepted and loved in order to turn back into a true wolf, but Danny had spent the whole of their friendship trying to keep a lid on his feelings because Jackson had been and acted so aggressively straight, even if he didn’t always smell it. Danny had never said anything about Jackson’s eyes occasionally lingering a little too long in the locker room or the way he dealt with his attraction to guys by bullying them. He’d never tell Stiles that Jackson made his life a misery in all likelihood because he was attracted to him and not because of Lydia as he’d always professed. There’d been others as well, and Danny knew that Jackson had stifled every bit of it. David Whittemore was not an openly intolerant man but Danny had always picked up how uncomfortable he’d been when Danny was over at their house, like he was afraid to talk to him. It
made sense that his attitude had rubbed off on Jackson.

He found a spot a block down and got out, taking care to lock up before sauntering down the street. He got about halfway when he walked past a black Camaro that looked very familiar and whose occupants were far too busy to notice him peering in the windows. Danny grinned and tapped on the glass, snickering when they pulled apart and ended up in a tangle while Stiles tried to get his hand out of Derek’s pants.

Danny stood back, waiting as they got themselves separated. The amount of profanity and growling going on inside the car was incredibly amusing and he laughed when they finally fell out. Derek’s hair was in complete disarray and Stiles had his shirt on backwards and they both stank of pheromones.

‘I thought this was supposed to be a serious stakeout.’ Danny said, holding back a smile. Stiles’ eyes lit up and he growled a little bit but Derek put a hand on his arm and he quietened down.

‘It is serious.’ he replied. ‘If it wasn’t I would be bothering to risk the lives of my pack to make sure you’re okay.’

Danny was taken aback. He hadn’t actually thought about it that way, seeing it more as an inconvenience. He was also so used to not interacting with any other supernaturals, in the way of most sharks, so he was surprised by the tone in Derek’s voice. Sharks didn’t have alphas and were more inclined to stick to themselves unless they were in a family unit like he was, but he could appreciate the protectiveness Derek had for his betas.

‘Okay, point taken.’ he replied. ‘And it’s not that I’m ungrateful, I’m just not used to anyone else looking out for me. I’m used to relying on myself.’

‘Well, you don’t have to anymore.’ Derek said, his hazel eyes piercing. ‘You’re an ally. That means we have your back if you need it.’

Danny couldn’t help it and laughed again.

‘I’ve never heard of a shark in a wolf pack.’ he said and Stiles grinned.

‘First time for everything though.’ he replied, taking Derek’s hand and dragging him off towards the club. Danny huffed, shoved his hands in his pockets and followed them.

They found Isaac and Erica at the parking lot where they’d obviously been waiting for a while.

‘Found him.’ Stiles jerked a thumb over his shoulder at Danny.

‘Great.’ Erica was resplendent in a red micro mini, black halter top and a pair of skyscraper heels, her thick blond curls pinned up on one side with an artificial rose. ‘I can’t wait to get in there.’ She bounded over, grabbed Danny’s arm and dragged him towards the entrance with Isaac tagging along behind them. He’d gone for simplicity in form fitting jeans and a white t-shirt stretched across his broad shoulders and Danny gave him an appreciative once over.

‘Where’s Scott?’ he asked and Erica cackled.

‘He’s already inside.’ she laughed. ‘Apparently, he got accosted by a bunch of drag queens because he got here before us and they swept him up and took him in with them.’
'No kidding.' Danny grinned. This was getting better and better. He glanced back to see where Stiles and Derek were but they were gone and he made a note to ask Derek about how they managed to move so quietly.

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'God, this place stinks.' Noah tried to breathe through his mouth.

'You’ll get used to it.' Chris replied and then nodded at where Boyd was ahead of them. 'He’ has it a hell of a lot worse.'

'No shit.' Boyd’s deep voice came back to them. He was on point, using his ability to see in the dark and his sense of smell to try and pick up whether Jackson had been down in the tunnels. They’d gone in via an old access doorway in the train station and followed it down until they connected with the sewers. Now they were following the maintenance tunnel that was used by the municipality through the industrial district and planned to come up close to the club.

Noah was thankful that Chris had equipped them both with night vision goggles. He hadn’t used them since Iraq but it had only taken a short while to get used to them again. He was carrying one of Chris’ modified tranquiliser rifles, the usual liquid replaced with something that Chris assured him could bring down an enraged elephant if needed. That had gotten a rare huff of laughter from Boyd, his eyes lighting up gold in the darkness as he led the way.

They got to a fork and Boyd stopped, head up as he scented the air. He looked back at them and pointed to the left.

'I’m getting something from down there.' he said. 'It smells like the kanima.'

'Knew it would be handy having a wolf along.' Chris chuckled and stuck one of his sonic emitters to the wall next to him. It would be activated by movement and keep Jackson from retreating the way they had just come. He put another one down the other tunnel to the right, sealing off both lines of retreat.

The tunnel they entered was dank, water running down the walls and sloshing at their feet. They’d gone maybe a hundred yards when Boyd froze, a low growl rumbling from his chest.

'He was here not too long ago.' he said. 'His scent is really fresh.'

'Keep going.' Chris replied. 'And stay alert.'

They followed the scent, Boyd taking in deep breaths to keep track of it. His growling was getting louder and Noah shivered involuntarily. Unlike Stiles, Boyd’s growl sounded a lot more like Derek’s, low and threatening. He was completely still and Noah froze in place, straining his ears to pick up any sound there might be. That was when he heard it, the barely audible hiss that was more like a snake than escaping steam.

Chris touched his arm briefly and gave him the signal for them to proceed slowly. Noah nodded and they started forward again. Boyd was moving soundlessly but as he got to the section of the tunnel which opened up to where there was a ladder leading up to a manhole, a dark shape dropped from the ceiling onto him and he roared as the kanima snarled. There was a snick of claws and Boyd grabbed for it, the kanima clinging to his back like a koala as he tried to shake it off.

‘Goddammit!’ Chris was sighting along his weapon but Noah knew he couldn’t risk the shot.

‘Do it!’ Boyd yelled, his eyes ablaze and his fangs out. ‘It got me anyways.’
Noah levelled his rifle, sighted and shot, but the kanima was too quick, leaping from Boy’d back to grab the side of the tunnel and slither up the wall. There was a clanging sound as it threw open the manhole and escaped into the night air.

‘Fuck.’ Chris lowered his weapon and went over to Boyd. The beta had slid to the ground, now completely paralysed.

‘Well this sucks.’ he announced. ‘Damn, that thing is strong.’

‘It’s gone topside.’ Chris slung his rifle across his back and knelt down next to him, looking up at Noah. ‘Can you follow it? I’ll stay here with Boyd.’

‘No problem.’ Noah said and headed for the ladder.

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Stiles was bored and envied Isaac and Erica at least being able to have fun inside. He pouted at Derek, but was completely ignored.

‘This blows.’ he muttered. ‘I could at least have a cocktail if we went inside.’

‘You’re under 21, Stiles.’ Derek kept his eyes fixed on the club down below the warehouse building they were camped out on. ‘Don’t think your dad would appreciate you drinking.’

Stiles snorted and wormed his way under Derek’s arm.

‘He makes allowances for you.’ he pointed out and Derek smirked at him.

‘Don’t push your luck then.’ he replied.

Stiles huffed and withdrew, leaning over the edge of the roof.

‘Okay, what’s wrong.’ Derek turned to look at him. ‘You’ve been antsy all night and you smell like you’re hiding something.’

Stiles tried for outraged but only ended up getting the suspicious eyebrows. He sighed and folded like a house of cards.

‘Lydia will kill me.’ he muttered. ‘She thinks you have too much to deal with right now.’

‘Can I be the judge of that?’ Derek folded his arms. ‘What is it?’

‘Shit.’ Stiles sighed and decided to pull the proverbial band aid off. ‘It’s about Jackson.’

‘I figured that part out.’ Derek said. ‘And I’m assuming that it’s something to do with her little visitation this afternoon. Look, I get that we’re dealing with some pretty fucked up shit right now but I would rather know. I hate being lied to, you know that.’

‘Fine.’ Stiles took a deep breath. ‘Peter told Lydia today that he’s responsible for all this. Jackson being the kanima comes from the fact that he’s got this weird ass relationship with his adopted parents and, well as it turns out he actually still has a family.’

‘Oh?’ Derek’s eyes did that crazy up down thing that made them connect in the middle. ‘I thought they were all dead.’

‘Well, that’s a funny story and something you two have in common actually.’ Stiles pressed his
forefingers together and gave him a pained look. ‘Seems like his family is...well, your family.’

‘Huh?’ Derek’s eyebrows were now doing the dance of incomprehension. ‘I don’t get it.’

‘Peter says he’s Jackson’s father.’ Stiles blurted. ‘He had an affair with Jackson’s mom and then there was the accident and that’s basically all I know. He apparently wasn’t very forthcoming with the details.’

He waited for Derek to say something but all he got was a blank stare as Derek seemed to be cycling through every configuration of eyebrow he had.

‘Jackson is Peter’s son.’ he finally said, his voice faint. ‘Oh my fuck, he’s my COUSIN?’ The last word went up several notches in volume and Stiles winced.

‘Yeah.’ He shrugged. ‘Surprise?’

‘Jesus.’ Derek slumped back against the ledge. ‘How the fuck did I miss that. Of course he’s Peter’s son. He’s as much of a douchebag as Peter is.’

Stiles snorted.

‘Lydia said pretty much the same thing.’ He went over, standing between Derek’s feet and resting his hands either side of Derek’s neck. ‘You okay, big guy?’

‘Yeah.’ Derek looked completely astonished and Stiles had to bite his lip to keep from smiling because it was utterly adorable. ‘Damn. Mom would have kicked his ass if she knew.’

Stiles leaned in to rest their foreheads together and felt Derek shake under his hands.

‘I’m sorry.’ he murmured. ‘I know it’s a lot.’

Derek huffed and looked at him, eyes flickering like a broken stop light.

‘Story of my fucking life.’ he replied and then froze. Stiles did too, completely distracted from the fact that he’d just dropped a colossal bombshell by the fact that the entirety of the Jungle was screaming.

‘Oh fuck.’ he said and Derek shoved him away and leaped over the side of the building. Stiles made an annoyed sound and followed him, landing gracelessly and running for the entrance. The doormen had already gone in and there were people streaming out so it was a battle to even get inside, the darkness, glitter balls and strobe lighting throwing him off.

‘Stiles!’ Derek’s voice cut through the noise and he skidded to a stop to see that Isaac, Scott and Erica were on the dance floor, both crouched in defensive postures with their fangs and claws out. Between them, the kanima had Danny back against the back wall. It hissed furiously and Danny held up both hands.

‘Come on, dude.’ He looked right into its yellow slitted eyes. ‘It’s me. You don’t want to hurt me.’

Derek moved between Erica and Isaac, both of them glancing at him. Stiles came up on the outside next to Scott and it snarled at him when he got too close.

‘It came down through the roof, we think.’ Isaac told them. ‘It went straight for Danny.’

‘Great.’ Stiles muttered. ‘At least we know we were right about that.’
They all watched as the kanima stalked back and forth, keeping itself between them and Danny.

‘I’m okay.’ he said to them. ‘If he wanted to kill me, he would have done it by now.’ He held out a mollifying hand to the kanima and it snapped its jaws at him. ‘Jacks, come on. You don’t have to do this. You can come back.’

The kanima lowered itself to the ground, still snarling. Its eyes never left Danny and Stiles wanted to roll his eyes at them both.

‘You need to tell him.’ he said to Danny. ‘It might help.’

‘Tell him what?’ Danny shot back but he sounded like he already knew what Stiles wanted.

‘Dude, seriously?’ He waved his hands at them. ‘Now is not the time for pining from a distance. Just freaking tell him.’

‘I…’ Danny faltered and the kanima sat up, head tilted as it regarded him. ‘I can’t.’

‘Jesus fuck.’ Derek growled. ‘Fine, Plan B.’

‘No wait…’ Stiles started but he was cut short by a popping sound and the kanima screeching. It wheeled around and Stiles saw the feathered dart sticking out of its rump. He turned and saw his father standing there, rifle raised.

‘Stop him from escaping!’ Derek ordered and they all moved into a semi circle. The kanima was wavering, the tranquiliser doing its job until it collapsed on its side. It was panting, sides heaving as it fought the sedation but eventually it closed its eyes and they all watched in amazement as the scales melted away to leave nothing but a naked Jackson lying on the black and white checkerboard floor.

‘Damn.’ Erica grinned, her eyes trained on Jackson’s crotch. ‘Guess that’s one reason he’s such an arrogant asshole.’

‘Shut up.’ Danny was already on his knees next to him. He gathered Jackson up in his arms, shifting to carry him bridal style. ‘What are we doing with him?’

‘Chris has a place for him to stay until we can get this figured out.’ Noah came over, going to his side and examining the unconscious Jackson. ‘This stuff is pretty powerful. He’ll be sleeping for at least the next twelve hours.’

‘In that case, can I suggest we get the fuck out of here?’ Stiles said, noticing how Derek was eyeing Jackson with great suspicion.

‘Good idea.’ Isaac said. ‘I can hear sirens.’

‘There’s a fire exit that way.’ Scott pointed. ‘Dolores showed me.’

‘Who the hell is Dolores?’ Stiles asked and then saw that Scott looked like he’d been bathed in glitter and was wearing a bright orange feather boa around his neck. ‘And why do you look like you spent the night in the Copacabana?’

‘Drag queens.’ Scott grinned and led the way out.

They came out into the alley that ran behind Jungle and Noah took Danny with him to get Jackson loaded into his car. Derek tagged along to get the Camaro while the rest of them waited at the entrance to the alley.
‘Well, it was fun up until lizard-face showed up.’ Scott grumbled. ‘I kept getting free drinks.’ he ignored the tiny growl from Isaac and beamed at Stiles. ‘It was awesome.’

Stiles laughed, patting him on the shoulder.

‘You’re something else, buddy.’ he said and leaned into him. ‘Can I just say that I feel horribly cheated.’

‘Don’t be.’ Erica grinned. ‘We’ve decided this is going to be a regular Thursday night thing.’

‘I’m sure Derek will love that.’ Stiles snickered and then jumped about a foot in the air when the Camaro pulled up out of nowhere and honked at him.

‘I call shotgun!’ Erica yelled and there was a brief tussle for position until she played dirty and bit Stiles in the arm, sliding past him and into the passenger seat. He snarled at her as he got in the back but she was unrepentent.

‘You’re going down, Reyes.’ He made a threatening gesture at her and she flashed her eyes at him.

‘Bring it on, Batman.’ she replied and Derek rolled his eyes at them both, putting the Camaro in gear and making a u-turn fast enough to make them all fall over, cackling at them when they all yelled about whiplash.

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