The Mating Call

by littlemisswriter123

Summary

There is a longing desire within Hope Mikaelson's soul. It calls to her. Something she cannot touch or see, but only feel with the deepest passion. She has come of age to be in need of a mate, and her instincts have driven her towards Beacon Hills, California. When Hope meets Derek Hale, an alpha who belongs to another species of Werewolf, her faith in the natural universe is tested. Now the question remains, will she allow her instincts be her guide?
"I will render them helpless..."

A cluttered array of empty moving boxes lay haphazardly on the, normally impeccably neat, hardwood flooring of Hope Mikaelson’s bedroom floor. It was the room from her time spent in New Orleans as a child, and although she hardly remembered it from her past, she would always stay fond of it. Her abandoned crib had been altered into a queen-sized bed – *fit for a queen*, her father would always say, but much of the rest, aside from a now towering bookcase on the back wall, stayed the same. Most importantly the mural of the New Orleans cityscape on the far-left wall remained untouched. Hope had even positioned her bed so that at night she could roll onto her side and gaze at the beauty her father’s hands had created until she would lull into a peaceful, dreamless sleep.

She did this now, despite the clock on her bedside table letting her know it was two o'clock in the afternoon. The sweltering summer heat of New Orleans drifted in the essence of the city through her seldom opened window. Spicy Cajun food that made her mouth water, smooth jazz trumpeted on a street corner, and even the distant earthy smell of the bayou in which she spent much of her time. It would be difficult to leave. Difficult, but possible. Hope rolled over onto her back and stared up at the eggshell ceiling, catching a glimpse of a figure in the doorway, it made her smile.

"Before you ask..." she began, "Yes, I'm feeling alright, and no, I'm not changing my mind." She then sat up enough to lean her back against the excellently crafted wooden bedframe and locked eyes with her intruder. Her father, Niklaus Mikaelson, or as most supernatural creatures of the world would know and fear him, Klaus.

Her father pursed his lips into a thin line as he stepped into the room, his eyes casting glances here and there, refusing to meet her eyes. He stopped when he approached her small, yet adequate vanity. A small smile touched his lips as he reached forward and picked up a hand-carved chess piece, the one Hope had been given while an infant. It was a Knight, and she distinctly remembered holding it as she slept, not once parting ways with it, believing it would protect her against the evils of the world. Little did she know, at the time, that it was her father who carved the Knight for her. She was the princess in his story and he was the King protecting their castle.

"You're certain you cannot be persuaded?" he asked her in an unusually soft tone. It made her feel guilty like she was committing some crime for leaving New Orleans for her own venture. Almost selfish

Puffing out a soft sigh, she pulled her legs into herself and watched him for a long moment "I know you're worried, but this is something I have to do. You know where I'll be and if I need you or you all need me I'm a phone call away."
Klaus looked at her fixedly "Why so far? Why California? That isn't two or three miles down the road, it's states away. There aren't even wolves in California, you're aware of this, aren't you? And if you're in trouble I can't be there to help...to do anything at all" Hope could tell his temper was starting to rise from his own troubled thoughts and premonitions of what might come for them next. It wasn't easy being a Mikaelson, always expecting a new enemy to show up on their doorstep and destroy their family, but Hope wouldn't trade it for all the world.

"I know, dad, I know. It's miles and miles away and if something happens we won't be five feet from each other to know the other is okay. I know this sounds crazy and reckless, but maybe I need crazy and reckless right now. I need to be more than I've been, and I've told you the reason I've chosen Beacon Hills..."

He rolled his eyes then and very sarcastically rebutted "Ah, yes, it calls to you. There's something in Beacon Hills that sets your soul on fire for some dangerous, idiotic path to destruction."

"Your words, not mine" Hope countered before running her fingers through her long dark hair as she touched her hand over her heart. She couldn't expect him to understand, so she never tried to thoroughly explain it to him. She didn't know if even she herself understood it. For months now, there had been this strain in her chest. This longing for something missing, something she needed desperately. It started out soft and hardly noticeable but over the weeks the desire...the passion for whatever is in Beacon Hills grew to the point it felt like trying to breathe underwater. Her instincts told her where to go and for now, she had no reason not to trust them. "It won't last forever, but I need you to...let go," she said in a slow voice, tone mild as she looked up to meet his eyes, "I need you to let go of me and just trust that I'll be alright."

"I can't just let go, Hope. You of all should know that..."

She stood from her bed, feeling as though a ponderous chain of guilt was weighing her down. She crossed the room and let herself be enveloped in his arms, forehead pressed against his shoulder. His support was what she needed the most. It was tender moments like these, however, that she knew would be the hardest to walk away from, but she had to do this. Not for anyone else but herself.

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Dinner was a quiet event. Hope wasn't certain if they simply had nothing to say or if they were too discouraged to speak their minds. Spearing a green bean with her fork she popped it into her mouth and chewed carefully, eyes lingering down at the table. Her father sat at the head of the table, to his left her Uncle Elijah, who also kept silent. Rebekah, Kol, and Freya didn't utter a word. And as for her mother, Hayley, who sat next to Elijah holding his hand under the table, she was the first to speak.

"Are you excited for tomorrow morning then?" she asked.

Hope was thankful for the break in silence, but still, she pursed her lips and nodded as she answered "I get the impression I shouldn't be excited. I get it, I do, but I would still prefer anything except the silent treatment."

Her Aunt Rebekah offered a smile "We're not ignoring you, love. Truth be told we're just waiting for the argument to ensue."

"There shouldn't have to be an argument," Hope interjected quickly before her father had time to say anything first, "I'm twenty-two years old. If I had lived in your time, I'd have already been gone away with a husband and had three kids by now. I don't need to defend my reasoning for leaving. Sure, If I had joined up in some magic mafia I'd let you talk me out of it, but this is my own personal
vendetta. How many times have you left to find yourself, Rebekah?” she quickly answered for her
"Plenty of times, but the thing is you always come back, just like everyone in this family does. Now
it's my turn."

Kol, deciding not to get into the midst of the conversation, sat back in his chair to listen. Hope didn’t
blame him if she could do the same she would. Hope watched her mother for some sign of approval,
anything at all that made her decision seem more plausible to everyone else at the table. Most
importantly she sought the approval of her father.

"It isn't about age, Hope," Elijah began speaking in his mild tone, "It's about the experience. I will
not stand in the way of your crusade, but I do expect you to mindful of what it is you intend to do.
You are powerful, yes, and capable, that much is certainly true. However, some situations that arise
require a higher level of expertise,” he cleared his throat as he dabbed the corners of his mouth with a
handkerchief, narrowing his eyes as he fixed a gaze on her, "If someone were to suspect who and
what you are, and be knowledgeable of your weaknesses, what will you do? Will you run or fight?
How will you evade enemies, Hope? That is our concern and if you can prove to us that you can
manage yourself on your own then,” he cast a glance towards Klaus, "I think we will have more
peace of mind."

Hope raised an eyebrow "You want me to prove to you that I can take care of myself?” she asked.
She had to admit, she was a little offended. These past years that she trained her intellect with Elijah,
her strategy with her father, her magic with her Aunt Freya...had they meant nothing? Had she not
already proven herself over the years of constant training? "What have I been doing all this time
then?” she asked "Learning Latin and fighting strategies and spells for what reason? To be told I'm
still not capable of holding my own?"

"Hope-" Freya started but was immediately cut off.

"No," Hope stated sharply, "I'm aware that I don't know everything there is to know, but I do know
enough to keep myself safe and out of harm's way. I know when to run and I know when to stand
my ground. I know what spells will harm and not kill and vice versa. If I must take a life then I know
that I can, and only if it's my only other option. I'm not a child. I'm a hybrid and a Mikaelson. A
combination that leads proof enough I have the upper hand."

"Show us then!" Klaus suddenly demanded in an outrage "Show us the strength you claim to
possess that can ward off all of our enemies!"

It happened all so fast. One moment father and daughter glared at each other from across the table,
and then the next all the glinting knives that had been laid resting on the table were raised into the air.
Hope didn't move, she didn't fidget. She concentrated, yes, but it wasn't nearly impossible for her to
control the knives that were suddenly sent soaring into the wall behind Kol above the fireplace
mantle. She was silent as she let the surprise of her actions wear away.

"And if that doesn't work," Hope started, "I'll explode their heart in their chest. I'll boil their blood in
their veins. I will render them helpless."

"Oh, bloody let her do it," Kol said then, breaking from his own silence, "She'd kick my arse if I
tangled with her, let alone some newbie vampire still growing into his fangs. Or some egotistical
hunter who seems to think because he studied Vulgar Latin in a college classroom that he's equipped
to handle any creature they read about in a fairytale," he said, taking a sip of his blood laced wine
and winked at Hope from across the table, "I'd bet my bottom dollar on you, love."

The table was rendered silent again from the outburst of opinion, causing Hope to smile. She
remained in her stiff, unwavering position, both mentally and physically. After all, it was still her
father she needed to convince, and by some miracle, it seemed she had. He merely nodded, taking a small bite of rare steak as he conceded. It didn't occur to Hope until after she excused herself from the dinner table that she'd just won a battle against her whole family. It was a liberating sensation that filled her with glee. As she closed her door quietly behind her she leaned her back against the support and smiled. She didn't just hope or think she could do this on her own, she knew she could.

Alright, so this is the first chapter of *The Mating Call*, and I have been tweaking far too much to make it easy to read.

I'm truly hoping you enjoyed this first chapter! Hope Mikaelson is so desperate to find what she feels is missing and she just might find it in Beacon Hills...

Let me know if you enjoyed this first chapter, and I will be posting more in a short time!
"Never anything so intense..."

It was nearly midnight when Hope sat down on the edge of her bed, looking around her now empty room in brief astonishment. Most of her belongings were packed away in the cardboard moving boxes, especially including the leather-bound grimoires she kept tucked away under a few loose floorboards in her closet. These books had belonged to her Grandmother Esther, her Great Aunt Dahlia, and even a few that once belonged to Camille – one of her father's past loves who had requested Hope receive all her supernatural inventory before she tragically died.

Leaning back on her mattress she grazed her nimble fingers over the violet comforter, she'd pack that away into a box tomorrow morning. A sudden swarm of butterflies battled inside her stomach as she imagined how tomorrow would turn out. She'd be leaving in only a few short hours for an early start. Would there be an argument before she leaves, leaving her feeling as though she wouldn't be welcomed back home? Maybe they'd make her feel guilty enough that she'd decide to call the whole trip off. Despite her better judgment, she allowed the disturbing thoughts ease her into a troubled sleep.

Thump thump. Thump thump. Hope couldn't tell if it was her own heart beating erratically out of control or multiple heartbeats surrounding her in her dark, confined space. She twisted in bed, whipping her head to the side frantically in her sleep. A hand, no hands, touched her. First her shoulders, and then they glided down her waist, groping her body with an intense strength and passion. Almost as though it wasn't just her body the hands wanted to get ahold of, but her very soul. She began breathing heavier, almost panting as her body writhed under the pretense of the touch, as though it were happening. A dewy sweat sprouted over her hot to the touch skin. In an instant the hands turned to claws that dug deeply into her chest, tearing at her flesh, trying claw their way in to her heart. Hope let out a horrified gasp as she sat bolt upright, her hands clutching her chest protectively, making sure everything was still in its place. She'd had dreams like this before, where what she longed for tried to reach her heart, but she'd never dreamt of anything like that before. Never anything so intense.

Feeling hot and sticky, Hope ran a hand through her hair and glanced over at the clock. Almost six. An appropriate time to get up, she thought, primarily because she didn't want to risk entering that dream world again. Pushing back her hair and tying it into a high ponytail, she slipped off the bed and made her way to the bathroom, grabbing a plush towel on the way.

The water cascading down her body, which was tight with tension from the dream, felt more incredible than she would have thought possible. She took care to pamper her skin before stepping out and wrapping the towel around her petite body. The medicine cabinet mirror was too foggy to
see herself until she reached forward and wiped away some of the moisture. She stared at her own dark eyes which were wide with interest, but not the courage she had been hoping for. She wasn't what you'd call naturally intimidating. No, she had a petite manner about her. At first glance anyway. Underneath the towel her body wasn't soft and subjected to bruising, she was toned with muscle that she'd gotten over the many training sessions with her family. Little did the world know, Hope Mikaelson was a fighter.

Getting dressed and packing the rest of the items she planned to take with her to California wasn't an issue, nor was lugging down her boxes into the back of her Black Nissan Rogue Crossover. The difficult part, as ironic and often said as it was, was saying goodbye. Hope knew it was going to be difficult, but she hadn't expected it to be quite so heartbreaking to see the proud, yet worried smile on her mother's face.

"Promise me you'll call as soon as you get there and if you have to stop along the way..." she and her mother embraced warmly, tears threatening to spill when she whispered, "Stay safe" in her ear.

"And you have your stay in order?" Elijah asked.

"Yes," Hope responded, "Everything is set with the realtor. All documents and paperwork are submitted and approved. All that's left is to move in" she hugged her uncle "And I know if I have questions you'll always answer my call."

"Always," Elijah said softly as he squeezed her back, a reassuring sign to her. Not that she'd mention it, but Elijah had always been her favorite uncle, and it was especially hard pulling away from him.

When all the goodbyes had been said Hope sat in the driver's seat of her car, her father holding onto the window frame as he spoke.

"If you, for any reason at all, need us we will be there so quickly you'll have whiplash for days"

Hope smiled, leave it to her dad to crack a joke of all times, but it pleased her. She knew he'd be alright here so long as their family supported each other. "I won't be gone forever, I'll be back before you know it" she smiled "With hopefully more interesting stories to tell than I can count" she grinned.

Klaus smiled crookedly and nodded slowly, chewing on his lower lip "I know, and we will be here waiting for you. Family-"

"Always and forever" she finished with a smile "Bye dad...I love you." He knew this, but she knew it was important, especially for him to hear it coming from her.

Klaus took her hand in his, letting her feel the strength of her protector "I love you, too, sweetheart" he leaned forward and kissed her forehead "Be careful."

With a nod, she smiled and put the car into gear. If she didn't press on the gas now she never would, so she eased up on the break as he stepped back and started down the street. Making her way through the traffic and onto the interstate ramp. She rolled down her window and let the wind whip her hair around, taking in the last whiff of the distinct New Orleans air. Her eyes set dead ahead, allowing her instincts to lead her towards whatever it was that called to her in Beacon Hills.
"His tattooed covered knuckles..."

The view ahead was a seemingly endless stretch of red dirt road, repeating itself in the view of the rearview mirror. Nothing moved in Hope's line of vision aside from the cloud of dust stirred up by her tires and the heat that seemed to escape in waves from the pores of the desert surface. It was 98 degrees in Texas today, the temperature not much different from the Louisiana heat. However, this heat felt pleasant to the skin. It wasn't muggy and suffocating like the boggy weather of New Orleans. Hope had to admit, she preferred the dry heat over the humid heat.

Hope had strayed from the interstate some ways back. She had grown bored of the constant view of cramped traffic and the annoying idiocy of incompetent drivers. Some might mistake her annoyance for a hatred towards humankind, but that wasn't necessarily the case. It wasn't that she didn't like people, she did. She just didn't like stupid people.

She had left Grapevine, Texas not long ago and it hadn't occurred to her, at the time, that she and her car were running on mere fumes. She quickly thought back to the last time she had eaten and made a face, realizing it had been 6:30 that morning. It was no wonder her stomach was growling for her attention. Glancing down at the gas gage she made another sour face before pulling off to the side of the road. She had been needing to stretch her legs anyway.

As she stepped out she let out a soft sigh of relief when her long legs were able to release from their cramped position. Driving for eight hours certainly had its effect. She removed her phone from the back of her rather revealing jean shorts and checked for any notifications. After replying to the few she had she opened a map app and searched for the nearest rest spot that didn't involve her having to drive all the way back to Grapevine. Luckily enough there was a little diner with a few pumps a couple of miles down the road from where she was stopped. It would be the perfect place to reevaluate and freshen up.

Quickly, she examined her car, making sure there weren't any scratches from flinging pebbles on the road. The black exterior didn't appear to have any damage, aside from a light dusting of red that she would need to be cleaned off later. Pleased, she slipped back into the driver's seat and adjusted her black t-shirt, so her skin didn't touch the already scorched interior. She turned on the air full blast and continued her drive forward.

Not long later Hope could make out a little building in the distant dusty horizon. As the image came into a clearer focus she was relieved to see there were a couple of cars including a green pickup parked in the lot in front. Well, at least she wouldn't be entering some completely desolate place
where horror movies take place.

She pulled up at the first pump she saw and stepped out, boots scuffing the ground as she checked for a credit card slot. There was none. Hope glanced up at the pump number before walking towards the diner. She had a sophisticated confident walk. Confident, not cocky.

The inside diner was exactly how she assumed it would be. The scent of fresh coffee on the burner and fried eggs wafted her direction, making her mouth water. Hope put on a pleasant smile and walked towards the front counter where a plump woman with short red hair was wiping down the surface after what looked to be an orange juice spill. She looked up and grinned brightly.

"What can I do for ya, hun?" she asked in a thick Texan accent.

Smiling she responded, "I'd like to put a few on pump three," she said, using her own Louisiana accent. Hope was particularly talented with different accents for whatever occasion she needed. Naturally, she held her mother's northern accent, accompanied by the occasional London and Louisiana twang she'd picked up from her surroundings and the rest of her family. The stretch of masks she could wear conveniently helped her to fit into most places she visited.

"Alrighty, and what about anythin' to eat and drink ya, darlin'?" she asked as she took out a pen from behind her ear and withdrew a small notepad from her front apron pouch.

Hope slipped a twenty from her wallet and handed it to the woman before looking at the menu, which was taped to the counter itself. "How about the special and a coffee?" she asked.

"Comin' right up. You go ahead and get yourself some gas and by the time you get back, it'll be ready for ya" the friendly woman answered.

With a nod and smile Hope went back out into the scorching heat to fill her tank up. It didn't take long to finish, she even took time to sponge off some of the red on her car, and went back inside. Her baked skin greeting the cool air with relieved goosebumps. There, on the front counter was the meal she ordered, and it took a lot of will to pass it by without taking a bite to wash up in the bathroom first. Hope was impressed by the cleanliness quality of service of the place, despite being so far out of reach from the closest city.

When she sat down to her meal she could practically hear her stomach thanking her for each bite that slid down her throat. As she ate, she suddenly became aware of the chatter amongst a group of people in a far-off corner of the cramped diner. Regulars, she thought to herself as she reached for the white ceramic mug of dark coffee. She raised it to her lips when she froze immediately. A very familiar scent made her heart skip a beat. Looking down at the murky liquid she closed her eyes and breathed in the steam, which burned her nose and made her eyes water. Her suspicion had been correct. This coffee was laced with vervain.

Carefully she set the mug back down on the counter just as the woman who served her was passing "Somethin' wrong hun?" she asked, "Coffee ain't burnt is it?"

"No," Hope covered immediately, "It's all great, thank you." Her eyes didn't hold the same warmth as her words tried to convey. The people in this diner served vervain in their coffee. This bit of information lead Hope to believe they must know about vampires, and thus this was not the place she should be in. She noticed the diner suddenly grew quiet and her eyes flitted across the room to see the group in the corner had stopped talking. They were watching her. A couple of them smirked while others held hard gazes. In particular, one large biker looking man with a shaved head cracked his tattooed covered knuckles in obviously threatening manner.
This was what her family had warned her about, what she had tried so very hard to prove she could handle on her own. She could do this, she could take care of herself. This would be her first test. First, search for all the exits in case anything got out of hand. There was the front entrance, the rather small window in the women's restroom, and she was certain there would be a back exit as well for the employees. Now it was time to decide her course of action. Stay here and finish her meal, or pay the bill and split.

The logical portion of her brain screamed for her to ask for the check and leave, you couldn't kill what you couldn't catch. But the stubborn, stupid side of her brain - which she was almost certain she'd gotten from her father - told her to sit where she was and finish her meal. To her own partial dismay, the logical side won over.

"Can I actually have a box to go. I should be getting on my way..." Hope just had to act naturally until she could get out to her car.

The woman looked back at her, a glint of something nasty in her eyes, but she quickly covered it up with a smile "Of course," she said, sliding a Styrofoam box her way taking the ten-dollar bill from Hope's hand and giving back the change, "You take care now" she said, an almost wicked essence hidden behind her friendly tone. There was something unsettling about the way she looked at her. Perhaps it was nothing, but it still made the hair on the back of her neck stand on end.

"Thanks..." Hope responded slowly, casting one last glance at the table of gawkers, her heart missing a beat before she could tear her eyes away and walked outside. She embraced the heat because for now, it meant she was safe. She didn't stop to ponder any unanswered questions as she hopped into her crossover and started the engine. Panic washing over her for a moment when the engine only sputtered and then roared to life. Hope puffed out a shaky breath and shook her head, adrenaline still pumping through her veins as she pulled onto the road again, leaving the shady diner behind. She put as much distance between them and herself as she could before she was able to relax a bit more in her seat.

Hope drove for another twelve very long, very tedious hours. Stopping for gas only once in that time, and not daring to venture inside anywhere. By midnight she could hardly keep her eyes open and knew the smartest thing to do was find the nearest motel. She was plenty far enough away from that diner and its people to feel safe pulling into a Super 8 parking lot.

Checking in wasn't an issue and soon Hope was in a room on the first floor, keeping an escape route hidden in a back crevice of her mind. After a much-needed shower, she leaned back on the bed and set an alarm on her phone. Tomorrow was another day and she only had seventeen more hours of driving left, then she'd be in Beacon Hills where, when she decided to go back home, she'd purchase a plane ticket for her travels instead. She'd had enough exploring and adventure for one night.

Getting into a comfortable position Hope quickly drifted off to sleep. Her body ached from her time sitting in the car, and her thoughts raced back and forth about how today's events could have ended differently. She didn't want to think of other possible endings where more than likely she had a stake driven through her heart. Tomorrow would be better. It had to be.
"A challenge she hadn't meant to offer..."

Hope couldn't understand why she still felt so horribly tired when she woke again, but rolling onto her side to look at the clock she realized it was three in the morning. Why had she only slept for three hours? A sudden thumping sound caught her attention and she sat up in slow confusion. The thump came again and again. It seemed to be coming from outside.

Quickly adjusting her black cami strap to fit back on her shoulder Hope slung her bare legs over the side of the bed and stood to her feet. She walked forward and pulled back the curtain to her room open just enough to peer out into the night. Her heart dropped. Outside, piled in the back of a grimy green pickup truck, were the people she'd encountered in the diner miles back. No, that couldn't be possible. How was it they just happened to be here? Unless...they had been following her. A sweat broke out over her brow as she watched them. There were five, three guys and two girls. All were built tall and held a muscular appearance, they appeared capable. They were all laughing as if they were about to play some game. Hope had a horrible inkling that she knew what the game was, and she was the pawn.

The man she had seen before, with the tattooed knuckles suddenly looked in her direction and she quickly pulled the curtains shut. "Sh**" she muttered. She ran a frantic shaky hand through her hair as she tried to think of what to do. Casting a glance over at her phone sitting on the side table she questioned if she should call someone. Her dad, Elijah. Anyone that might be able to talk her through this. She quickly shook her head, dispelling the idea immediately. This is your turn, remember? "Yeah, my turn to get killed..." she spoke under her breath. There was going to be an ending to this and it was up to her if she'd end up on top. She made her decision in silence as she pulled on a pair of jeans and stuffed her feet into her combat boots. She slipped on her black leather jacket and started to search through her items she'd decided to take into the motel with her. It was lucky she had, she thought as she slid a glinting silver dagger into the side of her boot. If they wanted a fight, they'd get one. She was a Mikaelson and they would soon learn not to toy with the original bloodline.

Hope inched herself closer to the window again and gazed out into the dark, frowning when she saw the truck had disappeared. "Where did you go?" she whispered to herself. A glitter of something shiny heading straight for her caused her to immediately dive to her knees. The window above shattered and glass was flung in every direction. Hope looked to her right to see an arrow lying there on the ruddy carpet. "What the he**...." Another arrow went soaring into the room again, this time sinking deeply into the wall. Either these people were incredibly dense or had nothing to lose.
It was time to decide, and the decision was to leave her belongings in the room behind and get out the door. She wouldn't be able to fight back if she couldn't see them in the first place. Crawling towards the door she reached up for the handle and turned the knob, hiding behind the door. Just as she thought. One of the men from outside started to walk in, but before he could get himself completely in the room she slammed herself up against the door, crushing his arm between the jam. If the shattering glass hadn't woken up the owner, then his scream would. Broken arm she'd guess. She opened the door again, the man screaming again from the horrible pain she presumed he was in. There was no time to make another decision, instincts took her body over and she sent a hard kick to the abdomen of a woman with a blonde pixie cut and way too much eyeliner. The woman crashed into the wall opposite them, hitting her head hard against a glass picture frame, leaving a stain of crimson behind. Hope didn't stop to check her pulse and instead took off down the narrow hall. Two down, three more dangers to go. Fantastic.

It was almost like the world suddenly slowed down, like the earth all at once stopped in its rotation and Hope could think a million miles per hour. Her own heartbeat pounding against her eardrums in a slow rhythmic pattern. She came to a halt in the hall, feeling a prickle on her skin that forced her to turn around, eyes catching sight of a silver tipped arrow gliding smoothly through the air towards her. In the next moment, she reached a hand up and grabbed hold of the sleek black body of the arrow just inches before it could cause any damage to her face.

Just as quickly as time seemed to slow it started up again and she watched the other woman, who was much different from her petite partner, come running towards her. She had dark hair that had grown down to her tailbone and fierce green eyes that were just as sharp as the pointed arrows she used as weapons. Before Hope even realized she'd released another arrow there was a horrible pain in her right thigh. A gasp of surprised pain forced its way up her throat and she looked down, the arrow was stuck deep in her thigh. Hope looked up again, a sudden rush of angered adrenaline filling her to the brim. Her eyes turned a haunting amber yellow with dark veins crawling down her cheeks. Canines protruded from her gums and she bared her fangs aggressively at the woman still stalking towards her. In a quick action, Hope snapped the arrow off, she would worry about taking out the head later.

Hope planted her feet and extended a hand towards the woman, uttering the words "Per se qui e fracta toi, per se qui e total toi." The woman let out a sudden scream of agony, dropping the bow as the bones in her hands suddenly began to move, dislocating the joints and rendering her hands useless. A ring of fire surrounded the woman, an after effect to the maiming curse Hope had used. She looked up, her eyes returning to their usual shade of brown, locking onto the two men standing at the other end of the hall. The man with the tattooed knuckles didn't seem to be frightened like the other scrawny one. He seemed surprised.

Taking a step back from the scene, Hope knew if she was going to make her escape it would have to be now. Perhaps they had a better understanding of what she was capable of and that she wasn't to be trifled with. She took off, rushing to her car and slipped in, peeling out of the parking lot so forcefully it burned a rubber mark into the pavement. She didn't dare look back to see if they'd started following her yet. Maybe they had learned their lesson, or maybe they had just accepted a challenge she hadn't meant to offer.

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The remaining driving time seemed to pass by quicker than Hope thought it would. Then again, she hadn't taken a break aside from an occasional stop for gas, and she may have been going a bit over the speed limit. She hadn't even pulled over to treat her wounded thigh which still contained the arrowhead from her attacker.
It was nightfall again when she passed the sign that read **Welcome to Beacon Hills pop. 30,000** and despite being dangerously tired she wanted to shout out in victory. She'd made it and at this point, that was all that mattered. It was now time to find her temporary residence, so she could catch up on some very much needed sleep. Putting her GPS on she followed it's set instructions, letting herself take in the town as she went. It was nicer than she expected it to be. She knew how often photos could stretch the truth, but it wasn't lower than her higher expectations. She could see herself settling into her rather easily.

Hope passed by Beacon Hills high, watching as a team of lacrosse players played underneath bright field lights. On a Friday night? Football must not be a big deal here. She didn't mind, it wasn't like she was going to be attending the high school.

Not long later did her GPS state her destination was located on her left. She pulled into the smooth driveway of a decently sized two story house with white paneling and a chimney that reached up towards the sky. The porch was certainly big enough for her to relax outside if she chose to do so. It had a comfortable quality about it that resembled the rest of the neighborhood. It felt safe.

Walking past the **SOLD** sign in the yard, she glanced over at the next-door neighbor's house. The mailbox read Stilinski in white lettering. It wasn't the strangest name she'd ever come across before. She took out the house key from her pocket and made herself very busy in the first few minutes of entering. She wasn't concerned about unpacking until the morning, but what did come first, however, was making sure the house safe for her to live in. She stood where she felt was near the center of the home – between the kitchen and living room – and spoke a boundary spell, setting her own twist upon it. "**Otum adnarvet esnavit atim.**" Now, only those who did not wish her harm could enter the house unless invited in by herself. If the bandits, or whoever they were, she'd just escaped from decided to make an appearance she would at the very least have the upper hand in a house where they couldn't set foot through the threshold.

Feeling pleased with herself, Hope carried in the remainder of her belongings and set them down on the hardwood of the living room floor. She'd arranged for it to be fully furnished, for the ease of it, and now she was especially happy she'd spent the extra money. It wasn't as though they didn't have the money to spare, after all.

The next task to be handled was that pesky arrowhead in her thigh. Hope looked down at the dried blood and bit down on her lower lip. She had of course already healed around the arrow, and so now taking it out was going to be twice as painful. She shook her head as the nerves started to cloud her thoughts. Normally if she were hurt Freya or Elijah would tend her wound.

"Stop being a coward," she scolded herself in a surprisingly strict tone. She then searched through her boxes until she pulled out a bottle of scotch she'd snatched from her father's cabinet a long while back. She figured she may as well take it along rather than get in trouble with him. She'd just continue to let him think Kol had swiped it.

Hope first took a very long drink of the scotch, not so much to take the pain away, but more to get herself to take the fragment out without further hesitation. Letting it settle for a moment she pressed her fingers against her thigh and then dug in and grabbed ahold of the arrow by its head and started to pull it out at a sideways angle, gritting her teeth as her tissue began to tear all over again. By the time the piece had fallen and clattered on the ground her hand was stained with red. She waited for herself to heal properly before cleaning up after herself, trying to scrub away any remaining memory of the incident.

Too tired to fix her bed upstairs, from the pain and alcohol intake, she grabbed a throw blanket from one of the boxes and kicked her shoes off as she sunk into the couch. It seemed almost immediately
after her head was laid on the armrest she was pulled into a very deep sleep. Entering a dream world that she would likely forget once she woke, but oh, what a dream it was.
"Welp, here are your muffins..."

Slight and relatively insignificant glimpses of unconnected scenes were the only memories of the dream Hope could remember from the night before. Darkness. Flashes of red. Fingertips against her body. If she were to ever confide in anyone about her dreams they'd simply denounce it as a sex dream and nothing more. Something everyone had at some point in their life when the desire was strong enough. Perhaps she could pass it off as that for a while, but deep down she knew there was so much more to it. Hope shook her head of the obscure thoughts and tried to focus on the task set in front of her today.

Sitting up from her position on the couch she stretched her arms up, sighing in content as her back popped and cracked, relieving the tension on her shoulders. For the first time in days, she felt fully rested and ready for the day ahead. She'd unpack, go shopping... then her mind drifted to the day before and a sinking feeling in her gut forced her eyes to suddenly flash towards the curtain covered window, a prickle of uncertain fear ran over her skin leaving gooseflesh behind. Had they followed her to Beacon Hills? She had to know.

She stood and walked towards the window, half expecting a grimy green pickup truck to be sitting out on the curb, waiting for her to venture outside. She closed her eyes, so she couldn't see her hand reaching forward. And like ripping a band-aid off, Hope quickly pulled the curtain aside. She was greeted with a warm sunlight and no sign of the truck. She smiled, happy to see they hadn't followed her. It was a pleasing, prideful moment.

Hope disappeared up the stairs and began scoping out the different areas of the house, her house, images of how she might put the rooms to use. The process took up much of her thought and she was glad. After freshening up in the master bathroom, which was impressive for the house size, she pulled her hair up into a tight ponytail and slipped on a simple white t-shirt. She didn't care much that the outline of her bra could be seen through the shirt, but she did care that her favorite jeans now had a gaping hole and were covered in dried blood. "Perfect" she muttered, tossing it into the wastebasket next to the sink.

In the first hour of work, Hope had accomplished quite a bit. She'd unpacked and placed everything in their rightful place, dusted the shelves, swept the carpets, and even mopped the kitchen floor. By the time noon rolled around her stomach reminded her she hadn't eaten breakfast. So, settling down in the kitchen, which now smelt of lemon-scented cleaner, she made herself a mug of coffee and broke out a bag of pretzel crackers to tide her hunger over until she could go to the grocery store.
The coffee was good and so were the crackers, but her hunger wasn't subsiding. Then she realized this was a different hunger and wouldn't be satisfied by food. Hope wasn't a complete fool. She had brought enough blood bags to keep herself fed for a few weeks, but what about when they were gone? A trip to the hospital by herself to steal another supply was a bit intimidating.

Setting her mug down she headed in the direction of a small wooden door in the kitchen, one that leads down to a cellar of sorts. She assumed at one point it might have been a storage place for wine, but when she entered earlier that morning there was nothing but cobwebs and dust bunnies residing inside. She reached above and pulled on a silver chain that turned on a single light at the bottom of the stairs, leaving everything behind that one light concealed in thick darkness. Hope descended the creaky wooden stairsteps and turned the corner where a small white cooler sat. Inside held twenty full bags of O Positive blood. That number might be worrisome to some vampires, but Hope was different. Since she was only a quarter vampire – a quarter werewolf and the remaining witch – she had a much easier time getting along without blood and could easily get away with one bag a week so long as she held a healthy human diet.

She took a bag in her hands and spun off the cap, sipping the tangy liquid inside. Her eyes darkened, her body reacting to the pleasure the blood brought her. Once the bags content had been drained dry she tossed it aside into a bin she'd dispose of later. When she closed the lid of the cooler she heard a distant ding dong. It seemed she had a visitor.

As she climbed the stairs her stomach gawed at her, but not due to hunger. Rather, she was terrified to open the door and come face to face with the owner of the green truck. It took her a few deep breaths to calm her heart rate enough to continue up the staircase, close and lock the door to the cellar, and then proceed to walk to the front door. To her own surprise she didn't feel her instincts screaming for her to turn and run, so she swung it open to greet her visitor.

It was a boy. Tall and lanky, dark hair that seemed to be growing in thick after a buzz cut, and probably the friendliest smile she'd ever come across. Although he was a handsome boy, the way he held himself suggested to her he was a bit awkward. He held a basket in his hands and from what Hope could tell there were muffins inside. Store bought, but a nice gesture all the same.

"Hello" Hope answered, using her usual northeastern accent rather than her Louisiana drawl. She couldn't help but pay attention to the fact that is heart suddenly jumped two beats as if he were running a triathlon.

The boy put a hand on the door frame and leaned, trying for an attractive pose, but in the process nearly dropping the basket in his hands. He had to scramble to keep them from smashing into the washed wood of the porch. "Hi," was all he managed to say at first, then saw Hope's eyes glance down at the basket and quickly tried to recover himself, "Oh, uh, yeah these are for you. You know, kind of a welcome to the neighborhood...gesture..."

Hope smiled, her suspicion had been right, awkward. "Thank you, I really appreciate it. I'm Hope," she paused and quickly thought back to the name she'd put on the paperwork, "Montgomery."

"Stiles Stilinski," he responded as he passed her the basket of mini muffins, "So uhm...welcome. To the neighborhood, I mean. I live right next door..." he trailed off "I'm sorry, are your parents home? My dad is kind of the sheriff and he likes to meet new neighbors...to ya know, just get to know."

Hope raised a groomed brow and tilted her head to the side studying him for a moment "Get to know?" she asked biting her lip "To make sure we aren't drug dealers?"

Stiles' eyes widened "No, God, no" he quickly interjected, "Wow, no I didn't mean that."
She laughed and nodded "I actually live alone, but I promise to behave."

A look of surprise crossed his features "You live alone? Wait, how old are you?"

"Twenty-two..." Hope smiled "I know, people say I look way too young for my age."

"Uh yeah, you kind of do," he paused, "Not that that's a bad thing" he added quickly.

She had to admit, he was entertaining to talk to, maybe having him as a next-door neighbor wouldn't be a dreadful thing.

"Welp, here are your...muffins" she watched his eyes glance down and quickly back up to her eyes as if he didn't dare look down again. She was suddenly very aware that her bra could be seen through her t-shirt. "If you need anything just call out for Stiles and I'll be right over. Not that I'll be waiting for you to call my name or anything..." he laughed awkwardly "Because that would be weird..." His expression could be easily read as Dear God, shut me up now.

"Right, well thank you, Stiles. I do have a question, actually. Can you tell me the nearest carwash around here?" she asked, nodding towards her black crossover, well it was normally black. Since she hadn't stopped to wash anything off on the way from the motel it was covered with a thick layer of dirt and grime.

"Yeah! That I can definitely help with. There's one a few blocks from here called Suds" he said, giving her the directions. He glanced towards her car again "So did you drive a long way to get here then?" he asked.

Hope nodded "New Orleans," she smiled, "The desert dust wasn't too friendly."

"New Orleans, like Mardi Gras?" he asked, "Now that sounds like a freaking awesome party."

"Oh, it is. You should make the trip sometime. It's well worth it."

They conversed a moment longer before he had to leave. She watched him hop into a pale blue, beat up Jeep. He waved at her as he left, like a little kid waving at his friend from across the park, and disappeared down the street. At least this place was friendly. Then again, the day was still young.

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It didn't take long for Hope to find the Suds carwash Stiles informed her about. There was a self-wash service and an automatic available. She preferred the self-wash, considering she could make sure it came to her expectation. She pulled into the carport and parked, stepping out to search for the cleaning instruments. Unfortunately, she found much more than a hose.

"I'd dust it off first if I were you" a deep voice spoke, catching her off guard.

Hope's throat clenched, and her voice was lost in some abyss she couldn't seem to reach. It was the man with the tattooed knuckles. A long jagged scar, which she hadn't noticed until now, ran down from his brow to beneath the collar of his jacket. Like a single claw mark. He was younger than she expected, in his early thirties maybe, but he seemed aged by his chosen lifestyle.

"What?" she gasped softly, voice distant as she felt like her heart might explode from her ribcage. Could he hear it?

"Your car," he said, picking up a soft feathered brush and held it out to her, "If I were you I'd dust it off before using the hose." His heated eyes were like shocks of blue lightning.
Hope glanced down at the brush, finally getting a good look at the tattoos etched across his knuckles. On each knuckle, excluding his thumbs, spelled out the word **CHASSEUR**. Chasseur? It was written in another language, and her first instinct was that it said chaser. Then she thought better. Chasseur in French could be translated to...hunter.

"You seem surprised to see me, Hope."

Hope stiffened at the sound of her name on his lips. How did he-

"How did I know?" he finished her own thought. He chuckled then and smirked as he reached into his back pocket and removed a sleek black phone, holding it up for her to see. It was her phone, the one she'd left back at the motel. He unlocked the phone with ease "You really should be careful where you leave your personal belongings. Some things are hard to replace..." he smirked as he scrolled through her gallery. "It took me a little bit to connect the dots, but when I did," he laughed, "Oh it was a euphoric feeling to know I'd actually come across the daughter of Klaus Mikaelson. The legendary original hybrid."

A chill skimmed down her spine as she listened, trying to keep her breathing even.

"Looking through your texts," he continued, "Here you tell this lad Josh that you'd be traveling to Beacon Hills, California" he laughed shaking his head "Oh, and to answer your friend's question... Yes, it is too soon to call him back" he grinned, a twisted humor in his eyes as he tossed the phone to her, which she caught with ease.

"What do you want from me?" Hope asked then, her voice stronger than she expected "Did you come to get you're a** kicked again or have you come to beg for my forgiveness?"

The man smiled in response "I'm not here to kill you, Hope. Not yet anyway. It isn't every day a hunter like myself runs into someone so...extraordinary."

"Oh, you think I'm extraordinary?" she asked with a raised brow and crossed her arms, cocking a hip to the side. "Then you are already aware of what I'm capable of? Somehow, I doubt that."

"I know you're dangerous, but I also know you're just a scared little girl biting off more than she can chew..." he took a step forward, forcing her to take a step back and press herself up against the car. He inched closer, pressing his hands against the car on either side of her, cutting off a quick escape. "I'll be keeping an eye on you, Hope. I suggest you keep this conversation a secret or I will be forced to pay a visit to that boy next door."

Her heart dropped at the mention of this man paying a sweet person like Stiles a visit. A sudden fiery temper erupted inside of her "If you go anywhere near him or his house or any innocent person in this town I will shove that little pistol you have hidden in your boot so far up your a** you'll be snorting gunpowder." She shoved him then, forcing him back a couple of steps "Now if you don't mind, I'm busy."

The man stepped back, narrowing his eyes "Have a good day, Hope. Looks like it's going to be a sunny one" he said before backing away and then turned, disappearing from her line of sight around the corner. Only when he was gone could she breathe again. What exactly was she up against here? The more she ran over the conversation in her head the more she was starting to think this whole idea was a huge mistake. But things were different now, she had to make sure this man didn't try to hurt anyone because of her. She'd stop him, even kill him if she had to.

After her car had been turned back to its original color, Hope decided she’d go ahead and get her grocery shopping done while it was still light. The last thing she wanted was to be walking to her car
alone at night and have an unwanted appearance from that man. She never did get his name, so, for now, she'd go with Dick. The reasoning was self-explanatory.
Did you really have to call the cops on us...

Hope walked down the frozen food aisle, pushing a squeaky cart as she went and stopped to look over the selection of chicken. Picking one up and setting it in her cart she wondered what her family was doing right now. Probably arguing about some paranoid thought that came to her father's mind. Tonight, before bed she would make it a priority to call them, check in and let them know everything was fine. Sort of.

"Hope!" a familiar voice suddenly called to her. Looking over her shoulder she watched as Stiles Stilinski practically skated a cart towards her, almost running into her in fact.

She nodded, unable to hold back a laugh as she picked up a bag of potatoes from a bin, checking for abnormalities and set it into her cart "Hi Stiles" she glanced into his cart which was filled with Little Debbie's, Doritos, and plenty of Reese Cups.

He smiled happily "So did you find the carwash alright?"

Hope paused, an unpleasant squirming sensation arising in her gut before forcing a smile and nodded "Yeah, it was very helpful. I can actually see my car now." She was surprised to hear him laugh, it wasn't every day she was socially acceptable. In New Orleans, there were tourists who didn't know her and ignored her, and then there were locals who did know her and took every chance they could to ignore her. She wasn't accepted into the supernatural world of cliques. Vampires hated her for being a wolf, wolves hated her for being a vampire, and witches rhymed with bi*ches for a reason. To have someone like her enough to call from the other side of a grocery store was... gratifying.

Hope walked with him up the aisle. She picked up a stock of broccoli and set it in her cart, and Stiles, who had a box of dinosaur shaped chicken nuggets in his hand glanced over and seemed to get the impression he wasn't being a 'responsible shopper' and set it down, picking up a head of lettuce from another chiller with a cheeky smile. Hope smiled shaking her head, she was beginning to like him as the minutes ticked by. And was it just her or did he smell like curly fries?

He then asked, "So what do you think of Beacon Hills so far?"

"Honestly?" she asked "I really like it. Not to say I don't miss home, but I must admit, it's nice to get away from the noise for a while."

"I could see that, but I mean why Beacon Hills? It's not like we have any interesting landmarks or
Hope smiled "Well, what you find interesting might be different from what I find interesting."

"True," he smiled "This place can be pretty great. How long do you plan to stay?"

She answered with a shrug "As of now I'm just going with wherever the wind guides me. Free spirit and all that."

"That's actually pretty cool, and brave."

"Really?" she asked looking over at him.

"Yeah" he smiled, which she returned warmly.

When Hope had gotten the items she needed, she walked with Stiles to the checkout. He offered to help her take her bags to her car and she didn't see a reason to refuse, so together they exited the store and walked through the parking lot. The sun hadn't set yet and she was glad. She knew it was silly, but she wanted to see what the sunset looked like here.

She opened the back hatch and started to load in her groceries when she heard an uncertain "Uhh" from Stiles.

She glanced over at him and saw he had spotted something, something that must have caught him off guard. She followed his gaze and to her worst fear her eyes found a single blood bag that must have been knocked out from the cooler when she was moving in.

Hope closed the hatch "Something wrong?" she asked, endeavoring to make it appear nothing out of the ordinary had happened. That he hadn't seen anything at all. It was a long shot, but worth a try.

Stiles looked over at her with a dropped jaw and searching eyes "Uh...nothing. Nope, there is absolutely nothing wrong at all," he laughed forcefully, "Alright, I'll see you later" he gave a single wave and backed up towards his Jeep, nearly tripping over his own feet as he did. He then turned around and scrambled into the driver's seat, started the engine and tore out of the parking lot.

"Way to blend in Hope. Your neighbor thinks you're a psychopath" she growled in irritation, pulling at the roots of her hair and turned on her heel to get into the driver's seat. It was a good thing the day was drawing near an end because she honestly couldn't see it getting worse. Although, she'd been wrong before.

Hope chewed on her lower lip and took out her phone, scrolled up and found her mother's number. She hesitated for a moment before pressing call. She raised the phone to her ear and an immediate smile touched her lips when she heard her voice.

"Hey mom," she said, tears threatening to touch her eyes, "Just checking in."

She must have sat there for an hour straight catching them up on what she'd experienced so far. Well, almost everything. She decided to leave out the little bit about being hunted down and threatened. No, she'd wait for the holidays to let that spill. For now, it was nice to just hear their voices.

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She felt relaxed going home, happy even. Despite the events of the day she was reminded by her family that no matter what obstacles stood in her path, she had the power to knock them down. It was reassuring to know they still believed in her.
Pulling into her driveway she glanced over at the house next door and noticed Stiles' Jeep parked in front. Maybe she'd go over and try to smooth the events of the night over. Surely, she could come up with some fabricated story that meant she didn't have to lose a friend. She added it to her list of tasks to be dealt with tomorrow.

She opened the garage door and pulled in, no longer trusting her car being outside. She didn't feel like waking up to a nasty note on her windshield and an arrow in her tire. When she entered the house, she closed and locked the door behind her. At least she didn't have to worry about Dick entering her home, so long as the boundary spell was still active.

Just as she was setting her bags on the counter, deciding if she should freeze the chicken she'd let sit in the car for an hour, her acute hearing picked up a stray noise. It wasn't the hum of the fan above or the tick of the wall clock. It was a whisper. Two people whispering, in fact. Her eyes narrowed before closing completely, focusing in on the voices.

"I swear I heard something man, seriously, I think we need to get out of here. We found what we needed, alright. Pictures of the freaky blood pantry and no proof of her having a condition that requires it. Now, please, if you love me as your best friend let's go before she shows up like some horribly scripted horror movie."

The voice belonged to Stiles. Another boy, whose voice she didn't recognize, answered.

"Be quiet," he whispered, "I think she's here..." She now knew they were in the cellar, with the cooler of blood bags. Alright, fine. Game on.

Hope slipped into a hidden from view laundry room to hide and mask her voice, she picked up her phone and dialed the number.

"Sorry Stiles, but you really should have minded your own business. "911 what's your emergency?" a woman on the other line spoke.

"Yes, my name is Hope Montgomery and I live on 128 Woodbine Lane. I'm hearing voices in the basement of my home. I think someone's broken in..."

"Are you able to get to a safe location?"

"Yes, I can."

"We will have a couple of squads over right away, ma'am. Would you like for me to stay on the line with you until they arrive?"

"No thank you. That won't be necessary" she said before hanging up.

Hope waited, peeking through the long length crack of the laundry room door. She watched Stiles and another teenage boy sneak out of the kitchen cellar door and creeping away, obviously trying to make as little noise as possible. When they were out of sight she used her vampire speed to slip through the door silently and into the cellar. She didn't have enough time to find another home for the bags, so instead, she held a hand over the cooler contents and spoke the incantation "Phasmatos radium calaraa, Phasmato..." The bags were suddenly disappeared, and yet they hadn't gone anywhere. The illusion spell conveniently made it appear the cooler was empty.

She crept out from the cellar just in time to hear sirens outside and a curse word slip from Stiles' lips. Hope darted out the back door in a blur, rounding the side of the house and stopped in the concealment of the thick bushes surrounding her property. She searched for Stiles in the front yard, but most importantly his phone which she assumed held the pictures he'd taken in the cellar. She could see it, just there in the back of his pocket while he conversed avidly with who appeared to be
the sheriff. Right, Stiles' father was the sheriff, and she got the impression it wasn't the first time he'd had to come to a call that involved his son. Focusing in on the phone in his pocket she willed for the circuits inside to fry, rendering it useless. Freya had once told her a witch could destroy anything if given the right incentive.

Once she was certain it was the appropriate time, Hope stepped out into the yard and walked towards the cruisers. "I'm Hope Montgomery. I'm the owner of the house..." she said to Sheriff Stilinski, casting a sideways glance at Stiles and his friend, who she overheard was named Scott.

"I am so, so sorry for this," he started, "My son and his friend here seemed to be under the impression that there was something suspicious in your home and they took matters in their own irresponsible hands."

"Something suspicious in my home?" she asked, feigning confusion excellently "What would be in my house that they'd need to break in for?"

"Boys?" Mr. Stilinski asked, "Answer her question."

Stiles quickly took his phone out from his pocket "We have proof, picture proof that you have..." he tried turning on his phone, but the screen remained black, "Just a sec..." he tried the power button, letting out an exasperated sigh when it remained in its dormant state. "Oh, God, why now? Why?"

"Uh, Mr. Stilinski," Scott started, "I know we were wrong in taking matters into our own hands, but if you just check the cellar I think you'll understand why we were suspicious in the first place."

Mr. Stilinski let out a heavy sighed and looked over at Hope which she responded with a nod "If it will make everyone feel better you can look. I have nothing to hide."

The officers, taking her permission, went into the house. Hope, Stiles, and Scott stood outside staring at each other. It was an awkward silence before Stiles said,

"Did you really have to call the cops on us?"

"Did you really have to break into my home?"

Stiles pursed his lips and exchanged a look with Scott, "Touché, Hope, touché."

Mr. Stilinski soon walked out of the house and down the porch steps and looked disappointingly at Stiles "We didn't find anything-"

"What do you mean you didn't find anything?" Stiles asked in shock.

"We didn't find anything," he repeated, giving him a hard look, "I'm very sorry for the inconvenience, Miss Montgomery," he pursed his lips, "Would you like to press charges?"

Hope looked over at Stiles and Scott who now held deer in headlights expressions. She managed a smile "I won't press any charges so long as Stiles here didn't take a mini muffin from the basket he brought over earlier."

"Nope, I didn't take a mini muffin..." he stated, "I took three..."

With a shake of her head she smiled "No, I won't be pressing charges. Imagination can sometimes get out of hand, but I would appreciate it if in the future there weren't any more break-ins to my home."
"Of course," the sheriff said with a smile, "Thank you, and have a good night."

Hope nodded in response, watching everyone start to disperse. She listened to Mr. Stilinski telling his son how lucky he was and how disappointed he was with him. She watched Scott follow behind, and as he passed, a strange scent fanned towards her. It was familiar, yet distinctly different than what she might have compared it to. Hope frowned, watching Scott look over his shoulder. They locked eyes for a long instant. There was something hidden behind them, something peculiar. Whatever it was she had this horribly strange feeling that it was something she'd never encountered before. She was also certain that she would soon find out what it was.
"A configuration of her own imagination..."

The reason behind Hope's mid-morning jog was not to train for an upcoming marathon. It wasn't to improve some time she'd set back in High School. And it wasn't to gain the attention of attractive bachelors in the neighborhood. No, instead she jogged around like a suburban mom with a minivan to appear normal. That's right, normal.

Since the fiasco of the other night, she realized having the police parked in your front yard only a day after moving in wasn't exactly a positive impression on the neighbors. So, here she was, waving at random people as she followed the sidewalk path up and down the streets. She felt positively ridiculous.

Hope adjusted her Bose earbuds and turned the volume up to the random Dubstep song she had playing, picking up the pace. If she was going to do this, she at least wanted to break a sweat. Her usual workouts in New Orleans consisted of running through the bayou, leaping over murky waters and climbing up tall Cyprus trees. The terrain here hadn't quite met her satisfaction.

Her plans for the day? Well, to start, she'd like to smooth things over with Stiles. However, she had a feeling their relationship wouldn't be quite the same as before. Although they'd hardly known each other, she felt a connection with him. He was someone she could talk with, trust even, and that wasn't something that happened very often in the life that she governed.

Hope quickly discarded the negative thoughts from her head and slowed to a walk, seeing her house in the near distance. She hadn't come here to make friends, rendering it pointless to think any further about the situation. So, she pushed all emotions behind her. At least for now, she had no need for them.

While taking a small swig from her sloshing water bottle she stepped inside the air-conditioned foyer. It was like taking a dive into a pool of cool water. Refreshing, but forced an involuntary shudder. A long shower would be perfect, she thought as she rubbed the back of her neck and closed her eyes.

"Remember Hope, it's a new day.” Puffing out a soft sigh, she swiftly climbed the stairs and made a quick job of freshening up. After a warm shower and a fresh change of clothes, she went back down to make herself a quick cup of coffee.

She sat down on a cushioned bench under the kitchens half-curved bay window, then shoved her feet under a pillow and wiggled her toes against the fabric. There was this undeniable feeling that
today would hold a few hiccups while searching for—well, she wasn't entirely certain what she was looking for. If she was looking for anything at all. She didn't know where she'd even begin. As misguided as her decisions have been so far, she still had a deep instinct that this was where she needed to be.

Her attention was suddenly guided away from her rolling train of thought as something unusual caught her line of sight. She'd been staring out the window, not really seeing what was in front of her when a dark figure came into her focus. Her immediate impression told her Dick was out in her backyard, watching her like the creeper he was, but just as quickly as the assumption came it was replaced with something far more bizarre. Whatever it was, it was difficult to make out, but she was almost certain the curious entity was a man. A man whose face was shrouded in darkness, making it impossible to identify who he was. At least, she thought the strange figure was a he. Hope couldn't sense the usual danger that usually made her skin crawl, but there was this strange taste of electricity in the air.

Adjusting her position, Hope started to straighten up from her place on the cushion, sitting on her knees with a hand rested against the fogging glass. There was an undeniable pull like someone had tied a rope around her waist and was physically trying to pull her outside and into the shadowy tree line. Instincts, perhaps. Or was it mere curiosity to know who might want to watch her drink a boring mug of bitter coffee?

She narrowed her eyes then as she finally came to the realization this dark apparition was not a configuration of her own imagination. No, it was very much real, and she would find out who or what this thing was. She got up from her seat and made a speedy dash for the glass glazed door in the dining room that would lead her to the back porch. Hope was almost certain if she were watching this happen on the big screen she'd be throwing popcorn at herself in retaliation for being so undeniably stupid. Still, she stepped out onto the porch, eyes searching the tree line for the figure. To her extreme disappointment, the mysterious creature had vanished.

Scowling, Hope ventured out into the damp yard, feet digging into the earth as she continued to the tree line. She shoved aside a few brambles of vegetation and went on into the graying thicket. "Hello?" she called, voice strong "I don't take kindly to unwanted visitors," she said as she stood in the same spot where it stood. Nothing. Not even footprints to signal someone had been there. Then again, the dirt was so tightly compacted in this area it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find any evidence of prints left behind. Hope scanned the forest in search of a glimpse of movement. The most peculiar thing of all was that she couldn't hear anything aside from the whistle of the wind. No footsteps, no breathing, no scurrying of tiny animals. Interesting, she thought to herself.

Hope returned to the house with a dissatisfied expression. Whatever had been there, and she was sure she hadn't imagined it, was long gone by now and she had no suspicions as to what it might be. Obviously, it wasn't Stiles, he was too clumsy and awkward to make such a quick and noiseless getaway. Maybe it was Stiles' friend, Scott? The one she'd met the other night. It was a theory anyway.

She quickly washed the mud from her feet and slipped on a pair of socks, then shoes. Now it was time to do a little exploring of her own and maybe she'd find something that would lead her closer to what brought her to Beacon Hills in the first place. It was a stretch, but she had to try.

After thoroughly washing her mug, she grabbed her keys off the hook by the garage door and made her way to the car. Her thoughts were still in a flutter of disarray as she backed out onto the street. It was only 9 o'clock and the neighborhood was still gaining its' warmth from the rising sun. Hope turned on the radio, checked her gas gauge, and then freely drove through town letting her senses expand. She opened herself to her surroundings, letting herself become vulnerable to the natural call
of her wolf instincts.

Recalling back to her evenings in the bayou amongst the pack she was born into, the Crescent Moon pack, she was reminded of one evening sitting around the scorching fire that licked the starry canvas above. Mary - who held no relation to Hope, but was close all the same – spent the evening telling stories of days past that conjured fantastic images that Hope held onto through the years. There was one thing that Mary had said that was particularly fixed in her memory. "Closing yourself off from the world and denying natural instinct makes for a blind wolf." Hope had easily convinced herself that every wolf was blind at some point in their life, metaphorically speaking, of course.

Hope was pulled back from her reverie and it suddenly came to her attention that a familiar pale blue Jeep seemed to be following where she went. Arching a groomed eyebrow, she studied the rearview mirror, recognizing Stiles at the steering wheel and Scott in the passenger seat. It was obvious they were following her, their intent probably to find anything else they might be able to hold against her as hard evidence. "Oh, boys. You don't learn easily do you?" she muttered under her breath as she watched the Jeep skit around a corner, attempting to remain unseen.

Despite not being need of any fuel, Hope pulled into a gas station and stepped out of the car. She topped off the tank and slipped back in, taking her phone out from the back of her pocket and pretended to focus on the blank screen. She closed her eyes, picturing vividly what she wanted to happen. She imagined Stiles and Scott, riding in the Jeep, rolling round and round the same neighborhood in search of her car. She imagined them turning corner after corner only to find they were going in a constant, unbreakable loop with no escape. Although it would appear to them every turn leads to a dead end, the reality was they’d drive past the exit over and over and over. They would see only what she wanted them to see. An inescapable maze of eerily quiet streets and carbon copy houses. She then spoke the spell that made her idea a reality.

"Averte oculos tuos a quo exitus. Hunc exitus ab auribos" she finished, snapping her eyes open and smirked slyly. Did she regret reciting a spell that would make those boys waste their entire day circling a neighborhood while questioning their sanity? No, not in the least. Hope pulled out of the gas station feeling at ease as she started to drive down the road, rolling her window down to let the breeze in.

It happened so suddenly. She was hit with such a strong wave of fierce yearning she hadn't been prepared for. Her heart pounded out of control, like the flight of a hummingbird's wings. The sensation nearly ran her car off the road, but before she could cause any real damage she was able to steady herself. When composed, she forced herself to pause and comprehend her situation. Whatever this force of nature was, it called to her, and she was eager to follow.

Left and right. Right and left. It seemed to take ages to finally feel herself going in the right direction. Finally, fed up with the number of U-Turns she had to make, she pulled up behind a set of abandoned apartment buildings. Unfortunately, as she was walking out of the lot she spotted a bold red sign that read NO PARKING ZONE. Hope pursed her lips into a thin line and then glanced around before grabbing hold of the sign and yanked it off the chain link fence. "Oh, would you look at that. It fell off" she then tossed it into a nearby waste bin. Now, it was time to follow her instincts without restriction.

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The journey that started at the abandoned lot soon turned into a trek through the forest. And as she traipsed through the leafy debris she suddenly was very grateful she'd decided to wear her leather fit combat boots, which made it a much easier climb up the occasionally steep slopes.

The closer she got, the more her mind began to wonder. What exactly waited for her at the end of
this figurative yellow brick road? There was always a possibility that all of this was some elaborate setup created by an enemy of the Mikaelson's. Now was the time to prepare for what was to come. A string of spells, curses, and hexes came to mind, all of which would remain in the nightmares of any human.

With each step forward she took, she could feel herself closing the gap between herself and her objective. She knew the exact direction of the source now and broke into a hard-core sprint. Leaping over broken branches and scattered boulders, she knew she was close, and yet somehow so far. She slowed until coming to halt, eyebrows furrowing together in confused angst. The instinct that had throbbed in her chest and gut was starting to fade away and she couldn't understand why. Had she somehow passed by what she was searching for?

Hope quickly looked over her shoulder to see nothing but the standstill trees gawking back with their gnarly limbs. She turned and looked ahead again, blinking when her vision focused on a building not far from her position. She'd been so confused by her fading desire that she hadn't noticed it there at all. As she moved closer, she could see it wasn't just a building. It looked to be a house. An old house with a dilapidating roof and scorched exterior. Her first assumption was that this place had endured a horrible fire.

Hope crossed the yard, gazing up at the dark wood as a soft whisper grazed her ear. It was hardly audible but present. Curious, she thought as she climbed the creaky steps and carefully walked into the place. She was careful to avoid any broken or weak floorboards, considering the interior was just as dark and charred as the outside. Whisper whisper whisper. Hope whipped her head around to see the front door had closed behind her. Tilting her head to the side with curiosity, she ventured into what she assumed was, at one point, the family room. The structure was vacant of all living things it seemed.

There was a heavy essence that resided within these walls and the longer Hope stood there in that stagnant location the more somber the emotions became. Like a heavy weight crushing down on her shoulders. Then, all at once, Hope felt as though she couldn't breathe. She began coughing horribly, leaving black soot in the palm of her hands. Her lungs felt as if they were about to burst with rising flames. Falling to her knees, she continued an ugly cough as the feeling of a searing blaze licked along her body, forcing her to shriek in horrible agony. She realized quickly she wasn't the only one screaming...screeches all around her erupted, shaking the banisters above. The house filled with a suffocating smoke and blistering hellfire. Help! The whispers turned into cries of torture Help us! Help us! They wailed in desperation.

Get out, Hope! Get out! It was all she could think while she shuffled on her hands and knees in search of the door that would, hopefully, lead her to sanctuary. Only when she was able to touch the front door handle did she find relief. It stopped. All at once. The heavy smoke disappeared, and she could breathe again. The fire was extinguished, but the same miserable emotions remained intact. A trickle of blood ran down her lip and dripped onto the wooden floor before she was able to scoot out onto the porch and into the yard.

There, lying on her front, she shoved her face into the earth and let out a sob. The torturous screams echoing in her memory. There were no other words to describe what being in that house felt like, and she didn't want to describe it. She'd never felt anything so...excruciating, both emotionally and physically. Whoever had lived in that house had suffered a fate far worse than she could have fathomed possible. What was this place? Why had her instincts led her here of all places? Why show her something so horrendous? Questions pelted her brain like hail on concrete, but still, she could form no answer. The only thing she was certain of was that she wouldn't be setting foot in that house again.
"I came here for you..."

The world was a blur of mixed emotions, like a complicated bar mixer. As she trekked through the darkening forest and to the safety of her car she could feel the weight of what she'd experienced start to fall like a heavy snow. She felt drained. Emotionally, physically, and magically. It was as if being in that house had literally sucked away her life force and she was only hanging by a delicate thread of energy.

The town blurred by with unfocused noise and light as she left the abandoned lot and drove straight for home. She was thoroughly convinced the moment she'd set foot in the door she would pack up her boxes, load them up, and make the long drive home where she'd be able to remain in the safety of her overly protective family's embrace.

Hope had even contemplated where she last saw the boxing tape as she pulled into her driveway. On the kitchen counter, right? She set her gear into park and stared blankly ahead, her mind beginning to process her jumbled feelings but dismissed the task immediately, her head throbbing from the effort. Maybe a bottle of wine would cure her of the tortured screams that bounced against her skull.

It wasn't until she stepped out of the car and a fresh breeze struck her face that a familiar sensation entered her chest. Her eyes were set on her front door, frozen as she felt that tug in her chest. It was so strong, and it wasn't fading as it had earlier in the woods. Thump thump, thump thump. Her whole body seemed to throb, much like her dreams. Oh, God, what was on the other side of that door?

Being pulled by some unknown force she began to walk. Her heart pounding wildly against her ribcage, making it difficult to breathe. The door was cracked by an inch and she could hear distinct heartbeats inside. More than one..two..three. What if...? She glanced behind her, eyes searching up and down the silent street for the green pickup truck. Nothing. No more hesitating, Hope. Just do it! She slammed the door open with her palm and stood in the doorway, fists clenched ready to fight.

There, standing in the center of her living room stood Stiles and Scott, but...what about the third heartbeat? She hadn't just imagined it. "Are you serious? Two nights in a row Stiles?" She asked in bewilderment.

"Hey!" Stiles exclaimed suddenly, his usually bubbled personality harsh and irritated "You had us driving in circles for hours, alright, we thought we were losing our minds. This is not a time for you to be pissed at us Voodoo Queen."
Sh*t, she thought, she'd forgotten all about the little spell she'd cast over them and their Jeep. No wonder he was in such a sour mood. She pursed her lips into a thin line and shut the door behind her, debating her next move. Obviously, she couldn't talk her way out of this without digging herself into a deeper hole. Compulsion? Yes, that could work. Very strong compulsion.

"I'm sorry for this, Stiles..." she said, taking a step forward and then paused. An involuntary shiver ran down her spine, feeling another instinctual tug. It wanted to guide her towards the stairs that ascended into darkness. But why? What was so important up there that couldn't be dealt with later?

Everything else around her faded. Sounds and colors muted and all she could focus on was the throbbing heartbeat on the second floor. The third heartbeat. Hope began to climb the stairs, feeling as if it were a lifetime before she made it to the top landing. She knew where to go, but that didn't mean she wasn't fearful. Was it her death that waited for her so patiently? She felt detached from reality as she walked down the hallway and stopped in the middle of the doorway to her bedroom. Her breath caught in her throat.

In the grim glow of her bedroom window stood a tall, broad man with the appearance of a ghastly apparition. His back faced her, but she knew it was the same figure she saw in the tree line from her window nook. The beat of his heart and hers thudded in her ears, tangling together in a rhythmic pattern.

There was this throbbing desire that seemed to grow in intensity as she watched the figure slowly turn to face her. Yes, he was a man. A very handsome man, in fact. With chiseled features that sloped in every pleasing way and radiant blue eyes that glowed so intensely she could feel her knees start to wobble. His jet-black hair. His physique. His...scent... sent her spiraling down a pit of sexual desire she never knew existed. Hope had the sudden instinct to submit to him...to...she paused as she began to unravel the mystery that had been haunting her for so long.

"Oh no..." she murmured as the puzzle pieces began to click into place. She now recognized the scent of him. He was a male wolf, obviously from a strong bloodline, and she had an intense sexual desire for him. In her world, her wolf culture, the women would go into heat as natural wolves did. They would pair up with their mates and try to conceive. Hope was plenty old enough to have children and it seemed her instincts wanted her body to bear the child of the man in front of her. This stranger. "He** no" she exclaimed as she fully comprehended what it was she'd been searching for. Not just some sexual fantasy, but for this male to impregnate her. That was so sick! Yes, he was probably strong and would lead to a strong child, but the idea of it was revolting. How could she possibly go through with something like that? No, absolutely not. No, the universe could go screw itself.

The man spoke then, his voice low and serious. "Who are you." It wasn't a question.

Hope didn't answer for a long moment, and when she did she said "I think I'm going to be sick..." she said, her face pale and skin damp. She felt as if she might vomit. She placed a hand on her forehead, vision beginning to close in by a fuzzy darkness. It was suddenly very hard to breathe. Was she blacking out? She'd never passed out before in her life, yet here she was having to grab ahold of the door jam for support as she sank to her knees. What happened after that she wasn't entirely sure. She could feel strong arms around her and soon the cushion of her bed underneath, but the rest was a blank memory.

"I think she's starting to wake up" came a voice through Hope's clouded hearing that was gradually coming into focus. She knew it was Stiles and she knew she was still lying in her bed. "What did you inject her with again? I mean is it supposed to last this long?"

"I don't know," Scott said, "Dr. Deaton said it was vervain. It worked on her so that's all that matters,
"Yeah, unless she's pissed at us when she wakes up and this room ends up being the scene of a gruesome murder. I don't know how vampires work, okay, all I know is I don't want her anywhere near me or my neck."

"Shut up." Another voice came, one she didn't recognize, but she knew it belonged to him. She shuddered as she slowly opened her eyes and blinked, surprised to see the sun was now up, sending dusty rays across her room. How long had she been out?

Hope's gaze immediately fell on him, silent just as she had been before. What should she say? _Hi, I just traveled halfway across the country because I think we should have hot wolf sex because my instincts tell me I should have your child._ Somehow, she had a feeling that wouldn't quite roll off the tongue for her.

Instead, she said, "Which one of you gave me vervain?"

Stiles quickly pointed at Scott.

Hope started to sit up and nodded "Smart," she said, her head aching from the after-effects of the vervain, she would need blood to cure her symptoms. Hope began to stand, but when she did large hands suddenly gripped her shoulders and pushed her back down onto the edge of her bed. Glancing up, she met his stare. He was now inches in front of her. She could practically taste his lips they were so close.

"Why did you come to Beacon Hills?" he asked, his intense eyes now holding the color of green, not blue like she remembered.

Hope swallowed hard and spoke before she could think. "I came here for you..." Their gazes locked. Her own words sounded foolish in her mind, but they were the truth. The question was, would he believe her?
"A silent battle of dominance..."

It had taken Hope all of two seconds to regret the words that spilled from her mouth. His steely gaze cut through her realm of security like a worn blade. Hope was almost certain it was jagged enough to cause a later infection.

"What did you just say?" his voice echoed as if it were in the far distance.

"I…" she stammered, her legs turning to jelly as she tried to speak through the weight on her chest.

Scott placed a hand on the man's shoulder and said, "Derek. Take it easy. She won't say anything if you keep freaking her out."

"I am not freaked out," Hope said sharply, voice as severe as Derek's eyes, "You don't intimidate me." Although, that wasn't entirely true. Now that she identified the intent of her instincts she had a better understanding of how to keep her emotions under control. However, his stature was truly intimidating. With his broad shoulders and tall impressive physique, he was no doubt a man with the capability of leading a strong pack.

Derek stepped forward, a strange aura of power surging from his body. It was that same electrical feeling she'd felt when she saw the figure standing in her backyard. She parted her lips, tasting it on her tongue.

"You were in my backyard. On the edge of the woods. I know it was you."

A very slight smile tugged at the corner of his lips and disappeared quickly. "You don't take kindly to strangers, so I've heard." Their eyes remained connected. It was a silent battle of dominance where the tension hit its peak. It wasn't until a voice broke through their concentration that Derek tore his eyes from Hope, releasing her from the metaphorical grip around her throat.

"Look, I don't know what kind of wolfy thing is going on here, but I'd like some answers," Stiles started, caught Derek's glare and quickly back peddled, "Or I mean, whenever you're done with your conversation. If that's what that is…"

Hope didn't dare glance in the direction of Derek again, too terrified she might be trapped in his gaze.
again. "You want information. I can understand that. It doesn't mean I'm obligated to tell any of you anything," she said as she turned from them and hoisted her suitcase out from under the bed, "I'll be out of here by dawn." She couldn't stay, she knew that. Instincts or not she couldn't be here any longer than she had to.

"Why?" Stiles asked, strangely upset.

"Why, really?" she retorted, looking over her shoulder at him "You're actually asking me that?" She shook her head and unzipped the luggage, pushing the top back.

"Yeah, I am asking that. You show up here, traumatize us in the Jeep Ride of Doom, and then when we actually catch you all you say in your oh-so-mysterious way is that you came here for Derek for God only knows what reason," he paused, trying to regain his receding voice, "Now you're just gonna leave? Just like that?"

"Yes," Hope said bluntly, grabbing for her wallet to pack away. Her arm didn't make it to the side table. She looked up at Derek, who was not only inches from her, but holding her wrist in a firm grip. If she didn't heal so quickly she'd be sure there'd be faint bruising as a result.

His expression was blank, aside from a thin shade of curiosity. He picked up her wallet and, keeping her wrist secure, opened the flaps. "Hope Marie Montgomery. I'm going to safely assume that isn't your real name?" he asked, casting his eyes down on her.

"It is, actually, a**hat. Let go." She yanked her hand free, refraining from yelping from the pain it caused. Grabbing the wallet from him she tossed it into her suitcase. "Now. Get out." Her tone was low and demanding. She could feel that power she'd had back in New Orleans begin to well up inside again. She'd missed it desperately. It was the dominating power of her true self. The hybrid alpha.

Derek gave a tooth filled crooked grin, tilting his head to the side with blazing eyes. "You know. I'm starting to want you to make me."

"Oh, God…" Stiles began as he slowly backed away towards the door. There was a charge of electric dominance in the standstill room. "Please, I am begging for the sake of my fragile life…"

"Shut up, Stiles" Hope said in drastic annoyance. With a quick and forceful wave of her hand, she sent both Stiles and Scott backward, out the door, and slammed it shut. The lock clicked, and it was herself and Derek alone in the room together.

Hope could feel the magic pumping through her veins at an alarming rate. It felt like her fingertips were pulsating. "Go on then. Show me the big bad wolf you are. Or is that just a show?"

It was without a moment's hesitation that he had his hands on her. One locked around her wrist, again like a vice. The other took hold of the back of her neck. She braced herself, expecting his grip to be excruciatingly tight, but it wasn't. It cradled her with care. Slowly, he forced her head to lean back, exposing the vulnerable flesh of her throat.

Time stopped as she felt his fangs touch against her pulsing jugular vein. It was a strange sensation. Hope didn't feel threatened and she didn't feel the need to protect herself. Her eyes slowly closed, waiting in anticipation. For what she didn't know.

His hot lips seared against her skin and Hope fought the urge to utter a soft moan of compliance. She refused to give into his dominance so quickly. "Do it." She said hoarsely, and she was fairly certain she wasn't referring to him tearing her throat out.
Derek moved, pulling her out of her state of vulnerability and locked his eyes with hers. "I have questions. You have answers. Humor me." His voice like gravel in his throat as his thumb grazed along the apple of her smooth cheek. She knew she'd do just about anything for him at that moment.

A steaming cup of dark brew filled the kitchen with an earthy aroma. It was the blend she always went for when she needed to handle something emotionally heavy. Hope entered the living room, deciding to not mention how grateful she was for Derek starting a fire in the hearth. She was desperately trying to get the image of him and the sensation of his lips against her skin out of her head. She was losing the battle.

She sat down on the end of the couch, her back against the side cushion and feet nestled under a pillow, her eyes on Stiles and Scott who sat across the room watching her. At least she had an audience.

"Alright, question number one," Scott started, taking a small sip from his own mug, "How do you know Derek?"

Stiles glanced over at him with a look of shocked disbelief "That's your number one question?"

"Well, yeah…” he said slowly, "Why, what's wrong with that? What would you have asked?"

"What would I have asked? Oh, I don't know, maybe what the he** are you?"

"Ladies," Hope interjected, ignoring Derek who smirked from his place on the rug in front of the blazing fire, "How about this. I tell you what I think you should know and if you have questions you can ask them. However, I don't guarantee I'll answer or that I'll answer honestly."

"That sounds like a rip-off," Stiles said, crossing his arms.

"Never said it wasn't."

"Alright fine. Just talk…please" he added noting her expression.

Hope took a swig of her coffee and nodded as she thought where to begin. "I won't drown you with unneeded details. You know the supernatural world exists, obviously. What I am…it goes against the balance of nature. I'm a hybrid, the only one of my kind. Truly you might be able to call me a tribrid," she said, smiling to herself.

"So, you're a mix. A mix of what?" Scott asked, eyes narrowing.

"That's the tricky explanation…” her voice trailed off, hesitating. It was always difficult explaining to others her status when they didn't understand the endless possibilities of the supernatural world. She always feared the reactions of others, and subconsciously she knew it was because all her life she'd never truly been accepted into the worlds she was supposed to be a part of. Everyone hated what she was at some point or another.

"I'm a mixture of a Werewolf, not the traditional you're familiar with," she added as a quick side note and continued, "A Vampire, and a Witch. I was born, not created. My parents will not be in this discussion." If there was one thing she'd keep from them, it was her family and their whereabouts. They didn't need any more trouble, especially from her.

She watched them all exchange glances as they tried to comprehend this sudden and new information.
"Dead silence. Just what I was hoping for."

"Sorry, we're just…processing," Stiles blinked away his confused gaze, "Alright. So, you're a deluxe package with all the bells and whistles? The blood in the freezer. We weren't just seeing things?"

Hope offered a small smile that almost touched her eyes "You're sane, yes. I cast a spell over the box to hide the appearance. I destroyed your phone to keep you from sharing the photos with your dad. I bewitched your minds and your Jeep to keep you occupied while I followed…" her gaze flitted toward Derek and quickly tore away "Something."

Stiles suddenly looked shocked and hurt, with a small gasp he said, "You broke my phone?"

She stared at him for a moment "Your priorities concern me."

"They concern us all," Scott said, "Now tell us what you meant when you said you came here for Derek?"

Slowly, she turned her head to address Derek fully "I'm afraid that answer is for his ears only."

"Da*n" Stiles said softly, clearly enjoying the soap opera.

Da*n indeed.

Derek and Hope were alone, sitting across from each other on the couch. They were both silent, their expressions and postures dared the other to speak first. Neither conceded. The mutual silence allowed Hope's mind to wander. She took note of his eyes first. They were no longer the dazzling blue she saw upstairs in her bedroom, but rather a deep moss green flecked with shards of silver. She could imagine herself diving into the murky waters of his eyes, never to resurface. To think, she'd wanted to kill him an hour ago.

"You told me you had a question. I'm waiting" Hope said, finally breaking the silence.

She watched him as he bit down on his lower lip, the simple action made her insides churn. He didn't know her or what buttons to push and yet here he was, pushing all the right ones.

"I had a dream, well, dreams…I can't be certain, but I think they were about you" his dark brows shifted into a confused scowl.

"Me?" she asked, a flood of red hot blood rushing through her as she realized they must have shared dreams. She carefully cleared her throat "What were they about?"

"It's hard to explain," he began, still gazing into her eyes with severity, "But I know they were of you. I just…know…"

"I understand what you mean," she murmured in a soft voice "I've been having dreams too. They've been…” she took a moment searching for the right word "Intense."

"That sounds about right."

At least they agreed on how the dreams felt, but what did they mean? Surely the universe, or whatever controlled her instincts, wasn't telling them both the same thing.

Giving a soft sigh, she rubbed the back of her neck "I don't believe in coincidences as much as I used to. So, I suppose the question is, what does all this mean and what do we do about it?" He was silent. It was the opposite of what she wanted. "I know this is going to sound insane, but I left New Orleans
because for weeks now I've had this pulling, this tugging that lead me here. I traveled miles and miles of dirt and paved road alike, following this instinct without a clue as to what was at the end of the line. Now I'm here and my questions are being answered. I should be happy to finally know, but to know that you're what's been tugging and the reason behind…I just…” she couldn't finish her sentence. It seemed so surreal. Hope wanted an exciting life of adventure with occasional misfortune and learned lessons, while her body wanted children with the man across from her. It was maddening.

"What is the reason?" he asked, voice so soft and gentle he sounded like a different person.

She met his stare again "Don't ask what you already know."

Again, silence.

"What are we supposed to do about it?" he asked.

"You tell me."

Hope watched him cautiously as his eyes grazed her body, appreciating her form. His hands touched her calves, carefully holding them in a firm grip before suddenly pulling her toward him. With her knees pressed against the sides of his ribcage, she could feel the thumping of his heart. *Thump thump. Thump thump.* Just like her dreams. He leaned forward, lips stopping just before they touched hers.

"I'll let you decide" he murmured, closing his eyes as his cheek pressed against hers, the texture sending a frozen chill down her spine.

Hope could remain here in this frame of time. She could let the fear, angst, and uncertainty of the past week wash away with his surprisingly tender embrace. They were both feeble in that moment. Strong and capable, yet horribly weak in each other's presence. Yes, she would decide. Later.
"How long could they control fate..."

Peace.

Hope felt true, unfiltered peace. A delicate smile curved her lips as she opened her eyes, greeted with the smoldering embers in the hearth. For the first time in so long she felt...whole. The worries she had before no longer mattered.

Rolling onto her stomach she absently traced her fingers down the ribbed fabric of the pillow that cradled her head. She was lost in thought. How long had she been asleep? It couldn't have been long, considering the living room was bathed in shadows.

Sighing softly, Hope snuggled into the couch and let her eyes close. She was just on the verge of sleep, that fine line between two worlds when her eyes snapped open. Sitting up abruptly, she scanned the living room confused. The room hadn't changed in the time she'd slept, but she was alone.

Derek was gone.

Exhaling, she shifted to a sitting position and rested her chin on her knees. He must not have stayed long, she thought as her eyes adjusted to the room.

Hope could still feel the sensation of his warm fingers caressing the small of her back. She had fallen asleep with her head on his chest, listening to his solid heartbeat. It had felt so right in the moment, at least, it did to her. Maybe he didn't feel the same.

She tried to shove the vivid memories from her thoughts. Shaking her head, she stood from the couch and dug her toes into the squishy carpet. Her gaze settling on the wood pile next to the brick platform of the fireplace. She debated for a moment. Either put on another log or call it a night. Would it matter if she couldn't sleep anyway?

Hope didn't have the chance to decide.

Without warning, a truck horn blared. Whipping her head to the side, she stared out the living room window with wide eyes. There, on the lawn facing the house, was the green pickup truck.

The noise was so loud she could see the glass of the window trembling. Then, a sudden bright light lit the entire living room, blinding her. She could see nothing but stars and strangely colored circles. Frozen in fearful surprise.

Her immediate instinct was to duck, to get away from the window and out of the line of fire, but she couldn't move her limbs. It was as if an electric current had paralyzed her, making her muscles rigid and uncooperative.

Move, Hope, move!

But she couldn't. She could only stare in blank horror as the light shut off, leaving her with spotted vision. The driver's door opened, and he stepped out. The man with the tattooed held something in his hand, a glinting object constructed of silver.

Then she noticed he wasn't alone. A man with a dark head of hair and a strong build was forced to his knees.
Her heart stopped.

"…Derek."

Dick placed the nose of the pistol against the back of Derek's head.

He pulled the trigger.

Hope inhaled a sharp breath as her eyes snapped open. Her heart hammered painfully against her ribcage. Sweat dewed along her hairline; wisps of baby hair clinging to the nape of her neck. She was greeted by a warm, buttery sunshine that streamed through her bedroom window. Watching the dancing dust particles, she eased her rigid muscles into a relaxing position.

Rolling onto her back she rested her arms above her head and stretched. Staring up at the white swirl patterned ceiling, her jumbling thoughts trampled over each other.

"It was just a dream," she murmured to herself, "A very horrible, terrifying dream."

Derek must have carried her to bed late last night. Or had that all been a dream too? Still, her stomach fluttered from the idea of being cradled in his arms. With a soft sigh, she sat up and rolled out of bed. She wore the same outfit from last night and decided a shower was in order.

After a quick warm shower, she dressed in a pair of black leggings and a pink Just Do It Nike tank-top. Then, she gathered her long damp hair into a tight ponytail. The pressure would surely give her a headache by the end of the day. At least it would distract her from her crushing inner thoughts.

Descending the stairs with the intent of making herself a cup of coffee, Hope heard shuffling from the kitchen. The scent of coffee, eggs, and bacon greeted her warmly.

"Hello?" Hope called from the foot of the stairs before rounding the corner, stopping in her tracks.

Derek stood above the stove, flipping sizzling bacon that popped grease at his bare forearms. He wore a plain white t-shirt – it complimented his large biceps – and a pair of dark gray jeans. His combat boots were caked in dry mud.

Not that Hope cared much, she'd been known to track dirt here and there.

Derek glanced her way, making her heart skip an unusual beat. He offered a crooked smile, obviously in a cheerful mood. The thought crossed her mind that the reason he was so cheery, eagerly making her breakfast because she'd done something last night she didn't recall.

"You're here?" she asked, obvious surprise in her voice.

He responded with a slight nod, setting a plate of the bacon on the counter "Don't worry, I brought my own food…"

Hope pursed her lips, "That's actually the least of my curiosities right now." Taking a small breath, she walked toward the cabinet above the coffee maker next to the sink and removed two mugs. "I'm sorry. I guess I just didn't expect to see you this morning."

Derek was silent for a long moment. "We have a lot to discuss. I thought it might be best not to wait."

She cleared her throat a bit awkwardly. "How do you take it?" she asked, pouring the pots dark and bitter contents into the two mugs.
"Black is fine."

Hope added a bit of cream to her coffee and brought them to the small table in front of the kitchen window. She preferred a view when she ate.

Derek joined her and soon they were sitting across from each other, avoiding eye contact. Despite the food smelling delicious, she couldn't seem to pick up her fork to take the first bite.

"You know there's not going to be an easy way to discuss this, right?" she asked, finally meeting his eyes. His hands were folded under his chin, watching her now.

"I know," he murmured, "But this isn't something I can just…brush off. I can't ignore this." His eyes were such a soft shade of moss green, yet so intense they created goosebumps over her arms.

Reaching for her coffee she took a sip, letting the taste wash over her tongue. "Where would you like me to begin?"

Derek nodded "I want to know exactly why you came here. You said you came here for me, but what exactly does that mean?" His concentrated eyes searched hers with curious interest.

How could she explain this without sounding utterly insane? She wasn't sure she could.

Chewing on her lower lip she traced her pinkie finger along the rim of her coffee mug. "You're a Werewolf and I'm a Werewolf, but we're not the same. At least, the way I understand it," she paused, searching for the right words, "In my society, with my pack, there's a certain time where a Werewolf feels the need to find a mate…” Her eyes flitted over to him, measuring his expression, "For obvious reasons. The bigger the pack, the stronger the pack. The more powerful a pack can be. I think that's universal, but I always thought that whenever I felt ready to find someone it would be someone within my own pack. Not a male Alpha from across the country."

"I grew up in New Orleans. My father's a hybrid, a mix between vampire and werewolf. How he became what he is, is a story for another time," she bit her lip and took another sip of coffee, "My mother was a werewolf when she gave birth and since my father had a witch heritage I was born with those powers. To make a long story short, while I was in New Orleans I constantly felt like I needed something. Something that no one could seem to satisfy," her brows knitted together remembering searching the streets of the Quarter trying to find something to quench her instincts, "This tugging kept pulling me in a certain direction. It pulled me here. It pulled-it dragged me to you…"

She met his eyes with a wide gaze "It makes sense. I mean, from an instinctual point of view. You're an Alpha, I'm an Alpha. Or I'm meant to be one, anyway. You're obviously strong and capable, but you're completely different. You have your own pack rules, I'm sure," she took a deep breath to bring her pitch down and sighed softly, "If I had known my instincts wanted me to make you my mate I wouldn't have come. That's not something I'd ever want someone to feel like is forced on them."

Hope grew quiet, waiting for his response as a flush of heat rose in her cheeks.

"Please say something." She murmured softly.

Derek shook his head slowly. "I know you're afraid of scaring me away, but I have to be honest. I don't think you're insane and I don't think you're trying to force anything on me. Instincts for a Werewolf is natural, and I'd be lying if I said my own instincts weren't telling me I need to find someone too," his dark brows furrowed, "I just – I can't right now. It's not the best time for me…” he
trailed off in a soft tone, thoughts seeming distant.

Hope had a strange cocktail of emotions. Part of her was unbelievably relieved by his words. She didn't have to settle into some instinctually forced relationship. Yet, she felt a small wave of disappointment. There was a strong part of her that wanted to be whole with her other half, and another part that said: "Not yet".

"I think I'd like to stay a little longer. Here, in Beacon Hills, I mean." Was it odd for her to want to be close to him even if she didn't want to be with him? Probably.

Derek gave a light chuckle and nodded "I think I'd like you to stay too. I'm not sure what that means, but I don't feel like arguing with it."

With a smile, Hope picked up a piece of cooled bacon "Let's just go with it then. We can see where it takes us."

How long could they control fate?

Breakfast ended, and Derek left to deal with business. Hope didn't ask what his business was, but she had a feeling it involved his pack. With his absence, the afternoon rolled around, leaving Hope plenty of time to dwell on her nightmare from last night.

Thanks to Elijah's many psychology lessons, she understood she feared Derek getting involved with her enemies. If they hurt him – or worse, killed him – she'd never forgive herself. Yes, Derek was a capable man and he could keep himself from harm, but the image of seeing him die so gruesomely had instilled her with a horrible dread.

Hope would make sure that never happened. If they laid a hand on him she wouldn't hold her power back.

To occupy her thoughts, Hope busied herself with chores. Washing the laundry, scrubbing the shower, and dusting every nook and cranny. Task after task she worked until there was nothing left to scrub or rearrange. Everything was spotless.

She was suddenly aware she was in desperate need of a hobby.

To start preparing for dinner. Spicy Gumbo, she thought, her mouth already watering. It sounded delicious, and she could use a taste of home. Not to mention, if Derek returned they'd have plenty to share. He learned earlier from breakfast that she was a girl with an appetite.

Hope scanned the cupboards and retrieved the ingredients one by one, setting them on the counter. The recipe itself required a lot, but she knew it would be worth it in the end. Back in New Orleans, she could spend hours by the fire in the bayou. A member of the pack – whoever oversaw the meal that night – would stir a pot of authentic Gumbo. That meal could easily feed the entire pack.

She loved those nights. Where she held a steaming bowl in her lap, taking occasional bites as she listened to mystical stories of the past.
Those were the memories she loved most.

Deciding to play a bit of music, Hope hooked her speaker to the Bluetooth and pressed play. It blared, "There is a house in New Orleans. They call the rising sun."

"Fitting," Hope said with a sly smile, turning the stove on low.

Hope bobbed her head from side to side, moving with the rhythm and occasionally mouthing the lyrics. Distracted by the music, she lost track of time while she cooked. Song after song she became livelier with her dance moves, moving her hips back and forth as she sang along to Livin' On A Prayer.

"Bon Jovi?" A voice came from behind.

Hope spun around and dropped the wooden spoon she'd been using as a microphone and to stir her pot.

Derek stood in the kitchen doorway with his hands in his front pockets, grinning from ear to ear. His eyes filled with laughter.

Oh, God, how long had he been standing there? Putting a hand to her forehead, Hope felt a heated blush creep up the back of her neck. She put a finger up. "Don't judge. Bon Jovi is classic."

"No, no. I'm not judging," Derek said pursing his lips, obviously fighting a laugh.

"Haha." Hope rolled her eyes playfully and picked up the wooden spoon from the floor, tossing it into the sink. "How was 'business'?" She asked, turning to face him while leaned against the sink.

Derek huffed a soft sigh and shook his head, frowning slightly. "I'd much rather take my mind off of it."

With a nod, she placed a lid on the pot while it simmered. "Well, dinner will take a while to cook. Do you like movies?"

He arched an eyebrow and nodded, "It depends on the movie…" He made a slight face, "It won't be a chick flick will it?"

His worried expression made her laugh. "Hey, if we're going to be friends you have to watch what I like too." She smiled and grabbed ahold of his bicep. Her hands couldn't entirely wrap around the muscle. Da*n, she thought.

Hope lead him into the living room and plopped down on the couch, pulling him with her. "How about…" She started and began to scan through the selection of movies on the screen, "Have you ever seen Die Hard?" She asked, looking over at him, reminding herself not to glance down at her lips. His mouthwatering scent was making it difficult to concentrate.

Derek gave her an incredulous look "You want to watch Die Hard?"

"You seem surprised."

"I mean, I'm not surprised. It's just not what I expected." He leaned his head back and smiled slightly, watching her.

"I'm never what anyone expects," Hope tried to suppress a sudden giggle, "That sounded so much better in my head."
His chuckle was light, laced with amusement. "Just start the movie," he said, shaking his head at her.

Pulling her legs up underneath her, she did as he asked and pressed play. Hope had a habit of squishing her throw blanket between her fingers absentmindedly. She did this now as she watched the beginning of the movie.

Fifteen minutes passed, and she was hit with a sudden craving for caffeine. Hope turned her head to look at him, prepared to ask him if he might like a cup. Before she could utter a word, she was met with his fierce green gaze. He had been watching her.

Derek's eyes were filled with intense sexual desire.

An icy shiver shot down Hope's spine, her entire body throbbing for his attention. She no longer craved coffee.

Movements smooth and swift, Derek lifted Hope from her position on the couch and pressed her down against her back. It was like pure adrenaline to be pinned beneath him; her head whirled dizzily. She threaded her fingers through his hair, pulling at the roots. Pleased to hear him groan softly. Catching his lips in a deeply passionate kiss she eagerly let her tongue dance and tangle with his.

"Derek…”

A low growl rumbled in his chest.

She gasped softly, closing her eyes as his calloused fingers skimmed the skin under her tank-top. Could she resist him?

**NOTES**

Happy tenth chapter everybody! Thank you for the likes and reviews for this story, it's truly one of my favorites! Be sure to keep reading, because Hope and Derek's story is just getting started!

Also, I am in search of a Beta Reader. Just someone who can be a second pair of eyes for my chapters before I publish. If you're interested send me a message!
The pot on the stove began to scream, protesting how long it had been sitting to simmer. Hope was glad for it. She pulled away from Derek and forced herself off the couch as quickly as possible, much like ripping off a band-aid.

Quickly retreating into the kitchen, she picked up another stirring spoon from the carousel and took the pot off the burner, stirring the contents. The spicy steam smacked her in the face, helping bring her back down to earth.

Distraction. She needed a distraction.

Hope could feel him standing in the doorway, could feel his gaze on her back and she was terrified to turn and face him.

"I'm sorry…" his faint voice came from the doorway. She didn't have to look to know he was leaning against the door jam, eyes cast down to the floor with his arms crossed. She was beginning to pick up what his habitual mannerisms were, she could picture it.

Hope sighed softly and shook her head, glancing over her shoulder to see if her suspicions were correct. They were. Eyes downcast in a brooding manner. Incredibly hot but brooding all the same.

"Derek, I don't want to hear apologies. It is what it is. Don't feel ashamed for something that comes so naturally…a lot of people would kill for that kind of connection." She bit her lip and tapped the edge of the pot with her spoon, removing the excess liquid so it didn't drip as she set it on a placemat.

"It's just going to be a little more difficult staying friends than I thought, but it's not the end of the world. We just need to be careful with our…instincts. We can't put ourselves in a position where that can happen."

_Not yet, anyway._

"Although I really thought Die Hard was a safe bet" she glanced his way with a playful smile, seeing a hint of his creep up. It fell quickly when a familiar voice sounded from the front door.

"Oh my God, what is that smell? Whatever it is I need it…"

_Stiles._

Hope nodded slowly "I think I'm really starting to regret my home choice…"

"That's hurtful," Stiles said as he entered the kitchen, stopping short at the sight of Derek. "You invited him? I thought we were friends." The sound of his betrayal nearly made her chortle.

"He spent the night," Hope said with a shrug, letting Stiles latch onto the bait. Judging by his expression, he was onto the same track she assumed he'd be.

"Nice…" Stiles started but quickly ducked away from Derek. Hope was certain it wouldn't be the first time he'd be hit by the Alpha.

Hope bit her lip and began taking down bowls. "Would you like to stay for dinner, Stiles?" she asked. She may as well put the invitation out. Having Stiles there would be a nice distraction. What better way to keep their hormones under control?
"He** yeah. That stuff smells amazing. What is it?" he asked, moving closer to the pot and took a big whiff.

"Gumbo," Hope answered, "Authentic to New Orleans, of course."

"You cook a lot then?" Stiles asked, helping himself to a heaping bowl.

"When I can," she smiled, "It relaxes me…"

The sudden blare of a car horn made Hope nearly jump out of her skin. Images of the nightmare came flooding back. The green pickup, the silver pistol, Derek's lifeless body.

"Hey, you okay?" Stiles asked, a hand on her arm, eyes filled with worry and surprise.

Hope quickly shoved the fearful images to the back of her mind. "I'm fine. Just…hungry" she nodded, turning back to the stove, feeling a hand rest on the small of her back. She looked up, meeting Derek's troubled gaze. She knew he was suspicious. She knew she should unload and tell him everything that was going on, but any time she dragged people into her problems she always felt horribly guilty. She couldn't do that to him.

"I'm fine."

"And if you weren't, you'd tell me?" Derek asked, eyes searching for a hint of a lie behind hers.

"Of course, I would."

Hope was a fantastic liar.

The rest of the evening came and went. She spent most of the time talking to Stiles, he was really growing on her. Poor awkward thing. Derek remained silent for most of the night. Unless she talked about home and her family. Then he'd ask questions, but mostly he listened

Occasionally they would lock eyes with one another. It was like they'd have full-length conversations in those small moments. And each time her thoughts drifted to the green pickup he somehow knew she was troubled and would help calm her nerves.

They were little things he did to make her feel safe, but they worked. Better than she'd like to admit. Like shifting his position to sit a little closer to her, or letting the side of his hand brush against her knee.

If she started to think about their little make-out session, she could just focus intently on Stiles and let the mood be killed. Using him to extinguish sexual desire. That's something to never mention to him.

At the end of the night, Hope stood in the kitchen at the sink, washing dishes and setting them one-by-one on the drying rack. Stiles had left for the night, saying he had a test to study for, and that left she and Derek alone in the kitchen.

"Here," she turned and tossed him a towel from his position at the island, "Make yourself useful," she said with a slight smile. She heard his chuckle and footsteps moving to stand next to her, drying the dishes she handed off. There weren't too many, but she liked to be thorough.

Hope swallowed hard, hating herself for what she was about to say.

"So, I don't think you should stay again tonight…" she nodded, glancing his way, measuring his expression.
He stayed silent.

She continued. "I think if we're going to just be friends, for now, we need boundaries because staying in the same place really just isn't going to work, ya know?"

Derek nodded in response "I know."

It was an obvious fix. To avoid temptation, one must remove the cause of said temptation, and oh he tempted her even now. The scalding hot water in the sink was the only thing keeping her grounded.

"But that doesn't mean we can't, I don't know, go to lunches and hang out. I mean you said it yourself, you're not in a place right now for something like that."

"I know."

Was that all he could say? *I know.*? Why did it bother her so much? Hope resisted the urge to huff out a sigh.

"Will I see you tomorrow, then?"

"Not tomorrow. I'll be out of town for...something."

Looking over at him she raised an eyebrow at him "Business again?" she asked raising a brow "Do I get to know what that something is?"

"Maybe," he shrugged looking down at her, "If you tell me what had you on edge all evening."

Hope paused, her heart dropping below her stomach "What?" she asked shaking her head, maybe if she pretended to not understand he'd drop the subject.

"You know what," Derek said, voice getting a bit above his usual volume, "You kept looking out the window like you're expecting someone. Are you expecting someone?"

"No. I'm not expecting anyone I just..." She could tell him, but then what if she did and he decided he didn't want to leave her? There was no way she could say no to him again if the opportunity presented itself.

"You just what?" he asked, bringing her from her thoughts.

"I'm just adjusting. You of all people should know how hard it is to adjust to new surroundings," she shrugged, "I mean, I like being here, but I can't say I don't miss home. This is my first time being out on my own without my protective detail of a family and it's hard to get used to that."

Hope set the last dish into the cupboard and turned to him. "I'm always on guard because I know anything can happen at any time. I always need to be prepared. For anything. Even if nothing is there."

Derek was quiet for a heavy moment and she thought for a split second he might just storm out and leave. But instead, he nodded and leaned forward, pressing a soft kiss against her forehead. She didn't protest as he let it linger for longer than half a second.

"I'll see you Saturday."
"Saturday" she agreed.

Hope rolled over in bed, tossing and turning as she tried to find a comfortable position, but every time she started to close her eyes all she could see was Derek on his knees with a pistol to his head. The amount of anxiety that entered her chest each time she pictured the scene sent her body into a flurry of emotion.

By 3 A.M. she had crawled out of bed and went downstairs to ease her mind with a bit of numbing television. Was this her life now? Constantly worried and paranoid about what might happen? Dear God, she was turning into her father. That was not an option. She refused to live her life fearing what was to come like he always had.

So what could she do? She had a few options.

Hope flipped the tv onto HGTV.

She could call her family, probably Freya or Rebekah, and ask for their advice while begging not to tell her father and Elijah.

She could move back home...and remain the girl in the bubble for the rest of her life. Hope wrinkled her nose at that idea.

Well, she could tell Derek and let him help her make a decision, but wasn't that the same as going back into a bubble? This entire experience was based on the idea that she could handle situations alone. If she told Derek he certainly wouldn't just stand back and let the hunters harass her. That sounded horribly arrogant, but it was how she felt.

She could just sit back and let what happens, happens and she'd just have to roll with the punches. That seemed to be a style their family had built over the years. Let their enemies come to their doorstep if they were actually willing to pick a fight, then deal with it when the time comes.

Although, that would mean her being holed up just waiting like a worm on a hook to see if they'd take a bite.

There was always the last option. One where the hunters become the hunted. Hope was a predator by nature...couldn't she take them out before they have a chance to do the same to her? Just because this was a game to them didn't mean she had to play by their rules. Strike first and strike hard. That was the first thing Elijah taught her when teaching her self-defense. Put your opponent on their knees before they even know what's hit them.

She was Hope Mikaelson - tribrid - daughter of the original hybrid. She could do this. She had to do this. This was survival of the fittest.

No time for sleep now. She had to work out her plans.

The man with the tattooed knuckles would be dead before Saturday.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!