Let's Do It Again

by Trekstar

Summary

Omega Jack Carter has spent decades covering his orientation and presenting himself to the world as a beta. When he and his daughter, Zoe, crash into the scientific wonder that is the town of Eureka, how long will that secret last? How will he also deal with the new director of G.D., an alpha he is quickly finding himself falling for despite his attempts otherwise?

Let's Do It Again is a retelling of Eureka season 1 in an A/B/O verse and a focus on Nathan/Jack. Each chapter will follow an episode of the season, with larger differences occurring to canon as the characters build their relationships.

Notes

Chapter 1 follows the plot of the original episode very closely, with only a few changes or extensions to thoughts, actions, and speech occurring. This is a result of me wanting to introduce the characters and their orientation and do a small bit of world building at the beginning.

Disclaimer: All rights for Eureka, its characters, and dialogue, go to its creators and Universal studios.
The storm was raging. The roads were slick under the fast moving tires, and barely anything could be seen ahead of the car, but wet road and the deep woods that flanked the pavement. Jack Carter, seasoned U.S. Marshal, maneuvered his cruiser carefully along the winding roads, trying to stay focused even with the presence of a heavily sulking teenage runaway sitting in the back seat.

“I told you we should have made a left back there,” she states with a hauty tone.

“Don’t make me use pepper spray,” Jack replies quickly, cutting her off dismissively.

“Are all cops this angry?”

“This isn’t angry,” he says, trying not to clench his teeth. “I was angry at the truck stop when you told the waitress that I touched you funny.” The memory of that moment still pissed him off and he glanced up at the rearview mirror to glare at the girl through the partition when she laughed at his words. “We’re way past angry.”

Glancing back at the road for a second, Jack reaches for the map he had lying in his passenger seat. “Would it kill ‘em to post a road sign once in awhile?” he grumbled under his breath. He couldn’t tell where they were at and he didn’t want to admit that she may have been right about that left turn at the fork they passed 10 miles back.

“Will you remind me again why we’re not on a plane right now?” the young beta demands. Jack exhaled slowly under his breath, trying to ignore her, but she continued on regardless.

“Oh, that’s right. The big, bad marshal’s afraid to fly,” she taunts with a smile.

“You don’t wanna push me right now,” he states, trying to remain focused on the winding road ahead of them. After the moves she pulled trying to stay away from him, hell, the fact that she even ran away in the first place, still made his blood boil, with anger and fear. The girl was his daughter and he knew what kind of scum were out there in the world; had been chasing them most of his life, and the thought of her out there, unprotected and at the mercy of it all at such a young age, gave him nightmares he really didn’t want to dwell on.

“Look, I’m just saying that if we would’ve made a left back there-“

“Don’t. Say. Anything.” Jack says, cutting her off with a hard look through the mirror. She glares right back for a moment before turning to the window with a curt “fine.” Her blond hair falls in front of her face as she looks out into the dark night.

Jack exhales another breath and the silence lasts all of three seconds before she starts up again.

“It’s just funny and all-“

“Seriously! I’ll pay you,” Jack tries to bargain, desperate to get her to stop talking.

“I mean, you track me across three states, you find me in a city of, like, hald a million people, and then you get us lost on the way back. I mean, you gotta appreciate the irony,” she says, giving him a look of disbelief. Jack stares at her through the mirror for a moment before actually turning his head around to look at her face to face through the partition in the cruiser. “Or not,” she finishes, both of them turning away, Jack shaking his head as he turns back to the road.
“We’re not lost,” he denies. “We’re just…taking the scenic route.”

“Yeah, well, the scene sucks,” she complained as Jack looks at the map again. It’s hard to see in the dark and there are no street lights on the road they’re on to provide some sort of light. Thunder rumbles overhead and lightening flashes in the distance. The light from a particularly bright flash makes Jack blink small spots out of his eyes and when he glances back up he sees the headlights of another car coming down the road.

“Whoa! Where did that guy come from?” Jack asks. He was sure there had been no one ahead of them a moment ago. He squints as the cars get closer, the bright lights of the other car nearly blinding him. “Hey, high beams, moron!” Jack chastises, annoyed by the bright light.

“Was that…I mean did you just see…” the girl stutters in confusion, looking back at the car they just passed.

“What?” Jack asks.

“Us,” she says simply, her voice reaching a higher pitch as she freaks out in the back seat.

Jack scoffs in exasperation. “I’m really not in the mood,” he says, not really paying attention. He wasn’t sure what her game was, but he wasn’t falling for it.

“We just passed our car with us inside,” she continues. Jack breathes heavily, tired of her tricks. He glances in the rearview mirror, watching the other car drive away into the night.

“And I thought I was sleep deprived,” he mumbles, thinking of the 48 hours he’d been awake in his chase of the girl behind him.

“I’m totally serious,” she tries to assert, but Jack isn’t having it.

“So am I, so just take a nap or something so I can concentrate.”


Confused he turns back to her, “No, you listen, homegirl.” He can feel himself building up to a rant, his sleep deprived mind and anger still simmering. It’s been awhile since he’d taken his omega pills too, which wasn’t helping matters.

“No!” she cuts him off, gesturing to the road ahead of them desperately. “Dog!”

Jack whips his head forward, seeing a shaggy mutt crossing on the road right in front of them. His daughter screams in fear as Jack curses and swerves the car to avoid hitting the animal. The dog dashes across the remaining bit of road, right into their path and Jack swiftly turns the wheel the other way, swerving back to the other side of the road, the tires squealing on the wet pavement as the car loses control and spins widely before skidding right off of the road entirely. The cruiser jolts roughly at the sudden stop, the teenageer still screaming in the backseat. Jack groans as his chest impacts with the restricted seatbelt, the strap cutting into his chest with a heavy pressure. Jack moans in pain, but quickly clicks on the overhead light and turns to his daughter behind him.

“You okay?” he asks with concern.

“You call this protective custody?” she complains. Jack really doesn’t know what he was expecting.

“You’re okay,” he says, turning away. He reaches for the door handle, still wincing in pain.
“Wait, where are you going?” the girl exclaims in a worried tone. The crash obviously freaking her out more than she had initially let on. Jack leans back in his seat and sighs tiredly.

“To check the damage.”

“And what if you don’t make it back?” she demands, becoming more hysterical as shock starts to set in. “I’ll be stuck in here like those guys in the plane who had to eat each other.”

Honestly, Jack wasn’t sure where her imagination came from. She definitely didn’t get it from her Alpha’s side of the family. He quickly banished the thought of his ex-mate and instead focused back on the issue at hand.

“You’re right,” he agreed.

“I know!”

Jack reached into the glovebox and pulled out some packets. “Here. Here’s some ketchup,” he said jokingly. He threw the small packets through the divider into the backseat. “Start at your feet, work your way up.” Okay, so she may have gotten her sense of humor from him. He opened the door and promptly fell about five feet. He yelled as he hit leaves, a few small branches, and then dirt before rolling down a hill and landing on his back with a groan.

“Karma’s a bitch, huh?” his daughter yelled from the car above him. He stared up at her in disbelief. No sympathy. None whatsoever.

Jack groaned as he climbed back to his feet and looked up, assessing the car stuck in the tree above him.

“Well, that’s a new one,” he said to himself, squinting through the rain falling on his face.

“Are you just going to leave me here?” Zoe yelled desperately down at him, fumbling for the door handle as the car groaned with the shifting weight.

“Hold your horses, I’ll get’cha down,” he promised, struggling through the tall plants and back up the small hill so he could be under where her door was. Zoe flung open the door, but stopped, looking down in trepidation as he held out his arms and gestured for her to take his hand.

“Come on, I’ve got you. Just grab my hand,” he said, reaching up for her. She slowly reached her hand down and grasped his tightly. He pulled her slowly out of the vehicle and with a small hop and fall she landed on the ground, Jack’s grip on her hand keeping her upright. “See, nice and easy.” She scoffed with a muttered “whatever,” before marching up the hill and back onto the road. She tried to act tough, but Jack could still smell lingering traces of fear coming from her as she brushed past. He sighed heavily as he followed after her. He really wished he could improve his lost relationship with her.

“So what do we do now?” Zoe demanded, gesturing to the road and the still falling rain around them.

“Well,” Jack said, looking both ways before gesturing further down the way they had been originally travelling, “We start walking. That car we passed had to come from somewhere. There should be someplace we can find help up ahead.”

“Yeah, or maybe we’ll run into a psycho ax murderer as we wander lost in the middle of nowhere,” she yelled as he started to walk away.
“I’ll take my chances,” he yelled back over his shoulder, continuing on. After a few moments, he heard her feet running to catch up and she sighed in annoyance as she fell into step beside him.

It was going to be a long night.

By about 6 a.m. the rain had slowed to a light sprinkle and they had managed to walk into an actual town. Jack could not have been more relieved as the two walked down the road.

“For the last time, there is no ‘other us,’” he said making air quotes with his fingers. Zoe had been hanging on to this idea of having actually seen *themselves* in the other car they had past earlier. Honestly, it was getting old and Jack wasn’t sure how else he could tell her that what she had seen wasn’t possible. At this point he was really hoping she hadn’t taken some kind of hallucinogenic drug before he had picked her up.

“I know what I saw!” she said.

“What you think you saw,” he retorted tiredly. It had been a long walk and another 8 hours or so without sleep. He really just needed someplace to lay down at this point.

“Look, it was an honest-to-God paranormal encounter,” she tried to reason. He wasn’t having it.

“You are an honest-to-God paranormal encounter.” She laughed sarcastically at him.

“Does that sense of humor come with the badge?” she said mockingly. He ignored her as they both crested over one last hill, buildings and suburban houses finally showing that they had reached the town they’d both seen a mile or so back.

“Civilization at last, huh,” he said with a small measure of relief. Finally. They would find help for the car, maybe a place to rest, and then be back on the road in hopefully a day or so.

Zoe stopped walking behind him. “By whose definition?” she demanded angrily. True, this town was smaller than anywhere she’d lived or probably visited beforehand, but it was still good enough for him. He stopped and turned back to her, her look of disbelief and outrage clear on her face.

“Come on,” he said, urging her forward. They steadily made their way down what had to be the town’s main street. Jack pulled off his tie, the fabric constricting and chafing after the rain had soaked it. He stopped near a cross-walk and beckoned to a kid riding across on his bicycle.

“Hey, kid. You got a sheriff here in town?” he asked.

“I’m not supposed to talk to strangers,” the kid replied and Zoe rolled her eyes in annoyance.

“Oh, give me a break,” she muttered. Jack gave her a warning look before turning back to the boy.

“You’re absolutely right,” he said, “and under normal circumstances, that’s a great policy, but as it happens, I’m one of the good guys.” Jack pulled out his Marshal badge and showed it to the kid as proof of his statement. The kid examined it closely and Jack noticed Zoe peering into the boy’s basket on his bike.

“What grade are you in?” she asked in disbelief. Jack followed her gaze and saw a *Theoretical Physics* textbook sitting in the basket.

“Eleventh,” the boy, who couldn’t have been more than 8 years old, said nonchalantly. “See that
guy picking up rocks?” he gestured behind him. Jack and Zoe followed his pointing finger and saw a long-haired guy in a dirty brown coat examining a rock.

“Uh….yeah,” Jack said slowly. This was starting to get a little weird.

“Walk two blocks past him. Turn left at the stand of deciduous trees. It’ll be 60 meters past the park.” The boy said, giving them directions.

“Great,” Jack said looking ahead. He wasn’t sure what decidu-whatever trees were, but he was sure he’d figure it out.

“Deciduous?” Zoe asked, a condescending tone in her voice.

“It means they shed their leaves once a year.” The boy informed her.

“Thanks, Einstein, I knew that.”

“I’m an Oppenheimer.” He replied seriously. “The Einsteins live on 4th.” With that the boy kicked off and started pedaling away.

“Thanks...” Jack said, watching the boy go.

“What a freak,” Zoe mocked after him. Jack had to admit, the boy wasn’t your everyday eight year old, but Zoe wasn’t your normal 15 year old either. After all, she had just been on the run through three different states. He gave her a long look at the irony of her statement.

“Shut up,” she said, turning away quickly at his look. Jack laughed as they both continued on, following the boys directions down the street.

After another 10 minutes or so of walking they finally found the Sheriff’s office and walked in, a bell clanging over the door as they entered. A young woman, an alpha by the scent of her, was sitting at a desk, her feet propped up as she read a newspaper. Jack hung back a bit. It’d been awhile since he’d taken his last suppressant and he wasn’t sure how strong his true scent was after the long night of walking in the rain. Though really an omega, the suppressants he took regularly made him smell like a beta, similar to his daughter’s scent. He’d been taking them most of his life, from the moment he had decided to join the U.S. Marshals. It wasn’t a normal standard to have omegas in law enforcement. Not that it was illegal, but omegas on the force didn’t always get treated the same way as their beta and alpha compatriots, and Jack wasn’t going to risk his job or status in the field because of a silly thing like his orientation. So he had decided to hide it. If anyone decided to look at his personal records as a kid, the truth would be there clear as day, but no one had before. People didn’t look too hard when what they smelled matched up with what they saw. Jack’s ex-alpha and Zoe were the only ones close to him who really knew about his true orientation, and the omega was relieved that neither of them had spilled his secret.

Though most places didn’t discriminate based on orientation, he was currently in a small town in the middle of nowhere. He wasn’t going to take his chances that these people might still hold old school values and ways of thinking about what certain orientations should or shouldn’t do.

“Yeah, “ he replied, “me and….” Jack trailed off as he picked up the smell of something divine. He looked over to the source. “Is that coffee?” he asked, completely distracted. He really needed something to pick him up or he was going to fall asleep on his feet.

“Excuse me?” the officer asked, a look of disbelief and annoyance on her face. Jack quickly tried to backtrack.
“Sorry, we’ve just been up all night, and I could really use a fix,” he explained, hoping the woman would understand. With a huff, the alpha slapped down her paper and got to her feet.

“Does this look like Starbucks?” she asked, irritation pouring off of her in waves.

“Sorry,” he tried to apologize again, realizing that he’d upset her somehow. “Deputy…”

“Lupo,” she supplied.

“Right,” he said, stepping closer and in front of his daughter. “Maybe we got off on the wrong foot.” He wasn’t sure how or why the alpha was so wired and upset, but he was going to try and remain civil. He reached into his jacket and pulled out his badge. “I’m Jack Carter. I work for-“

“Gun!” Lupo yelled, and in a move too fast for him to follow she had him suddenly face first on the ground. Jack coughed and groaned as the bruises he was sure he’d gotten in the crash were irritated and roughed up as the alpha pinned him to the floor with a knee grinding into his back. “Move and you’ll spend the rest of your days sucking meals through a straw!” she threatened him harshly.

“I’m a U.S. Marshal!” he cried desperately, his lips smushed into the wood paneling.

“Right,” Lupo scoffed at him with disbelief, not letting up an inch on her hold.

“Check my coat pocket!” he yelled, or tried to. He gasped for breaths as he felt her ruffle through his coat pockets looking for the badge.

Finally finding it, she got off of him without a trace of remorse. “Should have said something,” she said, as if it was his fault he found himself kissing the floor.

“Before or after you stood on my neck?” he accused angrily. Looking around the station he noticed his daughter missing. “Where’s Zoe?”

“What’s a Zoe?” Lupo asked in confusion.

Just then an older man, another alpha by the smell of him, came in, Zoe escorted in alongside him. “Did somebody lose this?” he asked with a soft voice. “She says her name is Shania.”

“Shania?” Jack asked unimpressed as he looked at her.

“He’s a U.S. Marshal,” Lupo informed the older man.

“Really? We don’t get many of those here,” the man said, looking at Jack’s badge. The man started to chuckle as he looked up at Jack. “Of course, we don’t get many of anybody around here!” Jack faked a laugh with the man, too tired and worn out to do much else. “Bill Cobb, County Sheriff,” the man said, introducing himself.

“Jack Carter,” Jack said, shaking the man’s hand.

“I see that you’ve met my deputy,” Cobb said cheerfully.

“Ah, yeah,” Jack started to say as Lupo whipped out his gun and handed it back to him. “Intimately,” he finished, giving the deputy a look. When had she swiped his gun?

“Coffee?” Cobb asked, offering Jack a mug. Jack wanted to laugh at how easily the man offered it when his deputy had practically cut his head off for asking for a cup.
“Okay,” Jack simply said, taking the offered mug.

“Well, what can I do for you, Marshal?” the Sheriff asked, shrugging off his coat as he walked further into the room.

Jack summarized what had happened on the road and how they had crashed their car into a tree.

“Are you all right?” Cobb asked, looking over Jack for any injuries.

“Yeah, we ran into-”

“Our selves,” Zoe said, interrupting him.

“You ran into yourselves?” Cobb asked slowly.

“Off the road,” Jack interjected, not wanted these people to think they were crazy. “We ran ourselves off the road trying to avoid a dog.” He explained.

Cobb nodded in understanding, “Oh, yes. He’s a local hazard. So what can we do for you?”

“Actually, I was hoping that you could hang onto the kid while I went and dealt with the car,” Jack said, walking to stand beside Zoe. She looked at him with wide, pleading eyes which he chose to ignore.

“Well, I don’t see why not,” Cobb said. “Jo?”

“You cannot be serious!” Zoe protested angrily. Jack grabbed her and guided her into the cell when Lupo unlocked it. “You’re just going to lock me up here?”

“Yeah,” Jack said easily, standing back as the doors closed behind Zoe. She would be safe there and also wouldn’t be able to run away again like last time. She glared at him angrily and then stomped over to the cot that sat in the cell with her. With one last look Jack turned away and asked Cobb, “I’m assuming you guys don’t get AAA out here?”

“No,” Cobb said. “We have Henry. Jo, give Henry a call. Have him bring the tow truck around.”

“Right,” she said, picking up the phone and dialing. She held it to her ear for a bit before saying, “There’s no answer.” A few moments later a large explosion sounded from a distance. Jack jumped, looking out a window for the source, but neither Cobb nor Lupo reacted.

“Now he’ll answer,” Cobb said, leaning back in his chair. Jack stared at him in disbelief as Lupo began to dial the number once again. Was no one going to do anything about the giant explosion that just happened?

“Henry. Lupo. Bring the truck,” Lupo said into the phone, apparently having gotten into contact with this Henry person. “And what was that explosion?” she asked. Jack stared between the Deputy and the Sheriff in confusion and disbelief. Had the tow truck guy made that explosion?

Lupo hung up a few moments later. “Says he didn’t hear anything.”

Cobb chuckled, though the laugh sounded somewhat forced. “He never does.”

Jack looked away. What had they stepped into? He thought as he took another sip of his drink.
A short time later, Jack was with Henry as the man used his truck to pull his cruiser out of the tree and back onto the road.

“Nice landing,” Henry said, making a swooping gesture towards the tree.

“Thanks,” Jack said, watching the progress of his car.

“How’d you get out?” Henry asked, making small talk.

“Carefully,” Jack quipped, somehow already feeling at ease around this alpha, even after having only being around him for a short period of time. Henry pointed at Jack knowingly, understanding Jack’s meaning without further prompting. There seemed to be a lot of alphas in this town, or else it was his luck that he just kept running into them at every turn. This one though seemed calming to be around, his scent mellow when compared to the two in the Sheriff’s office.

“And right about there should do it,” Henry stated as the car settled fully onto the road. “Let’s take a look.” Henry easily popped the hood of the car to get a look at the engine. He made more small talk as he rummaged through the parts. “So, you’re a U.S. Marshal?”

“Yep,” Jack answered, keeping a bit of space between him and the other man. His suppressants were sitting in the glove box of the car, but he couldn’t reach them right now with Henry right there.

“Must be exciting work.”

“Not at the moment,” Jack said, fiddling with a pine needle he had picked up in an attempt to keep his hands busy. He broke the needle in half several times before tossing the pieces to the side.

“I just was never completely clear as to what you fellows do.” Henry stated as he practically crawled right into the engine.

“Uh, it varies,” Jack explained. “Protect federal witnesses, bring back escaped felons, transport prisoners.”

“So, that little girl,” Henry asked in disbelief, referring to Zoe whom he’d seen in the cell what he came to pick Jack up at the station. “She’d be a…”

Jack nodded, agreeing to whatever Henry was thinking. After what Zoe had put him through, she deserved to have some people think of her as a criminal, at least for a little while. It’s not like they would be here very long. “How long you been in the tow business,” Jack asked, redirecting the conversation away from him and his daughter.

“Ah, I don’t do this for a living,” Henry said. “I do this for fun. I just always liked fixing things. I was an engineer back in the day.” Jack nodded in understanding as Henry shoved his entire arm into the engine block.

“As in trains?” he asked, finding himself interested in knowing more about this laid back alpha.

Henry stood up straight and looked Jack in the eye before calmly stating, “Space shuttles.”

Jack felt the smile he had started to form drop as he processed what Henry had said. Space shuttles. How did a man that used to work on space shuttles come to work out here in a small town in the middle of nowhere like Eureka? Jack would have expected someone with that job listing to be hanging around Florida or Texas; somewhere closer to the space program at least.
“So,” Henry continued, as if his past job details were a small matter. “I can fix it.” Jack let out a breath of relief, glad that something was working out in his favor. “It’s just gonna take me a few days.” Then again, maybe not.

“No, no, no,” Jack protested. “I gotta be back in LA tomorrow.” Abbey, his ex-alpha, was expecting Zoe to be returned home by then and Jack really didn’t want to receive an earful from her about having failed to return their daughter in a timely manner.

“Bright side,” Henry said cheerfully, holding out a hand as if to stop Jack’s protests physically. “It’ll give you some time to take in the sights.” The man gestured to the trees around them. Really, the man was a true optimistic, Jack thought.

“Perfect…” Jack groaned, wondering what he was going to do with Zoe. He couldn’t keep her in that cell for a few days. He may not have much experience in parenting, what with Abbey taking custody of their daughter when they divorced several years past, but he wasn’t stupid. You don’t keep your child locked up in a jail cell, no matter what they may have done to deserve it.

Henry slammed the hood of the car closed again and gestured for Jack to follow him back to the truck. “Let’s get her back to my shop, and I can start working on her.”

The two climbed into the cab and Henry pulled out quickly onto the road, Jack’s cruiser being pulled along behind them.

It didn’t take the two of them long to drive back to Henry’s station, but as they pulled up they could see that something was definitely wrong. Cars were parked along the road and where ever there was an open space, a huge crowd of people steadily walking down the road to where firetrucks and other emergency vehicles were parked. From the truck, Jack could see Sheriff Cobb talking with a small man wearing glasses and Deputy Lupo walking up to the two touting a huge gun of some kind over her shoulder. Jack glanced at Henry to find him frowning in concern over all of the activity surrounding them.

“This can’t be good,” he muttered as he parked the truck. The two of them got out and wandered over to stand with the crowd as the Sheriff addressed everyone. Jack hung back a bit and ducked into his cruiser, grabbing his pills and popping one in his mouth before joining the circle.

“Alright, what I would like to do is organize you into three groups.” Cobb instructed, pointing towards the horizon, “Everyone see the tree line? What we’re gonna do is we’re gonna sweep towards the tree line.”

“Okay, thank you! Let’s go, people!” Lupo yelled, ushering people to start the search pattern. The crowd slowly trickled out, everyone following Cobb’s orders and wanting to help. Jack slowly made his way towards the Sheriff and Deputy, trying to avoid getting in the way of the civilians passing him.

“Hey, Sheriff, what’s going on?” he asked, hoping to find out more of what the issue was and see if he could help. Jack tried not to make eye contact with Lupo as she glared at him in irritation. She really did not like him for some reason.

“There’s a boy missing,” Cobb admitted, seemingly reluctant to give away any kind of information.

“Is he lost or is he kidnapped?” Jack asked, pushing for more.
“We don’t know,” the Sheriff said, not looking at Jack directly. “We don’t know at this point.”

“Oh, Okay,” Jack said, his mind turning to his past experiences and training when tasked with finding a missing child. He couldn’t help, but think back to when he was trying to find Zoe and the steps he took to track her down. If this kid had left or runaway willingly, he could have made it farther than most people thought him capable of. For goodness sake, look at what his own 15 year old had accomplished. “Call Highway Patrol,” he continued, looking out to where the searchers were steadily heading for the trees. If, on the other hand the boy was kidnapped, these people on foot wouldn’t help much, or prevent the kidnapper from getting across state borders. “What you’re gonna want are roadblocks, on all the major arteries, and put Search and Rescue guys to comb the-“

“We’ve all seen The Fugitive, Marshal,” Lupo said with distain, cutting him off mid-way. “How about you let us take care of this?”

Jack awkwardly straightened his damp jacket before addressing Sheriff Cobb. “I don’t wanna step on any toes, sir, but I do have a lot of experience at this kind of thing,” he said, trying to appeal to the higher ranking alpha. He’d seen it before where law officers got put off by the presence of government officials and he didn’t want a bid for control to endanger the life of this missing kid. Jack tried to make his body posture more relaxed and softened his tone, showing Cobb that he wasn’t a threat.

“Trust me,” Cobb said dismissively, shaking his head, “you don’t.” Shocked and a bit taken aback, Jack could only step away and watch as Cobb directed his attention to Henry and walked away.

As the area cleared of people, Jack happened to notice an RV covered in blue tarp and surrounded by crime scene tape. Cobb and Lupo might not want his help, but nothing was going to stop him from doing his job and trying to help this kid. Making sure nobody was watching, Jack quickly ducked under the tape and slid inside the tarp to check the place out.

Inside, Jack ran into a scene he wasn’t prepared for. A huge circular shaped chuck seemed to have been sliced right out of the back of the RV, the entire back half simply gone. “Wow,” he muttered, peering closer at the damage. The cuts looked burned at the edges, almost like a giant laser had come through and separated the metal. The question was though, where did the missing back half of the RV go?

“Looking for something?” a woman’s voice called from behind him.

Startled, Jack whipped around, finding an attractive looking woman in a business suit behind him. Inhaling subtly, Jack caught traces of omega in the air. So this woman was an omega too, he realized, glad that he had taken the chance to pop a suppressant as he watched her scent him in return. The meds would make sure she only caught the scent of a beta from him.

“You know you’re disturbing an active crime scene?” she demanded.

“Well, actually, I’m investigating an active crime scene,” Jack corrected, reaching into his jacket and pulling out his badge. This woman was all business and he didn’t want to step on anymore toes today. “Jack Carter, U.S. Marshal,” he said, providing his information.

“Allison Blake,” the woman said, smiling as she reached back and pulled out her own badge. “Department of Defense.”

Well, that was shocking. What the hell was the DoD doing out here? Investigating a missing child’s case no less. “I didn’t see that coming,” he muttered, putting his badge back in his coat.
“Well, now that we’re done with the introductions, Mr. Carter, can you-“ Allison said, gesturing him out side of the tarp.

“Well, actually, it’s Marshal Carter,” Jack said, interrupting her. She obviously wanted him to go, and though she was DOD, he still knew how to do his job and he wasn’t going to let her stop him. “But you can call me Jack,” he finished, smiling as he climbed further onto the wrecked RV.

“Hey! I don’t like to repeat myself,” she demanded, annoyance coloring her scent and tone.

“Yet something tells me you’re going to,” Jack muttered, trying to ignore her as he looked around. “Wow. You see, I’ve seen some strange stuff…” he trailed off, turning from examining the cut patterns to look at Allison again. “This is why the DOD is out here in the middle of nowhere?” he asked, referring to the strange markings.

“I’m not at liberty to say,” she said confidently. How like a bureaucrat.

“Oh, come on, Ms. Blake,” Jack cajoled. “We’re on the same team.”

“That’s Agent Blake, Marshal,” Allison said, throwing Jack’s words back in his face, “and we’re not even in the same league.” Ouch, that stung, but Jack had to admire the woman for her confidence and forthright. He wonders if he was as open about his orientation in his job if he would have developed the same mannerisms. “This is way out of your jurisdiction,” she continued, looking at him in amusement. He was glad he hadn’t ticked her off yet and that she seemed to be humoring for the moment.

“Actually, I’m a U.S. Marshal, so technically, the United States is my jurisdiction,” he bantered back. “Careful, though, wouldn’t want you disturbing an active crime scene.” He turned away, smiling as she huffed behind him. Allison followed him further into the RV.

“Look,” she started only to stop as she caught sight of what he had noticed as well. A small handprint on one of the lower cabinets could be clearly seen against the grain of the wood. “Brian,” she said, distress starting to fill her scent as she was reminded of the missing child.

“The missing boy?” Jack asked, glancing at a few of the cabinets and counter around them, “Yeah- Hey!” Allison exclaimed in confused protest as he rubbed his thumb through the fingerprint. The residue it was made of smeared onto his thumb with a dark trace. “What are you doing?! she asked in disgust as he popped it into his mouth.

“Relax, it’s not blood,” he said calmly, “it’s chocolate. Hershey’s Big Block. With almonds.” He smiled at her as she looked at him in disbelief.

“How could you possibly know that?” she asked.

Jack reached over to the counter he had looked at earlier and grabbed the wrapper he had seen, holding it out to her. Allison rolled her eyes and smiled as he explained, “Believe it or not, I have done this before.”

“But,” he continued, “there’s one small detail I usually like to ascertain before launching a full-scale manhunt for a missing person.” He led her closer to the front of the vehicle, Allison trailing behind him.

“And that would be?”

“That there is, in fact, a person missing,” he stated confidently, lifting a hidden storage
compartment that folded out of one of the vehicle seats. There, laying against the wood and smiling unabashedly, was the ‘missing’ boy. “Hi, Brian,” Jack greeted the kid. Brian waved back as Allison stared at him in disbelief. Jack suddenly smelled relief and a small trace of interest coming off of Allison.

“Yep,” he said quickly, deciding it was time to leave. He quickly grabbed Brian’s hand and hoisted the boy out of the compartment and beat a hasty retreat out of the RV. Coming out from under the tarp, Brian’s mother let out a gasp of surprised joy as she noticed her son coming towards her with Jack following behind. She knelt down and checked on the boy as Allison walked over to talk with Sheriff Cobb. Jack began to pace around the reunited family, happy to have found the kid and ended the search, but really starting to feel the fatigue from lack of sleep hit him again. As he walked, his foot suddenly slipped, falling into a pothole and covering his shoe and leg in wet mud.

“Damn it,” he muttered, annoyed at getting more of his clothes dirty. Kicking off as much of the stuff as he could, Jack made his way over to Allison, as she seemed to have finished up her talk with the Sheriff. The emergency vehicles and the majority of the search party had already left and headed home or back into town.

“You really stepped in it,” Allison said as he joined her. Great, so she had noticed his little slip.

“Well, it wouldn’t be the first time,” he admitted. He knew she was talking about more than the dirt on his pants.

“I suppose I should thank you,” she admitted, not sounding very thankful.

“How about you tell me what’s going on here instead?” Jack asked, tired of messing around. He wasn’t blind. There were too many weird things in this town for it to be altogether normal. Kids reading textbooks way above their grade level, Deputies with guns that shouldn’t exist, giant holes in RVs, space shuttle mechanic tow truck drivers, and the presence of the DOD all painted a very weird and confusing picture.

“Sorry, Marshal,” Allison say, shrugging apologetically, “but, uh…”

“Yeah, I know, you’re not at liberty to say.” He’d figure it out eventually.

“Oh, hey, Marshal?” Henry suddenly called. Jack looked up and spotted the man a little bit ahead of him, standing next to the tow truck. “One, oh, I don’t know, maybe two days,” he said, pulling a lever on the truck that brought his car crashing down onto the pavement. The tires started hissing as they deflated from the impact and whatever else had punctured them during the crash last night. Henry looked at the car with a frown. “Three days, max,” he corrected, looking at Jack apologetically.

Jack stared in disbelief at the state of his car. “You may be here awhile,” Allison joked, looking up at him.

A short while later, Allison pulled up in front of a small house that had a sign out front calling it “Barlowe’s Bed and Breakfast.” Jack peered up at the cozy looking home from the passenger seat, giving Allison a look of disbelief as she simply stared at him.

“What?” she asked.

“Nothing,” he admitted, looking back at the house. It wasn’t what he had been expected; a little too
normal after the day he’d had so far. He was suddenly reminded of his daughter, back at the police station and locked in a cell. “Actually, uh, there is some-“

Allison scoffed. “You didn’t think that I was taking you to my place,” she chuckled.

“No!” Jack said, completely serious. “That’s not even-.” Jack shook his head. Where had that even come from?

“Because I’ll tell you right now, this isn’t Madison County, and you’re definitely not Clint Eastwood,” Allison explained.

“Well, yeah,” Jack chuckled, feeling uncomfortable at the change in direction of the conversation. “He’s twice my age,” he joked, trying to lighten the mood. “Uh, I was going to ask about my daughter actually.”

“Your…daughter?” Allison asked, looking confused and thrown off.

“Yeah, she’s uh, locked in a jail cell back at the Sheriff’s station.”

“What? Why is she locked-“

“Long story. Look, is there a chance I could get you to bring her here if this is where I’m staying? She’d hate me, well, hate me more if I left her in a jail cell all night,” Jack quickly explained, looking imploringly at Allison.

“I’ll see what I can do,” Allison stated slowly, still looking slightly confused.

“Thanks,” Jack said, stepping out of the car. “Oh,” turning back around Jack leaned into the window, laying his arms against the door as he address Allison again. “Just because you’ve dropped the subject, doesn’t mean that I have,” he said, referring to their conversation earlier at Henry’s.

“Marshal, whatever you think is going on with us,” Allison said with a laugh, “trust me, it’s not.”

Caught off guard, Jack shifted his stance before saying, “I was talking about the RV.”

“I knew that!” she called after him as he walked away, heading for the front door of the B&B. As she started the car and drove off, Jack tiredly scrubbed his hands through his hair, concerned by the turn the conversation had taken. There must have been some severe mixed signals given back when they were finding the kid. I mean, sure, he had tried to impress her, what with her insinuating that he didn’t know what he was doing. They had teased each other, but he had just thought it was friendly banter between fellow colleagues, nothing more. Apparently, Allison Blake had gotten a different impression. It probably didn’t help that she thought he was a beta and not a fellow omega like he knew he was.

Same orientation couples weren’t unheard of, but in Jack’s experience, and from what he’d seen, those types of pairings took a lot of effort to maintain and normally only thrived if the individuals involved had the right temperament and attitude for it. Jack was not one of those people.

Jack walked up to the door and entered the little house, calling a greeting as he came in. No one answered so he walked further in, shutting the door behind him. It was a quaint little place, comfortable looking, and he called again to see if anyone would respond. On the other side of the front hall there was a green colored room and Jack entered, hearing the whir of helicopter blades. He looked out the window in time to catch sight of a helicopter with what looked like the Presidential seal stamped on its side taking off into the sky. Jack could only stare in shock as he
heard the click of heels coming up behind him. He turned around, a well-dressed woman walking up to him in greeting.

“Ah, you must be the Marshal,” she said, smiling, her hair looking ruffled from the wind outside.

“That was fast,” Jack replied, surprised she already knew who he was.

“Small town, big mouths,” she answered, holding out her hand which Jack shook readily. “I’m Beverly Barlowe.”

“Jack Carter,” he greeted in return. He turned back to the window with a small gesture. “The helicopter there… was that…”

“Sorry, some of my clients require a certain level of discretion.”

“Clients?” Jack asked. He thought this was a Bed and Breakfast. What kind of small town B&B had the President as a ‘client?’

“Guests,” Beverly corrected herself. “You look exhausted,” she stated, changing the subject. Jack looked down at himself. His suit was caked with dried mud from falling out of the car and stiff from the dried rain. He couldn’t help, but agree as he even felt bone tired from the last few hours, not to mention the last few days he’s had. “Let’s get you settled in,” she beckoned, leading him away and to one of the rooms.

“Thank you,” he said, feeling completely drained. The house smelled of omega and the scent had a calming effect, even on him.

“Here we go, nice and cozy,” Beverly said, opening one of the doors and showing him a nice little room. “Will your wife be joining you?” she inquired as she lit a candle on the mantelpiece.

“My wife?” he asked back in confusion. Beverly gestured to his hand, where his old wedding ring still sat on his finger. “Oh… not likely,” he said. “We’re separated.” He really didn’t want to think about Abbey right now.

“Was it the sex?” Beverly asked, understanding clear in her voice.

“Excuse me?” Jack asked, taken aback at the blunt statement.

“Well, it’s a common problem in long-term relationships,” she rushed to explain. “People get bored, they want to experiment sexually and they don’t know how to express their needs.” Beverly got closer as she talked and Jack backed up, finding himself knocking against the window behind him. What was it with everyone in this town?

“Well, not that sharing my sex life with a total stranger doesn’t sound like loads of fun,” he said with strained sarcasm, “at the moment, my needs are a nap and shower.”

“You’re the guest,” Beverly allowed, finally backing away. Jack felt like he could breathe again and watched the omega as she left and wished him pleasant dreams.

He could not wait to get out of this town.

Jack startled awake, jolting up out of bed and glancing at the analog clock beside him. The time read 9 a.m. and he quickly jumped out of bed, wrapping the bed sheet around his naked lower half.
It was morning already and he had slept heavily all through the night. What was really bad though was the fact that Zoe didn’t seem to be here, which meant she had been in the cell, at the Sheriff’s station, all night. She was going to kill him, and he was pretty sure he deserved it for this.

Jack looked around, desperately searching for his clothes that he had laid aside after his shower last night. There were no sign of them, so Jack quickly grabbed his gun holster laying on the nightstand, made sure the sheet was securely wrapped around him, and shuffled out the door, shouting for Beverly as he went. Making his way downstairs to the main floor, Jack couldn’t find the omega anywhere and as he called her again, he spotted a book on an end table titled The Joys of Sex. Jack did a double-take after seeing it, wondering again what the hell kind of B&B this place was. Curiosity getting the better of him, he couldn’t help but crack the book open, catching a glimpse of what looked like two men engaged in some kind of sex act.

“Doing a little undercover work?” Beverly’s voice asked behind him. Slapping the cover closed, Jack turned to face her, holding the bed sheets securely against his lower half.

“Uh….someone took my clothes,” he accused, choosing to ignore her question.

“Oh,” she holds up several clothes in dry cleaner bags, showing him that they were his. “They were a little ripe. I hope you don’t mind.”

“Oh, sorry.” Jack said, suddenly feeling bad. He had been wearing the things for over three days. “Thanks.”

Taking the clothes from her, Jack quickly excused himself, shuffling over to the nearest empty room and swinging the door closed. He quickly dropped the sheet and put on his clothes as Beverly talked to him through the door.

“Henry called while you were sleeping. He said it’s gonna take longer than he thought. Something about sending out for parts.”

“Oh, yeah,” Jack said, sliding his dress shirt on. That wasn’t too surprising, he’d seen the state of his engine when Henry had been examining it. Didn’t mean he liked it though. That meant several more days stuck in this town.

Finally finished getting dressed, Jack came back outside and asked Beverly, “I need to know where I can get a car in town.” He really needed to get to his daughter and apologize for leaving her. Beverly paused a moment and fidgetted with some keys in her hand before holding them out to him.

“You can take mine,” she offered. “But just be sure to have it back before dark.”

Shocked by her generosity, Jack graciously took the keys with a sincere “Thank you.”

“Have a great day,” Beverly said, stepping aside as Jack made his way outside. Looking around for the car, Jack saw that the garage was completely empty. Confused he kept looking until he spotted this little, blue… thing sitting under some glass panels. Beverly’s statement about being back before dark made more sense now.

“A solar car?” Jack groaned. He’d be lucky to even fit in that thing. Not having much of a choice, Jack scrunched himself in, started it up, and made for town. The thing drove smoothly, but was definitely not something he would have bought for himself.

As he got into town, Jack looked out his window in confusion as he saw men in what looked like mad scientist outfits go by, a woman blowing triangle bubbles (how was that even possible?), and
what looked like four versions of the same guy playing chess with himself. Themselves? This town was beyond weird.

Jack quickly pulled up to the Sheriff’s station, the tires screeching as he quickly parked. Stumbling out of the vehicle with a grumble, Jack was about to head inside when a statue of a crazy looking naked man caught his eye, the thing standing proudly in the middle of a small park.

“What the hell?” Jack asked aloud.

“Archimedes,” a young voice popped up from the ground. Looking down, Jack saw a young boy sketching with chalk on the sidewalk.

“Excuse me?” he asked.

“Greek mathematician. Discovered hydro statics. ‘Eureka!’ Get it?” the boy explained.

“Not really, no,” Jack admitted.

“When’s your birthday?” the boy asked randomly.


“Five, 13, ’69,” the boy said aloud, looking like he was thinking. “You’re a Tuesday,” he announced. “I’m 11, 18, ’97. That’s a Tuesday, too.”

“Good to know,” Jack said, watching as the boy drew out what looked like some complicated equation. Leaving him to it, Jack finally entered the Sheriff’s station, his daughter immediately pouncing on his entrance.

“You are in big trouble,” she stated firmly from behind the iron bars. “Just wait until the judge hears that you kept a minor locked up all night.” He knew she’d be angry.

“Here,” Jack said, kicking over a waste basket and trying to act like her words didn’t bother him. “File a complaint.”

Jack turned to where Lupo was sitting, her eyes covered by a bandanna, gun parts littered about in front of her, and a stop watch in her hand. “Deputy,” he asked, “where’s the Sheriff?”

“Can’t you see I’m busy?” Lupo asked in irritation.

“Oh…..honestly?” Jack said, looking at his daughter for help, though she ignored him.

“You wanna know where the Sheriff is?” Lupo asked, pulling down her blindfold. “He’s out on police business. Which is where I should be, instead of babysitting Felon Spice here.” Lupo tilts her head in Zoe’s direction.

“Hey,” Zoe called, looking offended.

“Now, if you’ll excuse me,” Lupo got up from her chair, “I’m gonna stop doing your job and start doing mine.” With that, Lupo makes her way out of the station, slamming the door behind her.

“Something I said,” Jack asked, looking back at his daughter.

“No, I guess you just have that effect on alphas,” Zoe snaps, sitting back down on her bunk.

“Oh, what is that supposed to mean?” Jack demanded, watching as his daughter avoided eye
“Forget it.”

“No, really,” he said, “I would love to get some sage advice from a teenager caught impersonating a flight attendant.”

“Oh, please,” Zoe scoffed, “How hard is it to do this?” She held two fingers together on each hand and smiled while pointing and motioning to the sides and forward. Jack sighed, deciding to finally get to the real matter at hand.

“Seriously, you can’t keep doing this.” Zoe looked at him as he leaned against the bars. “You can’t keep running away from your alpha.”

“Why not?” Zoe demanded. “You did!”

There it was. The reason Zoe was mad at him and kept running away. She blamed him, probably even both of them, for their separation so many years ago.

“Zoe, Abbey and I, we tried,” Jack stressed, trying to make her understand. “It’s just, some people just don’t work.” He was trying to explain this as simply as possible to her, because his whole relationship with Abbey had been ill-conceived from the start. The only good thing about it had been Zoe, and even she had been taken from him because of his job, his cover as a beta, and Abbey’s role as alpha in the relationship.

“Don’t work?” Zoe mocked. “Mom, all you do is work!”

Jack felt pain lance through his chest. It’d been so long since he’d last heard Zoe call him mom. He hadn’t realized how much he missed it until she’d said it again. How could he explain it to her? That his work was important, that he loved it, but loved her too. He wasn’t great at showing his feelings. Last time he had opened up that much it got him nothing, but a broken bond and visitation rights to his own daughter.

“Zoe, that’s…” he tried, but he couldn’t figure out what to say. Taking a breath, Jack stepped away from the bars, putting a little distance between him and his daughter. “Do-” he coughed, clearing his throat and blinking away the tears that wanted to form. “Do you need anything?” he asked looking back towards the cell. Zoe wouldn’t even look at him.

“Not from you,” she stated dismissal clear in her tone.

“Okay,” he said softly, his voice cracking with emotion. Needing to get out and have some fresh air, Jack quickly walked out of the station, blinking at the clouds above him and taking big gulps of air. The weather must have felt his pain because not a moment later, rain started to pour once more from above. Letting out a heavy sigh, Jack got back into the little blue solar car and decided to head out, wanting to visit Henry.

“Stellar job,” Jack said while driving down the road through the woods. He angled the rear-view mirror so he could look at himself as he berated his actions. “Mother of the Year.” Suddenly hearing a dog barking, Jack looked forward in time to see the same dog that caused him to crash the previous night dash across the road again. Cursing, Jack quickly swerved the little blue car, trying not to hit the dog. This time was a bit more successful than last night as he veered back onto the road and not into the trees. He didn’t know what he would have said if he had wrecked another car, this one not even his this time.

Cursing at the dog, Jack finally made it to Henry’s pulling to a stop outside of the station.
Grumbling, he staggered out of the car, slamming the door behind him. Trying to regain his equilibrium, Jack glanced down and then did a double-take. Circling around the spot where the RV had been parked the other day, Jack knelt down and ran his hands through what looked like salt or sand crystals piled up on the pavement. There was a lot of it and the stuff was largely out of place considering the season.

Dog barking drew Jack’s attention away and he looked up to find that same dog as before, disappearing into the trees. Curious, Jack trailed along behind the animal, figuring it might be headed somewhere and some instinct telling him to follow it.

He tromped through the woods, grateful that the rain seemed to have at least stopped for a time. He caught flashes of the dog’s tail appearing every once in awhile ahead of him and he followed the best he could. Coming through some branches, Jack saw the dog standing before what looked like a clearing through the trees. Creeping closer, Jack stared, amazed at the sight of bleached white tree corpses and frozen cow carcasses. Leaning his hand on one of the trees, Jack jerked his hand back at the flash of heat that instantly burned his hand. He’d never seen anything like this. What the hell was going on? One of the cows had a steaming chunk of meat ripped out of its hindquarters, the insides clearly visible from where he stood several feet away.

“Okay, this is the creepiest thing I’ve—Ah!” Jack flinched as a needle shot into his skin. Groaning, Jack tried to resist the pull of the drug being pumped into his system, but ultimately succumbed to unconsciousness as the world went dark.

With a groan, Jack blearily opened his eyes, his body jostled by the movement of what felt like a vehicle.

“Morning, sunshine!” an accented voice yelled over the sound of the wind. Blinking, Jack looked around, finding himself locked in some kind of cage on the back of a small vehicle being driven through town.

“Where am I?” Jack asked, grasping one of the metal bars and pulling himself up to a sitting position. “What’s going on?”

“Afraid I can’t say, mate,” the man driving said, his Australian accent thick as he smiled broadly.

“Well, where are you taking me?” Jack asked, trying to get some kind of answer. He didn’t appreciate being drugged and kidnapped, especially by some crazy alpha he’d never met before.

“Can’t say that either,” the man replied, the same big grin on his face. Looking around, no one seemed to react to seeing a man locked in a cage being driven down the street. Was this a normal thing here?

“Look,” Jack said, trying to play nice, “whoever you are-“

“Call me Taggart!” the Aussie interjected cheerfully.

“Taggart,” Jack agreed, keeping his tone calm. “Not sure if you realize this, but you’ve just assaulted and kidnapped a Federal Marshal.”

“Yeah, sorry about that,” Taggart apologized, sounding both sincere and pleased at what he’d done. “Just doing my job.”
“Your job?” Jack asked, incredulous. “What kind of job?” Taggart opened his mouth to respond, but Jack cut him off, “Let me guess, ‘can’t say.’”

Taggart suddenly slammed on the brakes and Jack hurtled forward, unprepared as his head slammed into the bars of the cage. He yelled in pain, his head aching from the drugs he’d been given and now the impact with a metal bar.

“What is wrong with you!?” Jack yelled, clutching his head.

“Lowjack,” Taggart whispered with almost reverent awe as he stared ahead at the same shaggy dog that Jack had been following in the woods.

How was this dog everywhere? Jack wondered almost hysterically. Watching Taggart as the man slowly reached to the side and grasped what looked like a heavy duty sniper rifle.

“Whoa-“ Jack started, freaking out at the sight of the gun, only for Taggart to make a shush motion as he carefully aimed the weapon at the dog. The man was certifiably insane, and Jack was stuck with him, locked in a cage.

“I got you this time,” Taggart whispered, toggling the sight on the gun.

Jack paused. ‘This time?’

“Oh, hang on, you’re a dog catcher?” Jack asked in disbelief. Why did a dog catcher have or need equipment like a large sniper rifle, which was probably loaded with tranquilizer darts, Jack wondered, wincing as he thought back to the needle that had pierced him in the clearing.

“Biological containment specialist,” the alpha muttered in correction, finally shooting the gun. Instead of hitting the dog, the animal ran away and instead the dart struck a shocked looking man that had wandered out near the alley.

“Are you insane?” Jack asked, watching as the poor man collapsed to the ground unconscious.

“You sneaky little bastard,” Taggart said, a crazy grin taking over his face as he looked in the direction the dog had wandered off to.

“You just shot that guy,” Jack tried again, hoping the man would realize what he’d done.

Taggart shrugged. “With a non-addictive Phenothiazine derivative,” he explained casually. “Perfectly harmless.” The man hopped out of the vehicle, about to make his way towards the downed man.

“It’s just a dog,” Jack scoffed.

Taggart stopped and backtracked to stare at Jack through the bars of the cage. “Now you listen to me, friend. I’ve tracked polar bear across the Arctic tundra, dived with great whites off the Barrier Reef, hunted with the prides of the Serengeti, but none of it even begins to compare with what that animal’s put me through.” The alpha said all of this with a low intensity in his voice and Jack found himself becoming nervous as he felt the low simmering anger coming off of the man. Taggart suddenly laughed and Jack found his hands clenching into fists nervously. This man was seriously crazy. “It’s not just a dog, Marshal,” the man continued. “It’s the devil himself.”

Jack found himself nodding, if only to get the insane alpha to back away from him. The minute the man left to go pick up his dart from the guy he struck, Jack started pressing on the bars, trying to get one of them to budge. Spying a crowbar nestled in the front seat, Jack grabbed it, freezing as he
looked up to see Taggart glancing at the vehicle before heading further down the street, presumably in pursuit of the dog. With the crowbar in hand, Jack quickly used it to pry one of the lower bars off the cage, making a gap big enough for him to slip through. Quickly climbing through the gap, Jack made sure his gun was still in his holster before leaving the vehicle, jogging back down the street while keeping an eye out for Taggart.

Jack burst back into the Sheriff’s station, spotting Lupo and his daughter sitting together at a desk looking through magazines and eating Chinese food.

“Where’s Cobb?” Jack demanded, pointing at the Deputy. “I wanna know what’s going on. I wanna know now!”

“See what I mean?” Zoe said looking at Lupo. Jack had no idea what they were talking about and he didn’t care at this point.

“Is there a problem, Marshal?” Lupo asked blandly.

“I don’t know,” Jack said, trying to keep the hysteria out of his voice. “You tell me. I mean, one minute I’m driving my delinquent daughter back to Los Angeles, and the next I’m in the middle of the freaking Twilight Zone!”

“Why don’t you just calm down?” Lupo asked, coming out from behind the desk, her hands settling on her hips.

“No, no, don’t tell me to calm down!” Jack yelled. He could tell that he was starting to freak Zoe out, but he was angry and freaked out himself right now. “I’ve had it with you people and I’ve had it with your crazy town.” Jack breathed, trying to regain control and assert some kind of authority. “Now start talking or I’ll have 50 marshals here by nightfall.”

“I’m afraid I can’t allow that,” Allison said, walking into the station with Taggart right behind her.

“Really?” Jack asked. “And just how do you plan on stopping me?” Everyone shifted uncomfortably and looked away as Lupo suddenly flexed and started cracking her neck, advancing on Jack as he hastily backed away.

He wasn’t fast enough as she sprang, grabbing his arm and twisting it behind his back harshly, her other hand pinching at a nerve in his neck that had him yelling out in pain. With quick, jerky steps she forced him over to the open cell, throwing him in.

“You, in there with him,” Lupo ordered, gesturing to Zoe. Without a protest, the girl quickly sprinted into the cell with her father as the Deputy locked the door closed behind them.

Jack groaned, trying to massage the pain out of his neck, casting a quick glance over his daughter to make sure she was alright.

That had not gone as he’d hoped.

“I’m going to go get, Sheriff Cobb,” Allison said, heading out quickly as Lupo propped her feet up at her desk, staring at Jack in smug satisfaction.

An hour or so later, Allison marched back in, caring a few files with her and placing them on Lupo’s desk.
“What’s this?” Lupo asked, gesturing to the manila stacks.

“Files. On him,” Allison said, tilting her head at Jack.

“What for?” Lupo asked in irritation.

“Sheriff Cobb has been incapacitated. We need a replacement.” Allison said, glancing at the cell again.

“What happened to the Sheriff?” Jack asked hesitantly.

“His leg got cut off,” Allison answered in a clipped tone.

“What?” bewildered, Jack glanced over at the omega. “How?”

Instead of answering, Allison just gave him a silent look, quelling him into silence again.

Sighing, she went to the office fridge, grabbing an ice pack from the freezer and some magazines from Lupo’s desk, she handed the items to Jack and Zoe.

“Here,” she said softly, giving an apologetic look to Jack’s neck.

Giving her a quick glance, Jack grabbed the ice pack, folding it over his aching neck with a small measure of relief, while Zoe eagerly grabbed the magazines with a smile and started to flip through them.

“He’s got experience. So what?” Lupo stated dismissively, lazily leafing through the files. Allison grabbed another skimming through it as she explained her reasoning.

“The way I see it, we have two options. We can get rid of him,” Allison stated matter of fact. Jack’s head shot up, concern and fear building and he saw whatever smile Zoe had on her face instantly drop as she looked fearfully at Allison. “Or use him.”

Lupo pulled out her pistol, slapping it on top of the files. “I know my preference.”

“He wrecked my cage,” Taggart muttered from where he was peeking out the window.

“He found the kid,” Allison argued back.

“We would have found him eventually,” Lupo retorted quickly.

“Smashed it to pieces,” Taggart continued to mutter. Jack wanted to protest at that, it was just one bar, but he kept quiet, figuring silence was golden in this moment.

“Without Cobb, we are gonna-” Allison started, but Lupo interrupted her.

“He’ll pull through. He has to,” the Deputy argued. Jack wondered what had actually happened to the man. It sounded like he might be at risk for dying.

“Built that cage with my own two hands,” Taggart continued to grumble.

“You’ll build a new one,” Allison said in exasperation.

“Yeah,” he muttered reluctantly, “but not as good.”

“Jo,” Allison said, turning back to the alpha, “the guy’s obviously good at what he does. And right
now, we need every resource at our disposal.”

“I still think it’s a bad idea,” Lupo continued to argue, shoving the files away from her.

“Marshal,” Allison stated, coming up to the bars expectantly. “Come on, let’s go for a ride.”

Jack breathed, trying to relax as he slowly set down the ice pack. Zoe grabbed his forearm, a look of fear in her eyes. He smiled at her encouragingly as the cell door sprang open, and he stood up, giving Zoe’s knee a quick squeeze in comfort. The cell door slammed closed as he walked out, following Allison out of the station and into her car. Nothing was said, until they were well on their way down the road, headed out of town.

“So, back there,” Jack started, clearing his throat nervously. “When you said, ‘get rid of him,’ was that like, you know, ‘buy him a bus ticket, get rid of him,’ like, you know…”

Allison looked at him unimpressed. Alright, so it had meant what he’d thought it had meant.

“First things first,” Allison stated, completely focused. She reached down and pulled up a huge stack of papers, colored tabs marking selected paragraphs of interest. “Standard non-disclosure agreement. It says that you will be charged with treason if you tell anyone what you see here. A lot of people would like to get their hands on what I’m about to show you.” Jack skimmed the pages, barely getting anywhere when Allison thrust a pen in his face. “Sign it,” she commanded.

Not asking questions, and feeling like he was finally going to be getting those answers he had been searching for, Jack took the pen and signed his name, Allison stopping the car as he did so. Giving her back the documents, Jack looked up to find them stopped before a ragged, broken down old bridge with ‘Do Not Enter’ signs plastered everywhere.

“Where are you taking me,” Jack asked in confusion. “Area 51?”

“Allison chuckled. “They wish that had our security.” With that Allison started the car forward.

Right towards the bridge.

“Slow down,” Jack urged, watching as they come closer to the edge of the bridge, but Allison picked up speed instead. “What are you doing?!” Jack yelled, fumbling for a handhold and bracing for the drop as they hit the edge…

And when right through it. With a rippled wave like parting water, the scene changed to the same forest road they had been travelling earlier. Jack glanced over at Allison, shocked by what had happened. She laughed, glancing at his god-smacked face.

They pulled up to a security post, the guard greeting Allison as she handed him her badge.

“What in the-“ Jack flinched as a bright light flashed in his face. Jack rubbed his eyes, trying to blink the black spots out of them. “Oh, god. I think I’m blind.”

“Relax. That almost never happens,” Allison said calmly.

Jack stared at her in shock. “Excuse me?!”

Continuing through the gate, Allison’s car drove up to mountain, giant satellites dotting the landscape. Jack peered upwards; staring at a large facility nestled proudly into the side.
“Oh, man….What did I just sign?” he asked himself, watching as military helicopters flew in to land on the roof of one of the structures.

“Welcome to Eureka,” Allison declared proudly.

Pulling up to the front of the main building, Allison parked and stepped out, Jack following quickly behind her. A large sign with G.D. Advanced Research Facility stood outside and Jack ogled at it and the many scientists wandering around. Following Allison into an elevator, Jack gazed outside as she began giving him a small history lesson.

“It started during World War II, when Einstein realized that our future was in the hands of scientists, not soldiers.”

“Wait,” Jack interrupted in disbelief. “Einstein? Like, the Einstein?”

Allison nodded her head, seeming to enjoy his bafflement. “He convinced President Truman to create a haven where the world’s greatest thinkers could live and work. And since then, most of our major scientific breakthroughs have happened right here in Eureka.” Jack watched as the elevator descended downwards, cement blocking out the light from above. “Hold on,” Allison warned, just as the elevator suddenly picked up speed, plummeting downwards. Jack felt his stomach flip and closed his eyes, praying for it to be over.

Finally slowing down, the elevator came to a halt, opening onto a large white corridor that seemed to stretch for miles. Men and women in white and yellow outfits swarmed around, going about their work.

“Whoa,” Jack said, trying to take everything in.

“Put that on please,” Allison ordered, gesturing to the badge he was given, before walking off at a brisk pace through the chaos. She stopped in front of a branching tunnel and Jack glanced down it as he heard the squeal of tires. He watched as a black car sped down the tunnel at an amazing rate of speed, headed right for them. He flinched, putting his hands up just as the car hit an invisible barrier that rippled from the impact, but stopped the car without a scratch.

“So, where do you fit in, in all this?” Jack asked. “I mean, no offense, but you don’t strike me as the science type.” Jack gave a look to her business suit.

“I’m the government liaison,” Allison answered, seemingly fine with his question. “It’s my job to make sure the research we’ve done here is-.”

“Profitable,” Jack finished, trying to predict her words. It seemed like that would be the answer as that was what he found most government types to be focused on.

“I was gonna say productive, but building a better tomorrow doesn’t come cheap,” she admitted. Jack glanced to the side as they passed a tunnel labeled Section 5. There were guards everywhere around this section, but as Jack watched a large metal door sprang up and sealed the tunnel from prying eyes.

“I guess that explains Fort Knox,” he joked.

“Section 5, restricted to military projects only,” Allison answered simply.

“Military? You mean weapons,” Jack clarified, looking back as lasers sprang up over the door.

“Couldn’t say,” Allison admitted. “You need NSA clearance to enter.”
“Well,” Jack scoffed. “So much for building a better tomorrow.” It always came down to war. War and money.

“Life is full of compromises, Marshal,” his fellow omega argued, trying to make him understand. “The trade-off is that Eureka has the best of everything. School, housing, health care.”

“I hope with an emphasis on the latter after what I’ve seen,” Jack muttered, seeing all the potential hazards that came with the technology they were building here.

“There are always risks,” Allison stated blandly.

Jack glanced at her at the admission. “You’ve had problems before,” he realized, wondering what kind of problems were produced with equipment like the kind he’d seen.

“Occasionally,” Allison quietly stated.

“Like?” Jack asked, jumping on the opening for more information.

“Global warming,” she said, walking off.

Jack slowed, looking after her incredulously. Was she serious?

“I’d like you to meet one of our top scientists,” Allison said, opening a door for Jack. The two walked into another elevator, this one shooting upwards. Stepping out once it came to a stop, Jack stared up in awe as the ceiling opened, showcasing the sky outside as a huge machine lowered into position. He’d seen pictures of these. It was a giant observatory, used to study the stars.

“What’s all this for?” Jack asked Allison. The machinery was gigantic, bigger than anything he’d seen before.

“Professor King is trying to locate the Point of Origin,” she answered, observing the machine with him.

“The origin of what?” Jack replied, still not understanding what could need something so big.

“Everything,” a man’s voice called out. “Life, the universe. It all had to start somewhere.” Jack turned around, spotting a thin man making his way dramatically down the stairs. “Precisely where is what I intend to find out.” Oh, but this guy had an ego the size of his machine. Jack could tell just by looking at him.

“Professor Warren King, Marshal Jack Carter,” Allison said, making the introductions. “Professor King is a Nobel laureate and noted astrophysicist,” she continued as he shook the man’s hand. It was clammy, making Jack want to brush his hand against his jacket as soon as they separated. This professor was a beta, but wore some kind of scent enhancer that Jack guessed was supposed to make his scent smell more like that of an alpha. It made Jack want to wrinkle his nose in disgust.

“Wow,” Jack said, feeling like he should be somewhat impressed. “Well, I’m captain of my division softball team,” Jack chuckled, the laugh dying as he noted his two companions were giving him strange looks. “It sounded better in my head,” he admitted, feeling embarrassed. He was feeling out of his league, surrounded by all of this fancy and important science and discovery.

“Allison,” King said, turning his attention to the omega. “How’s the Sheriff doing?”

“He’s still in surgery,” she explained. “But the Marshal has agreed to help us during his absence.” Jack glanced at Allison as King turned back to him.
“Oh, the Marshal? How generous. Well, you must find all of this a bit shocking,” King said, a patronizing tone in his voice.

Yeah, Jack would admit to himself that what he’d seen had filled him with awe and wonder, not to mention a bit of worry, but he wasn’t going to say all that to this man.

“Nothing shocks me,” he said. “I’m from LA.”

“I see,” King whispered, staring emptily at the Marshal.

Behind him, another man in a black body suit covered with green wires was posing, thrusting a stick around as he seemed to fight imaginary foes.

“Well, almost nothing,” Jack admitted, following the stranger’s movements around the room.

“Well, perhaps we should just jump right in,” King offered. Jack turned away from the bodysuit man and agreed, letting King lead the way into the next room. Walking through a sheet of plastic, they all entered into a view of the clearing that Jack had seen earlier that morning before Taggart had drugged him.

“We carbon-dated the trees in and around the event perimeter. They range in age from 12 to 1,200 years old,” King said, spouting off information as they walked. Scientists were running devices over the petrified cows and trees in the area.

“I take it that’s not normal,” Jack said.

“What about that sounds normal?” King asked, turning back to the Marshal. Not waiting for an answer, the man walked through another wall of plastic, continuing to talk as he went. “Rapid aging like that can only be caused by some sort of quantum anomaly. And then there’s the temporal bi-location of the RV—”

“I’m sorry,” Jack interrupted, feeling completely confused. “Come again?”

“Temporal bi-location,” King repeated, like that helped Jack understand better. “Fargo!”

The young man from earlier whirled around, still wearing the body suit he’d been in earlier. “Somehow, the back half of the RV became momentarily isolated from the front,” King continued to explain while Fargo hopped on a computer and began to run a visual of what the professor was describing. “It’s caught in a different time stream. Where it ended up was a direct result of the Earth rotating beneath it during stasis.”

“How is that possible?” Allison asked as they all watched the screen.

“Well, it’s a good question. We’re auditing all active projects, but so far, none of them seem related,” King admitted reluctantly.

“Including yours?” Jack asked, finally butting in.

“Hold on!” Allison protested.

“That’s all right, Allison. Marshal’s just being thorough,” King allowed. Jack stared at Allison, wondering why she was so quick to defend the man.

“No, my research involved using advanced pattern recognition software to trace cosmological events,” King explained. “So, unless you’re afraid of a little math…”
Not putting up with King’s taunting, Jack continued his questioning. “And what about Section 5? Surely you have more than math locked up in there.”

“Details concerning S-Five labs are all strictly classified, but as far as I know, nothing in there could have caused this,” King continued, looking at the floor as he did so.

“As far as you know?” Jack asked, getting annoyed with the man and his flippant responses. “No offense, but isn’t it your job to know?”

“Oh. Pushy,” King whispered creepily, raking his eyes over Jack’s frame. Jack tried to contain his shiver of disgust at the motion, knowing that he’d cornered the man when he didn’t answer the question.

“We should get back to work,” Allison demanded and Jack turned to see her staring at King.

As they walked off, King shouted after them. “Allison, keep me posted on the Sheriff’s progress. We’re all pulling for him.”

Jack wanted to sneer at the man’s fake expression of sympathy and concern. The man didn’t care about anyone, but himself and Jack was relieved to finally be out of his presence. With quick steps, he followed Allison through the maze of workshops and back out into open sky.

The ride back to town was silent except for the pounding of the rain on the roof of the car. Night had fallen by the time they entered the square.

“Well,” Allison finally said, breaking the silence. “That wasn’t at all awkward.”

“You want me to help, this is me helping,” Jack stated without remorse. He knew she was annoyed by the pointed questions he had been aiming at her boss and the tension showed in her stiff body language.

“Just lay off of Warren, okay?” she demanded, justifying Jack’s thoughts. “He’s not one of your escaped felons.”

Jack glanced over at her. “Warren, huh?” Jack asked, picking up her use of his first name. “Sounds like someone has a crush on the teacher.”

Allison slammed on the breaks, Jack flying forward and almost braining himself on the dashboard.

“Really gotta start wearing my seat belt,” he groaned, muttering angrily to himself.

“Are you questioning my professionalism?” Allison demanded, anger rolling off of her in waves.

“It was a joke,” Jack said. Not really, but he was trying to calm her down. “I forgot the DOD doesn’t have a sense of humor.”

“Well, maybe you’re just not funny,” she said, both of them staring tensely at the road.

“Look,” Jack offered, trying to change the subject. All this tension was going to give him a headache. “I’m still trying to wrap my brain around all this. I don’t know squat about quantum physics, and to be perfectly honest, I’m not sure whether I can help you or not!” Jack ranted, releasing all of his issues so that she could understand. “If you want me to try, then I’m gonna have to do my job my way. And for the record, I’m all kinds of funny.”
A few moments passed of the two of them just staring out the window as Allison drove. Jack broke it again, turning to Allison and asking, “Can I have my gun?”

Giving him a look, she rolled her eyes, reached between the seats and pulled out his weapon. Thanking her, Jack quickly checked the safety before slipping it back into his shoulder holster where it belonged. Glancing up, Jack cursed before commanding Allison to stop the car in front of Café Diem.

“Don’t wait for me,” he yelled, jumping out of the car and charging into the shop where his daughter was sitting leisurely at a table reading a magazine.

“What’cha reading?” Jack asked when his presence got no response from the girl.

“Popular Science,” she said absentmindedly. “It’s all they have-“ Catching herself, Zoe looked up, finally realizing who she was talking to.

“What are you doing out of your cell?” he demanded, wondering why he even had to ask this question.

“I’m getting takeout for me and Jo,” she answered easily. “Are you hungry?” she asked as a male omega came up, clearing his throat. “Vincent can make anything you want. They don’t even have menus here.”

“Marshal, you name it, I got it,” Vincent stated confidently. Looking between his daughter and the man, Jack decided enough was enough. It’d been a long enough day.

“Yeah, what the hell. Surprise me.”

“One Chef’s Special, coming up.” Vincent declared with a dramatic turn.

“So, where have you been all afternoon?” Zoe asked.

“Yeah…about that,” Jack started, settling into the chair across from his daughter. This was really going to make her happy. “We should talk.”

“Okay,” she sighed, closing the magazine and resigning herself to whatever he had to say. “Please, just give me the bad news.”

“What does that mean?” Jack asked, surprised by her tone.

“Well, the last time you wanted to talk, you told me you were moving out.” Jack, realizing where this was going and tried to interject, but Zoe silenced him with a quick, “No, no, and the time before that, you said that Grandma had died. Do you see the pattern here?”

“No, it’s nothing like that,” Jack told her, smiling broadly. Zoe gave him a sharp look and he instantly caved. “Okay, yeah, it’s something like that.” Speaking quickly he filled her in on what had happened.

“The Sheriff was injured, and we’re gonna be here for awhile.” Zoe continued to stare at him. “What?”

“Nothing. Just go investigate something,” she muttered, turning back to her magazine. With a pang, Jack remembered her words back at the station, about how all he did was work.

“They need my help,” he urged, trying to make her see why he couldn’t just leave.
“That’s one Fugu-sashi, one cheeseburger, and a side order of salt-crusted yams and shaved white truffles to go,” Vincent said, coming back to the table and delivering Zoe’s food. “Tell Jo if she wants to tip me up, she’ll have to do better than that.”

Zoe laughed and thanked the man. Turning back to Jack, she quickly grabbed the bag before saying, “Well, I guess I’ll see you when I see you.”

“Wait, wait,” Jack urged, reaching out and stopping Zoe desperately before she could head out the door. “Why don’t you come with me to Beverly’s?” he offered. “I’ll get you a room.”

“Touched. Pass,” Zoe said with finality as she hooked the strap of her messenger back over her head and headed for the door.

“Zoe, I’ll be done as soon as I can,” Jack promised.

Zoe whirled around and glared at him. “You used to say the same thing to Dad. I guess she finally got tired of waiting.” With that Zoe ran out the door and into the night. Jack despondently collapsed into the nearest chair, staring at the tabletop.

Zoe was right, Jack had worked a lot during his marriage with Abbey, but it wasn’t the only reason that their relationship failed. In all honesty, it had been over soon after Zoe was born, when Abbey had demanded certain expectations and things from Jack that he just wasn’t willing to give or give up, like his job. After he carried Zoe, Abbey had expected him to settle down, quit his job, and focus solely on raising their daughter. As much as Jack loved Zoe, he had worked too hard to reach his position in the Marshals to give it up so easily. Tensions rose and Jack stayed at work more, avoiding Abbey and their home like the plague. Zoe only saw Abbey’s point of view, as she was never around for the larger arguments that fell between them. She didn’t see him much and just listened as Abbey complained about him while she was home. Jack wasn’t sure how to explain everything to Zoe, her anger at him shadowing every conversation they had together, until it just turned into a heated argument about everything he had done wrong.

“So Marshal,” a voice said, cutting into his thoughts abruptly. Jack looked up, finding Vincent crouched down next to him on the floor. “You’re investigating this thing, right?” the omega asked eagerly. “I heard Ned Carver’s cows got sliced and diced just like Walter’s motor home.”

“Yeah,” Jack said, trying to stop the rumor mill from spreading further than it already had. “Maybe it’d be best not to spread that around.”

“Trust me,” Vincent said, waving his hand like it was nothing. “Around here, it’s business as usual.”

Wonderful, Jack thought.

“In fact,” the man continued, gesturing to a board behind Jack, “we’ve got a pool going on what’s gonna get hit next. Pot’s up to about a grand if you’re interested.”

Jack looked at the map on the board, slowly seeing a pattern forming in the circled dots. Quickly rising, Jack made his way to the board, tracing the locations with his finger as Vincent tried to pry for information on where things might hit next.

“I’m more interested on where things started,” Jack muttered. “Can I borrow this?” he asked, looking to the omega standing behind him.

“Yeah,” Vincent agreed readily.
“Rain check on the food,” Jack told Vincent, quickly tugging the map down and running out the door.

Curling it up tightly, Jack dashed down the streets, slowing when he finally spotted the house belonging to Allison, her car parked out front. Knocking at the door, a young boy opened it and peered out.

“Hey, little man, is…” Jack paused, recognizing the kid from earlier. “Archimedes, right?”

“Honey, who is it?” Allison’s voice asked, coming closer to the door.

“Five, 13, ’69. Tuesday,” the boy stated. Jack smiled, happy to see the kid remembered him.

Allison chuckled awkwardly, urging the boy back inside as she noticed Jack standing outside.

“Marshal, what’s going on?” she asked, closing the door and standing outside.

“He’s a nice kid,” Jack said. “We chatted in the park earlier today.” Jack smiled remembering the moment.

“You trying to be funny?” Allison demanded, glaring at Jack. His smile dropped as he took in her displeasure.

“No,” Jack said hesitantly, unsure of what he did to upset the mother.

“My son has autism, he barely speaks to the people that he knows,” she explained.

Finally understanding, Jack apologized. “I’m sorry. I didn’t realize.”

Sighing, the woman put her head in her hands. “I’m sorry," Allison said, apologizing as well. “It’s been a long day.”

Getting back on track, Jack showed the woman the map he had rolled up. “I think I have a lead. However, as much as I hate to admit it, I’m gonna have to run it by your professor friend,” Jack admitted.

Allison allowed him to step inside, walking away as she quickly called King on the phone and asked him to hurry over. Walking into the kitchen, Jack watched Allison’s son, Kevin, begin writing out an equation on a piece of chalkboard.

King arrived a half hour later, scoffing as he walked into the kitchen to where Jack had rolled out the map.

“You called me here to look at a map?” he demanded.

“What are those?” Allison asked, pointing to the red dots littered across the board.

“These are the rough locations of every reported anomaly,” Jack explained.

“I’m well aware of Vincent’s tacky little pool, Marshal,” King said impatiently. “We’re gonna start placing bets now, is that your idea?”

Jack looked at the man unimpressed.

“No. Your pattern recognition software traces cosmic events to the point of origin, correct? What if the events are a little more local?” he asked, watching as understanding blossomed on both of their
“Could that actually work?” Allison asked.

“Yeah, in theory it could,” King admitted, staring at the dots on the map. “It’d take a major recalculation, though.”


“No, I’m not afraid of a little math,” King said, glaring at Jack.

“It can’t hurt to try though, right?” Allison asked.

“It’ll take a little while,” King said, rolling up the map again. Looking at Jack he asked, “May I drop you someplace, Marshal?”

“No, I’ll walk,” Jack said quickly, not wanting to be stuck in a car for a prolonged period with the man. “I could use the fresh air.”

“Right,” King said grabbing his things.

“See you, Archimedes,” Jack said, waving to Kevin. With a quick good bye to Allison, Jack walked outside, breathing in the air not tainted by King and his perfume.

It was a long walk back to Beverly’s, though Jack felt like all he’d been doing since he got to Eureka was walk or be dragged somewhere. As he approached the house, Jack groaned, seeing the empty car port for Beverly’s solar car. The same car he’d left parked at Henry’s. How had he forgotten that? Dreading having to tell Beverly, Jack entered the house, stopping for a moment as he heard talking coming from one of the rooms down the hall.

“Slow down. Who is ‘they?’” Jack heard Beverly ask someone. Creeping closer to the door he heard a man respond.

“I don’t know. I’ve never seen them. And they did help me. But now everything’s falling apart...”

Jack cringed as a floorboard squeaked underneath his shoe.

“Who’s that?” the man in the room whispered. Decided to cover his tracks, Jack calmly strolled forward, meeting Beverly as she came around the corner.

“Marshal!” she exclaimed.

“I saw a light on,” Jack said, walking further into the room. Inside was Walter, the father of the boy he’d found. “Hey, it’s Walter, right? How’s the family doing?” The man looked stressed, his hands visibly trembling as he addressed Jack.

“Fine,” he said, his voice a hoarse whisper. “And they’re probably waiting for me.” With that, the man quickly grabbed his coat and scurried from the room, Jack becoming suspicious as he watched him run.

“Walter, we will talk tomorrow, okay?” Beverly called after the man.

“Everything okay?” Jack asked Beverly.
“Emergency session,” she replied. “Normally, I try to keep my evenings free, but as you’re discovering, this town is anything, but normal.”

“Like your little bed and breakfast,” Jack said, knowing Beverly was more than just a charitable host.

“We all have our roles to play,” she admitted. “Now, I don’t know about you, but I could use a drink.” Beverly walked to the liquor cabinet, pouring out a glass of something strong.

“How’s his son doing?” Jack asked, his thoughts turning to Walter’s shifty behavior.

“He’ll be fine. Kids are resilient. It’s the adults I worry about, especially around here,” she admitted.

“If I was stuck in this cracker farm, I’d probably need a shrink too.”

“Who says you don’t?” Beverly asked, turning back to him with a smile. “And I prefer psychotherapist.” She handed him one of the drinks before moving the conversation along. “Maintaining relationships is tough in your line of work. It helps to have someone to talk to.” There was a leading tone in her voice and Jack resisted the urge to roll his eyes. Abbey was a mental person too and Jack was experienced with someone trying to dissect his emotions and motivations. He really hated it.

“What do I do, the job comes first,” he said, giving the drink a small sniff. He wasn’t sure what it was, as he rarely drank anything other than beer, and instead of taking a sip he sat down on the couch, loosening his tie as he went.

“I imagine your wife might disagree,” Beverly said. Jack rolled his eyes, noticing that she’d brought up his ex-wife again.

“She knew what she was getting herself into,” Jack said flippantly.

“Still,” Beverly urged. “The time away, the distance. It must take its toll on you too. Especially with a child involved.” She came to sit by him on the couch, another glass and a container of alcohol clutched in her hand.

Jack thought for a moment, her words bringing back his thoughts while in Café Diem. “I tried a desk job when Zoe was born,” he admitted, twirling his wedding ring around on his finger.

“Change to make others happy. You end up making yourself miserable,” Beverly stated, rationalizing his state of mind.

“That’s exactly what I told Abbey,” Jack agreed, though silently admitting that he may not have told her exactly like that.

“But she felt you were choosing your job over them,” Beverly pushed, getting Jack to think more about his ex-mate and daughter.

“Yes,” he nodded. “I told her it’s not that simple. I mean, it’s not just a job. I stop bad people from doing bad things.”

“Well, I’m sure that’s a tremendous comfort when you go home at night. Alone,” she said, pouring more alcohol into his glass, though he hadn’t taken a sip yet.

“You don’t pull punches,” Jack said, staring at the liquid in the glass. He stiffened as felt her
release some heavy omega pheromones, arousal and attraction lying cloyingly in the air. Jack held his breath, pushing the glass back at Beverly as he quickly stood up and backed away, startling the woman badly. She looked at him with shocked eyes.

“Sorry,” he muttered, retreating towards to door, “I should really, uh, get to bed. Big day tomorrow.” Not giving her a chance to say anything else, Jack dashed out of the room and up the stairs, locking the door to his room when he got inside. He did not need or want whatever that woman was offering. He already had enough drama in his life.

Suddenly feeling exhausted as the events of the day hit him, Jack fell on top of the covers, not even bothering to undress himself. Within a few moments, he was fast asleep.

“Carter.”

Jack jolted awake, awareness rushing back into him in a rush. He blinked confused, spying Lupo and Allison standing over his bed with looks of exasperation on their faces. Looking around he noticed his door hanging wide open.

“Wasn’t that locked?” he asked, running a hand through his hair as he tried to wake up.

“Beverly gave us the key,” Allison said. “It’s time to wake up.”

Jack groaned, pulling himself up and turning so his feet rested flatly on the floor.

“What happened?”

“Things have gotten worse,” Allison declared.

“The diner,” Lupo interjected, expanding on Allison’s words. “We had our first fatality.”

“I was just there with my daughter,” Jack stated, wondering how close Zoe and he had come to being in danger.

“She’s fine,” Allison told him, putting his nerves at ease. At least he didn’t have to worry about that.

“Okay, what about King? Has he had any luck?” Jack asked the two women, hoping something had been found. He was ready to get this over with.

“That’s the good news. He may have found the point of origin,” the omega revealed.

“Where?” Jack asked, climbing to his feet and fully awake at the revelation that they may have found who was causing all of this.

“Come with me, I’ll show you,” Allison said, her and Lupo heading for the door, Jack stumbling behind them to catch up.

Lupo pulled her police vehicle up in front of a simple, two-story red and white colored house. It looked completely nondescript from the other houses around it in the neighborhood. Following the ladies out of the car and up to the front door, Jack looked at Allison in confusion as Lupo knocked
“You’ll see,” was all Allison offered when she took in Jack’s bemused look. Sighing in annoyance, he turned his attention forward as a woman suddenly yanked the door open, her night clothes rumpled as she took them all in with a large measure of relief.

“Oh thank god, I was just trying to call you. Please, please. Come in,” she beckoned, waving them inside. Jack stared first in shock and then growing understanding as he remembered that this woman was the mother of Brian, the boy that had gone missing, and the mate of Walter, who he’d seen acting suspicious just last night with Beverly. Walking inside, Lupo immediately asked what the problem was.

“It’s Walter,” the woman explained in a rushed breath. “He’s just- He hasn’t been himself, he is so stressed out, and then after nearly losing Brian in that thing with the motor home-“

“Susan, calm down,” Lupo urged in a soft voice, trying to get the woman to control her nerves. “Where’s Walter?”

“Okay, he came home late, very late last night, and then just locked himself in the basement,” Susan took in a deep breath before continuing. “Something went wrong with his experiment, and I think he’s been trying to fix it.”

Jack looked at Allison, knowing she shared the same thought as him. Whatever Walter was experimenting with was causing the temporal anomalies across Eureka.

Lupo inclined her head, indicating where the stairs to the basement were at. Without a word, the Deputy and Jack moved at once to start down the stairs, Allison staying with Susan on the first floor. Jack heard Susan try to call to her husband, asking him to come out. She started out kind, but then he startled as a large screeching yell of “WALTER!” rang down the stairs. Glancing at Lupo in bewilderment, the alpha simply rolled her eyes and continued on, reaching a steel door with a digital keypad.

“You’ve gotta be kidding me,” Jack complained, taking in the complex setup. Sighing, he moved to head back upstairs. “Alright, let’s see if Mrs. Perkins has the code.” Lupo charged back up the stairs, calling Susan’s name before Jack could take one step.

“Doesn’t anybody do anything half way around here?” Jack asked the air, staring at the over-the-top security system. Suddenly, a giant shudder shook the entire basement. Jack braced himself against the wall as he shouted for the Deputy upstairs.

“Hey, Jo, any luck on that code?” he yelled. He backed up, startled as Jo suddenly swung around a corner on the stairs, in her hand a huge gun that looked part gattling gun, part bazooka, and part grenade launcher. Jack wouldn’t be surprised if the weapon happened to actually be all three things.

“Nope, but I found a key,” Jo said with determination. Walking over to the intercom system, she pressed the button so she could speak with Walter. “Dr. Perkins, it’s Deputy Lupo. If you can hear me, back away from the door.” Finished, Jo scooted back, arming the gun and taking aim at the door. Jack backed against the cinder block wall again, covering his ears with his hands as he prepared himself for a huge explosion.

“Maybe this isn’t the best-“ Jack started, only for Jo to let lose a score of bullets, pelting the keypad on the door until the whole thing simply fell off, obliterated under the hail of gunfire. “Way to do that,” Jack finished, his ears ringing.
Looking up, Jack watched as the dust settled, lights flashing from an unknown source further in the room. The door that had previously been locked swung easily open for the two officers, revealing a scene of chaos beyond it. Metal poles and support beams levitated and spun above the floor, wires sparked and threw electricity, and in the middle of it all, some kind of giant gizmo in the center of the room stood solidly, two rings at its center spinning wildly and creating large concussive vibrations to resonate outwards.

“Ladies first,” Jack yelled at Jo, taking in the scene before them.

“I think we found the point of origin,” she said, assessing the damage and charred destruction.

Looking up, Jack felt his jaw drop. “That’s not all we found,” he said.

Above the spinning device, Walter Perkins hovered in the air, his image flickering in and out. Each time he faded and reappeared, he would be stuck in a different position, facing the floor, or the ceiling, them, or the wall. It was obvious he was stuck and had no form of control of what was happening to him.

Lupo suddenly raised her massive gun, aiming at a block of machinery with radiation signs all over it.

“Whoa!” Jack cried, pushing her gun down quickly, meeting her glare with a calm focus. “Let’s not shoot the crazy-end-of-the-world machine just yet, okay?” There was no telling what would happen if they just started blowing everything up.

The giant whirling machine suddenly seemed to explode, compressed air and electricity shooting outwards as Walter vanished from hanging overhead. Ducking back and shielding their heads from debris, Jack and Lupo quickly retreated to the outer room, rushing back up the stairs…only to freeze as several heavily armed individuals covered in radiation suits and gas masks intercepted them on the stairs. Both they and Lupo raised their guns at each, squarely standing off while Jack raised his hands in surrender behind the alpha.

“Somebody order an invasion?” Jack quipped, trying to remain calm as Jo was forced to lower her weapon in the face of mounted opposition.

Escorted back up the stairs, Jack saw what looked like the entire army filling the streets of the neighborhood. Allison and Susan Perkins were outside, standing by an armored vehicle as soldiers and scientists quickly worked on constructing an isolation dome around the house. Ushered off to the side, Jack stood with Allison as everyone scurried around, ignoring them for the moment, until another armored car pulled up. An older man hopped out, barking orders at everyone he passed in a loud, no nonsense voice. Jack watched from afar as scientists wheeled out the machine they had seen in the basement, pushing it down a plastic tunnel to another connected isolation tent.

Jo scampered over to the man that was giving orders, greeting him with familiarity before running off to do some task he had given her. The man then turned, spotting Allison and making his way over.

“Congratulations, Ms. Blake. Looks like you people finally screwed the pooch, but good,” the man said, sounding exorbitantly pleased with himself and the circumstances.

“Colonel Briggs, what do you think you’re doing?” Allison asked, annoyance heavy in her tone.

“Something I should’ve done the last time one of your little science projects got out of hand,” Colonel Briggs smirked, glaring right back at the woman.
“Eureka is under DOD jurisdiction,” she tried to argue, only for Briggs to cut her off gleefully.

“Was under DOD jurisdiction,” he corrected. “Now it’s a matter of national security, which means you answer to me.” With a little mocking salute, the alpha turned and headed back towards the house to oversee proceedings. Allison’s face fell as she realized she had lost control, cursing the man under her breath.

“So you two are close, then?” Jack asked, turning with Allison to walk away from the busy site.

“You know, the boyish charm act works better when you’re showered and shaved,” she snarked back, still a bit peeved at what had just occurred.

“Yeah, it’s on my to-do list,” Jack agreed, rubbing a hand over his prickly cheeks. He hadn’t had an opportunity for self-care since the moment he’d set foot in this crazy town. “So, where are they taking that thing?” Jack asked, looking back over his shoulder at where the techs were manhandling the machine that had presumably caused all this.

“Where else?” Allison muttered, gesturing to the G.D. logo printed on the side of a truck.

“Ah,” Jack nodded, before following Allison back to her car.

Back at G.D., Jack followed Allison and Colonel Briggs back into the test area with the plastic walls he had been in yesterday. The machine from the basement was already set up in the middle of the room, Warren King tapping away on his tablet as he stood near it.

“Will somebody please explain to me what we’re dealing with here?” Briggs demanded, looking at King.

“From what we can gather, it’s a prototype tachyon accelerator,” the beta said, still examining whatever information was being given to him on his device.

“In English, Professor,” Briggs asked him impatiently. Jack had to agree. He was as lost as the Colonel in this.

“I’ll speak slowly for your benefit, Colonel,” King said, finally looking up. Jack rolled his eyes, keeping silent in the back of the group. It seems the man was rude to everyone, not just Jack.

“A tachyon is a hypothetical particle that travels faster than the speed of light,” King explained.

“Okay,” Briggs started, but King cut him off.

“No, that’s not okay. Nothing can travel faster than the speed of light, or the whole concept of linear time becomes meaningless,” the man said, pacing back and forth on the machine. “If Walter Perkins created some sort of tachyon collision, then time, as we know it, ceases to exist, and the laws of physics break down at the most fundamental level. And if we don’t stop this, no one will be safe,” King finished, looking excited at the science, but also concerned by the implications.

“Now this is why I hate this town,” Briggs muttered, turning to one of his men.

“Well, hang on,” Jack said, trying to understand everything. “How could Walter Perkins have even built this without anyone knowing?” With as secure as G.D. seemed to be, Jack figured it would have been pretty hard to hide this thing from everybody.
“He had to break some major protocols,” Henry Deacon answered, wiggling out from under what looked like a warped satellite dish. “I mean, this is a stolen Sentex prototype, strictly next-gen military hardware.” Henry walked over and pulled a piece off of the machine, examining it in his hands. At the term ‘military hardware,’ Jack looked back at the main machine, his mind immediately jumping to Section 5. Allison had said the work down there was for military contracts.

“So the question is,” Henry continued, “could Walter have built this on his own? And where would he get ahold of something like this?”

“Section 5,” Jack answered Henry, watching King as he climbed on the machine, tinkering with little bits here and there. He figured he hit the nail on the head when Henry turned a shocked look to King and Allison turned to stare accusingly at the man as well. King, looking down at them from the machine, seemed to flounder for words.

“Well, I don’t see how that’s possible,” he evaded, not meeting anyone’s eyes. “But I guarantee you, there’ll be a thorough inquiry.”

“You can count on it,” Allison agreed harshly, still glaring at the beta’s back.

“Alright, I’ve heard enough,” Briggs said. Stepping forward, the military alpha addressed the room at large. “Now listen up. My orders are to contain this area, so anyone here, stays here till we figure this out.” Reaching for a radio, the Colonel started issuing commands to his people outside.

“This is Briggs. Start taking people down to the bunkers, omegas and children first.”

Jack gasped, suddenly realizing that Zoe knew nothing about what was going on and with Jo here with him that meant she was alone at the Sheriff’s station. Turning back towards the exit, Jack determinedly stalked for the doors, wanting to get to his daughter and see that she was safe and secure during this craziness. One of the soldiers guarding the door raised his automatic rifle, aiming the thing right at Jack’s head.

“Get out of my way,” he growled at the man, trying to figure out the best way to get past this guy. Clenching his fists, Jack prepared himself to get violent with the alpha goon that stood between him and his girl.

“I have my orders, sir. No one leaves.”

“I’m going to get my daughter!” Jack practically yelled at the man, anxiety running through his veins.

“I wouldn’t do that, Marshal,” Briggs called.

“Tell your grunt,” Jack commanded, turning to Briggs angrily, “he’s got two seconds before I make him eat that rifle.”

Briggs sneered, inhaling deeply and obviously scenting the beta smell emanating from Jack. “That grunt is a Force Recon Commando who can kill you a hundred different ways with his bare hands,” he mocked, obviously seeing no threat in Jack. Jack seethed, wanting to punch the lights out of this cocky, pumped up, self-righteous asshole alpha. He needed to get to Zoe.

“She’s my daughter!” Jack tried again, trying to make the man see reason.

“I don’t care!” the alpha yelled back. Tensing up, Jack prepared himself to start pummeling the alpha.
“I hate to interrupt,” Henry suddenly intervened, coming around a corner swiftly. “But we have bigger issues at hand. Time is unraveling. The laws of physics are breaking down. Now correct me if I’m wrong,” Henry said insistently, “but that’s the kind of thing that’s not gonna stop at the city limits, is it?”

Jack felt himself deflate, acknowledging the truth of Henry’s words, but feeling himself fill with more anxiety and distress at the thought of Zoe, alone and stuck underground in some bunker somewhere.

“A rift of this magnitude will continue to grow exponentially, unless,” King paused, thinking hard. “Henry,” he said, turning to the other man, “is it possible Walter was trying to create another collision when his machine blew?”

Henry nodded, thinking it over. “Theoretically, the two events would cancel each other out. I mean, it’s sort of like starting a backfire in a brush blaze,” he explained, turning to Jack.

“Right,” King continued, brainstorming. “So if we can get this one up and running again,” he said gesturing to Walter’s machine.

“I’ve got some Grade A hardware in the garage,” Henry cut in. “I mean, not like what Walter was using, but it should do the trick.” Henry glanced at the other side of the room, groaning as he looked at chalkboards filled with complex equations, one of them missing a giant chunk in the right corner. “There’s just one small problem. Part of his formula was lost in the blast.” Pointing at the mess he turns back to the group. “I mean, without it, the accelerator’s useless.”

Jack stared, looking at the equations closely as Briggs started to complain again.

“You mean to tell me that in this town full of supergeeks, you can’t find one person who can do a simple math problem?”

“It’s not that simple!” Henry insisted. “Walter,” he continued, cutting off whatever else Briggs had to say, “was our top quantum physicist. Now, he could have worked on this for months…”

“Oh, my…” Recognition suddenly hit Jack. He’d seen these equations before, but where? It was right at the tip of his tongue.

“What?” Allison asked from beside him, having heard his mutter.

“I could swear I’ve seen this before,” Jack explained, still trying to think of where he could have possibly seen something like this.

“Even if we put our top people on it,” Henry was practically yelling at this point, still raging at Briggs.”It’s not going to be a walk in the park.”

Suddenly it clicked. Quickly turning to Allison, Jack pleaded, “I need to borrow your car keys.”

“Oh, what are you thinking?” the other omega demanded, wanting Jack to explain.

“Trust me,” Jack asked, because he had a feeling that if she knew what he was going to go get, she’d never allow it. Allison stared at him for a bit, seeming to measure his sincerity.

With a sigh she dug in her pockets, relenting as she passed over her keys. “Do I have any choice?” Jack smiled in relief as he took the keys from her.

“Watch yourself,” she warned in concern. Jack nodded as he quickly made his way over to Jo. He
still needed a way out of this building and the big army grunt or whatever was still watching the
doors.

“Jo,” Jack said, whispering In the alpha’s ear as he directed his attention at the guard. “I need to get
out of here. Do you think you can take him?”

“Please,” Jo sneered. “He’s Force Recon.” Disgust was heavy in her tone and Jack had to smile at
her surety. Chuckling at Jack’s insinuation that she couldn’t take him, Jo immediately walked over
to the guard and with a flirty look to gain his attention, quickly dragged the man away, where Jack
was sure he would be found later, knocked out in some closet somewhere.

Not wasting any time, Jack quickly headed out the doors and topside to get to Allison’s car. He
needed to save this town, and thereby also save his daughter.

Skidding into a parking space at Café Diem, Jack quickly bolted out, marching straight for the pair
of guards that stood in front of the doors that must have led down to the safety bunkers. With a
quick flash of his badge, Jack charge through the doors, making his way down a flight of stairs
with some other pedestrians and emerging into a very cramped room. Jack slowed, carefully
checking through the crowd for the person he was looking for.

The crowd suddenly seemed to part before his eyes, revealing Zoe sitting against the wall and
talking with Beverly. Glancing up, Zoe quickly noticed him standing there, a large relieved smile
taking over her face.

“M-“ Zoe caught herself, remembering there were other people around. “Dad,” she said instead,
the term sitting weirdly on her lips when referring to Jack. He didn’t care though, he was just so
relieved to find her there and safe.

“Honey,” Jack cried, quickly wrapping his daughter in a hug. “You okay?” he asked, giving her a
once over to check for any injuries.

“Yeah,” she soothed, trying to calm him down. “What the hell’s going on?”

“Uh,” he wasn’t really sure how to explain it as he barely understood it himself. “There’s this
machine, and a missing formula, and a lot of science stuff I can’t explain.”

“What are we gonna do?” Zoe asked, eager to help.

“We aren’t going to do anything. You are going to stay right here where it’s safe,” he insisted, not
wanting to put her in danger.

“Like hell!” Zoe argued back fiercely. “I’m coming with you!” Any other time, Jack would be
thrilled to hear his daughter wanted to be with him, but not right now.

“Zoe, I don’t have time to argue,” Jack tried again, wanting her to see that he didn’t have much
time.

“Which is why I’m gonna win,” Zoe said with finality. Staring at her, Jack realized she was right.
The girl was more stubborn than he was.

“Fine,” Jack relented, watching as a smile broke out across her face. “You stay by my side,” he
ordered. “You don’t leave my sight, not for a second, you got it?”
With every word he spoke, Zoe’s smile just got bigger, obviously happy to be going with her mom, and she nodded quickly to his conditions.

“Let’s go,” Jack said, trying to keep the smile from his own face as they made their way back through the crowd. Finding Taggart sitting on a step, Jack quickly knelt down.

“Hey,” Jack greeted the other man. “We need your help.”

“Nice to see you, too, Marshal. Nasty out there, isn’t it?” smiled Taggart.

“I think I can fix it. But I can’t do it alone,” revealed Jack.

“How can I help?” asked the alpha eagerly, standing up and brandishing a hooked blade of some kind.

“Uh, actually, you can’t,” Jack admitted. “But I’m hoping he can.” Jack pointed behind the man, to where Kevin was idly sitting, staring off into space.

Both Zoe and Taggart gave him confused looks, but Jack was sure. Making his way over, he crouched by the boy, speaking softly.

“Hey, Archimedes. I need you to come with me, okay?”

Finally back at the lab, Jack stood around with everyone else as Kevin stood staring at the messed up formula. He had been doing so for several minutes and everyone was starting to panic as time ran out.

“Alright, this has gone on long enough,” Briggs demanded.

“He just needs more time,” Jack urged, sure that Kevin could solve this.

“Yeah, like 15 years and a college degree,” the alpha snipped, his frustration tangible in the air. “He’s just a kid for crying out loud.”

“Just give him a chance.” Allison stood protectively over Kevin, making sure that everyone kept their space while her son stared at the problem.

“Allison,” King spoke up, “Maybe he’s right. We all know Kevin has special talents, but this is just too much, especially under these conditions.”

“Yeah,” admitted Jack, watching the boy as he just gazed at the chalkboard. “Yeah, it’s not working.” Jack had another idea. He thought back to all the times he had seen Kevin working and recalled that it was never while standing up. Walking over to the chalkboard, Jack picked the thing up and laid it back on the ground, the formula facing up for Kevin to see. “There you go, buddy. Give that a try.”

Immediately, Kevin dropped to the ground, examined the board one last time, and began writing. He quickly filled in the missing gaps of the equation, Henry and King jotting down the information as it was written. Jack took great pleasure in seeing the shocked looks on Briggs and King’s faces.

“He got it,” exclaimed King, inserting the work into the algorithm in the computer.

“Well, I’ll be damned,” Briggs agreed, unable to tear his eyes away.
Henry and King immediately set to work getting the machine running again as Jack and Allison shared a proud smile for what her son had accomplished. The two omegas quickly grabbed their kids, retreating behind safety glass on the second story as they watched the two scientists get to work. Just as Henry and King seemed to fix the problem and everyone was prepared to activate the device, a large rumble and crash shook the building, snapping electrical wires down on the main floor. The soldiers quickly evacuated the lab, leaving the two main scientists to finish the job. Henry quickly started a countdown, activating each ring on the machine as he went.

“Oh, man,” Jack whispered, hugging Zoe close to him just in case. They watched as each ring began to form this blue glow as it started spinning. Once all rings were activated, Henry initiated the final algorithm and everybody watched as an energy ball formed in the middle of all the rings. It all seemed to be going well until one of the coils on the outside collapsed, causing the rings to shift and destabilize the others. An energy wave burst forth from the device and Jack and Allison shielded their kids as the safety glass shattered on top of them.

Screams could be heard throughout the lab as computers shattered and electricity arched through the air, everybody running for cover if they were able. Jack pressed Zoe to the ground, covering her body as best he could as debris rained down around them and the floor rocked with pulses from the device.

Then, suddenly everything went quiet. Jack blinked his eyes open, taking in Zoe’s blond hair under his hand as he slowly shifted to look around. The monitor room they had been in was completely trashed, but with a quick glance, he saw that Zoe, Allison, and Kevin seemed to all be okay. Staggering over to the railing, Jack looked down to see Henry, King, Briggs, and a few soldiers slowly getting to their feet.

“Did it work?” Jack shouted.

Several days later, Jack pulled up to Henry’s garage, a call letting him know this morning that his car was finally fixed. Walking up to where the alpha stood, beaming with pride next to his car, Jack felt relief and a bit of sadness come from knowing that he and his daughter would be leaving soon.

The car looked fixed and as good as new on the outside Jack observed, but then Henry popped the hood, revealing an engine that was completely not the same one that had originally been there. This new one was all gleaming silver, streamlined, and screamed power.

Jack chuckled, amazed at the change to his car. “Space shuttles?”

“Uh-huh,” Henry agreed, tossing Jack the keys to his car. “Turn her over.”

Jack moved to go climb in the front seat, eager to hear if the engine purred like he imagined it might.

“No, no, no,” Henry stopped him. “Use the remote,” he said, gesturing to the keys in Jack’s hand.

Following directions, Jack clicked a button and immediately the car turned on, the engine revving like a jet about to take off.

“Thanks,” Jack shouted, trying to be heard over the noise, but still smiling ear to ear at his new friend. Henry laughed, closing the hood as Jack climbed in the front seat. As he started to pull out, Henry leaned in the window with a serious expression.
“Hey, uh. Try to keep her on the ground,” he warned. Jack chuckled, agreeing as he pulled out completely. “No, no, really!” Henry called after him.

Stepping on the gas once he hit the main road, Jack gasped as he was pinned to the seat, the car jolting forward like a runaway plane. Quickly easing off, he breathed easier as the car returned to a more normal rate of speed, wondering why Henry saw it necessary to give his car an option to go at mach speeds.

Pulling carefully into town and in front of the Sheriff’s station, Jack got out of the car just as Jo and Zoe were walking out.

“Ready to go?” he asked his daughter.

“I am,” she agreed with a smile.

“You know, she’s really very insightful,” Jo informed him.

“Yeah,” Jack confirmed cautiously, seeing the proud look on Zoe’s face. “She should write a book.”

“Jo, thanks for everything,” he said, turning to the alpha. “Tell Cobb I’m sorry we missed him.”

“Tell him yourself,” Jo said, motioning behind them. Turning, Jack saw Sheriff Cobb hobbling up the side street towards them.

“You’re leaving us so soon, Marshal?” Cobb asked with a grin.

“Good to see you up and about, Sheriff,” Jack said, taking in the man’s cane and wobbly demeanor. “Should you be up and about?” he asked in concern.

“No,” the Sheriff admitted with a guilty smile. “Don’t tell the doctors.”

Jack smiled, admiring the man’s spunk. The two men clasped hands in farewell.

“I owe you big, Marshal.”

“No, I was just doing my job,” Jack said, waving away the praise.

“No,” disagreed Cobb. “You were doing my job. And you did it well, I might add.”

“Thanks,” accepted Jack, feeling bashful at the man’s words.

“Henry does good work,” Cobb stated, patting the top of Jack’s car as he and his daughter climbed in. Jack was about to agree when he turned around and saw Cobb pulling up his pant leg, revealing a gleaming, high-tech prosthetic leg. The omega could only gape as he wondered if there was anything Henry didn’t do in this town.

“Try to keep it on the ground,” Cobb saluted.

“Yeah, you too,” Jack said, thinking that maybe Henry really did put in a feature that made his car fly. The man did work on space shuttles after all.

As they drove out of town, Jack turned to Zoe, feeling like it was now or never before they got back to LA.

“You know, it was wrong for me to leave you like that,” Jack started, referring to when she was
younger and they were still somewhat of a family. “I know it was rough,” he admitted. “And that I wasn’t always available. So-“

“Are you apologizing?” Zoe asked incredulous.

“No!” Jack stuttered, feeling embarrassed.

“Yes, you are!”

“No.”

“You are! You’re totally apologizing to me.”

“Alright, yeah,” he agreed. “Yeah, I am sorry.”

Zoe smiled, seeming pleased and content for once around him. Jack watched her, unable to hold back a smile of his own.

“Now, if there something you wanna say to me?” he asked.

Zoe looked at him, trying to don a poker face, but failing as the corners of her lips curled up in a hidden smile.

“Nope,” she said quickly with the shake of her head.

Jack laughed. “Well, you’re definitely my kid.”

Back at his office in LA, Jack looked over one of his open files, cross-checking the information with what was on his computer.

“Carter,” his boss interrupted, stepping into his office. “These are Special Agents Hicks and Miller, Department of Defense.”

Jack stood up quickly, greeting the two agents as they walked in.

“Look,” Jack quickly said, feeling nervous as the two alphas stared him down. “If this is about that thing I signed, I didn’t tell anyone.”

“Actually, we’re here on behalf of the Major. He was very impressed,” the male alpha said.

“You mean Colonel,” Jack corrected. “Colonel Briggs.”

“No, Major William Cobb, Army Intelligence,” the female corrected in turn. “He said you two worked together recently.”

Jack took a moment, wanting to be shocked, but thinking it over he wasn’t even surprised. Everyone else had something super special about their background in that town, why wouldn’t the Sheriff as well?

“With his recommendation, your security classification and pay level will increase effective immediately,” the male continued, pulling out an envelope from his suit jacket.

Jack stared in confusion at the two as he slowly opened the letter. Skimming through the words,
Jack looked up at his superior, the two DoD alphas leaving the office as quickly as they had come in.

“I don’t understand,” Jack said.

“Relax, Carter. It’s a promotion. Congratulations,” the man said as he left Jack’s office as well.

“Define promotion!” Jack yelled after him, rereading the missive that ordered him to report to Eureka as its new Sheriff.
A lot had changed for Jack in the last week since he’d transferred to Eureka as its new Sheriff. He’d told Zoe and Abbey that he’d been transferred to a new job in Oregon without giving too much information away. His ex-alpha didn’t care, but Zoe had tried asking tons of questions which he’d quickly tried to derail. Jack was pretty sure Zoe knew where he was regardless though. It didn’t take a genius to figure out that he’d been ‘promoted’ to the same town they’d crashed into a mere two weeks ago.

He’d also, much to his displeasure, taken to sleeping in the same jail cell his daughter had occupied before, as he didn’t have a place to actually stay in this town yet. That was fun. Nothing like spending your nights in a drafty cell and waking up each morning with a sore back. Jack really needed to find a new place, and soon or he’d quit just for the sanctity of his health.

Jo still hadn’t warmed up to him. There had been the potential for at least mutual respect after the whole time-world-ending-debacle thing they’d faced together, but that had been before Jack was called in to take the Sheriff’s position that Jo believed should really have been hers. Experience-wise, Jack had to somewhat agree. His actions during the crisis may have been what had gotten him the job, but Jo had more experience with the weirdness that was Eureka. Jack couldn’t even fathom half of the science that went on in this place.

After the whirlwind week he’d had, it was depressing to now find himself standing at a funeral, two wooden caskets lying side by side as friends of the married couple stood around in a moment of silence. A holographic image of Walter and Susan Perkins hovered in the air, the projection showing the couple kissing lovingly in a tribute to the life they’d shared.

Jack looked down to where their son, Brian, stood quietly watching the image, Allison holding the boy comfortingly as Henry moved to stand in front of the small group that had assembled.

“A lot of us are still in shock about the tragic events that have brought us here,” Henry began, the alpha dressed in dark funeral garb. “The loss of Walter and Susan Perkins forces us to question if the work we do is worth the risks. Eureka was born from the idealistic vision that by advancing science, we can control it for the greater good.” Brian sniffled, Jack catching sight of tears falling from the boy’s eyes as he stared at the ground.

“Clearly, that’s not always the case,” Henry continued his eulogy, looking at the boy in sympathy. “We can never forget Walter and Susan. Their legacy is in our hands now. Their friends. Their family. Their son.” Brian finally looked up, clutching a rose tightly as he made eye contact with Henry.

“Walter and Susan, you will be greatly missed,” finished Henry, staring mournfully at the caskets. As the alpha stepped away, rejoining the crowd, Brian stepped forward and placed his rose on his mother’s casket, retreating back into Allison’s arms as Henry gave the signal for the bodies to be lowered down into the ground. Jack stood alone for a moment, staring at the two boxes as the rest
of the funeral group swiftly departed, Allison taking the boy with her as he had nowhere else to go now that he was alone.

He couldn’t understand it. Walter had died, vanished after his machine had exploded in his basement when Jo and he had gone down to confront the man and put a stop to his invention. His death had been a consequence of his own actions, but Susan’s… Jack couldn’t understand why the woman would take her own life. He could understand losing a loved one, but the woman still had her son. Jack couldn’t fathom leaving Zoe alone like that if he had a choice in the matter.

Suddenly, the hairs on the back of his neck stood up and Jack felt like he was being watched. Looking around, the omega found that he was completely alone, the bright sunny day a sharp contrast to the mood of the area. His senses refused to calm down and feeling unsettled, Jack beat a hasty retreat back to the cars, spying Henry, Brian, and Allison waiting in the parking lot. Henry was comforting Brian as Jack walked up to Allison. The other omega studied Brian, watching him in concern as he numbly took in Henry’s words.

“I still don’t get it,” Allison stated, a small measure of frustration slipping into her tone.

“What’s that?” Jack asked, urging her to walk with him, feeling that their conversation shouldn’t be heard by Brian.

“Susan committing suicide. I mean, I know it sounds callous, but I don’t care how bad things are, once you have a kid, you don’t get to just check out,” Allison ranted, voicing the same thoughts Jack had been keeping to himself.

“Yeah,” Jack agreed, his thoughts drifting back to his own daughter. “Zoe has said the same thing to me about my job more times than I can count.”

Allison turned to the new Sheriff sympathetically. “Taking your life and taking a job are hardly the same thing.”

“In this town?” Jack asked, thinking about how Walter’s life had been taken because of the job he had. Jack wondered what risks he would come across now that he had the job of corralling these mad scientists. “Not so sure.”

Jack quickly left, climbing into the new Sheriff’s jeep he had been given on his first day and wanting to do nothing, but get back to the station and relax for a bit. Turning the key, Jack groaned as the engine sputtered and died. Nothing seemed to be going well today. Trying again, the engine still refused to start and the omega pulled the keys back out in frustration, resigning himself to walking all the way back to town or possibly getting help from Henry before he left. Suddenly, the car’s horn, alarm, and windshield wipers all activating, bombarding the Sheriff with a loud cacophony of noise. Confused, Jack desperately tried pressing buttons and switches on his dash, trying to fix whatever was going on with his car. Everything suddenly stopped, a flash of bluish light filled the cab of the car. Looking up, Jack couldn’t see where the light had come from, but was grateful that all the noise had finally stopped.

With a sigh, Jack tried to start the jeep again and was relieved when the engine finally turned over, deciding that he would have Henry look the car over when he got a chance.

“I don’t need you to tell me that I don’t have a place to put my stuff,” Jack argued, pacing back and forth back at the station. “I know that! The question is, where is my stuff that I don’t have
anywhere to put?” It’d been a week and yet his suitcases and stuff from his apartment were still lost somewhere and this person on the other end of the line was being no help whatsoever. He didn’t even have a change of clothes, just the go bag he’d brought with him and his uniform. The other phone rang and Jo answered as Jack continued to argue with the man on the line.

“It’s for you,” the alpha stated.

“Can you take a message?” Jack asked, covering the receiver on his phone.

“No,” Jo denied, getting up from her seat. “It sounds urgent.”

Jack sighed, putting the call on hold and switching to the other line. “Hello, Jack Carter.”

Listening, Jack felt his annoyance mount as he turned to look back at Jo with a glare. “Really? A ghost? Very mature,” he told the caller, not even bothering to keep the sarcasm from his voice.

“Look, it’s very convincing, but I get it, haze the new guy, big laughs. I gotta go.” He didn’t have time for prank calls and he couldn’t believe that Jo had made him take it. Hanging up and switching the lines back to the moving company, Jack groaned in frustration when he realized that they had hung up too.

“Great. Thank you, Jo,” Jack complained, walking closer to where his ‘partner’ sat at her desk. “I think I may have lost my only chance of getting my stuff back because I had to take a crank call about a haunting.”

“I didn’t set that up,” Jo stated carelessly, looking at him from her desk as if he was beneath her.

“Yeah? I should believe you, why?” Jack asked, confronting her on her blasé behavior towards him.

“Carter, this is a town full of scientists. Everyone knows there’s no such thing as ghosts,” she told him condescendingly.

Before he could say anything more, both officers looked up as they heard the front door open, watching as a woman came into the main room with a purposeful walk.

“Where is Walter?” she demanded. Jack and Lupo stared at the woman before looking at each other, silently asking if they were both witnessing the same thing.

Susan Perkins, very much alive and breathing, was standing in their office and glaring them down.

“You were saying?” Jack asked Jo. Cautiously stepping closer to the woman, Jack motioned for her to take a seat.

“Jo, call Allison. She’s gonna want to see this,” he ordered his deputy.

“Where is Walter?” Susan repeated, looking at the two of them as if they could conjure the man from thin air. Anger and hurt was practically emanating from the woman and Jack felt at a loss on how to handle this.

“Uh, Mrs. Perkins, give us one moment, and we’ll try to… resolve the issue,” Jack stated, floundering for words. With a perfect sense of timing, Allison chose that moment to walk into the room, catching sight of him first and then their guest.

“What’s going on here?” Allison asked, staring at the woman in disbelief.

“Was hoping you could tell me,” Jack answered, stepping back as Susan got more visibly agitated.
"I need to see Walter," she demanded for a third time, staring the two omegas down.

"I’m not sure this will all get worked out, Mrs. Perkins," Jack admitted cautiously, trying to get the woman to calm down.

"Walter was obviously trying to hurt me," Susan explained to the two. "And when I-." The beta woman interrupted herself, glaring at Jack, Allison, and Jo as she demanded angrily, "What are you all staring at?!"

Trying to calm the woman and embarrassed that their looks had been noticed, Jack attempted to explain the situation. "Sorry if we seem a little unnerved, but we just buried you this morning."

Looking shocked and maybe even a bit insulted, Susan turned her attention to Jack. "You’re unnerved? My parents called me in hysterics, because they got an invitation to my funeral, and a message saying they had a grandson who needs a home."

"Which was all a big surprise to me, seeing as how I’m not dead and I’ve never had a child!"

"Yeah…" Jack admitted, feeling more uncomfortable as he glanced at Allison for help. "You win."

"We’re just trying to figure out what’s going on," Allison explained calmly.

"Then get Walter in here and ask him," Susan demanded furiously.

"You didn’t tell her?" Allison asked Jack in disbelief.

"I was getting to it," he explained, avoiding the omega’s glare.

"Tell me what?" Susan asked nervously.

With a sigh, Allison seemed to gather herself, drawing her shoulders up as she looked at the woman. "Walter’s dead."

"….Walter’s dead?" Susan repeated, looking between Jack and Allison as if they were going to announce that this was all some sort of huge joke.

"Yeah," Jack replied slowly, practically stuttering out the explanation. "He sort of, blew himself up."

"Oh my god," Susan whispered, staring at Jack in mounting horror. "You’re not joking."

"I’m sorry, Susan," Allison apologized, the conversation drifting into silence as they gave the woman a moment to process everything.

"Wait a minute," Jo stated. "If she’s Susan Perkins, then who did we bury this morning?"

Jack shifted uncomfortably, glancing back at the woman sitting before them. She looked exactly like the woman they had buried this morning, and though she obviously knew Walter, she denied ever having a kid. So who was this woman if not the Susan Perkins he had met before?

"You’re staring again," Susan scolded, glaring at them.

"Yeah, do you mind if I ask you how you and Walter met?" Jack asked, trying to see how similar this woman was to the one they buried and get more information.

"I was a grad student at MIT. He was a post-doc," she explained, getting up and pacing as she talked, her nerves getting the best of her. "We got married right after graduation, and he wanted to
start a family, but I wasn’t ready.”

As she talked Jo opened a file sitting on her desk, skimming through the information as she followed along.

“One morning, this guy came to the door and wanted to talk to Walter about some top-secret job. He wanted to go, I wanted to stay. So we separated.”

“I want you to know, we’re gonna have to verify everything you just said,” Jack explained, making sure the woman understood what was going to happen next. “Hopefully it’ll help us sort this thing out.”

“How long will that take?” Susan demanded.

“I’m not sure,” Jack admitted, unable to help the chuckle that escaped him as he thought about how he was going to solve this. “It’s not like we have a standard form to undead you.”

Allison coughed softly. “Actually…”

Jack turned to her in astonishment, sure his mouth was hanging open. “Tell me you’re kidding.”

“924/B. In triplicate,” Jo inputted.

“We’ll still need to confirm your identity,” Allison assured Susan.

“How are you going to do that?” she asked.

“Well, we’re going to need to do a DNA test,” Jack started to explain.

“Oh, we can do better than that,” Allison corrected. “But we’re still gonna need to do some digging.” Allison gave Jack a pointed look. It took him a moment before the full meaning behind her words registered.

“You mean I gotta go back to the-“

“Yes.” Allison said seriously.

“Well, someone’s gotta get me a coroner,” Jack demanded. He may have to dig up the body, but there was no way he could examine it on his own.

“You’ll have one,” Allison replied shortly. Her eyes told Jack to be quiet and do his job.

“I don’t care what you have to do. I just want to get back to my normal life,” Susan interjected.

“Yeah, I can relate,” Jack agreed, turning away.

Jack had been digging late into the afternoon by the time he finally hit Susan Perkins’ casket. Night was falling as he leaned back in the grave, taking a breather from the workout he’d just had. Thankfully the ground had still been soft and a little loose from the burial this morning, otherwise he didn’t think he could have done it on his own. Tossing his shovel up and climbing out of the hole, Jack retreated to his jeep just as Henry pulled up in a flatbed truck with a crane attached to the back.
“Hey, Henry,” Jack tiredly waved at the alpha, putting his shovel away.

“Hey, Jack!” the man greeted cheerfully in return, hopping out of his truck. Walking over to the grave, he peered down with an impressed look. “You dig that all up yourself?”

“Yeah,” Jack groaned, stretching his back.

“You know, I have something that could have helped with this,” Henry admitted, turning to his friend.

“Of course you did. You couldn’t have said something sooner?” Jack called after the laughing alpha as he retreated to his truck, grabbing what looked like a giant controller from the front seat. It looked like something Jack had used before to fly model airplanes, but with an added revolving metal piece on the top.

Turning it on, Henry expertly manipulated the crane, using it to grab the coffin and move it up onto the truck in just a few moments. Standing by his friend, Jack turned to Henry with a teasing smile.

“County Coroner, huh?”

“Board certified,” Henry agreed. Jack glanced down at his mechanic jumpsuit where a patch with the word ‘Forensics’ sat on one of his pockets. “Oh.” Ripping the thing off, Henry reached in his pocket and produced a nearly identical patch, this one with the word ‘Coroner’ on it instead. Slapping it onto the Velcro pocket, Henry beamed at Jack in a pleased manner. Jack couldn’t help, but laugh. Henry really was a jack of all trades in this town.

“Pretty cool, huh?” Henry asked, holding up the remote control. “I call it an omniversal remote. I can run all this equipment by remote control,” he explained, gesturing to the truck and the crane.

“That’s super, Henry.” Jack agreed quickly, glancing around at the now completely dark cemetery. “Can we just hurry it up?” he practically begged the man, the surrounding grave stones putting him on edge. Jack felt antsy messing with a grave, visions of every zombie movie he’d ever seen popping up in his head. “I’m not a big fan of cemeteries.”

“Ah,” Henry nodded in understanding. “One too many Romero movies, huh?”

Jack sighed despondently. “On too many funerals, too,” Jack muttered quietly, thinking about all of his past associates in the Marshals who had died.

Just as Henry seemed to get the casket settled onto the bed of the truck, suddenly the car alarms and lights of both vehicles started to go haywire, the headlights flashing as the siren on Jack’s jeep went off.

“Whoa!” Henry exclaimed, both men startling at the eruption of noise and light in the once quiet cemetery. The man frantically pressed several buttons on the remote, trying to stop the commotion. “Something’s interfering with the frequency,” he explained to Jack.

“Pull the batteries,” Jack told him.

“What?” the alpha yelled back, unable to hear him over the sounds.

“Pull the batteries!” Jack yelled his words again. Henry slipped off the back cover quickly and the minute the remote’s battery was in hand, everything went quiet, the headlights on the cars shining steadily through the night.
“I guess I got a few more kinks to work out,” Henry admitted, looking at his device.

“Well, just see if you can get the body to Global Dynamics without alerting the entire town,” Jack teased, backing towards his jeep. “I’m going over there now to see Allison.” Giving a last wave to Henry, Jack climbed in his jeep and drove away.

After the whole incident with Walter’s machine, Global Dynamics had taken the destruction of most of the facility as an opportunity to remodel, giving the place a sleeker, more updated look. Jack wondered if the old facility had been the same one that had been built in Einstein’s time, as all of the cement and plaster sure had made it look that way. Now, inside everything was reinforced glass and metal, the place looking a whole lot more modern than it had previously.

A double bonus in Jack’s mind was that the previous director, Warren King, had been fired over his oversight with the chip Walter had stolen in Section 5. The omega felt relief walking into the new building, knowing he wouldn’t have to smell or speak to the stuck-up beta again.

“So, you met the new director yet?” Jack asked Allison as they walked through the main atrium of G.D.

“Not yet,” Allison said, ignoring the pleased smile on Jack’s face, well aware of his feelings towards the old director. “He just arrived. G.D. is under DARPA jurisdiction and they get a little crazy about sharing information. Hence our visit.”

“What’s DARPA?” Jack asked, checking out the new features in the building as they walked down a hallway.

“The Defense Advance Research Project Agency,” she explained. “It’s the central research arm of the DOD.”

“Okay,” Jack asked, confused. “So why am I here?”

“Well, you wanna use the new molecular bio-scanner on Susan Perkins’ body and this new woman, right?”

“Maybe,” Jack answered hesitantly. He’d just wanted to do a DNA test on both woman and see what that told him. He assumed whatever this machine Allison was taking him to was better or more in-depth than a simple blood test. These people couldn’t do anything half-way it seems.

“Yeah, well, all requests to use laboratory resources for police applications must be submitted to the Director of Research.”

“Who we haven’t met yet,” Jack said, catching on.

“Exactly.”

Jack blinked as they suddenly stopped in front of a man, his back turned to them. The omega bit down on his lip as the strongest scent of Alpha that he’d ever smelled flooded his senses. The man that turned around was tall, black hair and tanned skin catching Jack’s eye before his gaze shifted, trailing up a solid frame and stopping on solid gray eyes that Jack felt like getting lost in. Until he realized those eyes weren’t directed at him. They were directed at Allison.

“Nathan?” Allison asked, sounding shocked as she took in the man’s presence.
“Allison,” Nathan’s deep voice greeted back, Jack having to look away as the alpha smiled charmingly at the other omega. Breathing through his mouth, Jack willed himself to get back under control, promising himself that he’d check his suppressant medication when he got back to the station. “I swear I was just about to call you.”

“What are you doing here?” she asked accusingly. Jack glanced at her, wondering what the history between the two of them was. “You’re not…”

“Afraid so,” Nathan confirmed.

“You’re moving back to Eureka?” Allison asked, her expression making it look like that was the last thing she wanted. Jack awkwardly stood off to the side, reminded of whenever he and Abbey happened to be in the same room together and an argument would ensue.

“Moved, actually. Yesterday,” the man stepped closer to the pair and Jack willed himself to stand firm, even though another part, buried deep down, wanted to step in even closer, to immerse himself in the heavenly scent coming off the alpha before him. “Same office, same house. Surprise!” The alpha smiled, still only looking at Allison. An uncomfortable silence settled between everyone as Nathan stared at Allison and she avoided eye contact with him. Jack just tried to sneakily keep looking the man over, avoiding the conflict between the two.

“I probably should have called sooner,” Nathan admitted, looking apologetic as he realized Allison’s reaction was not happy or the one he’d obviously thought he’d get with his presence.

“Probably,” Allison snapped, glaring at the large alpha.

Taking a bracing breath, Nathan turned his attention to Jack who wasn’t nearly prepared to have all that attention on him. “You must be the new sheriff I’ve heard so much about. Nathan Stark,” the man greeted, holding out his hand cordially.

“Jack. Carter,” Jack greeted, taking the man’s hand and stumbling over his words, swallowing thickly as the alpha’s hand completely enclosed his own. Nathan was taller than Jack, not by much, but his presence and self-assured manner seemed to make him appear much larger than he really was. Jack cleared his throat, trying to start some sort of discussion when silence fell again. “So, you two used to work together?” he inquired.

“I mainly work with her son, Kevin, but Allie and I had our moments,” the alpha answered, turning back to Allison and Jack berated himself for feeling bereft at the loss of eye contact.

Watching the two stare at each other, Jack decided it was time to get back on track, refusing to acknowledge that he wanted Nathan’s attention back on him. “You must be the new sheriff I’ve heard so much about. Nathan Stark,” the man greeted, holding out his hand cordially.

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Watching the two stare at each other, Jack decided it was time to get back on track, refusing to acknowledge that he wanted Nathan’s attention back on him. “Anyway, I was looking into something and wanted to know if I could use your bio scanner-molecule-thingy.” Jack wanted to hit himself for sounding stupid in front of the man. Nathan nodded regardless, though he looked a bit surprised by the words that had come out of Jack’s mouth.

“Of course. Anything I can do to help.”

The sound of a clearing throat had everyone turning to look at Fargo, the smaller man dressed up in a suit and looking at Stark with hero-worship in his eyes.

“Excuse me, Dr. Stark. Maggie’s taking care of your parking space and the new furniture will be delivered tomorrow,” the beta informed the director.

“A lot to catch up on,” Nathan said apologetically, turning back to the two. “Sheriff, it’s been a pleasure. Allison…it’s good to see you.” With a long last look at Allison, the alpha walked away,
Jack turning to look at his fellow omega in question.

“So, you two have a history?” he guessed.

“You could say that,” she confirmed, annoyance clear in her tone.

“What, like an ex-boyfriend?” Jack asked, hoping he didn’t sound too eager to know her reply.

“Not exactly.”

“Well, what exactly?” he asked, getting impatient.

“He’s my husband.”

Jack felt his face fall as he realized she hadn’t said ex. Which meant the two were still married. The secret omega groaned as he realized that he was attracted and lusting hard after an already mated man. Figured. That was just his luck.

Later that night, after finally retiring to his cot in the cell, Jack couldn’t get himself to fall asleep. He was tossing and turning, trying to get comfortable while his mind kept going over the many events of the day. Or more like, his mind kept flashing back to one Nathan Stark, alpha director of G.D. and mate to one Allison Blake. Jack groaned cursing his mind as it turned once more to Stark, picturing his broad shoulders, those dark eyes, and those large hands. Wondering what those large hands would feel like when wrapped around—

The sound of the front door creaking open shattered his train of thought and Jack bolted upright in bed, looking towards the noise. The beam of a flashlight could be seen, bouncing off the walls as someone walked through the halls and came closer to where he lay. Thinking quickly, Jack glided to his feet, tiptoeing quickly across the room and grabbing some metal thing which he then hurriedly stuffed under his covers, making it look like he was sound asleep on the cot, before retreating to a corner, cloaking himself in darkness. A moment later, the stranger walked into the room, making a beeline straight for the cell and as they pulled away the covers, Jack grabbed his gun, raising it to the back of the intruder’s head.

“Freeze! Don’t move,” he ordered firmly, trying to ignore the fact that he was only in boxer shorts and a dark undershirt. Not nearly enough to protect him should things turn violent. Keeping an eye on the person, Jack flipped the switch on a lamp nearby, shining the light in the intruder’s face.

“Evening, Sheriff Carter,” the beta greeted with an awkward grin, waving his hand in hello.

With an exasperated groan, Jack lowered his weapon. “Fargo. How did you get in here? I thought I locked the door?”

“Oh, yeah, that doesn’t work. Sheriff Cobb always had an open door policy,” Fargo explained. Jack exhaled deeply, suddenly feeling like he wasn’t going to be getting any sleep tonight.

“Uh, you-uh, might wanna be careful with this,” Fargo warned, motioning to the metal contraption Jack had placed on the cot. “It’s a portable generator.”

“So?” Jack asked, too tired to care about potentially damaging some power supply thing at the moment.
“A fission-powered portable generator,” Fargo further expanded.

“Okay,” Jack said, feeling more awake as he realized that he had indelicately manhandled a dangerous piece of machinery. “Don’t sleep on the nuclear powered device. Good safety tip,” Jack said, thanking the beta. Fargo nodded, pleased with himself and the two stood staring at each other from across the room.

“Fargo. What do you want? It’s 10:30 at night,” Jack asked, hoping the beta had interrupted his attempt to sleep for a good reason.

“Actually,” Fargo said, suddenly seeming to remember why he was there. “I’m here to help you. I heard you were looking for a place to stay, and I’m involved in a little project that I think you may find interesting.”

“Really?” Jack asked, drawing out the word in a doubtful voice. “What kind of project?”

Fargo had the mentality of a child. The man had ordered Jack to keep his eyes closed since the moment they’d left the station. Jack didn’t know where he was, but he could tell that they had driven for a little while and from the mud squishing under his shoes, they were now standing somewhere outside. The omega was tired, both physically and mentally, and just wanted to see what this mysterious place was that Fargo had promised him.

“Can I open my eyes yet?” Jack asked, gripping on to Fargo’s shoulder as the beta led him forward. They came to a stop and Jack could hear crickets and frogs chirping in the cool air.

“Okay,” Fargo agreed, sounding excited. “Behold, the home of the future.”

Opening his eyes, it took a moment for Jack to accept what he was seeing. It was a bunker. An old, dingy, vine covered bunker entrance standing in what looked like the middle of the woods. Jack really wasn’t sure what to say and watched as Fargo eagerly jogged to the door, swinging it open on creaky hinges. Jack hung his head, reluctantly stomping after Fargo as he descended a few flights of stairs.

“Alright, watch your step,” the beta warned, shining his flashlight on the cavern below them. Reaching the bottom of the stairs, Fargo illuminated a blank steel door, staring proudly at Jack.

“I’m going back to my cell,” Jack decided, turning for the stairs.

“Oh, come on, Sheriff,” Fargo asked, quickly grabbing Jack’s arm and holding him there. “Just take a look. I know she’s not much from the outside, but I promise, once you get to know SARAH, you’ll love her.”

“Who’s Sarah?” Jack asked, wondering if he was bunking with a woman down here. There’s no way that was going to happen.

“SARAH, open door,” Fargo commanded, addressing the steel door.

“Fargo, I don’t know if this is a good....idea....” Jack trailed off, watching as the door opened automatically, revealing a modern, high-tech looking house within.

play and a fireplace was revealed behind a secret panel in the wall, a fire bursting into life seconds later.

“Welcome,” a feminine voice greeted, emanating from the ceiling.

“Okay, what’s that?” Jack asked, trying not to freak out.

“That was SARAH.” Fargo revealed, grinning at the house around him.


“It’s a smart-house,” Fargo went on. “It’s designed to anticipate its owner’s every need and desire. Of course it’ll take some time to learn all of your personal preferences.” The beta wandered further into the house, Jack trailing along as clear walls separated, revealing a dining room and then a kitchen beyond that.

“All I want is a house that isn’t radioactive,” Jack said thinking about the fission generator back in the cell. He reminded himself to have Jo get rid of that first thing in the morning.

“Well,” Fargo snickered, “it used to be a nuclear disaster bunker, but don’t worry, the rad levels are well within normal.”

“That’s great.”

“The telecommunications system is linked directly to your office and the skeleton profile has been programmed into the mainframe.” Fargo walked past a bathroom and then back into the main room. “There’s a 24-hour helpline if you run into any problems.” Jack took the little card the beta gave him, looking at the number.

“Thanks, Fargo.”

“No problem, Sheriff Carter.” The man smiled, stepping back as a blue beam of light ran up and down Jack’s body, the sheriff batting at it as if he could physically get it off.

“What the hell was that?” he demanded, looking at the beta.

“Just a simple bio scan. SARAH is programmed to monitor human systems to make sure those living here stay healthy.”

“Oh, you’ve really got to get yourself a partner,” Jack joked, looking around the place again. It had potential and it was definitely better than sleeping on a cot. “Thanks again, Fargo. This helps out a lot.”

“You’re welcome. See you around, Sheriff,” the man said in farewell, turning towards the door.

“Sheriff, I am reading only 40% of the omega suppressant still working in your system. Were you wanting to take another before you turned in for the night?” SARAH asked innocently. Jack stared in shock at the ceiling before turning to Fargo with wide eyes.

The man gaped at Jack, taking a noticeably breath in as he tried to scent Jack’s true orientation. “You’re a- Sheriff, you’re an omega?”

Jack banged his head against the wall, groaning in frustration. Well, there went that secret. Turning to glare at SARAH, he yelled, “You couldn’t have waited five minutes for him to leave?!”

“Was it something I said?”
“So it’s true?” Fargo asked, still visibly shocked.

“Yes, alright. It’s true, but you can’t tell anyone, you got it?” Jack demanded, looming over the smaller man and pointing his finger in his face. “I don’t want anyone else to know.”

“Okay-okay. I can keep a secret, sir. My lips,” the beta mimed zipping his lips, “are sealed.”

Scrubbing his hands roughly over his face, Jack looked at Fargo’s earnest expression. The man was doing his best to give him the widest pair of puppy dog eyes he could manage. Jack groaned, not seeing another choice, but to trust this man he didn’t even really know. “Ah, fine. I’m trusting you, Fargo. This stays between us. If I hear a word that someone else knows…”

The man was practically bouncing up and down in contained excitement, backing towards the door as he remained facing the omega. “Night, Sheriff! Sleep tight!” the beta called, making a run for the door and charging back up the steps. Jack sighed as the door sealed closed behind him, heading back for the kitchen. There was no way Fargo was letting this go.

“SARAH, where’s the fridge?” Jack asked, looking around the room. A whirling noise sounded behind him and Jack turned to find a refrigerator rotating out of the wall.

“Allow me, Sheriff Carter. There’s cold beer on tap. Dr. Fargo says you like baseball. I recorded the Indiana game for you.” SARAH filled a glass full of beer and the baseball game suddenly started playing on a large tv screen in the kitchen.

Moving to stand in front of the tv, Jack felt himself start to relax as he viewed the game. “SARAH, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship. Just…try not to blurt my orientation out to anyone else, okay?” he asked the house.

“Of course, Sheriff Carter.”

“TIME TO GET UP!”

Jack jerked upright out of a dead sleep as SARAH’s incredibly loud voice sounded throughout the house, followed quickly by pulsing dance music. Jack covered his ears as the music throbbed against his head.

“What?” Jack yelled.

“YOU HAD 837 HOURS SLEEP,” SARAH continued.

“Yeah, well, that’s…” impossible, Jack thought. That was like several days worth of sleep. “Why are you yelling at me?” Jack yelled up at the house.

“AM I TALKING LOUD?”

“Yes! SARAH, turn it off!” Jack shouted, trying to get out of bed with the club music still pounding in his ears.

“IT DOESN’T SEEM LIKE I’M TALKING LOUD.” Jack scrambled for his cell phone and the help-line that Fargo had given him last night.

“Smart House Tech Support, how may I assist you?” an accented man’s voice answered the phone.
“I’m having technical difficulties,” Jack answered, trying not to scream down the phone.

“Well, I’d be happy to help you with that, sir. Can I please have your name?”

Jack paused. “Fargo, is that you?”

“Ah, o-one moment, sir, while I transfer your call.” There was a pause on the line before Fargo’s unaccented voice popped back on the phone. “Douglas Fargo speaking.”

“You don’t say!” Jack said, voice heavy with sarcasm.

“Sheriff Carter, how is everything?”

“YOUR SHOWER IS READY, SHERIFF.”

“Well, your house is yelling at me,” Jack complained, that horrible music still pounding in his ears.

“Hold on…Well that’s weird. There’s been a power surge. It reset the clock and threw off the settings…” there’s a pause over the phone and suddenly the music cuts off. “There, is that any better?”

“A perfect 39 megahertz. Just how you like it.” SARAH said, her voice lowering to an acceptable level.

“Yes,” he agreed feeling relieved, his ears feeling muted after the loud noises. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome. So, uh, Sheriff. About that…thing…from last night…” Fargo asked inquisitively.

“Bye Fargo.” Jack quickly shut off the phone and tossed it on the bed, making his way to the bathroom.

“Just a reminder. Susan Perkins’ bio-scan, today, 9:00 a.m.”

“Uh, SARAH,” Jack asked, looking around the simple room he walked into. “I thought this was the bathroom?”

Instead of answering, a sink and toilet suddenly folded out from the wall.

“Show off,” Jack muttered making his way to the toilet. Pausing, he looked up, taking in the wide open doorway and feeling exposed. “Uh, SARAH, do you mind?” Jack asked, motioning to the doors. SARAH slid the doors closed quietly, Jack reminding himself to check with Fargo about privacy options later.

In the bio-scan room, both Susan Perkins’ were laid out in two giant scanning machines, Fargo talking to the one living woman before they were slid into the scanning tubes.

“So now, this’ll tell us if the new Susan is identical to the one we buried?” Jack asked, watching the women behind a glass wall. As the machine began running, information and pictures of body scans started to fill the glass.

“Even more accurate than a DNA test,” Henry informed him, closely looking through the available data. Turning to possibly head for another computer, the man greeted Allison as she came into the room to stand beside Jack.
“You okay?” Jack asked, listening to the omega sigh loudly.

“Yeah, yeah,” she said quickly. “Nathan and I just got into it last night, and Kevin had a nightmare, he did all these terrifying ghost drawings and…you know what, forget it, it’s nothing,” she finished shaking her head. Jack watched her for a moment before deciding to let her be. If she had something to talk about he figured she’d say it when she was ready.

“So, Kevin isn’t Stark’s son?” he asked, trying to sound casual.

“No.”

“But, you guys are still married?”

“You’re awfully curious,” Allison asked teasingly, giving Jack a coy look.

“I’m a cop,” Jack replied, quickly coming up with an excuse. “It’s my nature.” Though it wasn’t the only part of his nature that was urging him to inquire deeper.

“Look, Nathan and I separated last year,” she informed him. “We just haven’t gotten down to the final paperwork.”

Jack bit his tongue, trying desperately to keep the smile that wanted to break out from reaching his lips. He tried to mentally berate himself for being interested in Allison’s soon to be ex-mate, but his inner omega, which had been buried for way too long, had for some reason, suddenly perked up his ears and zeroed in on one Nathan Stark. Jack needed to watch himself. He was still on suppressants and didn’t want to go around making himself act like the fool in front of everyone. Fargo already knew about the secret which only his family had known about. He didn’t need it getting out more than it already was.

“What’s with the look?” Allison asked.

Jack snapped out of his thoughts, glancing quickly at Allison before focusing back on the room in front of him. “There was no look,” he denied.

“There was a look,” she laughingly insisted.

Jack was about to protest again when Henry jogged back into the room. “You’re not going to believe this,” he exclaimed excitedly.

“Oh,” Jack paused, as if he really was trying to guess. “They’re both Susan Perkins?”

“Down to the last protein chain! Chromosomes, cell differentiation. I mean, all the markers are identical,” Henry eagerly explained. He paused, taking in Jack’s words for the first time. “How did you know?”

“I was reading Walter’s personnel file last night. Guess what the subject of his first dissertation was? Stem cell replication,” Jack explained.

“Are you saying that Walter cloned his wife?” Allison asked dubiously.

“Not exactly,” Henry corrected. “Walter went way beyond cloning. He recreated Susan, cell by cell as a full-grown adult. I mean she may look 30, but chronologically those tissues can’t be more that seven years old. Tops,” Henry stated, his voice rising in excitement.

“A year older that her son, that’s creepy,” Allison stated and Jack agreed. How desperate had
Walter been to keep his mate?

“Susan was right,” Jack said with disgust. “Walter wanted a family. With her,” he gestured to the original Susan, “or with her,” finished, motioning to the dead body.

The next morning, Jack rushed to the G.D. clinic. He’d arrived earlier that morning to do more work with Allison and Henry, and instead had heard that Nathan had been found unconscious in his own office. Telling himself the excuse that it was his duty as Sheriff of Eureka, Jack quickly rounded the corner and stopped dead, awkwardly falling back to lean against the nearest wall.

“I’m fine,” Nathan told Allison, his eyes catching sight of Jack, but quickly looking back towards his mate.

“Who said I was worried?” Allison denied weakly, her scent peaking in happiness and just a bit of interest.


“Susan Perkins is asking for you,” Jack lied, smiling at the other omega. “Henry told her about the whole uber-clone thing.” Putting what he hoped was a charming smile on his face, Jack walked closer, placing himself between Allison and Nathan. He continued to look at Allison, hoping she didn’t notice his movement or suspect anything.

“I have to go deal with this,” Allison apologized turning to Nathan.

“I don’t think I’m going anywhere,” he teased.

Allison beckoned Jack to follow her and he reluctantly trailed after her.

“Sheriff,” Nathan called and Jack swung around quickly, trying to hide his eagerness. “Talk to you for a sec?”

“Sure,” Jack agreed, moving closer to the man’s bed. Allison left with a promise that she’d see him later, waving cutely at Nathan. Jack tried not to grind his teeth in irritation, instead turning his attention to the man in the hospital bed. The currently half-dressed man in the hospital bed. Jack didn’t even try to hide his stare as the man slowly got out of bed, straightening up to reveal a set of abs and a lightly furred chest that made Jack want to purr in appreciation. Instead he coughed awkwardly, dragging his eyes up to meet the cocky ones of the alpha before him.

“Should, uh- should you be out of bed?” Jack asked, remembering that this man had collapsed in his office several hours ago.

“What I need to be doing is getting back to work,” Nathan answered, slowly buttoning up his shirt, much to Jack’s displeasure. “I didn’t want to say anything with Allison still in the room,” the alpha began. Inhaling deeply, the man paused, a confused look on his face before he gave a shake of his head. “I saw something. Something I’d like to keep between us,” he asked, his steel gray eyes seeming to burn into Jack’s own.

“Okay,” Jack agreed readily.

“There was an electrical problem with the computers. And then I saw…something. A figure,” he
confessed hesitantly.

“Are you saying someone was in your office?” Jack asked in concern.

“Not someone,” the alpha corrected. “Something. It wasn’t entirely corporeal.”

“Corporeal?” Jack asked incredulously.

“Physical. There and not there at the same time,” Nathan explained.

Jack paused a moment, taking in exactly what the alpha was admitting to. “Are you saying….you saw a ghost?” he asked in disbelief, not accepting that this man believed in the supernatural.

“Sheriff, the Director of Research at the most advanced scientific facility in the world doesn’t see ghosts,” Nathan stated condescendingly.

Jack smiled, not believing him for a moment. Nathan Stark thought he saw a ghost. Chuckling, Jack promised to check it out and headed for the door, figuring that it was about time he caught up with Henry and Allison.

“So, are you sleeping with her?”

Jack tripped and almost face-planted into the floor at Nathan’s words. Using a wall for support, the omega turned back to the man, giving him a look of shocked confusion.

“Excuse me?”

“Well, the way you interrupted us when we were in here together, I figured there might be something going on between the two of you.” Jack wanted to cringe, embarrassed that his actions had been noticed and completely misunderstood.

“You’ve got the wrong idea,” Jack stated simply, backing out of the room. Nathan’s alpha pheromones were slowly permeating the air, marking the man’s position as top alpha in this place, and the scent made part of Jack want to get incredibly closer to the man, while the other part wanted to run away as far as it could. “I’ll let you know if I get anywhere,” he promised before practically running from the room, habit making him choose the latter option.

“Tell me, Henry,” Jack stated, helping the alpha escort the body of the Susan Perkins clone down the hallway. “You’re a scientist. Do you believe in ghosts?”

“Well,” the man said, seriously considering the question. “I believe in energy. When somebody dies, that energy has to go somewhere. So theoretically, I suppose it’s possible. Why?”

“Eh, the topic’s come up a few times,” Jack brushed off, remembering his promise to Nathan, but also recalling the prank call, and Allison mentioning something about Kevin having a nightmare about some kind of ghostly figure.

“Where are we taking her, anyway?” he asked, helping to push the gurney into an elevator.

“Cryogenics. She’s gonna be the focus of a lot of interest,” Henry answered.

Taking the elevator down several floors, down a few hallways, and into a dark room, Jack gaped in horrified awe. A honeycombed pattern of containers covered the entire floor of the gigantic room,
each container occupied by a dead body.

“What’s the mortality rate around here?” Jack asked, unable to see an unoccupied container from where he stood.

“Twice the national average. The bigger the science, the bigger the risks,” Henry informed in a matter of fact manner. Jack nodded absentmindedly, acknowledging that he may have to brace himself for many more deaths in his career as Eureka’s new Sheriff. “But none of these are local,” the alpha admitted, smiling sheepishly at Jack when he gave him a sharp look. “We have them shipped in for research.”

Just then, Jack’s cell phone went off and he scrambled for his pocket, answering it with a simple hello.

“Hello, Sheriff Carter. It’s SARAH.”

“Sorry, who’s this?” Jack asked, not recognizing the name.

“Your house.” SARAH answered. Jack paused, caught off-guard as he realized his own house was calling him.

“Oh…um…I’m waist-deep in bodies at the moment, so…” Jack struggled, trying to figure out what to say to his own house.

“Sorry to bother you, but your wife, Abbey, called from Los Angeles.” Jack groaned at the mention of his ex-mate’s name, wondering what the woman could want now. “She wanted to let you know that your daughter, Zoe, didn’t come home last night.”

“Well, there’s a shocker,” Jack muttered, not surprised that Zoe was on the loose again. What did shock him was that it took over a week for it to happen.

“She also said something about you shirking your responsibilities as a mother and an omega,” SARAH continued. “I recorded the conversation if you’d like me to play it back for you.”

“Ah, no,” Jack quickly refused, not wanting to hear a single thing from Abbey. “Regarding the recordings, no more recordings. My private life isn’t a reality show.” Jack just knew Fargo had access to everything his house did or saw in whatever computer she was hooked up to.

“Whatsoever you say, Sheriff,” SARAH agreed readily.

“SARAH?” Jack asked, an itching suspicion starting to gnaw at him.

“Yes, Sheriff?”

“Is there a camera in my bedroom?” Henry looked up from his computer, giving Jack a strange look. The omega couldn’t help the small blush that he was sure was burning on his face.

“Certainly,” SARAH replied a little too happily. “I monitor all areas of the house for Dr. Fargo’s data collection.” He knew it. “Would you like me to patch him in?”

“No, I’ll be seeing Dr. Fargo in person later. Thanks,” he promised.

“Will you be home for dinner?”

Thrown by the question, Jack answered unsurely. “I guess so.”
“Wonderful. I’ll make pot roast. Your favorite, right? Don’t be late,” SARAH ordered, sounding pleased by his answer. Hanging up, Jack turned to Henry.

“Hey Henry, I need to see a geek about a ghost,” he admitting, watching as his friend smiled and pointed down a hallway.

“Right this way.”

“Where’s the video, Fargo?” Jack demanded, barging quickly into the beta’s work space.

“I dumped all the video in the trash!” Fargo cried, holding his hands up innocently. “Please, don’t hit me.”

Jack grabbed for the trashcan sitting at the man’s feet, rummaging through it. “Where is it?” he demanded, not finding anything, but a few papers and empty coffee cups.

“Carter,” Henry stated, looking at him while trying to hide a smile.

“What?”

“What are you, Amish?” Jo asked mockingly. “The computer.” She gestured to the one Fargo was in front of.

Feeling stupid and silly, Jack meekly placed the trashcan back on the floor before moving to stand beside Fargo where he could see the screen. “Can you get it back?”

“Sure,” he confirmed nervously. “Why?”

“I need you to pull up the tape from yesterday.”

“No problem,” Fargo said, quickly clicking away at the computer. “Surveillance cameras are on 24/7.”

“Okay. A: That stops now,” Jack demanded, feeling supremely creeped out. “If I see anything on there from the bathroom, I’m going to kill you.”

Fargo glanced at him nervously, chuckling awkwardly. Oh yeah, Jack was going to have a huge talk with him later.

“B:” Jack continued, trying to stay focused. “Pull up the footage from my bedroom from around the time of the power surge.”

Fargo pulled up the video, all four of them getting a crystal clear view of Jack snuggling with his pillow and drooling softly. His three friends smothered laughs as they watched the footage.

“If this goes on the internet, you’re a dead man,” Jack promised the beta.

Looking back at the screen, everyone shifted closer as the sudden bluish figure of a person appeared instantly in Jack’s bedroom. It lasted only a second before vanishing again.

“What the hell is that?” Jo demanded.

“There was a power surge at my house that screwed up the computers. Stark, before he blacked
out, he said that his computers when haywire, too, and then he saw a figure,” Jack explained, staring intently at the screen. “I’m betting that’s it.”

“I guess that answers your question about ghosts,” Henry said, jotting information down in his little notebook.

Fargo played back the scene, freezing it just as the figure appeared. It took a few tries and technical manipulation as the image would disappear from one frame to the next faster than one could blink. Carefully controlling the camera, the four investigators finally got a good look at their ghost.

“Is that who I think it is?” Henry exclaimed.

“Unreal,” Fargo whispered.

“Now we just have to find him again,” Jack stated.

“And how are we supposed to do that?” Jo questioned.

Jack thought for a moment, thinking of areas the ghost had been seen in and how it influenced technology.

“Henry,” Jack asked, addressing the alpha. “That remote of yours, that’s for scanning electronic frequencies, right?”

“Yeah,” confirmed Henry.

“Do ghosts have frequencies?” Jack asked, thinking of how the thing constantly messed with surrounding technology.

“Oh,” Henry said, understanding filling his face as he ran quick mental calculations. “We’re gonna need a bigger battery.”

Pulling into the parking lot, tires screeching as he slammed on the brakes, Jack watched with Henry as the lights and cars around the elementary school seemed to go crazy.

“Looks like we found him!” Jack yelled, both men charging out of the jeep and into the school. Hurrying past a crowd of kids rushing in the other direction, the two barged into the gym, watching as Susan Perkins, holding Brian, reached out for the ghostly figure of Walter.

“Stop!” Jack cried.

“Don’t touch him,” Henry seconded, hurrying over to check on Allison who seemed to be knocked out in the middle of the gym.

“It’s okay, Walter,” Jack soothed, holding a hand out to keep the man still. “We’re here to help.”

Walter stared at him, not moving an inch as the energy around him flickered and sizzled.

Taking in a deep breath, Jack checked on Susan and Brian before making his way over to Henry and Allison. The omega was still passed out, contact with Walter obviously effecting her similarly to how it effected Nathan.

“I called G.D.” Henry stated, trying to make Allison comfortable on the gym floor. “They should
hopefully be here soon with something to contain Walter.”

“Will they know what to bring?” Jack asked, unsure how they could hope to contain him when he seemed to phase so easily in and out of existence.

“We’ll figure something out,” Henry promised, glancing over at the man.

A little under an hour later, several G.D. scientists flooded into the area, quickly setting to work on constructing some kind of sphere around Walter. Some doctors from the facility came over, checking over Allison and setting up monitoring equipment for her and Walter as Nathan stalked in with a few more specialists. Sticking by Allison, Jack listened as Henry explained to Susan that her mate was stuck in some kind of time shifting pocket and that the ball should work to get him back to normal.

With a aching groan, Allison slowly started to come around. After the doctors cleared her, Allison immediately moved to her feet, determined to get moving and not lie around any longer than she had already. The omega stumbled as she landed on her feet and Jack quickly moved to support her, mentally comparing her to Nathan. The two seemed to be work-focused down to their very core. Quickly giving her the rundown of what happened, Jack helped her stretch her legs, holding her tighter whenever Allison seemed to lose her footing.

“So what happens now?” Jack asked, trying to distract her from her struggle.

“Temporal rehabilitation.”

“What?” Jack asked, slightly confused.

“Think physical therapy, but a whole lot more expensive,” she explained.

“Oh, I was talking about Susan,” Jack replied, embarrassed that he hadn’t made that clear. “You think she’s gonna stay?” Jack asked, looking back at the couple, the betas staring at each other through the glass of Walter’s ball. Jack caught Nathan’s eye from where the alpha was standing watching over the proceedings. Feeling inexplicably embarrassed, Jack jerked his head back around, focusing on Allison again.

“For Brian’s sake, I sure hope so,” she answered.

“Wow. I thought my family was dysfunctional,” Jack teased, Allison chuckling and looking up at him with a happy smile.

“Allison, can I have a word with you?” Nathan suddenly asked from across the gym. Even without yelling, the two could hear him perfectly. Allison gave Jack a reluctant smile.

“I guess I better go over there,” she said, searching his face.

“Oh, yeah,” Jack shrugged, sheepishly running his hands through his hair and glancing over at Nathan, the man still glaring at the two of them. He sighed deeply, feeling like he’d already lost the war before it had even started. Nathan wasn’t going to give him the time of day when Allison still remained within his reach.

“Yeah,” he continued, looking back at Allison. “I got to fill out a report on this anyway….and I still don’t know how to spell corporeal, so…” Jack laughed, feeling embarrassed.

“Get some rest,” he told Allison. As she turned to walk away, Jack asked her to do one last thing. “And tell your husband, I’m glad he’s feeling better.”

Walking away from each other, Jack had almost made it to the doors when Jo caught up to him. “Carter, I’m glad I caught you,” Jo said, sounding serious. “There’s something you should know…”

Jack cut her off, not in the mood to hear about something else that may have happened. “Is it life threatening?” he asked. “Does it have anything to do with a hole in time, or clones, or does it have some kind of global consequences?”

“Well, no,” Jo said, trying to tell him something. “Then whatever it is, it can wait till tomorrow,” he told her, just wanting to go home and sulk with a beer, mourning something that never really was. “Yeah?” he asked, hoping she would just let whatever it is go.

“You’re the boss,” Jo stated, giving him a smug look. Jack felt like he was going to regret not hearing her out, but right now, he didn’t want to worry about it.

“Open the door!” Jack yelled, banging on the steel separating him from his new home and a cold beer.

“Due to technical difficulties, I cannot visually confirm identity at this time,” SARAH stated, making Jack angrier with her fifth refusal to let him in since he’d gotten there.

“Okay,” he said, taking a deep breath. “Listen to my voice. It’s me, Jack Carter!”

“I’m sorry. Voice-recognition imprint is currently offline. And in the future, when someone says they’ll be home for dinner and they’re running late, it’s polite to call,” SARAH explained with fake pleasantness.

Jack stared at the camera on top of the door, completely flabbergasted. “You’re joking. You’re made at me?!?” he demanded.

“Sorry, but I’m not programmed for that emotion at this time.”

Jack scoffed, backing away from the door and considering it as he thought over his options. SARAH was acting like a jilted lover who’d been stood up and she was clearly very good at giving the passive-aggressive treatment when she thought someone deserved it. Willing himself to calm down, Jack turned back to the door, walking closer and laying a soft hand on the frame. She wanted to act like a spouse, then he might as well treat her like one. No sense in getting on an A.I.’s bad side, especially when she ran the house you lived in.

“I’m sorry,” he apologized, stroking the metal like he would the arm of a lover. “It won’t happen again,” he promised, giving the camera his best doe-eyes.

With a click the door swung open, SARAH obviously having decided to hold him to his apology. Grabbing his stuff that he had tossed down in anger, Jack calmly walked into the house, asking SARAH to turn on the lights and fireplace, as well as play some relaxing music. He just wanted to relax and forget all about the last few days.
Jack slipped into the massage chair that SARAH pulled out, unable to hold back a moan as the rollers moved up and down his spine, asserting more and more pressure on the knots of stress in his back. He sighed, relaxing back into the seat and letting the machine push and pull his body where it wanted him to go.

_Bang! Bang! Bang!_

Jack’s eyes blinked open, not realizing that he had closed them as someone pounded on the front door.

“Just a minute!” Jack called, reluctantly climbing out of the chair and shuffling over to the entrance. The door swung open as he approached it, words on the tip of his tongue, ready to dismiss whoever was at his door falling silent at the sight of his daughter, with Jo, smiling on the other side.

“Hi!” Zoe greeted cheerfully. “You know, your yard needs a lot of work.”

“Turns out it couldn’t wait until tomorrow,” Jo said smartly, giving him a wolf-like grin. “Sleep tight.”

“Sweet pad. Where’s my room?” Zoe asked, ducking around Jack as she entered the house. The omega gaped like a fish, his mouth opening and closing, completely at a loss for what to say in the moment.

Abbey was going to hate this.
Lost Time

Jack slammed the door of his jeep closed, walking up to Café Diem as Allison quickly jogged up next to him.

“Be reasonable, Carter,” she said, a laugh caught in her voice.

“I went back to check some of my own personnel files,” he complained, turning to the omega next to him. She was trying and failing to hide her amusement at his disgruntlement. “They’d been classified.” Jack laughed in disbelief. “I mean, they’re my files!”

“It’s not my fault that there are things about yourself that you’re just not cleared to know,” Allison teased, looking at him mock seriously.

“Yeah,” he quipped. “I’d hate to stumble across something that, if I told me, I’d have to kill me.” Jack scoffed, looking at the woman next to him. “What’s next? They going to classify the contents of my fridge? My underwear drawer?”

Allison spun around, placing a hand on his chest to stop him mid-step. “You think agents of a foreign government would be after your underwear?” Her eyes dipped down and Jack resisted the urge to cover himself. He felt a blush creep across his face.

“Maybe,” he mumbled, breaking eye contact as he scuffed his shoe against the sidewalk. “I can pretty up when I want to.” His mind jumping to some of the more silken and risqué articles in his dresser back home. His blush erupted full force and Jack bolted into the café, feeling Allison’s eyes on him as she followed him inside.

“Jack! Come here,” Henry called, beckoning the omega over to the table the alpha was sharing with two other individuals. “I want you to meet two of my oldest friends.” Jack quickly made his way over to the table, taking in the blond, male beta and brunette, female omega sitting there. Henry had a huge smile on his face as he looked down at the woman, holding her hand as he made the introductions. “Kim, this is the new Sheriff, Jack Carter,” he said, gesturing from the woman to Jack. Jack shook her hand when she moved it from Henry’s grip.

“Good to meet you,” he greeted, unable to contain a grin of his own.

“And the man himself, Jason Anderson,” Henry continued, motioning to the beta as if Jack should know who he was.

“A pleasure, Sheriff,” Jason acknowledged, shaking Jack’s hand as well.

“You guys just get in town?” Jack asked curiously.

“Just this morning, actually,” Kim enthused, visibly overflowing with excitement. She seemed to be a very happy person and her energy was catching it seemed as Jack watched Henry, the alpha seemingly unable to take his eyes off her, his eyes tracing the contours of her face with a broad smile.

“Something big going on?” he asked curiously.

“Project up at G.D.” Jason informed him with a sense of important, taking a sip of his coffee. “Dr. Stark asked me to oversee a project personally and there’s no way I could leave my mate behind, especially seeing as how we would be running into an old college friend,” the beta grinned, taking
Kim’s hand in his and stroking his thumb over her knuckles softly.

Jack shifted, taking a step back as he eyed Henry speculatively. The two newcomers were apparently married, and yet here was his friend, smiling and acting like a schoolboy with his first crush. Jack mentally sighed, hoping Henry knew what he was doing.

“Morning,” Zoe grumbled tiredly, stomping down the stairs the next day as she hitched her messenger bag over her shoulder. Jack glanced up at the teen, momentarily distracted as he mumbled a greeting back. Taking a sip of his coffee, Jack turned back to the papers he had scattered across the table, picking one up and reading it closely.

“SARAH, coffee, black,” Zoe asked, marching into the kitchen.

“Parental override initiated. Decaffeinated tea for Zoe.” SARAH corrected.

“Oh, come on!” the beta complained, turning back to her mother. “I was up all night reading Shakespeare.”

“Uh-huh,” Jack agreed, rifling through more of the paper. SARAH had told him when he’d gotten up that morning. “You’re really into that school play, huh?” he asked her. Zoe had seemed to fall right into a normal routine since joining him here in Eureka. With Allison’s help, Jack had been able to easily enroll her in the local high school, and in Jack’s opinion, the girl seemed to be doing pretty well for the two weeks she’d been with him. No hint of running away again at least.

“Yeah, you know, I think drama club is really helping me find myself emotionally. I feel like I’m really starting to fit in,” Zoe admitted, coming to stand by the table with Jack.

The omega turned to his daughter, giving her a long look. “How many classes you get to skip for rehearsal?” he asked.

“Last period every day. Including geometry. Love drama,” Zoe readily admitted as Jack turned back to his papers with a laugh. Some things never changed.

“That’s what I thought,” he muttered, losing himself in his work again.

“Do you remember my school plays, when I was a kid?” Zoe asked, circling the table to face her mother.

“Mmm-hmm,” Jack agreed, barely paying attention.

“Remember third grade. Parade of Nutrition?” she asked. “You remember my cucumber outfit?”

Jack hummed in agreement again.

“Do you?” Zoe insisted.

Jack finally glanced up at her, noticing the gleam of challenge in her eyes.

“Yes,” Jack lied. He remembered there being a play, but he hadn’t actually been able to make it to watch her perform. “Zoe, you were the cutest cucumber in the garden.”

Zoe laughed, but Jack felt his face fall as anger quickly filled her scent. Uh-oh.
“I was a tomato, actually,” she snapped angrily. Jack could only stare at her in mortified silence, realizing that he had well and truly fallen into her trap. Ashamed, he nodded his head, taking her word for it.

“You weren’t at Parade of Nutrition,” she accused.

“I knew you were a vegetable!” Jack argued, hoping that counted for something.

“In fact, you weren’t at anything I ever did!” she ranted.

“Come on,” Jack pleaded. “It’s not like you did anything in those plays. You just sort of sat there looking…” he stopped, realizing that he probably shouldn’t have said anything.

“I sat there looking…” Zoe taunted, urging him to finish his thought.

“Come on, Zoe,” the omega begged, wishing she would cut him some slack. “Work was crazy back then, but it’s different here,” he argued, telling himself that he would make it up to her, as this seemed to be something she found important.

“There’s a visitor at the door,” SARAH informed, bringing up the camera to the front door. Jack glanced over and saw no one standing outside.

“It’s different,” Jack continued to plead, turning back to his daughter. She ignored him, giving him the silent treatment as she grabbed up a newspaper and started to read it. SARAH informed him again that there was someone at the door.

“There’s nobody there, SARAH,” Jack called, glancing back at the camera that continued to show nothing outside.

“Alright, don’t tune me out with the newspaper,” Jack asked, wanting Zoe to talk with him. “I invented tuning out with the newspaper.”

“Forget I said anything,” Zoe stated, dismissing the entire conversation.

“Alert,” SARAH called, sounding as close to annoyed as a computerized house could manage. “There’s a visitor at the door.”

Jack stalked to the front door as SARAH proceeded to pop it open. “SARAH,” he called angrily, “there’s nobody at the door!”

Jack paused as the door opened completely revealing a young boy, eyes outlined with eyeliner and dressed all in black.

“Hello, Sheriff,” the kid said, holding out a business card. “I’m Putnam. I go to Zoe’s school.”

Taking the card Jack glanced at it. Embossed in shiny gold, the card simply read: Putnam, Theatrical Director, Tesla School.

“Theatrical Director?” he asked, glancing at the boy again. “What are you, like, 11?”

“He’s a senior,” Zoe informed him, walking out of the house and standing by Putnam.

“Twelve, actually,” Putnam stated, turning to Zoe. “Put it in gear, lamb chop. I wanna run through Act One before first period.” Jack mouthed the words ‘lamb chop’ to himself, giving Zoe an amused look. She ignored him, choosing to instead gift the kid an awed and worshipful look as he stared off into space. “Space is time, time is relative, and all of it’s money.” Jack nodded,
completely amused by the severe disposition the kid was portraying.

“I gotta grab my costume from Vincent after school and then I have rehearsal until 6,” Zoe informed Jack.

“You asked Vincent to make your costume?” Jack asked confused. He knew the man had a gift for making anything, but he thought the talent had been restricted just to food.

“Sir, you should know, your daughter’s an incredible talent,” Putnam stated sincerely. “Her audition, she was black body radiation in 1901.” Jack felt lost, having no idea what the radiation was, much less how you would even begin to act it out. “Let’s roll,” the boy commanded, pointing at Zoe.

With that, the two of them headed out of the bunker, Zoe shouting down “And a tomato is a fruit!” before they left.

Jack sighed, shutting the door and wondering when he was ever going to win.

Around mid-afternoon, Jack decided to swing by Café Diem and pick up Zoe’s costume himself. The gesture would show her that he was interested in her school activities and that he wanted to be involved. Or at least that’s what he hoped she saw. Jack sighed as he walked into the café, putting on a smile as he waved to Henry and Kim sitting at a table nearby. The alpha and omega were sitting awfully close together and he shook his head, turning away as he walked to the counter. The omega wasn’t going to butt into someone else’s business, but it looked to him like the two were really close.

Henry looked happy though. Happier than he’d ever seen him actually and Jack mused that there had to exist a past history between the two. No regular college friends were that close and natural with one another, Jack thought.

Taking a seat at the counter, Jack ordered a coffee and told Vincent he was there for the costume. It only took a moment for the other omega to return with a box filled with purple fabric.

“Ta-da!” Vincent exclaimed, holding the outfit against his chest.

“Fetching,” Jack complimented, looking at the thing closer. It looked like some kind of purple leotard with metal disks sewn all around it.

“Be careful with the tentacles,” the cook warned, lifting one of the appendages up for Jack to see.

“I thought they were doing Shakespeare?” Jack asked, peering into the large box before him. There just looked to be a lot of purple, metal, and suction cups inside.

“Putnam’s re-imagining it,” Vincent answered, making sure that everything was packed correctly. “He’s a visionary.” The wonder in the man’s voice made Jack want to roll his eyes.

“And I just thought he was annoying,” he muttered.

“Hey, hands off the mate,” a teasing voice sounded behind them. Turning, Jack saw Jason walk up to Henry and Kim’s table. Keeping half an eye on the proceedings, he thanked Vincent and grabbed the box. As he walked towards the door, he overheard part of the conversation between the group as he passed by.
“I was just recruiting him to help us out on the body armor,” Kim explained, putting more space between her and Henry as the two stood up to welcome Jason.

“Ah, just like old times,” the beta grinned, not seeming to take Henry and his mate's closeness as a threat.

Seeing that everything seemed to be civil enough, Jack walked outside, walking towards his car on the other side of the street. He groaned though as he spotted the black convertible parked right behind his jeep, boxing the vehicle in. Halting mid-step, he realized that he couldn’t let the car stay. Who knew when Jo and he could be called out to work.

Sighing, Jack looked around, slightly stumped on what to do with his hands currently full. Just then, Kim wandered out of the café and headed for the black car. Recognizing that it must be Jason’s, Jack went back into the restaurant and walking up to the beta where he stood talking with Henry.

“Uh, sorry,” he interrupted as Jason turned around. “I don’t mean to be a hardass, but blocking a police vehicle, not a very good idea,” he advised the man.

Jason turned to Henry, the look he gave the alpha seeming to ask if Jack was serious. “My apologies, Sheriff. I’ll get right on it,” he stated, giving Jack a placating smile. “Nice costume,” he added as he passed the Sheriff.

Jack gave Henry a look, the alpha following his friend outside in time to watch Jason and Kim speed off towards G.D.

“Healthy ego on your buddy,” Jack commented carefully. He wasn’t sure exactly how close the three friends were, but he didn’t want to accidentally push away the only close friend he had in this town by saying the wrong thing.

“Oh, yeah,” Henry agreed quickly. “Jason has more patents that the Fortune 500 combined. Universities throw grants at him just to rub up against their blackboards.”

“Huh,” Jack muttered, taking the alpha at his word. Jason definitely seemed to have a long list of credentials. “What about his mate?”


“Uh-huh... Well, what about his mate and you?” Jack pushed, the sheriff hoping the man would give up some more information. “I saw you talking in Café Diem,” Jack admitted with an innocent smile when Henry gave him a startled look.

“We’re friends,” he claimed briskly, walking away with a scoff.

“Uh-huh,” Jack said teasingly, trailing after. Deciding to play his hunch, Jack inquired further. “When weren’t you friends?”

Henry stopped on the other side of the street, giving Jack a bashful look. “Come on, man. It’s obvious,” Jack said.

“Long time ago,” relented Henry, finally fessing up. “We worked together for years and…” The alpha cut himself off, speaking the rest quickly with an obvious want to be done with the conversation. “I was best man at their wedding and the rest is ancient history.” Jack stared at the alpha, observing how agitated the conversation had made his friend. “I’ll catch you later,” Henry ended, hastily walking away down the street.
Jack sighed, understanding that, like him, Henry was yearning for another’s mate. The omega didn’t see this ending in anything, but heartache for both of them though. Spinning abruptly on his heel, Jack banished the depressing thoughts from his mind and stalked over to the Sheriff’s station.

Walking inside, he spied Jo methodically cleaning one of her guns. The woman was way too obsessed with her weaponry, Jack thought, setting the box down on the counter.

“Hey, you wanna help me with this?” he asked, motioned towards the costume.

“What is it,” she questioned, walking over and peering inside the box as Jack unfolded the instructions for putting the pieces all together.

“Costume for Zoe’s school play,” he replied, trying to find the first step. “Alright. Insert tab epsilon into slot gamma,” he read out, laying the paper down so he could follow the pictures.

“Who writes instructions with Greek letters anyways?” he asked, searching the box for the correct parts.

“Greeks?” Jo guessed, holding up a tentacle and aiming it like a rifle. “I thought they were doing Shakespeare.”

“A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” Jack confirmed. He had seen Zoe reading it late last night when he checked in on her. “Putnam changed it,” he explained.

“Putnam,” Jo stated with dawning understanding. “The kid’s a visionary.”

How many times was he going to hear that today? Jack held up another tentacle, unable to find whatever this tab epsilon was. “Yeah, well, I think he has a crush on Zoe,” Jack divulged, thinking back on how the boy had sung Zoe’s praises back at the house. “It’s cute. All very normal.”

“Normal is good,” Jo confirmed, smiling at Jack as she leaned against a desk and watched him work.

“Normal’s very good,” he agreed beaming. “The more the better.”

Jo continued to watch him fumble with the pieces, Jack not seeming to have much luck with building the darn thing. “My mom used to make my costumes,” Jo admitted quietly. He paused, dropping the piece in his hand back in the box as he turned to the alpha in surprise. She had never willingly opened up about her past before other than sharing the fact that she had been in the military.

“You used to do theater?” he asked calmly, afraid he was going to spook her or something and she’d run away.

“Believe it or not, Carter. I didn’t have childhood dreams of becoming a commando,” she joked, giving him a playful look.

“So you went from being told to break a leg, to actually breaking them,” he chuckled.

“Enjoying yourself?” she teased, directing a true smile his way.

“Yeah,” he admitted before catching sight of the clock on the wall. Checking his own watch, Jack frantically started to pack everything up, figuring his daughter would know how to set it up better than he could. “I gotta get this to Zoe before rehearsal. Trying to score some points,” Jack admitted to his partner.
“Tell her to break a leg for me,” Jo said, placing the lid on the box as he grabbed his leather jacket.

“Thanks,” he said sincerely, dashing for the door.

Jack blinked, finding himself standing on the side of the road and holding his radio. A door slammed behind him and the Sheriff turned, finding Jo walking briskly towards him, her police vehicle parked next to his with both sets of lights flashing on the roof.

“Where’s the perp?” she asked. Seeing his confused look, she motioned to the radio in his hand. “You called me.”

Jack looked around, not seeing anyone, but them on the forest road.

“Why did you call me?” she asked.

“I…” Jack stuttered, not even sure why he was standing there. “I can’t remember.” Jo looked at him in concern.

“Let’s get you back to the station,” she offered, guiding him back to his vehicle as he stared at the ticket book he’d just realized was in his other hand.

“It’s called a senior moment,” Jo poked teasingly, noticing the confusion still on his face when they walked into the station moments later. “Soon you’ll be driving, just one right blinker going nonstop.”

“No,” Jack denied, his mind feeling blank and lost as he stared at the ticket book he’d had in his hand. “I mean, I- I took my ticket book out of the car for a reason,” he insisted, giving the alpha a pleading look and hoping she’d see how weird this all was. Not receiving any form of sympathy, Jack sighed as he placed the book down, shedding his jacket and tossing it on his chair.

“I need Henry,” Jack muttered, thinking the man might be able to explain what had happened.

“Was this on the way to or from Zoe’s school?” Jo inquired curiously.

“Oh no,” he whined, paling at the thought of what his daughter would do to him for messing up her rehearsal. “She’s gonna kill me. She’s right to kill me,” he admitted, turning and running for the door, hoping he could still make it in time to the school. As he reached the doors, Henry suddenly walked in, the two men starting to talk at the same time.

“Hey, Jack, have you gotten any reports on anybody…”

“Henry, I wanted to ask you about…”

“…who’s lost time?”

"...losing time?"

They stared at each other, realizing they’d both asked the same thing. Both turning to Jo, the deputy stepping away from the desk she’d been leaning against, making her way to a computer as they followed after her.
“I ended up on the side of the road, not sure how I got there,” Jack admitted, looking over at his friend to hear his side.

“I was working with Kim on the equations for their project. The pot we’d been using was completely empty one moment, and then half-full of hot coffee the next.”

“So, 10 minutes?” he asked, looking at the computer screen over Jo’s shoulder.

“Maybe more. I was at Global Dynamics, so it could be Section 5,” Henry reasoned.

“No. No, I was out by the farm. I must have called Jo,” Jack refuted, thinking about the tree-lined road.

“We digitize all the audio including the radio calls,” his deptury informed them, pulling up the files. Skimming through to the most recent one, she analyzed it carefully. “Time code says you called me two minutes before I got there.” Playing the audio, the three of them heard Jack’s voice start talking.

“Jo, it’s Carter. I need some backup on Old Post Road, somebody’s in a lot of trouble.”

“Wow,” Jack muttered, running a hand through his hair and trying not to freak out. “I don’t remember saying that, but I must have pulled someone over,” he rationalized, turning and making his way over to his ticket book. Flipping through the book, Jack sighed as he spotted some ripped pages that hadn’t been there before. “The ticket’s gone. Carbon’s missing, too,” he told the other two. Reaching for a pencil, Jack started to lightly scrub over the page underneath where the stolen ones had been.

“Well, I can put that under a UV scope. It’ll high-....or you could just draw over it. Same thing,” Henry said, noticing what Jack was doing.

Seeing a few letters and numbers reveal themselves, Jack held the ticket up to the light, calling out what he could read as Henry peered over his shoulder. “Okay, the first four of the plate are N-I-D-5.”

He waited as Jo typed them into the database on the computer. Glancing up, Jack did a double-take when he spotted a car with the same license plate numbers sitting right across the street. “Are you serious?” Jack muttered, not believing his luck.

“NID-563,” Jack said louder, completely reading off the plate of car and hearing a confirmation ping come from Jo’s computer.

“I passed that car on the way out to see you,” Jo admitted, looking at the information on the screen.

Henry followed Jack’s gaze, spying the other car as well and recognizing it instantly.

“And Jason was there when I lost time,” he said, a small measure of betrayal entering his voice as understanding set in. Jack stiffened as he felt the rare sense of anger wafting off of his friend. Since he’d known the man, Jack had never seen him to be truly angry and the omega felt himself grow nervous at the thought of what he might do towards someone who had actually invoked the feeling so strongly.

Making a quick motion towards Jo, the three quickly left the station and headed across the parking lot.
Jack’s head felt light and he found himself blinking spots out of his vision as he heard several gasps from nearby. Looking at his hand, the omega was surprised to find himself holding his gun. Peering further up, he recognized his surroundings as that of Café Diem, though he had no idea why he was here.

“Carter,” Jo yelled, running to support Henry who was leaning in pain against a table. “What did you do? Why did you shoot Henry!?” the alpha demanded, Henry and all of the customers in the café looking at him in shock and dismay.

“I didn’t,” Jack said, staring at his weapon in confusion. He was scared and his memory was cloudy. He couldn’t remember anything. The last thing he recalled was leaving the station to go give Zoe her costume. Had he even given that to her?

“I don’t remember,” he told Jo and Henry, trying to keep his panic from flooding the room. “I don’t remember anything.”

“Sorry, Carter, I have to keep your badge and gun,” Allison commanded, as she, Jack, and Jo watching Henry’s get his arm patched up in G.D.’s clinic.

“No,” Henry demanded indignantly, gasping in pain as the doctor put too much pressure on his wound. “No. Whatever happened, it wasn’t Jack’s fault.”

“There’s no way I could intentionally hurt Henry,” Jack exclaimed, still feeling guilty as he watched his friend get treated. He was a bit flattered at his friend’s words and smiled at the alpha for the blatant trust the man seemed to have in him.

“Protocol for discharge of a weapon, injuring a civilian—” Allison started, listing off regulation.

“And what does your protocol say about the fact that nobody, absolutely nobody, remembers what happened?” Henry yelled at her, frustration clear in his voice.

“I’ve got nothing,” Jo admitted, looking at Allison. “All the café witnesses are fuzzy.”

“Last thing I remember, I was leaving the station to go to Zoe’s school,” Jack added, looking pleadingly at the other omega. “Allison, we have to figure this out.”

“I’m sorry, Carter,” she said unrelenting, looking at him apologetically. Jack sighed, realizing that he wasn’t going to win this. Walking over, he pulled his badge and weapon from his belt, reluctantly handing them over to her.

“I’ll figure this out, Henry,” Jack promised the alpha before turning and leaving the room.

“SARAH, door,” Jack muttered tiredly, making his way into his house.

“Sheriff, down in front please,” SARAH whispered. Looking up, Jack spotted a video camera on a tripod directed at once was his dining area. Now, it looked like a theater stage with actors standing in various positions and a scenery backdrop behind them. The costumes all looked very science
fiction like, and Jack smiled when Zoe, in normal clothes walked onto center stage, her hands folded into the shape of a gun.

“Up and down, up and down. I will bring them up and down. I am feared in field and town. Goblin lead them up and down,” she spoke, talking to an imaginary character and lifting up on to the balls of her feet as she said the last ‘up.’ “Here comes one now,” she finished, looking off into the distance.

“Um,” Jack interrupted as Putnam appeared from behind a fake silver colored tree. “I know I’ve been forgetting a lot of stuff today, but I know this is my living room,” he said, motioning to the stage.

“Shh! Rehearsal in progress,” SARAH scolded.

“Sorry, I was just checking her blocking,” Putnam apologized. Walking over to a small machine, the kid clicked a button and suddenly the entire stage vanished, leaving only Zoe, Putnam, and Jack in the original dining room. Jack laughed, amazed at how real the projection had looked.

“Oh, crap,” he exclaimed, catching sight of Zoe’s angry glare. “I have your costume in my car!”

“Yes, luckily for you, I don’t need it,” she informed him angrily, “because I have a new part with a new costume.”

“I was trying to help,” he tried to explain, feeling awful. How come every time he tried to connect with her, it blew up in his face?

“I know. Just don’t ever do it again,” she demanded.

“What?” Jack asked, feeling hurt by her sharp words. “That’s not fair.”

“Uh-uh,” she continued, standing firm. “Promise. Putnam, put this on tape.”

“Aww, come on!” he pleaded as the kid walked over to the video camera and turning it to point at Jack’s face. Seeing that his daughter didn’t seem to be changing her mind, and actually looked amused at the prospect, Jack reluctantly turned to face the camera. “I promise,” he said simply, mentally crossing his fingers as Putnam ended the recording.

“Clever little set-up,” Jack complimented, walking over to look at the little machine that had created the image of the stage.

“That’s a holographic generator I invented. Theater’s about creating illusion,” Putnam explained, walking over and reaching for the generator. “The device helps me realize the vision.” Passing the thing back to the kid, Jack watched as the two directed their attentions back to practicing for the play.

As Zoe started to read her lines again, Jack’s mind got caught on Putnam’s words. Thinking about the case, Jack realized that whatever was happened, it was making people freeze, or forget, or just not see what was happening around them. Catching sight of the video camera, the Sheriff had an idea. Though it was obviously possible to trick the mind, the camera was a whole lot harder to lie to.

“Putnam, you’re a genius,” Jack muttered as he grabbed his jacket, quickly dashing out of the house again.
Back at the Sheriff’s station, Jack rummaged around, looking for anything that might give some clue as to what was going on.

“Spring cleaning?” Jo asked as she walked in, quickly noticing his actions.

“Someone’s done something to us,” Jack claimed, shifting some files around. “We just don’t know what. He can make us not see, or move through time, or just blank out.”

“Okay…” Jo stressed the word, not sounding like she believed him.

“We all forgot?” Jack confronted her, referring to what happened in Café Diem. “All of us? I mean Henry gets shot and no one saw anything? Come on, Jo.” He knew that such a scenario was almost impossible and Jo was too smart to think something wasn’t going on.

“You’re argument is so strong, it’s almost petty of me to ask. How?” she said, giving him a chance.

“He’s got a thing,” Jack stated confidently.

“A thing?”

“Yeah, a gizmo. A device. Has to be a device,” he reasoned.

“Do you have a piece of device-oriented evidence?” Jo asked, sounding like she was believing him less and less.

“No,” Jack admitted, “but look.” He said, finally noticing something out of place on the counter. “What’s my ticket book doing there?”

“Gathering dust,” the alpha said, giving him an unimpressed look.

“That’s right. I always have it in my car.”

“In the trunk, on the floor,” Jo listed, agreeing with him.

“And yet, here it is,” he declared, placing his palm on top of the book meaningfully. Intrigued, the deputy walked over, looking at the paper on top as Jack pointed at a pencil scrubbing near the top.

“I don’t remember doing that,” Jack said, looking at the ‘NID5’ highlighted by the markings.

“Okay, this is weird,” Jo admitted

“We need to talk to Henry. Maybe he knows something that could have caused this.”

About to head for the door, Jack turned around as Jo made an interested noise in the back of her throat. “This is weirder,” she declared, looking at her computer screen. On it were the numbers from the ticket. The search result from a vehicle tag search showed the top result as being Jason Anderson.

“What if Jason was at Café Diem,” Jack asked, turning to his partner. “And that’s why we were there?”

“We can’t prove that,” Jo said, shaking her head.

“Vincent,” he corrected. “Check the receipts. See if Vincent made a meal for Jason today.”
“Okay, and where are you gonna go?” she asked.

“I gotta go see a guy about a thing. Device. Gizmo,” Jack corrected, unsure what to call the thing he was sure was messing with everyone. “But first, there’s something else we have to do.”

Jack walked to the equipment locker, rifling through it until he found what he was looking for.

“Think you can help me strap this on?”

It was already late at night by the time Jack walked up to G.D., eager to talk to Henry and brainstorm about what was happening. The omega groaned though upon seeing person-of-interest number one, Jason himself, leaving the building.

“I thought you were suspended,” the man demanded, looking displeased at the Sheriff’s presence.

“You worried to see me?” Jack taunted, his gut instinct telling him this guy was involved somehow in whatever was going on.

“You shot my friend, so yes,” Jason growled.

“I figured it all out,” Jack claimed, stopping the man before he left. “I know what you’re up to.”

“In regards to?” the man asked, acting naive.

“I know you have a device that can, create a wormhole, or bend time, or make you invisible,” Jack explained confidently. Hearing footsteps behind him, Jack turned to see Nathan and Allison, along with two security guards, walk up. Directing his reasoning to Nathan, Jack tried to get him to understand and know he was telling the truth. “A wormholing, time-bending, invisibling device that shields you from the mind,” he went on, trying to appear absolutely sure as the ridiculous words he’d just uttered finally registered in his mind. He really wasn’t good at explaining sciency ideas.

The omega watched as Jason looked at Nathan questioningly.

“Yes, he said invisibling,” the alpha said, sounding amused as the word crossed his lips.

Jason grumbled to himself, reaching into his suit pocket and Jack pounced, not wanting the man to zap them all with whatever doohickey he had.

“Carter!” Allison yelled, “You’re already under suspension. Stop it!”

Desperate, Jack grappled with the beta, knocking the device in his hand to the ground as the two G.D. guards roughly pulled him away.

“There. That’s the device that invades your mind,” he insisted desperately, pointing at the thing.

“It also starts my car,” Jason mocked as Nathan bent down to pick up the keys, examining them before looking at Jack with an almost disappointed look.

“No, Stark-“ Jack tried to insist, struggling against the guards as they shoved him away and back towards his jeep.

“Go, Carter. You need to leave while you still can,” Allison ordered, following him and his escorts
back to his car.

“Allison, I swear-“ Jake tried to explain as he was forced into the passenger seat of his jeep. Allison grabbed his keys, climbing into the driver’s side and starting the car quickly.

“Enough, Sheriff. We’ll talk about this later;” she ordered. Sighing in defeat, Jack laid his head against the window as they drove off, despondently watching as Nathan stood next to Jason, probably apologizing for Jack’s actions.

This had not gone well, he thought.

“Well, it’s a little unorthodox, but I’ve dealt with worse,” Beverly admitted, watching from outside as Jack paced within the cage of his own cell back at the station.

“How are you so strong?” Jack demanded, looking accusingly at his deputy after the way she’d practically thrown him in here.

“I’m small, but I’m scrappy,” Jo stated proudly, wearing a smug smile.

“I don’t need therapy,” Jack argued, glaring at Beverly and Allison through the bars.

“Maybe not, but if it keeps you away from Jason Anderson until after the DOD test tomorrow afternoon, consider it time well spent,” Allison explained seriously. “Fifty minutes, not a second less,” she said, turning to Beverly. With that, the omega quickly stalked out of the station, not even sparing a glance back at them.

Watching her leave, Jack waited until he saw her disappear through the outer door before rushing towards the door of the cell. “Okay, come on, Jo,” he said, expected the woman to let him out.

“Oh, that’s not my call, Carter,” Jo answered, sounding honestly sorry that she had to leave him there. “I’ll be at Café Diem if you need anything.”

Jack groaned, realizing that he was truly stuck in this cell while Jason still roamed free.

“Well, I’ve had resistant patients, but you’ve set a new benchmark,” Beverly started, sounding happy to actually be there.

“I don’t have time for this,” he complained, sitting on the cot and resting his head in his hands. He needed to get out of here.

“I understand Henry’s doing well?” the other omega asked, pushing for a conversation.

“Well, yeah, aside from the bullet hole, yeah, he’s doing great,” Jack replied, stress making his voice heavy with sarcasm.

“How do you feel about what happened?” she asked innocently and Jack was reminded of Abbey and how she would try the same psycho-mind stuff on him when she wasn’t getting the answers she wanted.

“I don’t know what happened,” Jack growled, growing more frustrated as he looked around the small cell. “I mean, I was trying to find out, but I can’t do that from in here.”

“Sheriff-“
“Beverly,” Jack cut her off, really not feeling in the mood for her prodding. “No offense, but I really, really don’t want to do this.”

“I get that,” she answered eagerly and Jack felt relief, thinking that he might pass the rest of the time in silence. “But, since we’re both here, we might as well talk about something,” she continued, cutting his relief short. “Who knows, I might even be helpful if you let me.”

Jack stared at her, annoyed as the woman settled into a chair and looked at him expectantly. If she thought he was going to start talking about feelings, she could just forget it. He refused to even start down that path.

“Okay,” he allowed, seeing that she wasn’t going to give up without discussing something. Thinking of what he could ask her, Jack decided to see if he could get more information out of her. “Do you know any way that someone could make people forget things?”

She didn’t look happy with his change of topic, but seemed to accept it anyways as she answered. “Hypnotherapy could potentially be used to trigger memory loss.”

“No,” he denied quickly. “Nobody could hypnotize me that fast. And it wasn’t just me! It was everybody at Café Diem.”

“You’d be surprised what the true masters could do,” Beverly insisted mysteriously and Jack suddenly wanted to look anywhere, but in the woman’s eyes, wondering if she was one of those ‘masters.’

“Do you know Jason Anderson?” he asked instead, pushing for more information.

“I’ve met him in passing,” she stated unhelpfully.

“Yeah. He and Henry go way back,” Jack mused. “I don’t trust him.”

“Do you trust Henry?”

“Of course,” Jack replied, insulted that she might think otherwise.

“Then shouldn’t you trust Henry’s opinion of Dr. Anderson?” she asked. The thought made sense, but-

“I don’t even know his opinion of Dr. Anderson,” he laughed in realization. Giving the omega a sharp look, Jack suddenly had an inspired thought. “I should ask him.”

“That’s not exactly where I was driving,” Beverly backtracked.

“Well, we all get different things from therapy, right?” he insisted, grabbing for the bars of the cell door. “I mean, I need to see Henry, that would help me in my processing,” he reasoned, trying to appeal to the therapist. “That’s what you’d recommend, right?”

“Under normal circumstances, yes, but-“

“Great! So, I can go?” he asked eagerly, beaming happily.

“Absolutely,” the omega agreed, checking her watch. “In 46 minutes.”

Jack deflated, slumping back down onto the cot dejectedly and turning to face the wall.

Well, he’d lost that round. Jack sighed, determined to wait the remaining time in silence until Jo
“Something is going on,” Henry readily admitted when Jack finally saw him the next day walking the hallways of G.D. “There’s just too many weird coincidences for this to be just about you losing it.”

“Last night, I had a theory about your buddy, Jason,” Jack admitted, broaching the subject carefully. After a night of sleep, the sheriff had started to wonder if everyone else was right. Maybe he had been jumping to conclusions. After all, what reason would the distinguished beta have for messing with their minds?

“Jason?” Henry asked, looking confused.

“Yeah,” the sheriff clarified. “Like, that he had a device of some kind.”

“Oh, well, that at least narrows it down,” Henry teased.

“Oh, don’t you start,” Jack scolded. “You know, a device that could, like, erase short bursts of time, or how we perceive them,” he explained. “Almost like he could make us forget all about him.”

The omega slowed, looking back at his companion as Henry stared at him like he had seen a ghost.

“What?”

“Not just about him,” the alpha revealed. “He can make us forget about whatever he wants.”

“And that’s not crazy?” Jack inquired hopefully thinking he may not have been so far off after all.

“Not at all,” Henry reassured. “Jason,” he paused, looking around to make sure the two weren’t overheard, “Jason Anderson has a machine that can wipe out short-term memory.”

“How can you be so sure?” the omega asked, thrown by the alpha’s certainty. He’d been arguing with people about this thing all night, and yet here Henry was, flatly stating it all to be true.

“Because I built it!” Henry exclaimed, visibly upset. Jack stared at the man in shock. He did what?!

“20 years ago, I had a theory that a properly modulated EM burst could change the electrical properties of your brain cell,” the alpha explained further. “Unbind short-term memory before they can imprint as long-term memory.”

“So then, you have one too?” Jack asked for clarification.

“No,” he insisted, looking imploringly at the sheriff. “While I was developing it with Jason, I could never get a single test to work!”

“Not one that you remember anyway,” Jack added, quickly reaching for his radio.

“Now I know what that son of a bitch has been up.” Henry seethed, starting to pace angrily.

“Jo, this is Carter. Look, I may need that backup we talked about,” radioed Jack. “Meet me in the Global Dynamics lobby.”
“Carter, what are you doing here? You’re under suspension,” Allison’s voice commanded. Jack turned, finding himself and Henry standing in the omega’s office.

Jack looked at Henry, the same confusion he had mirrored in the alpha’s eyes. How had they gotten there?

“We ah…..had a….” Jack stumbled, feeling lost and unsure of what to say.

“It was…” Henry tried, only to fail as well. They didn’t know why or even when they had walked in here. “It was important,” the alpha insisted desperately.

Allison scoffed, looking at the two of them like they were crazy. “Okay, I would love to stay here and play with you two all day, but I have work to do,” she dismissed, ordering them in not so many words to leave.

Just then the office doors slid open and the deputy walked in.

“Jo?” Jack asked, looking at her in confusion.

“You have no idea why I’m here, do you?” she asked walking up to him. Jack looked at the other two, hoping they may have an idea of what she was talking about. “Wow.” Suddenly, the alpha grabbed for his uniform shirt and Jack tried to evade her hands as she tried to rip it off him.

“What-“ Allison protested, sounding angry and annoyed.

Jack stared at his partner as she gave him a measured, insisting glare. He sighed, deciding to trust her as he dropped his hands. Jo reached forward and popped open his uniform, revealing a small flat camera taped to his chest. Henry and Allison stepped forward, staring at the machine in surprise.

“Hidden camera,” Jo announced, pulling out a small screen from her own jacket. “Saw the whole thing.”

The three watched in amazement as the camera played back what had happened. They watched as Jack and Henry stormed into Allison’s office, telling her about their theory of Jason having a memory device that could wipe out short-term memory. Next to Jack, Henry made a noise of surprise as understanding lit his eyes.

Turning back to the video, they continued to watch as Allison questioned Jason’s motivation for tampering with people’s minds. The three on screen began to dig, pulling out Kim and Jason’s files since college and skimming through them. The Henry on screen seemed to get only angrier at whatever they were reading.

“All of Jason’s breakthroughs were fields Kim pioneered,” the Henry onscreen demanded hotly.

“This is Jason Anderson we’re talking about here. This is your friend, Henry,” onscreen Allison warned.

“I thought he was.”

“But Kim’s the real genius,” the voice of Jack reasoned, those watching able to hear him, but not see his face. “He’s been stealing her work for decades.”
“What about all the other research projects he’s helped on?” onscreen Allison demanded angrily.

“Oh, wait for the team to make the breakthrough and the wipe them out,” onscreen Henry practically yelled and Jack laid a reassuring hand on present Henry’s shoulder as the man’s scent spiked with increased anger. “Cover your tracks and then ride in and save the day,” past Henry finished icily.

“This is monstrous,” screen Allison said, looking between past Henry and Jack.

“Twenty minutes at a time,” a woman’s voice sounded from the screen. The video turned, showing Kim standing in the doorway looking devastated. “How many times do you think?” she demanded, staring at past Henry.

“Kim…” screen Henry tried to soothe and the current alpha tensed, hints of sadness and loss drifting off of him.

“Add it up, Henry,” Kim had demanded. “He took a lot more than 20 minutes of my memory. He took my life.”

“I know,” past Henry whispered sympathetically.

“We’ll make this right, Kim,” Allison had reassured.

“I already have,” Kim promised, right before raising and triggering a small device, a wave of energy emanating from the thing and stopping the three in their tracks. In the present, the group watched as Kim gathered up all the files they’d been using, quickly putting them away before walking out the door as if she had never been there.

“She’s done something,” Jack realized, looking at Allison and Henry.

“The test,” the other omega whispered in mounting horror. “They're doing a live test of the military armor right now. I heard Jason was going to model the vest they’d created himself.”

Jack ran from the room, desperate to reach the testing center before it was too late. As horrible as the memory-stealing beta was, he couldn’t let Kim kill him.

“Stop!” Jack yelled, barging into the control room just as Jason finished counting down. The omega shoved desperately between Nathan and a tech, pushing the tech’s hand away from a button. Looking through the safety glass, Jack observed Jason standing on the other end of the room wearing some kind of tactical vest, a heavy artillery machine gun pointed straight at him. “Don’t,” he pleaded, looking at the people in the booth before turning to Nathan.

“Stark, what’s going on,” a general asked, looking angrily at the Director.

“Someone’s about to lose their job,” the alpha uttered, looking angrily at Jack for the interruption. The omega willed himself not to back down in the face of overbearing frustration and anger he felt directed at him.

“Nathan,” Allison exclaimed, hurrying into the room. “There’s something you should know.”

“Sheriff, you’re standing in the way of science!” Jason yelled from where he stood like a practice dummy.

“Jason, the camera never lies,” Jack boasted, unbuttoning his shirt wider and revealing the camera still strapped to his chest. Out of the corner of his eye, the omega noticed Nathan move closer,
tilting his head for a better look at the camera he was showing, and Jack valiantly fought the blush threatening to take over his cheeks, grateful, and yet not at the same time, for the fact that he was wearing an undershirt under his uniform.

“My daughter taught me that,” Jack continued, clearing his throat. “I had Jo rig me up with this digital video, and we just finished watching the surveillance feed. We know about your memory wiper,” he said, closing his shirt, “which is a device that Henry built and you stole.”

“A memory wiper,” Jason mocked desperately. “Stark, are you listening to this? Can you have this maniac hauled off?” The beta’s voice started to grow hysterical as he pleaded to the alpha.

“I outsmarted you,” Jack grinned, feeling pleased.

“Now I know you’re hallucinating,” Jason snapped scathingly. “Activate the damn test,” he ordered.

“I’ll get that,” the omega said cheerfully, reaching for the controls. The beta still didn’t believe the sheriff had caught him, or that other people believed him. “Okay, fair enough. I mean, you’re 100% certain that you’re smarter than me,” he allowed, giving the man a look. “But are you smarter than Kim?” he asked.

He watched Jason tense. “I mean, she’s the one that programmed your very fancy little vest,” Jack continued.

“I double-checked the algorithms,” the beta insisted.

“Sure,” Jack agreed. “And if Jason Anderson is the genius everybody says he is, then there’s no way you’re in any danger. But,” he countered. “If Kim’s the real genius, then you have no way of knowing if she sabotaged that vest. But, if you’re smarter than her, then there’s no way she could have figured it out.”

“If she had a problem, she would how said something,” Jason contradicted bitingly.

“Maybe she did and you just don’t remember it,” Jack replied, remembering that Kim had the device. He watched as doubt filled the man’s eyes. “There’s no way she’d play you, right? I mean, you’re Jason Anderson.” Jack turned back to the controls, reaching for the button he had pushed the tech away from. “You’re the genius, not her, so let’s fire this puppy up!”

“No! No,” Jason shouted desperately, holding out a hand as if he could stop Jack.

Everyone in the booth froze as the man confirmed his guilt and Jack felt justified pleasure course through him as Nathan gave him an impressed look and shifted his anger towards the beta.

“I think it’s time for you to go, Jason,” the alpha ordered.

“Stark, come on,” Jason tried to plead.

“Cash that check quick. It’s the last one you’re gonna see,” Nathan dismissed, gesturing to the general. The two left without a backwards look, Allison following along behind them.

Jack breathed a sigh of relief as Jason stepped away from the kill zone, turning to look as a door opened inside the room. Henry walked in, guiding a fuming Kim, the omega glaring at her sure to be soon ex-mate.

“How could you do this?” she demanded. The beta looked unsure how to answer.
“I just wanted what you had,” he claimed, looking at her sadly. “You and Henry.”

Jack suddenly felt sick, realizing the degree to which this man had manipulated Kim. With a memory device, who knew what sort of things this man had done or made the omega do to suit his needs.

“Look, I did what I had to do, but I gave you a good life,” Jason argued, trying to justify his actions as if that made everything okay.

“No,” Henry interjected, growling at the man. “You took it.”

“What can I say, Henry? I’m sorry,” the beta said, not sounding the least bit apologetic. Jack dashed out of the both and down the short flight of stairs, grabbing on to Henry’s arm and sending out calming vibes as best as he could at the alpha when Henry tried to charge the man.

“Hey,” Jack explained desperately, and a small bit regretfully. “If I hadn’t come what I did-“

“He would have been fine,” Kim said stonily, glaring at Jason. “Even though you stole my life, I couldn’t take yours.

“The vest works,” she continued. “I just turned down the power so you’d get banged up a bit.”

“Is that right?” Henry asked eagerly and Jack didn’t even try to stop him as he punched the man straight in the jaw. The beta fell hard, looking dazed as Henry put an arm around Kim and the two walked out of the room.

“I saw that coming,” Jack told the downed man, glaring at him without remorse as security came in to escort the man out of the building.

“Ladies and gentlemen, please take your seats. A Midsummer Night’s Invasion is about to begin,” a woman’s voice called, ringing through the auditorium. Jack scrambled quickly backstage, running into Putnam as he directed the actors into.

“Excuse me. The backstage is for-“ the boy started, but Jack cut him off, finally spotting his daughter near the stage.

“Two seconds, two seconds,” he excused, brushing past the boy and rushing up to Zoe.

“Mom!” Zoe whispered urgently, looking a little freaked out.

“Hey, these are for you,” he said, smiling proudly as he passed her a bouquet of bright flowers. With a look of shock she accepted them, a small smile crossing her face.

“I’m psyching up,” she told him with a nervous chuckle, shaking the nerves out of her hands.

“I know,” he said quickly, not wanting to distract her or get in her way. “I just wanted you to know that I’m here this time. You’re gonna be great,” he urged in support as she looked up at him in awe. “Break a leg,” he whispered in luck, beating a hasty retreat off the stage and back to his seat next to Allison.

The play turned out to be really good, and Jack couldn’t contain a giddy smile as he watched his daughter take the stage for the final scene.
“If we shadows have offended, think but this, and all is mended. That you have but slumbered here, and these visions did appear. And, as I am an honest Puck, if we have unearned luck, now to escape the serpent’s tongue, we will make amends ere long,” she recited, walking across the stage where other space fairy-like characters danced around her. “Else the Puck a liar call, so, good night unto you all. Give me your hands, if we be friends, and Robin shall restore amends!” With a last shout, Zoe pressed a button, the jetpack behind her lifting her up into the air as the entire crowd roared with delight and applause.

Jack cheered as loudly as he could as he watched his daughter fly around the room, everyone standing on their feet.

“Oh, she was amazing!” Allison yelled from where she sat next to him. “Her costume is terrific.” Jack really couldn’t take his eyes off Zoe, totally impressed at what she had accomplished.

“All the drama they put us through as parents, and these are the moments we’re gonna remember the most,” Allison told him.

“If we’re lucky,” Jack replied, sadly recalling all the missed moments before this. From now on, he’d try to be there as best as he could for his little girl.
This was hopeless. There was no way Jack was ever going to pass Jo’s gun test. He watched as the alpha filled the test paper with red x’s, her disapproval growing with each mark.

“Oh my god, no. Carter!” Jo clicked a button on a remote and Jack narrowly dodged out of the way as a large gun rack practically fell out of the ceiling. “The XJ-55 assault cannon uses a 30-round magazine? On what planet?”

“Oh come on,” he whined, eager to know his results. “What’s my score?”

“53%,” she answered after looking through the test.

“Yes,” Jack grinned in success. “Third time’s the charm.” That score was significantly higher than anything he’d had yet.

“Third time’s the F,” Jo corrected, stopping his party before it could begin. “No advanced weaponry for you.”

The omega was scandalized. He’d never get to use the cool guns at this rate.

“I have to know every gun in the rack?” he demanded, staring at her incredulously. Jo gave him a bored look and clicked the button again, the gun rack disappearing into the ceiling as fast as it had appeared.

“What?” she asked, looking at him sharply. “You think you should get special treatment just because you’re the sheriff?”

Jack sighed, realized that this conversation had been lying untouched for too long. “Look, I see what’s really going on here,” he explained calmly, walking closer to her desk. “I know you feel you were passed over when they brought me in as sheriff.” They had to talk about this. His job as the new sheriff had been an unspoken issue since he first started. They weren’t going to be true partners until they cleared the air.

“Yet, I aced the exam on the first try,” the alpha deflected, or maybe it was a complaint. Her knowledge of weaponry did far surpass his own.

“Jo, it’s not a contest,” he insisted, looking imploringly at the woman. “I was assigned here by Washington. If you have an issue, take it up with them,” he urged, trying to show her that it wasn’t his fault he got this job.

The alpha simply stared at him, unmoved. Jack decided to switch tactics.

“Okay, look Jo. I’m the sheriff, which mean I need your trust, I need your respect, and…” he glanced down, spying the remote on her desk. “I need the remote to the gun rack.” He tried to smile innocently.

Jo smiled in return, grabbing the remote and moving it to its case. “Sorry, but you can’t enforce the rules if you’re not willing to follow them first,” she informed him sweetly. Grabbing a large textbook on the super special guns next to her desk, she held the thing out to him. “Better hit the books.”

Jack huffed, giving her a dry look before reluctantly swiping the book from her hand. Dragging his
feet back to his desk, he slumped in his seat as he cracked open the binding. Guess he had to do this the hard way.

Jack pulled out a notebook, taking notes on the different guns as he read. A few moments later, he looked up as the phone started to ring insistently. Jack glared at it as he continued writing, really wanting to ignore it.

“You’re the sheriff,” Jo piped up from across the room. “It must be for you.”

He dropped his pencil, picking up the phone while he glared at his deputy. “Jack Carter,” he answered. The person on the other end started to yell at him about loud noises coming from a house. “Wait, hold on. Who’s being too loud?” The caller slowed down, complaining about loud noises coming from Henry’s assistant’s trailer. “Spencer? Yeah, it’s Friday night,” Jack replied, knowing like everyone else, that Spencer always held movie nights with Fargo, Taggart, and Vincent at his home on this day of the week. “Did you ask him to keep it down?” He blinked as the caller turned their anger on him. “No, I’m not shirking my responsibilities,” he told them, looking over at Jo, the alpha peering curiously over at him from her desk. “In fact, I’ll send my deputy right over,” he promised, giving Jo a dorky grin as she gave him an annoyed glare. “Not a problem. Good-bye.”

“Spencer’s movie night is getting a little rowdy,” he informed his deputy smugly once he’d hung.

“I handled it last time,” Jo blandly reminded him.

“Good, then you know the way,” he teased. It was only fair for failing him, again, on that stupid test.

“You know what they say about payback, right?” Jo coldly asked, gathering her things and making for the door.

Jack swallowed, looking at the alpha nervously. “She’s a bitch?” he answered, anxiety growing as she simply walked out of the door without another word.

The next morning, Jack walked with Allison and Jo out of Café Diem, the three having grabbed coffee before work.

“Nothing like a little Vinspresso to start the day off, huh?” Allison asked him, sounding way too cheerful for this early in the morning. Jack watched her, knowing this trick from Zoe.

“I’m waiting,” he encouraged, looking at her knowingly.

“What?” the omega responded innocently.

“Come on. You’re making small talk, buying me coffee, which means A: you’re into me,” god, Jack hoped not, “or B: you want something.” Please let it be B, he prayed.

Allison sighed, giving him an annoyed look before finally admitting, “Okay, look, we have a visitor in town.”

“Was that so hard?” Jack teased, understanding that someone really important must be visiting G.D.
“We do?” Jo demanded, sounding almost concerned. Jack looked at her perplexed, wondering what had her so worried. Government officials always seemed to be visiting G.D. for some experiment or other.

“Congressman Faraday, he got in last night,” Allison explained, walking with Jack and Jo back to their office.

“Okay, and you’re telling me this why?” he asked.

“We’re under a budget review. Faraday’s tour has to go smoothly,” she informed him. “Nathan would just like you to keep a lid on things.”

Jack’s mind abruptly flashed to muscles, hands, and dark gray eyes before her words finally registered. He wanted to laugh. Why the alpha thought he had control over the weird things that happened in Eureka, he had no clue. Normally it was Nathan’s scientists that messed things up in the first place. Jack just tried to mitigate the damage.

“He has great faith in your abilities,” Allison said, trying to flatter him. He really wished her words were true, but every interaction he had with the alpha seemed to end with some misunderstanding about him and Allison, or in anger and annoyance.

“No, he doesn’t,” Jack muttered dejectedly.

“No, he doesn’t,” Allison agreed easily, not caring that her lie was caught. “We still need a day or two of quiet,” she asked.

“In this town?” Jack scoffed. “It’s easier said than done.”

Henry chose that moment to barge out of the station, speaking worriedly as he came up to the omegas. “Sheriff, something’s happened to Spencer.”

“Oh!” Jack smiled teasingly at Allison, impressed by the timing.

“I didn’t hear that!” she demanded, walking briskly away as Jack turned back to his friend.

“So what’s happened?” he asked.

“He just, didn’t show up for work,” Henry explained, looking frantic.

“And this means something’s happened, how?” Jack questioned, not understanding what the worry was.

“Just, please, Jack. Come with me to check it out?” the alpha pleaded.

Jack sighed, already knowing he couldn’t resist Henry. “Fine. Let me grab Jo and we’ll meet you there.”

Several minutes later, Jack and Jo parked in front of Spencer’s trailer home, Henry’s tow truck already sitting there waiting for them. Henry started to talk the moment they both stepped out of the jeep.

“I may be overreacting, but for four years, he has never, ever been late,” Henry reasoned as they walked to the front door.
“Let’s do this,” Jo said seriously, her gun already in her hand as she took position beside the door, looking as if she was going to storm the place.

“Jo!, Put away your gun,” Jack ordered, looking at her like she was crazy. They were just investigating. There was no reason to act as if an army stood behind the door.

“And walk into a potential trap? I don’t think so,” she countered severely.

“She’s not normally this high-strung,” Henry observed in a whisper.

“She has some issues,” Jack stated, wondering what had put his deputy in commando mode.

The trio walked into the house, Jo checking all the corners for potential threats.

“No signs of a break-in,” she informed him.

“What a relief,” he said, humoring her. “Did you see anything last night?” he asked, remembering that she had been out here.

“Last night?” Henry questioned.

“Movie night,” he reminded the alpha.

“Right.”

Jack looked over at his deputy when he didn’t receive a response. The alpha was still looking over the small room, shining her flashlight in every nook and cranny.

“Jo?”

“What are you implying?” she demanded suspiciously, suddenly shining the light right in his face.

“Nothing,” he insisted, shielding his eyes with his hand. “Can you kill the flashlight?”

“I’m investigating a crime scene, following procedure,” she explained with authority, stalking over to him. Jack tensed when he sensed the dominance pouring off her, recognizing it as an attempt to make him submit. He’d never seen Jo try something like this before and he really didn’t appreciate the bid for control. “Maybe you should try it?” she told him bitingly, still shining the light.

Jack looked at her, telling himself he wasn’t going to let her actions get to him. He’d seen dominance control used like this before, normally being directed at panicked citizens during a crisis to avoid fear and injuries, but not aimed at him personally. Breathing through his mouth, Jack looked Jo in the eyes, forcing his voice and scent to take on a calming tone to combat whatever alpha high his deputy was on. “Can you dial it down until we figure out that there’s actually been a crime?” he asked her. The omega watched as Jo seemed to assess him, obviously deciding he wasn’t a threat as she lowered the flashlight. Henry flipped on the lights from across the room, and the moment was broken, Jack almost getting whiplash as Jo’s pheromones plummeted down to normal levels.

She blinked, suddenly seeming to realize where she was and she gave him an apologetic look as she stepped aside, letting him wander further into the room. Jack gave her a confused look as he walked past, wondering what had set her off. Henry had been right; she was very high-strung today for some reason.

Jack turned his attention to the rest of the room, searching among the random items on the counter
before he found and picked up a particular one of interest. Spencer’s wallet. Behind him, the omega noticed Henry brandishing the kid’s PDA.

“Well, he probably hasn’t gotten far,” Jack reasoned, dropping his eyes lower and noticing a red spot on the carpet next to some broken glass.

“Unless he was taken, by force, against his will,” Jo theorized, Henry and Jack both giving her equal looks of disbelief.

“Alright, no more coffee for you,” Jack decided. Her alpha scent may have gone down, but the woman was still wound way too tight.

“Is that blood?” Henry asked, changing the subject as he noticed the same thing Jack had.

“Yeah,” he agreed, following the trail of dots back out the front door. The boy must have been barefoot to leave a path like this. Jack wondered what could have made Spencer wander outside without any shoes on and a cut foot.

The trail ended once they made it to the ground and he looked around, trying to figure out where the omega could have gotten to.

“Jo, call Taggart. We may need his skills for this one,” Jack said, looking at his deputy. She quickly tried to hail the tracker on her radio, but several moments passed with no response.

“He’s not answering,” she announced, looking annoyed.

“Seriously?” Jack sighed, looking towards a flat plot of land nearby. “Alright, we might as well start looking on our own then.” Leading the way, the omega tromped through the tall grass, scanning the area for any sign of the missing man, calling his name loudly.

The trio stopped when they stumbled across what looked like an abandoned crop field, the dried up plants standing well over everyone’s head as they moved closer. Running through the crops was a narrow path and Jack turned to Henry in question. The alpha looked just as confused as he did, and taking a chance, Jack started walking down it.

“It’s too narrow for a tractor path,” Henry stated, keeping right on Jack’s heels as they speed walked through it. The omega was reminded of the corn mazes he used to run when he was a kid.

“Yeah,” he observed, looking at the bent plants underfoot. “These crops have been flattened, not cut.”

“Help,” a small plaintive whine sounded. Jack looked up, desperately trying to see over the tall plants.

“Do you hear that?”

“What?” Henry and Jo asked, looking at him alertly.

“Spencer!” Jack called, hoping to hear the voice again. Running though the maze, he heard a bit of coughing before, rounding a corner, he spotted the missing omega, sitting completely naked in the middle of a flattened circle of plants. Concerned, Henry and Jack ran quickly up to the man, trying to ascertain his condition. The omega was visibly upset, rocking back and forth with his knees to his chest, dirt and sweat covering his body.

“Spencer, are you okay?” Henry asked.
“What happened?” Jack followed up, seeing the kid was obviously traumatized by something.

“I can’t- I can’t talk about it,” Spencer stuttered, pleadingly looking at the sheriff.

“Why not?” Jack asked, trying to keep his voice calm. The boy raised his bruised and dirty hand, pointing to the sky shakily.

“They’re watching,” he warned in a whisper.

Jack, Jo, and Henry followed his finger, seeing nothing, but a clear blue sky above them.

“Okay, uh. Stay here,” he ordered firmly, glancing at his companions. “I’m going to get something to cover him up with,” he explained. Receiving nods of understanding, Jack dashed back to his jeep, grabbing a blanket and some water. The omega had looked like he’d been out there all night and Jack was sure he was dehydrated. Having collected his supplies, the sheriff ran back towards the field and down the crop path. Henry quickly grabbed the blanket when he arrived, wrapping the cloth around Spencer’s shoulders and making sure he was well covered. Jack offered the alpha the bottle of water and his friend took it with a grateful smile. He watched as Henry tried to wash the dirt and blood off of Spencer’s hands, crooning quietly to him when the omega still seemed to be anxiously tense about whatever had happened to him.

“He’s obviously traumatized,” Henry informed Jack when he walked back over to him, leaving the hurt omega in Jo’s hands.

“Well, maybe Beverly can reach him,” Jack offered, sensing the distress coming from his friend as he stared at Spencer. “Henry, are you okay?”

“No,” the alpha admitted helplessly. “But I will be once he is.”

Jack nodded, understanding that Henry was feeling useless and maybe a little bit guilty for what had happened to his employee. He wished he could belay those worries, but there was nothing that could be done until the omega healed, mentally and physically.

“Okay. Keep me posted, alright?” he asked, receiving an affirmative from Henry before the man guided Spencer slowly out of the field, the alpha having decided himself to take the omega to Beverly’s himself.

“What do you think?” Jo asked him, coming to stand by the sheriff as she alertly scanned the open circle.

“Well,” Jack sighed, squaring himself up and trying to be professional. “His friends must have played a prank on him and he passed out,” he speculated.

“Really?” the alpha said disbelieving.

“What?” he asked her, walking out of the field. “There’s always a logical explanation for these things.” Jack gestured to the crops, referring to the obvious looking crop circle they had been in. Did Jo expect him to think that actually aliens had made this mess and that Spencer had been abducted or something?

“Yeah, that sounded logical,” she scoffed.

“Okay, what’s your theory then?” he asked her, trying to keep the peace.

“Well, it’s a crop.” Jack groaned, not believing that she was really going to go there. “And there’s a
“No. No, no, no,” he denied vehemently, turning back to the woman. “I don’t care how weird this town gets. There’s one thing that I know, and that’s that there are no aliens.”

Jack’s cell phone chose that moment to ring and he flipped it open, giving Jo a warning look when she tried to protest his reasoning.

“Jack,” Allison’s voice sounded over the line.

“Oh, hey, Allison,” Jack greeted, wondering what the omega could want.

“Carter, Fargo’s missing. No one’s seen him for a few hours now.”

“That makes two today,” he mused aloud and Allison immediately started to protest. “I know, I know. You don’t want to hear about it. Okay, I’m on my way,” he stated, hanging up.

“Someone else disappeared?” Jo asked.

“Fargo,” he told her, quickly jogging back towards his jeep.

Walking into the main atrium of G.D., Allison immediately intercepted Jack, stopping him before he could get very far.

“How’s Spencer?” she asked him.

“He’s been better,” he admitted, watching Nathan walk by with another man dressed in a suit.

“How’s Fargo?”

“The last person to see Fargo was Dr. Sharat and he missed a critical meeting with Stark. It’s not like him,” Allison informed. Jack had to agree. Fargo would never do anything to upset Nathan, not if he could help it.

“Spencer was acting odd, too,” the sheriff told her, his eyes tracking Nathan’s back as he walked through a door with his guest. “I need to talk with Dr. Sharat,” he decided, moving towards the labs, only for Allison to block his path.

“No, that’s gonna have to wait,” she ordered firmly. “She’s kind of in the middle of something important.”

“Well, so am I,” Jack stated, trying to keep the annoyance out of his tone. “You called me, so…” Jack quickly sidestepped around the omega.

Walking into Dr. Sharat’s lab, Jack quickly placed himself against a wall when he spotted Nathan giving a presentation to the Congressman. Allison walked purposefully in, ignoring Jack as she came to stand by the Director’s side. He scowled, knowing she had more of a right than him to be there, but not liking it.

“In decades time, wars will be directed from command screens such as this one. There will no longer be a need for massive troops on the ground,” Nathan pitched, turning to look at Allison as she stopped beside him. Suddenly feeling bold, and just a little bit petty, Jack stepped forward, standing by Allison and drawing the alpha’s eyes away from the other omega. He saw annoyance flash behind Nathan’s eyes, but Jack just smiled charmingly, ignoring the look.
“Dr. Sharat?” the alpha inquired, turning away and instead facing a bushy haired beta standing behind a computer.

“The PX-319 transmits a low frequency signal that delivers a subconscious message of fear and paranoia to the amygdala,” the woman began seamlessly, projecting a visual model of a tank with two soldiers in it, “causing the enemy to turn against one another in a violent rage, as this demonstration will show.” On the screen, the computer generated soldiers began to fight, one of them appearing to kill the other. Dr. Sharat pulled a lever and a wall slid up, revealing five monkeys in a room with computer terminals. Jack held back a smile at the sight of the happy and playful animals, already knowing that that’s not what they should have been doing. Embarrassment rolled off of the beta in waves and Jack cringed when he sensed the responding anger coming from Nathan. “Just... Just one moment,” she stuttered, frantically clicking at different buttons and controls.

“A violent rage,” Congressman Faraday mocked. “This is worth 80 million?”

Nathan smiled apologetically before stalking over to the doctor. “Dr. Sharat?” he questioned demandingly.

“The satellite’s telemetry must still be off,” she explained desperately.

“Still?” he asked, confused.

“Fargo didn’t tell you?”

“We had a meeting. He didn’t show up,” Nathan explained, subtly trying to calm his anger.

“Just give me a few minutes,” she pleaded, still clicking away at the computer.

“That’s alright Dr. Sharat. I’ve seen enough,” the Congressman stated dismissively. “Dr. Stark. A word?” the man asked imperiously. Jack gave Nathan a sympathetic look as he walked past, following Faraday out into the hall. The alpha’s face remained stoic, giving no hint as to what the man was thinking or feeling. The omega watched him until the door closed, sighing as he turned back to face the doctor.

“So, I understand you spoke to Douglas Fargo this morning?” he asked her.

“The man has lost his mind,” she stated angrily, still focused on the computers. “If you find him, shoot him.”

“I’ll take that as a yes,” Jack interpreted, shocked by her candor. His cell phone started to ring again and he flipped it open as he walked towards the door. “Thank you for your time. Nice monkeys,” he called back as he left.

“Whoa, whoa. Vincent did what?” Jack said into the phone, trying to calm the anxious talking on the line. Sighing, Jack hung up once he got the details, turning to Allison who was walking next to him. “Vincent just-“

“I don’t want to hear,” she commanded, cutting him off. Jack turned away in annoyance. If she didn’t want to know, than why did she keep looking at him expectantly? He was trying to do his job.

Grabbing his radio, Jack contacted his deputy. “Jo, I need you to get down to Café Diem. Vincent disappeared during the lunch rush,” he relayed quickly. Seconds went by and no response was heard. “Jo, come in. Over,” he tried again, making sure he ended the call like she preferred. “Jo?”
Jack sighed, realizing that now his own deputy had vanished. “Today is officially Missing Person’s Day,” he muttered angrily to himself. “You don’t want to hear it though.”

Allison retorted, “A day or two of quiet wasn’t an unreasonable request!” Jack waved her off as he headed out.

Jack barged into the station, shocked to find Jo there and seemingly well.

“There you are! I’ve been trying to raise you all morning,” Jack exclaimed, shedding his jacket.

“I’ve got it under control,” she replied, pulling weapons off the gun rack.

She must have gotten absorbed caring for her weapons again, Jack thought.

“Really? Because every time I turn around, someone else has gone missing,” he complained. He took off his gun holster, trying to relax and calm down. He didn’t understand what was happening. “First Fargo, now Vincent.” At least Spencer had been found relatively quickly.

“Look, I know. And I know what needs to be done,” Jo demanded. Jack turned around, finding the alpha glaring at him angrily. “What I don’t know is why you insist on telling me how to do it?”

“What’s wrong with you?” he asked, looking at her perplexed.

“My problem is you,” she replied coldly. “Sheriff Cobb treated me like a partner, not an appendage. When something goes wrong around here, people look to me. They don’t know you. They don’t trust you,” she ranted.

“Because you don’t trust me” he entreated, somewhat relieved that they were finally getting this out. He wished the timing was better, but he could talk about this now if that’s what she wanted. “You’ve been on a tear since day one.”

“I think you need to back off,” she growled, getting in his face. Jack refused to, staring her right in the eyes as he continued.

“Look, I’m sorry you’re pissed because you didn’t get the job. Right now though, we have to find these people, and I know we’re going to, but we need to work together, okay?” he pleaded, hoping she would take the olive branch. “Are you with me?”

Jo stared at him, taking a breath as she seemed to calm down. Jack felt the tension in his own body ease as she relented. “Alright,” she agreed, giving him a small smile. “We’ll work together.”

“Oh, okay,” he smiled back, relieved that they’d seemed to connect on some level. “Good. So we’re okay?” he asked, making sure.

“Yeah, we’re okay,” she promised. Her scent was still a bit charged, but Jack figured that was residual from the argument and the events of the day. Jack relaxed, turning back to his desk.

“Sorry, Carter,” he heard Jo mutter before she slammed the butt of one of her rifles against his head. Jack was out before he even hit the floor.
Jack groaned as he came to lying on the floor of the station. The world was blurry as he tried to make sense of what happened.

“Carter,” a voice called and Jack looked up, spotting a figure standing over him and holding a giant log. Panicked, he kicked out, sweeping the person’s feet out from under them and making them fall. The log dropped off to the side and the omega frantically climbed on top of the person, trying to pin them to the ground.

“What the hell are you doing?!” Henry yelled. Jack blinked, his vision clearing as he finally got a good look at the person under him. The alpha looked at him in confusion, startled by the sudden attack.

“What am I doing? What were you doing?!” Jack accused, gesturing to the log.

“I found it out by the crop circle. I think Spencer spent the whole night rolling it over the fields to make them,” he explained quickly.

Groaning, Jack slid off the alpha, trying to keep still as his head throbbed harshly with the pounding of his pulse. “I guess that explains why his hands are so messed up.”

“You alright?” Henry asked, sounding concerned.

“Yeah,” Jack lied, breathing through the pain. “It was Jo,” he explained.

“Jo hit you?” the alpha clarified, looking closely at the impact mark on the omega’s head.

Yeah,” Jack lied, breathing through the pain. “It was Jo,” he explained.

“Jo hit you?” the alpha clarified, looking closely at the impact mark on the omega’s head.

“You’re lying to me, aren’t you?” the alpha accused.

“Uh, no, it wasn’t.”

“Yeah, with the butt of an MPS auto-assault 12 shotgun,” Jack paused as he stumbled to a chair to sit down. “Or a model 50 tactical-takedown rifle. I’m never gonna pass that test,” he mused, blinking spots out of his eyes. Damn, but that woman could hit hard. Jack glanced at the desk next to him and saw the remote to the gun rack sitting out in the open. “Oh, no,” he whispered as he grabbed it. Jo would never just leave the thing out like this. It was much too precious to her.

Jack winced, pulling himself back up and pressing the button on the remote. The gun rack emerged, completely empty. “Oh, no,” he repeated, glancing at Henry in horror.

“Tell me this wasn’t filled with weapons,” Henry pleaded, circling the rack.

“Uh, no, it wasn’t.”

“You’re lying to me, aren’t you?” the alpha accused.

“Big time,” the omega agreed. This was so bad. There’d been enough advanced weaponry on that rack to take over Eureka. Jack’s head throbbed again and he leaned against the empty rack for support.

“What is going on?” Henry questioned, completely lost.

“Well, let’s see. Spencer thinks aliens have landed. Vincent and Fargo are missing, and Jo has gone G.I. Joe;” he recapped.

“You think they’re all together?” the alpha questioned.

“I think they were together at Spencer’s party and maybe something happened,” he admitted, trying to brainstorm what may have occurred to send his deputy off the deep end. “Either that or we are being invaded by aliens,” he joked. “Henry, please tell me you don’t believe in aliens,” Jack
pleaded desperately.

“I believe in Occam’s razor,” the alpha informed him. “It’s the basis for methodological reductionism.”


“Okay, given two equally predictive theories, you choose the one that has fewer assumptions,” Henry expanded, putting it in simpler terms. “So a tree has fallen in the forest after a storm. The first hypothesis holds that that tree was blown down by the storm. The second, rival hypothesis, claims that that storm forced an alien spaceship to crash into the tree. See?”

Jack kind of did, but he needed to get back on track with what was going on. Who knew what kind of damage Jo could do if she wasn’t thinking straight. “I need a closer look at Spencer’s trailer,” Jack decided, grabbing his coat. The trailer was where this all started, so it should tell him something about what was going on.

“I’ll go,” Henry offered quickly, seeing Jack stumble. Jack looked at him, seeing the insistence in the alpha’s eyes.

“Okay,” he relented, remembering to strap on his holster. “That’ll give me a chance to get over to Beverly’s,” Jack added, ignoring the frustrated look on Henry’s face. He knew the alpha wanted him to rest after Jo’s attack, but the man wasn’t going to say anything. At least not yet. Jack appreciated the gesture, not wanting to sit around when he could be helping.

“What for?” Henry sighed, giving up on keeping Jack in one place.

“I’ve got four people who are probably together and definitely armed. Spencer’s the missing member of that team, and they probably want him back,” Jack reasoned.

“Be careful,” the alpha cautioned.

“You, too,” he replied, standing still until the room stopped spinning.

“Okay, so what makes you think Jo and the others are coming for Spencer?” Allison asked as she climbed out of her car. There were both at Beverly’s and Jack’s headache still hadn’t subsided. He followed her as she rounded her car, popping the trunk.

“Occam’s razor,” he dismissed, watching as she pulled out a case.

“You’re spending way too much time with Henry,” she complained, her scent filling with annoyance and…jealousy? Jack dismissed the notion, not having time for it right then. “I borrowed this from Section 4,” she said, showcasing a deadly looking firearm.

“I want to stop them, not vaporize them,” he criticized, looking at the weapon warily.

“It’s a PEP,” she explained. “Pulse-energy projectile rifle. It’s for crowd control. Completely non-lethal.” In other words, it was a fancy taser.

“You pass that weapons test?” he asked her when she made no move of handing it to him.

“It’s not that hard, Carter.”
They intercepted Beverly coming out of the house.

“Where’s Spencer?” Jack demanded.

“Inside, and he’s getting worse,” she stated, jogging after them as they ran into the house. “What happened to your head?” Beverly asked, noticing the massive bruise Jack was sure had formed.

“Had a trust issue,” he muttered.

Inside, Allison and Jack spotted Spencer, the omega staring blankly ahead. “Their leader is here,” he mumbled blankly. “He looks human, but it’s just a guise. You can see it. Hideous, under the skin.”

“We won’t let anything happen to you, Spencer,” Beverly assured him. “Will we, Sheriff?”

“No,” he agreed. “I can stay positioned in the foyer. Allison, why don’t you take the back,” he directed. “PEP the hell out of anything that comes from behind.”

As she went to go towards the back, Spencer suddenly reached out, snagging Allison's wrist. “He picked Eureka for a reason,” he warned.

“He?” she questioned.

“He can’t be trusted. I- I need to- I need to go,” Spencer stuttered, rising from the chair. “We have to capture and interrogate him. He must be stopped.”

“Who?” Jack inquired, getting a bad feeling.

“Their leader,” the omega answered. “He’s infiltrated our government, and now he’s here, hiding in plain sight.”

“Oh, jeez,” Jack muttered, paling as he finally understood.

“What?” Allison demanded.

“He’s talking about the Congressman,” he revealed, the pieces clicking together. “Spencer’s not their target. Faraday is.”

Jack ran for his jeep, Allison right behind him.

“Where would the Congressman be right now?” he demanded, speeding through town.

“At G.D. with Nathan,” she answered hastily. Jack made the turn, speeding down the empty back roads in a hope of getting there before the wayward group did. Jack’s cell phone started ringing and the omega checked the caller I.D., seeing Henry’s name pop up.

“Henry, give us some good news,” Jack asked.

“They were watching a movie called They Came to Conquer.”

“Let me guess, alien invasion?”

“Invasion, abduction, dissection. This movie’s got it all.”

“Okay, but it’s a big leap to go from watching a movie to thinking it’s the real thing,” Jack insisted. There had to be something else.
“Yeah, but we’re talking about Spencer here,” Allison interjected. “I’m assuming he didn’t get this at Blockbuster.”

“Not even close. Looks like he hijacked a satellite signal to intercept a digital broadcast. Then he bounced the signal off a Global Dynamics satellite to cover his tracks.”

“Oh…” Allison exclaimed, looking troubled.

“Oh? Is that a good oh or a bad oh?” Jack glanced at her.

“The number of the satellite is GD-85,” Henry continued.

“Oh, no,” Allison repeated.

“Don’t tell me,” Jack guessed. “That’s the one that screwed up your monkey test.” He remembered the doctor mentioned something about a satellite malfunction to Nathan.

“They lost the satellite signal for a few hours Friday night. I’m assuming—“

“Spencer got it,” he finished, increasing speed. That would explain Jo’s weird behavior and the dominance move back at the trailer. She obviously didn’t have the best emotional control right now.

“There’s Nathan’s car!” Allison exclaimed, pointing at the black town car pulled over on the side of the road.

“Henry, we gotta go,” Jack said, ending the call as he pulled over. Two people were flat on the ground beside the vehicle. It had begun to rain and the water soaked into their clothing. Allison ran to Nathan, pulling a dart out of his neck as Jack supported what had to be the driver. The already forming bruise on his forehead hinted at more of Jo’s handiwork.

“Taggart,” Nathan groaned, rising to his feet. “Jack’s deputy and my assistant took Faraday.”

“Yeah,” Jack agreed, walking over and checking Nathan over himself. The alpha looked okay, his body fighting off whatever drug Taggart had stuck him with. Seeing the dart in Allison’s hand, Jack wanted to groan. How had he forgotten that the crazy alpha would have been at the movie night as well. The man had also been missing since this morning, he recalled, remembering how Jo couldn’t get him to answer his radio. “They’re infected with your paranoia-inducing monkey beam.”

“That’s impossible,” Nathan argued. “Those are sent from a secure Global Dynamics satellite.”

“No possible. Spencer hacked it,” Allison informed him.

Nathan looked at Jack. “If anything happens to Faraday…”

“It won’t,” he assured the alpha, smiling as he placed a hand on the man’s shoulder. “Especially now that we know where they took him.”

Allison turned to him confused. “Where did they take him?”

“Well, where would you go if you were about to do an autopsy on an alien?” he asked, gesturing to the dart in her hand.

“Taggart’s lab,” she breathed, understanding filling her eyes.
“I’m calling Global security detail,” Nathan said, reaching into his jacket pocket.

“No, you can’t,” Jack disagreed worriedly, knowing those security goons would shoot first and ask questions later. He grabbed the alpha’s hand stopping him from using his phone.

“A crazy cabal is about to dissect a U.S. Congressman. I am,” the man insisted.

“They’re not crazy. Just paranoid. If they see a bunch of people with weapons this is gonna go bad, really fast,” Jack explained, trying to persuade the man. “We know that there are two heavily armed and well-trained alphas in there. They’ll snap if they see a hint of any kind of attack on their territory.”

“That’s my point.” Nathan argued, removing the omega’s grip from his phone, but not opening it yet. “They’re armed and dangerous. I don’t see any other choice.” The alpha sounded almost apologetic as he stared down at Jack.

“Can’t you just reverse the paranoid thing?” the omega pleaded, trying to find a way to keep his friends safe. He watched as Nathan broke eye contact, looking down at the road awkwardly. “You don’t know how,” he realized, dread growing in his stomach.

“I know how to save a U.S. Congressman,” the alpha replied with finality, stepping away and opening his phone. Feeling hopeless and knowing he’d lost control of the conversation, Jack ran back to his jeep, determined to get to Taggart’s before it was too late.

By the time he pulled up to the cabin that passed for Taggart’s lab, Jack realized he was late to the party. Heavy-duty security forces ran around everywhere, setting up a perimeter and getting into position for the assault. The omega practically jumped from his jeep before it had come to a complete stop, dashing up to the man giving orders to the others.

“I need to get in there,” Jack insisted desperately.

“No he does not,” Nathan’s voice ordered. Jack spun around, seeing the alpha standing right behind him. They must have pulled in moments after him.

“Let me negotiate this. I know these guys,” he pleaded, never having felt so helpless.

“So do I. Listen Carter, I don’t like this any better than you do,” Nathan explained, pulling Jack away. The omega felt warm where the alpha’s hand gripped his arm. “If something happens to that Congressman, what do you think is going to happen to Eureka?”

“We just need more time,” Jack begged, looking up at the man.

“I’m sorry, Sheriff,” Nathan apologized, standing firm on his decision.

Jack suddenly stumbled, wincing as his hand went to his head. Nathan caught him with a hand wrapped around his waist, surprised by the sudden motion.

“Whoa, you okay?” the alpha asked in concern, eyes wandering over the omega’s face and spotting the bruise on his temple. Arm tightening around the sheriff, Nathan looked at the mark with a frown, his other hand lifting, but hesitant to touch the injury. “Have you had that checked?” he asked, staring down at the omega in concern.
“No,” Jack practically whispered, staring up at the alpha. His hands smoothed over the man’s chest, admiring the feel before bracing himself. “Sorry, Nathan.” With a massive shove, Jack pushed the man away from him. Shocked by the move, Nathan actually stumbled back a few steps and Jack took his opening to run.

“Wha-? Carter! Stop!” the alpha yelled after him. Jack ignored him, running for the cabin door as security scrambled behind him.

Reaching the door, Jack pounded on the wood desperately, afraid Nathan or someone would come around the corner and drag him back. Noticing an intercom, Jack depressed the button, not letting up until he heard someone answer.

“Who is it?” Taggart’s voice sounded inquiringly over the box.

“It’s Carter,” Jack said, looking up at the camera over the door that was pointed right at his face. “I’m unarmed,” he stated, pulling off his gun belt and showing it to the camera before tossing it to the side. “Open the door.”

“And what is this in reference to?” Taggart asked, still trying to sound innocent.

“Taggart, I know you have the Congressman in there,” he admitted. The door suddenly opened, revealing Jo holding a large gun in her hand. She pointed it at his head and the omega immediately raised his arms, showing her he wasn’t a threat.

“Are you alone?” she asked.

“Oh, yeah,” Jack answered, putting his hands behind his head and trying to ignore all the red dots highlighted on his deputy’s chest. She hadn’t noticed the sniper marks yet and he tried to keep his scent calm, not wanting to tip her off. Jack breathed, urging himself to remain relaxed as Jo patted him down, searching for hidden weapons. He slowly sidled to the side, using his own body to block the sights so the snipers couldn’t shoot Jo.

“Come in,” she commanded, pulling him into the room and shutting the door.

“Come out of the house with your hands on your heads!” a male voice shouted over a speaker. Jack calmly walked down a set of stairs into Taggart’s lab, aware of Jo’s gun aimed at his head as well as those Fargo and Vincent appeared to be holding.

“Jo, any minute this place is gonna be swarmed by the only people on the planet who are better armed than you,” he warned the alpha.

“We’ll do what we have to,” she stated confidently.

“No, you’re gonna get hurt, or worse,” he pleaded, catching sight of the Congressman strapped to an exam table. Though obviously freaked out, the man didn’t appear to be hurt anywhere.

“We can’t trust him. He’s one of them,” Taggart seethed, pointing at the sheriff accusingly. Jack flinched, his senses assaulted by the alpha’s fear, anger, and anxiety all at the same time.

“Then don’t trust me,” Jack reasoned, appealing to the people inside as he scanned the faces of Vincent, Fargo, Jo, and Taggart. “Trust your own common sense.” He knew these people were smart. They wouldn’t live in Eureka otherwise.

“Oh, so, what? I’m stupid now?! I know what I saw,” Jo demanded.
“You guys are suffering from a mass delusion,” Jack explained, keeping his scent calm and soothing as he talked to them. Jack almost wished he wasn’t on suppressants, knowing that one of the fastest ways to calm any orientation was to expose them to a heavy, calming dose of omega pheromones. Unfortunately, his were, right now, locked behind a pill-studded key. He could still try and work with what he had though.

Taggart scoffed at his words. “Nice try, mate.”

Jack turned to his deputy desperately, taking a page out of Henry’s book. “Think about it, Jo. What makes more sense, that he’s an alien, or that you guys are delusional?”

Fargo suddenly dropped his gun, the automatic rifle letting out a spray of bullets when it hit the floor. Everybody in the room ducked, desperate to not get shot.

“Okay, who gave Fargo a gun?” Jack questioned, glaring at the beta for his slippery fingers. The man almost looked embarrassed as he picked the weapon back up again. The tension in the room only seemed to mount after the gunfire, the two alphas even more on edge than they’d been before.

“Okay,” Jack continued, trying to get them to see reason. “You were all watching a movie in Spencer’s trailer called *They Came to Conquer*, right? In which aliens invade a small town in the Pacific Northwest.” Really, that movie had been way too coincidental for Jack’s tastes.

“Spencer saw their ship,” Taggart hissed through his teeth, reaching for a saw blade and directing it towards the Congressman. “He is their emissary.”

“Taggart!” Jack shouted desperately, grabbing the man’s one empty hand to hold him back. The alpha froze, turning to stare at the omega. “What Spencer saw was Congressman Faraday’s helicopter arriving,” he explained calmly, walking around the lab table to stand right in front of the alpha. He tried to push as much calming and relaxing feelings into his scent as he could. “His trailer is directly below the flight path.”

Taggart hesitated, looking like he was finally starting to listen to Jack. “What time did you arrive,” Jack asked the Congressman.

“Just after midnight,” the man stated quickly, looking at the alpha hovering over him imploringly.

“Okay. About the time the party broke up?” Jack guessed, looking at everyone around him. “Spencer bounced the movie off a Global Dynamic weapons satellite that was being used to beam waves of paranoia into lab monkeys.” He glanced over at Fargo’s face, seeing the beta exhibit a flash of understanding. “There was a malfunction, wasn’t there, Fargo?” he prodded, wanting the man to admit it so they could see he wasn’t lying. “It failed and that’s why you took off.” The beta nodded, looking reluctant to admit the fact. “Unfortunately, it didn’t fail. When Spencer bounced the signal, you became the lab monkeys.”

“We have the alien right here,” Jo insisted, refusing to lower her gun. “Get out of our way,” she ordered Jack.

Desperate, Jack moved closer to her, trying one more tactic. “Maybe you do have an infiltrator, but it’s not him.” He held out his arms, offering himself like a free target. “It’s me.” Jo abruptly shifted, pointing her gun straight at his chest without hesitation. Fargo and Vincent backed up, retreating away from the two alphas and the sheriff to seek safety against the wall.

“I’m the new guy,” Jack continued, refusing to look away from the deputy. “I didn’t pass your test. I didn’t see how much this town needs you. That’s fair,” he admitted. “But, I need you too. You’re
not an appendage, Jo. You’re my partner, and there’s no one in this town I’d rather have watching my back than you and that’s the truth,” he stated with sincerity.

Jo looked flustered, lowering the weapon as she stared at him. Her eyes softened a bit, and Jack knew he’d been understood.

“So, please trust,” he asked everyone in the room. There was a tense moment where Jack wasn’t sure what they would decide, but one by one, the renegades slipped off their weapons, placing them on the floor or counter. He released a heavy sigh of relief before slowly reaching over and untying the Congressman from the table. “Slowly,” he instructed under his breathes, afraid to make any sudden moves that would set everyone off again.

Gesturing for the man to follow him, Jack lead the way back up the stairs, opening the door to the outside and peering out. “We’re coming out! Don’t shoot!” he shouted, letting everyone know things were under control. Jack grabbed his holster from the ground as they all filed out, hearing shouts of “Hold your fire!” from around the woods. “They’re unarmed,” Jack shouted. “Everybody’s okay.”

Security officers walked out of the woods, escorting the entourage to the parking lot where Fargo, Taggart, Jo, and Vincent were loaded into a waiting armored car. Jack walked over to Nathan and Allison, the sudden loss of tension as he moved away from the strong scents Jo and Taggert leaving him shaking.

“So they’re okay?” Allison asked.

“Oh, no. They’re freaking bug-nuts,” Jack corrected practically hysterical. Turning to a guard, he immediately ordered for restraints to be put on the lot of them, but especially the alphas. Nathan stepped in front of Jack, the omega instantly inhaling the scent of papers, science, and power coming off the man. He felt the last bit of tension he’d been holding in his shoulders release, sighing quietly. Remembering the move he’d pulled to get into the lab, he glanced up, smiling sheepishly at the alpha.

“Carter, if you ever pull a stunt like that again…”


Nathan grunted, unimpressed. “Go get that looked at,” he ordered, gesturing to Jack’s head. “I’d hate to have you fainting on me again.” With that the man left, walking over to check up on the Congressman.

Waving a quick good-bye to Allison, Jack beat a hasty retreat back to his car, fighting the blush and absolutely inappropriate fluttering feeling that had erupted in his gut.

The next day, after collecting himself and heading back to G.D., Jack and Henry watched from behind glass in Dr. Sharat’s lab as the renegades sat staring at tv screens playing what each of them enjoyed the most. Jack smiled at seeing koalas on Taggart’s screen and NAVY seals running operations on Jo’s.

“We reprogrammed the signal to stimulate the brain’s pleasure center,” Henry explained. “I chose delivery footage each should find benign and peaceful.”

“Well, you sure know Jo,” Jack laughed, the alpha chuckling along with him before walking away,
moving to monitor the computers elsewhere in the room.

“Congressman,” Nathan’s voice popped up and Jack stiffened, not realizing the alpha had been near him. “I trust this unfortunate incident in no way will affect our budget considerations?” Jack stared at the man from the corner of his eye, admiring the line of the alpha in a fresh suit.

“I was abducted, threatened, and humiliated by your people, in your town, on your watch,” the Congressman criticized and Jack winced in sympathy, realizing that the whole trip must have made an awful impression on the man. “However, in spite of this incident, what I saw in there yesterday takes precedence.” Jack glanced over, wondering if the man was talking about the lab. “Dr. Stark, we’ll be talking,” Faraday promised, shaking Nathan’s hand before leaving the room.

Jack was about to scoot over, tempted to try and talk with the alpha again after yesterday’s events, when Allison walked in and stood shoulder to shoulder with Nathan. Jack sighed, resigning himself to lean against the glass and watch his deputy as the two talked.

“So, are we funded?” she asked the alpha.

“For now,” he agreed simply. “I guess I owe you one, Sheriff, for getting the Congressman out relatively unscathed.” Jack looked up, startled at being addressed, and finding Nathan’s gray eyes shining happily at him. Tongue-tied, Jack could only give him a nod, showing that he’d accepted the praise. The omega tried not to blush at the sudden attention by the alpha.


Giving her a smaller nod, Jack turned back to the glass, pretending to be watching Jo again, but instead catching Nathan’s smirking reflection every time his eyes flicked over.

God, this infatuation was going to kill him.

“Mutli-velocity XK exterminator,” Jack listed, hanging the mentioned gun on the rack as Jo oversaw.

“Very good.”

“BMFG liquidator,” he identified, hoisting up the next gun.

“And size of magazine?” she asked.

“Trick question,” he answered, smiling brightly at the alpha. “It uses a single-chamber artillery.” He correctly put this gun in its spot as well. They had been restocking the rack since they’d got on duty, returning every weapon that Jo had swiped in her bout of rebellion and brushing up on Jack’s knowledge at the same time.

“Wow, Carter. Keep this up and you’re gonna pass the exam,” she encouraged.

“Yeah, I don’t know,” he replied, not sharing her enthusiasm. “I tend to choke the exam.”

“Well...this is the exam,” she revealed. Jack regarded her in surprise, feeling his mood lift. “The manual didn’t say anything about it having to be written, so…” Bashfully Jo looked at him, the omega feeling a smile start to emerge on his face as he realized what she was saying.

“Thanks, Jo,” he said, reaching out to shake her hand.
“Don’t mention it,” she joked, putting her hand in his. Pulling her forward, Jack engulfed her in a
sudden hug, surprising the alpha. Breaking away, Jack laughed as he dodged the swipe Jo tried to
deliver, dashing around the gun rack as he avoided her pursuit. The alpha really wasn’t any good
at dealing with emotions and touchy-feely stuff and the omega decided to tease her with it from
now on whenever he got the chance.

Working with her was going to be a lot more fun than he’d originally thought.
It was shaping up to be a pretty relaxing day for once in Eureka. Jack smiled as he and Jo hung out in the station, the omega making another cup of coffee while Jo played around at her desk. The radio softly buzzed in the background, filling them in on some of the local news around town.

Jack had only just set his coffee down on his desk when Allison stalked into the room, the other omega looking none too happy to see him.

“Carter, what are you doing?” she demanded.

“Uh,” Jack looked around the room confused. “I’m the sheriff. I’m sheriffing.”

“You were supposed to meet me at Global a half an hour ago,” she demanded, and Jack felt dread creep up his spine. “For your physical.”

That wasn’t going to work. Any kind of physical would immediately reveal his orientation and Jack was simply not ready for that. He’d been trying to avoid this moment as much as he could, but it looked like Allison was ready to drag him to the clinic by his ear if she had to.

“Uh, good news,” he rambled, trying to come up with an excuse. “I gave myself a physical, and I’m in perfect health.” Allison looked unimpressed, verging on highly annoyed.

“Alright. It’s mandatory. You can’t be insured by Global without one,” she informed him sternly.

“Uh, yeah. Now’s not a good time,” he lied. “We’re really, really, super busy.”

The omega looked over at his deputy. Jack wanting to face-palm as he saw Jo leisurely painting something at her desk. Actually painting! Couldn’t she have made it look a little more official, like with paper and pen so he could pass it off as her doing paperwork at least?

“Okay, this is the third time you’ve put this off. What’s up?” Allison demanded.

“Uh….well…..” Jack stalled, trying to think of an excuse. Walking over to a counter, he manually started to sharpen a pencil, glancing at the omega to find her impatiently watching him. Taking out the pencil, he stared at it and was struck by inspiration. Setting it down, he turned to face her.

“Because I don’t want to die,” he declared firmly.

“Isn’t that the whole point of taking the physical, Carter?” she asked, giving him a look of confusion.

“No,” he corrected confidently. “That’s tempting fate. Insure a cop today, he takes a bullet.
“What are you, superstitious?” she laughed in disbelief. He would be if it kept him from revealing his secret, Jack decided.

“It’s not superstition if it’s true, which it is.”

“Okay, you know what?” Allison said sternly, stepping more into his space. “You’re not grasping the point here. If you don’t take the physical, you don’t have a job.” She paused, glancing him over. “So strip. We’ll just do the physical here.”

Taken aback, Jack could only gape at the other omega in completely shock. “Excuse me?”

“Oh, we all have a past,” she explained, smiling coyly. “This is mine.” Jack wasn’t sure if she was referring to medicine or seduction. Pinned against the counter he couldn’t go anywhere as she moved to within a foot of him. “Drop ‘em,” she ordered in a sultry voice.

Trying to remain calm and not climb the counter behind him, Jack desperately attempted to stall the woman. “I’m gonna need to see some credentials if you are a doctor,” he countered.

“Was a doctor. Before Kevin was born,” she corrected smugly. “But, I still think I remember where all the main parts are.” The omega dropped her eyes to Jack’s pants and the sheriff quickly covered his privates with his hands, scooting along the counter and sidestepping away from her to give himself some breathing room. Knowing he was giving off a distressed scent, he glanced over at his deputy, seeing that, though she was acting like she wasn’t paying attention, her eyes were sharp where they watched Allison, her body tensed to jump into action if she needed to.

Jack turned back to Allison with some relief, knowing that he wasn’t dealing with this completely alone. “Yeah,” he laughed in a strained voice, trying to keep the atmosphere light. “There’ll be no pant dropping without a nice dinner and many, many cocktails.”

The phone chose that moment to ring and Jack couldn’t help the overwhelming relief he felt, his shoulders relaxing as he quickly made his way over to Jo, standing beside her as she answered the call.

“Dr. Carlson, okay calm down. Just breathe,” the alpha commanded soothingly down the line.

“Who is it?” Jack asked.

Covering the receiver, Jo turned to him. “Car Carlson. He 911s all the time. We can ignore,” she offered, but Jack jumped at the opportunity.

“Not on my watch. Sorry, Allison. Gotta go,” dashing for the door, Jack swiftly left. He had barely set a foot on the sidewalk though before realizing he had no idea where this doctor lived. Jogging back inside, he looked apologetically at his deputy. “Where am I going exactly?”

Jack pulled up to a simple house, the lawn perfectly manicured and with just enough plants to make it look professionally done. The omega moseyed up to the front door, but stopped halfway up the lawn when he notices a man staring back at him from the open door.

“Carl Carlson?” Jack guesses.
“You’re not Sheriff Cobb,” the man accuses, looking at him confused.

“Uh, no, Sheriff Cobb retired,” Jack told him. He took one step closer, but the man flinched back as if scared. Slowly, showing he meant no harm, he raised his hands and approached the house. “I took his place. There was a town meeting,” the sheriff informed him, seeing that the man still didn’t seem to want to trust him.

“I don’t get out much,” Carl stated, still standing in his house as Jack finally made it to the front step.

“I’m gathering. Jack Carter,” he introduced himself, reaching to shake the man’s hand. Carl flinched heavily away and the omega quickly withdrew his hand. His sense of smell was picking up faint traces of omega mixed with bleach and soap. It was, altogether, a very bland and not very enticing scent.

“Do you have any idea how many strains of bacteria are transmitted by hand-to-hand contact?” Carl demanded as if he’d been insulted.

“No,” Jack answered, realizing the man was a germaphobe. “But I’m guessing you do.” Was there any scientist in this town who wasn’t eccentric in some way?

“Yeah, well, I’m really sorry, but I don’t think this is gonna work out,” the man decided. He talked like he had to get out everything in one breath and the anxiety rolling off him was putting Jack on edge. “I need Sheriff Cobb,” he insisted before slamming the door right in the sheriff’s face. Blinking at the black wood, Jack felt himself getting frustrated. He was only there to help with whatever issue this man had. Knocking, Jack figured he’d try again. Better this than running into Allison again.

“You’re still not Sheriff Cobb,” the omega scientist muttered in disappointment when he answered the door.

“Yeah, we established that, but since I’m here, what is your emergency exactly?” Jack asked, trying to stay pleasant.

“I have to get to work!” Carl informed him, staring at the sheriff like he was insane for not knowing. Jack stared back, not sure he was understanding correctly.

“You called 911 to bum a ride?” he demanded in clarification. Who did that? Jack was pretty sure people got arrested, or fined, for misusing the 911 system for things like this.

“It’s a very big day for me,” Carl explained simply, not seeing the issue. “Sheriff Cobb always used to give me a ride on very big days. Driving makes me nervous,” he continued pointedly.

“It’s okay, Carl. I’m here,” Beverly’s voice suddenly stated. Jack turned to see the omega stepping with familiarity up to the door.

“Client of yours?” he asked.

“Six years running,” she admitted with a sigh.

“Why didn’t you tell me that there’s a new sheriff?” Carl demanded turning to the woman.

“It came about rather unexpectedly, and I didn’t want to panic you until we had time to process it,” lied Beverly, trying to soothe the other omega.
“Yeah, well, now I’m panicking,” Carl complained frantically. “This is a defining day in my research and I have absolutely no way of getting to work!”

“I’m sure Sheriff Carter will be happy to drive you,” Beverly offered. Jack rolled his eyes, imagining what being stuck in a car with this man would be like for the whole drive to G.D.

“Yeah,” Carl scoffed in disbelief, staring at him suspiciously.

“You know, he is a former U.S. Marshal,” she bribed. He turned to Jack, instantly looking at him in a new light and with more trust.

“Yeah,” Jack confirmed unwillingly.

“Okay,” the omega relented. “Only if he puts the lights on.” With that, Carl slammed the door in both of their faces as he went to get his stuff.

“Well, that was surprisingly easy,” Beverly admitted turning to the sheriff. “He must like you.”

“Beverly, I don’t run a taxi service,” Jack groaned, leaning against the door.

“He’s on the verge of a major breakthrough,” she insisted.

“More like a major breakdown,” he whispered fiercely.

“He’s pioneering the field of cellular regeneration,” she whispered arguably back. “You would be helping him help everyone else if you do this,” she appealed to him. Jack inwardly groaned, knowing that he was going to have to drive this man all the way to G.D.

Carl abruptly swung up the door and Jack narrowly missed falling through. The omega scientist glared at him before stepping outside and shutting it again behind him, shaking out a thin plastic sheet as he did. Jack noticed gloves on the man’s hands as he checked the lock on the door once, twice, and then roughly shook it to make sure it was really locked.

“What are we waiting for?” Carl announces testily. “You’re making me late?”

“I used to have a real job,” Jack groaned, following after the man as they walked to his jeep. Carl spread the plastic over the passenger seat, pulling out a small, pen-sized device that scanned the car with what looked like a UV light.

“And remember, lights, but no sirens,” Carl commanded firmly. Sighing, Jack climbed into the front seat, switching on the lights as they pulled out.

Carl had Jack escort him all the way to the elevators and the omega was more than ready to just go back to the station and relax with Jo. Babysitting should never be on his list of sheriff duties.

“Alright, I got you here in one piece,” he stated, eager to say good-bye.

“Well, maybe next time, if you wouldn’t mind cleaning out your car-“

“There won’t be a next time,” Jack insisted. “Best of luck.” Waving, he went to turn away.

“What do you mean?” Carl asked, looking at the sheriff in surprise. “You’re not coming to my lab?”
“Uh, no. I’ve got-“

“Today’s the day I go for all the marbles,” Carl pleaded.

“I’ve got a thing….and then I have another thing,” Jack made up, smiling innocently at the other omega.

“Oh, cause Sheriff Cobb always used to,” the scientist tried, attempting to make him feel guilty.

“Okay, for the last time, Carl,” Jack exclaimed, tired of hearing those words, “I’m not Sheriff Cobb. I’m an officer of the law and I just can’t-“

“Carter!”

Jack whipped his head around, watching in horror as Allison hurried down the atrium right for him.

“-get enough of the science in this town!” he blurted, jumping into the elevator with Carl before she could catch him.

“Oh, good!” the omega cheered, looking pleased at the sheriff’s continued presence.

“Yeah. So, what is this breakthrough?” he inquired, watching in relief as the door slid shut completely, blocking Allison from reaching him.

Entering Carl’s lab, Jack looked down at the smock, gloves, and shoe covers the man had forced him to put on. For heaven’s sake, he was even wearing a hair net on his head."Is this really necessary?”

“I can’t risk introducing new strains of bacteria into the test area,” Carl informed him, carefully placing a bunch of fluid filled vials into some machine. Jack walked up to a glass tank, examining the chameleon stuck to the side. Giving it a small tap, he moved over to the scientist, watching as he carefully set up his experiment.

“Could you step back, please?” Carl requested. Giving an exasperated look at the other omega, Jack took a step back, moving over to a desk on the side of the room instead. “I’m attempting to achieve ‘adhesion affinity gradient’ in the proximal blastemal cells in human tissue,” he went on to explain.

“I’m glad someone’s on that,” Jack muttered, feeling bored.

“Yes,” Carl agreed, not noticing the sarcasm. “You know, when a lizard loses its tail, it grows back. It’s called cellular regeneration. I’m trying to do the same thing with people.”

“Oh, well, that’s cool,” the sheriff stated with sincerity, understanding how such an achievement could really help a lot of people. Carl grinned, happy that he seemed impressed.

“Beverly encourages me to take risks and not wimp out when I’m on the verge of something new,” the omega explained further, prepping the last of whatever liquids he was using. A large syringe was in his hand, hovering over the testing area. “Moment of truth,” Carl muttered, turning to Jack and playfully knocking his own fist against his head. Jack smiled, amused at the sight. As quirky as this guy was, he seemed to grow on you the longer you hung around.

“One drop,” he whispered tensely, poised with the giant syringe over the test tubes. “One drop
only.” Jack stiffened, watching the man slowly and very carefully inject one drop into the mix of one of the tubes. With a sigh of relief, tension that both men were holding eased at the successful task. With a click, Carl started the machine all the vials were placed in, the thing spinning as the solutions descended into a hollow cavity within the equipment.

The chameleon in the tank suddenly darted about, making a weird cooing sound as it moved. Distracted, both omegas turned to the creature, Carl accidentally knocking a whole vial of liquid into the machine and solutions. Jack realized it was the same stuff that Carl had just painstakingly placed only one drop of into the vials.

“Oh-oh,” the scientist visibly paled as he looked down into the machine.

“What do you mean ‘uh-oh’?” Jack demanded, feeling nervous and a little scared at the declaration.

Without warning, the machine exploded in a rapidly expanding blue shield. Jack heard glass shatter as he was unceremoniously tossed against the wall. His back and head colliding with the surface, Jack didn’t even register the pain as he blacked out before falling to the floor.

When Jack came to, his first sight was that of Allison crouched over and checking him over for injuries. Groaning, Jack rolled to his side, attempting to get his hands and feet under him before standing up.

“Careful,” Allison cautioned, carefully guiding him up onto his feet and supporting him as he looked around the room.

The lab was trashed. Glass lay shattered everywhere; the chameleon apparently unscathed as it crawled across a nearby counter. G.D. security and scientists were combing the place, cleaning up the mess and making sure the area was secure after the explosion. Jack noticed Carl standing out in the hall with Nathan, the two having a very heated conversation about what probably happened in here. He was surprised and relieved to see that the other omega seemed to have come through the blast in better condition than Jack did. Who knew the short and stoutly man could take a hit like that. He groaned as he leaned against a nearby table, his chest aching with what he suspected were probably bruised ribs.

“If you had come to my office for your physical, you might not have been hurt physically,” Allison scolded and Jack rolled his eyes, annoyed that she was still pestering him about that, especially right now.

“Well, Dr. Blake, if you hadn’t tried to give me a physical, then I wouldn’t have had to have gone through such extreme measures to avoid it,” he argued, the two omegas glaring at each other and refusing to back down.

“You got off lucky, Carter,” she protested.

“Not as lucky as him,” he moaned, trying to breathe through the pain as he gestured to Carl. The aforementioned man stepped back into the room with Nathan, the alpha looking incredibly displeased at what happened. The director ran his eyes over Jack, giving him a visual check-over before turning to Allison.

“Allison, I’m gonna need Form 395 Tack Two-Charlie,” he ordered.
“Nathan…” Allison protested, looking at her mate beseechingly.

“My call,” he argued. “He’s all yours, Carter,” the man said, turning on his heel and casually strutting out of the room.

Confused, Jack looked after the man. “All mine? What’s Form 395 Tack Two-Charlie?” he asked, turning back to Allison for clarification.

“Revocation of Government Clearances and Property,” she sighed. “Carl is being fired and it is your job as sheriff to oversee the safe and orderly removal of all ex-employees from Eureka.” Dismayed, Jack looked over at Carl, depression visibly written all over the poor man’s face.

“What does that entail?” Jack demanded.

“Technicians from G.D. will pack up anything that belongs to Dr. Carlson and confiscate anything that doesn’t,” she listed as if reading from a book. “They’ll review his personal documents and redact any classified information. Dr. Carlson will then be scanned to make sure he’s not concealing any classified materials. A Global Dynamics Human Resource counselor will provide Dr. Carlson with a new resume, replacing his tenure at Global with a plausible government research project, complete with applicable references.”

Oh, this wasn’t going to be good, Jack thought.

The sheriff watched as G.D. techs stormed Carl’s house, boxes of the man’s stuff growing exponentially on the lawn. The omega himself, wearing only an undershirt and staring with devastation at his lost home, seemed to be unable to process everything.

“Every molecule of my life has been erased,” he mourned as a woman handed him a jacket and new resume. “Don’t touch me!” he demanded angrily when the lady tried to lay a reassuring hand on his shoulder.

“I’m really sorry about this Carl,” Jack lamented, watching the man put the coat on.

“Where am I gonna sleep?” the omega cried, looking at him in distress.

“I’m sure Beverly has a place,” he reassured.

“She’s not returning my calls,” the man simpered. “Besides, I cannot sleep in a public bed…. If Sheriff Cobb were here, he’d let me stay with him.” Jack stared at the omega, the man looking up at him with watery eyes. “But he’s not here.” Jack sighed. The man’s words always seemed to hit him right where it hurt and he couldn’t ignore someone in need.

“Carl,” he offered hesitantly, “I happen to live in a hermetically-sealed military bunker.”

“Perfect!” Carl beamed, all trace of tears gone from his eyes. “Thank you. I’ll just call Beverly and let her know where I’m staying…if I had a phone, cause I don’t have one, cause they took it. So I don’t have one… Can I borrow…?”

Jack sighed, handing over his, which Carl grabbed with the cloth of his jacket. The omega quickly walked off to make the call and Jack turned around, wondering what was wrong with him? He just couldn’t seem to leave people alone.
Allison walked up behind him, pushing a dolly laden with three heavy looking boxes. “You moonlighting at Staples?” he joked, as she placed them beside him.

“Form 395 Tack Two-Charlie,” she announced proudly. “Carl has to complete these before he’s allowed to leave Eureka.”

Jack stared at the stack of boxes. The things literally came up to his chest. He hoped they didn’t expect Carl to get them all done in a day. “So much for your paperless society.”

“Well, these will get filed with the DOD. They’re not quite down with the ‘save the tree’ mentality as of yet,” she joked. Jack smirked, allowing himself to get distracted for just a moment. Allison took the momentary lapse in attention to move forward, slapping a patch on his neck before he could protest. “Oh, and that’s for you.”

“Ow!” he exclaimed, quickly moving away from the omega and reaching for the patch.

“It’ll hurt a lot more if you try to take it off,” she commented unsympathetically.

“What the hell is it?” he cried, feeling wrong footed. Who did this woman think she was?

“Wireless body sensor,” she announced. “In other words, portable physical.” Jack stared at the omega in horror, realizing what she had done. “It’s taking constant measurements of your vital signs, organ functions, and blood chemistry,” she continued smugly.

“I feel so violated,” he whined, flinching when the patch delivered a sharp shock when he tried to peel it off. She was going to know everything, and she had taken the choice right out of his hands.

“I’ll be monitoring you,” she smirked, walking off.

“Allison!” he cried after her in protest, his distress rising as she ignored him. Clenching his head, Jack whimpered, knowing it was only a matter of time before she confronted him about his true orientation. Why couldn’t things just go his way for once?

“SARAH, door,” Jack called tiredly, walking into his home. Zoe was sitting at the table doing homework and she looked up as he walked in. “Hey, what’s up?”

“Organic chemistry is going to kill me,” she declared, looking him over and obviously smelling the mixture of distress, pain, and anxiety that he was sure were flowing from his every pore. “What happened to you?”

“Well, organic chemistry tried to kill me and Allison knows about me.”

“What?!” she exclaimed, abandoning her work as she gave him her full attention. “How?”

He gestured to the patch on his neck. “She slapped this patch on me when I was helping someone. It records everything about me physically and will send it to her as the day goes on I guess. She was determined to give me this physical and wouldn’t take no for an answer.”

“That bitch!” Zoe growled, leaning up to examine the patch closer.

“Hey! Language!”

“Oh, please. You know you were thinking it too.”
“It doesn’t matter what I think. What’s done is done now. I can’t stop her from finding out and, let’s face it, in this town, my secret wasn’t likely to stay secret for very long,” he muttered angrily, tossing his jacket aside. Rubbing his head tiredly, Jack suddenly remembered Carl. “Oh, and we’re going to have a house guest tonight, so remember to pick up,” he asked, moving to the kitchen for a drink.

“Who is it?” she asked sourly, her mood spoiled.

“It’s a researcher who got canned today. He’ll be over just as soon as he finishes off some paperwork, which could take awhile,” he admitted, taking a seat next to her as he sipped from his beer. Jack jumped, startled when his cell phone started going off in his pocket.

“Carter,” he greeted, answering it quickly.

“It’s Carl,” the omega’s voice sounded over the phone.

“Oh, hey Carl. You done already?” Jack checked his watch. It’d only been 20 minutes since he’d left the man with that stack of files.

“Uh, no. Listen, I wanna thank you for the generous offer, but I don’t think I’m going to be needing a place to sleep tonight.”

Jack paused, getting a sinking feeling in his gut at the man’s words. Carl had no where else to go. Why would he turn him down? “Carl, where are you?”

“I’m just cleaning,” Carl admitted, omitting the real answer.

“Cleaning what? You’re place is empty,” Jack questioned, his unease growing. Zoe looked at him worriedly, sensing his growing panic.

“The railing of the Da Vinci Bridge.” Jack ran for the door, frantically racing for his jeep.

“Don’t move! I’ll be right there,” he ordered, shutting the phone as he peeled away from his house, breaking every traffic law in his bid to get to the suicidal omega. Jack berated himself as he drove, wondering why he’d thought leaving a man alone, when he had just lost everything, had been a good idea.

He made it to the bridge in record time, screeching to a halt and springing out of the car to the sight of Carl standing on the other side of the barricade. Assessing the situation, Jack took a deep breath, speaking evenly as he inched closer to the railing.

“Hey, Carl.”

“Hi,” the omega muttered in a small voice, looking down to the drop below.

“You wanna come back here?” Jack asked, hoping the man would listen.

“Why? My whole life’s a failure. Blew up six years of research, got fired, ended up with nothing, but my toothbrush. All before lunch too,” he whined piteously. Jack nodded his head. It really did sound bad when he put it like that.

“Okay, it was a setback,” he reassured, trying to get him to see that he shouldn’t give up.

“No, my work is my life. Without it, I’m nothing,” he stated dejectedly.

“No, you’re something. You’re….um…..you’re a nice guy,” Jack countered weakly.

“Well….” he tried again. “You’re colorful.” Jack didn’t know what he was saying anymore. He hadn’t really been trained to talk people off ledges.

“Don’t patronize me, Sheriff.”

“Alright.” Jack eyed the railing, feeling like he had to be on level with the other omega, but really not liking the choice available. “Well, if you’re going then, hold on.” Before he could think deeper about it, Jack grabbed the railing, hopping over it and scrambling to place his feet on the small ledge on the other side.

“No! What are you doing?” Carl protested in distress. “Don’t. When I get nervous, I get very confused,” he yelled. “If I get confused, I might-“

“Fall?” Jack asked sarcastically through clenched teeth. He really hated heights.

“Yes. I’m glad you understand.”

Jack made the mistake of glancing down, the 50 feet between them and the ravine below making him dizzy. He squeezed his eyes shut, clinging to the railing for dear life. “I-I-I don’t t-think you w-wanna do this,” he stuttered. “I get it. You’ve had a really rotten day, and-and everything sucks. Okay.” Jack tilted his head back towards the safety of solid ground. “Why don’t we just climb back over and talk about it? Huh? You know, go grab a beer? Make fun of Nathan,” he joked shakily, his legs starting to tremble with fear.

“I never grabbed a beer with anybody in my life,” Carl admitted, looking at Jack in awe. The omega wondered if anyone had ever actually tried to be a friend towards this man before. He was probably socially starved from being cooped up in his house all day.

“Today’s the first drink of the rest of your life,” Jack teased, seeing he was winning the scientist over. “If you don’t jump,” he added, trying keep his eyes on Carl and the horizon.

“You think we could be friends, huh?” Carl asked hopefully.

“I think that’s what the beer’s for,” he chuckled, his fellow omega joining in. Carl tried to reposition his hands so he could turn around, but was finding the task harder than he thought.

“What do I do? I don’t know what to do,” the man whined, freaking out as he tried to maneuver back over.

“Take it real slow,” Jack advised cautiously.

“I can’t do it slow, I gotta-“ Carl wavered on the ledge and the sheriff reached his hand over, trying to offer support.

“Gotta do it really fast,” the scientist muttered to himself anxiously.

“Give me your hand,” Jack asked, staggering at the firm grip Carl used to latch on. The man was stronger than he looked and just as heavy. “Okay, come on.”

Suddenly, Carl’s foot slipped, his hand unable to grip the railing as he fell over. Jack screamed in terror as he was pulled off the bridge by the man, the two of the yelling as they plummeted through the air. Carl hit the ground first, and Jack registered landing on the man for just a moment before
his world went black for the second time that day.

Jack felt nothing, but pain everywhere on his body. He whined weakly, feeling the cold hard ground against his back. Slowly testing his extremities, he concluded that his arms and legs seemed to work, but when he tried to shift to a sitting position, Jack yelped as a sharp pain cut through his chest. He’d definitely broken a rib or two, he acknowledged grimly. His cell phone went off and Jack weakly fumbled for it, grateful he only had to move his arms to get it.

“Carter,” he croaked.

“Carter, are you alright?” Allison’s voice asked, and the omega groaned for a whole other reason.

“Not sure,” he whimpered, trying to get up again. His whole torso felt bruised and broken, but by some miracle, he actually managed to sit up. “Still taking stock,” he gasped painfully into the phone. “How’d you know?”

“Well, your blood pressure spiked, your adrenals went into overdrive, and your white cell count suggests you may have broken something,” she listed. Ah, that damn patch.

“Well, I fell down,” he admitted, looking up at the bridge above him. He was surprised he even survived that at all, truth be told. “A long way down.”

“Are you sure you’re okay?” she insisted.

Ignoring her, Jack looked around, not seeing Carl anywhere. “Where’s Carl?” he muttered, confused. The man had definitely fallen with him.

“What do you mean ‘where’s Carl’?” Allison demanded angrily. “I thought you were staying on top of him.”

Jack chuckled without humor, though the sound was quickly replaced with a whine when the pain spiked in his chest. “Believe me I was. Call you later,” he ended, tired of talking. Staggering to his feet, Jack winced, realizing that it wasn’t just his ribs that ached or might be broken. Limping forward, the omega desperately scanned for Carl, making his way through the woods agonizingly slowly as he balanced his injuries with his aching head. Guessing he had a concussion on top of everything else, Jack nearly cried in relief when Henry’s garage appeared when he stepped out of the woods.

Limping faster, the omega opened the door to Henry’s work room, practically falling inside. Henry was, thankfully, present and he rushed over when Jack stumbled to an overturned bucket and collapsed on to it.

“Carter, you okay?” the alpha demanded in concern.

“Yeah, yeah,” he lied, taking deep breathes as he glanced at his friend guiltily. “I think I might have cracked a rib….or three.”

“What?! How?” Henry demanded, the man lifting Jack’s eyelids and checking each eye before he lifted his shirt, slowly running his hand over the omega’s chest.

“Funny story. Ah, a hypothetical guy falls maybe 50 feet, lands flat on the ground. And then another guy weighing 180 falls and lands on top of him. Okay, what is the chance of the
hypothetical guy getting up and walking away?” Jack inquired, watching as Henry seriously considered the question as he checked him over.

“Well, whether I use single case probability or an application of Bayesian statistics, the outcome is the same,” the alpha scoffed. “Slim to none.”

“Yeah, that’s what I thought,” Jack groaned. There was no way Carl could have survived that fall, and yet he hadn’t been lying dead at the landing site.

“Look, this hypothetical guy,” Henry stood up, looking at the omega critically. “Is that you?”

“No,” Jack denied. “I landed on the hypothetical guy though. It was Carl Carlson.” Henry looked at Jack completely shocked.

“What?” he asked in disbelief. “Carl was just here! I mean,” the alpha admitted with a shrug. “He did look pretty beat up, but he certainly didn’t look like a guy who fell 50 feet.”

Jack was so confused. “Doesn’t make any sense,” he muttered, his head spinning and throbbing to the beat of his erratic pulse. “I gotta find him,” the omega declared, rising to his feet with Henry’s help.

“You might want to find a doctor,” the alpha urged desperately. Jack waved him off, knowing sooner or later, if he kept showing up injured around Henry, the man would end up locking him up just to keep him safe and his alpha instincts sane. No alpha liked standing around helpless when an omega or someone in their care appeared to be in distress. Thankfully, Henry seemed more in control of his instincts than most alphas he’d met before, and gave Jack the freedom to do what he needed to, despite what his instincts might say.

Waving good-bye, Jack started down the road, resigning himself to walking for awhile.

It was dark by the time Jack found his jeep at the bridge and drove it back into town. He was just about to pass Café Diem when he spotted Carl standing outside and talking to Nathan.

“Carl!” he called, parking the car next to Nathan’s and climbing out with a groan. “I’ve been looking for you everywhere. What happened?” he asked. Coming up behind Nathan, Jack spotted a knife in the other omega’s hand and he staggered forward, attempting to stop him when he raised it. “Carl! No!”

Instead of attacking Nathan though, like Jack had thought, Carl instead stabbed the knife straight through his own hand. Jack froze, staring in shock as the omega confidently pulled the knife out and dropped it to the ground. He’d finally lost his mind, Jack thought deliriously.

“Carlson, no job is worth this,” Nathan groaned, looking at the man sadly.

“Then what do you think this is worth?” Carl asked smugly, showing them his hand as, right before their eyes, the wound stitched itself up and healed, leaving nothing, but a little smear of blood behind.

“We need to get you back to G.D.,” Nathan declared, staring at the healed hand in awe. Jack could practically see the dollar signs going off behind the man’s eyes.

A wave of dizziness suddenly washed over Jack and he tripped, collapsing against Nathan who
caught the faint omega in surprise.

“Carter? What the hell happened to you?” he asked, quickly noticing how beat up he was. Carl anxiously hovered nearby, while then alpha held Jack up. The omega leaned his head against the man’s shoulder, too tired to even lift his arms at the moment.

“I fell 50 feet off a bridge. How was your day?” he mumbled into Nathan’s suit. “I’m pretty sure I’ve got several busted ribs and a twisted ankle.”

“Okay, I’m getting you both to G.D. Carter, you need a doctor, and Carl, do you think you can replicate your experiment that caused this?” he asked, motioning to the man’s hand.

“Oh, I’m getting you both to G.D. Carter, you need a doctor, and Carl, do you think you can replicate your experiment that caused this?” he asked, motioning to the man’s hand.

“A little too amazing,” Nathan suspiciously added. “Carlson’s not just a researcher anymore. He’s the research.”

“Think how much relief this will give everyone,” Allison added.

“Well, except for surgeons,” Jack interjected, thinking about all the jobs that would become obsolete if everyone could self-heal. “Oh, and hospitals. And the guys who make band-aids,” he added with a grin.

“Spontaneous cellular regeneration. The implications are staggering,” Henry considered in astonishment. “Surgeries, amputations, organ transplants, all could become a thing of the past.”

“It could change the entire face of medicine,” Nathan agreed.

“A little too amazing,” Allison suspiciously added. “Carlson’s not just a researcher anymore. He’s the research.”

“Look, I’ll be the first one to jump up and down if he can replicate the results. But until then, he needs to be studied,” the alpha argued sternly. Jack didn’t like it, but Carl seemed happy enough messing around in his lab at the moment.

“Dr. Stark,” Fargo called, hastening into the room. “I have some numbers for you to sign off on.”

“Thank you. If you’ll excuse me,” he pardoned, nodding to the rest of them before following the beta to his office.

Excusing himself, Jack entered the lab, Carl making an excited noise at his arrival. “When I perfect this formula, I can make you invincible,” he promised, guiding the sheriff through the room.
“That’s a very generous offer,” Jack smiled, “but, I think I’ll have to pass.”


“I’m not sure if that’s a good idea,” he cautioned, thinking about how impulsive and destructive people might act if they believed it wouldn’t cost them anything. “Besides, fear’s what keeps you sharp, right?” Carl didn’t look convinced. “You know, buy me a beer sometime. Tickets to a ball game. Something,” Jack offered instead, switching the topic.

“I’ve never been to a ball game,” the scientist mused. “All that spilled food on the ground, fermenting in beer and filth. Always used to make my skin crawl when I used to think about it.” Jack winced at the imagery himself, the man’s words not painting a nice picture.

“Well, when you put it like that, it’s no wonder.”

“Well, it’s interesting. It doesn’t bother me anymore,” Carl stated. “In a strange way, it’s almost appealing,” he explained, smiling at the sheriff. “Ever since the accident, I have had this bizarre life craving.”

“Sounds like you feel pregnant,” Jack laughed, the memory of that experience making him unconsciously cover his stomach. It’d been a long time, but Jack could admit he missed the feeling.

“Well, in a strange way, I do,” Carl agreed. “It’s like a light’s been turned on.” He paused as he thought of the right words. “It’s like I’ve been reborn.”

Jack glared when SARAH opened the door to reveal Allison standing on the threshold later that evening.

“What do you want?” he asked from the couch, holding an ice pack against his chest and refusing to move as it just resulted in pain.

“Relax. I just came for the patch. Your exam is over,” she declared, pulling the square off his neck. Jack winced as the thing was removed. Observing her warily, Jack wondered when she would tell him the news.

“So I passed?” he asked, staring at the coffee table and avoiding the omega.

“Yes,” she confirmed. “You are officially insured by Global Dynamic’s life and health.” There was silence for a moment between them, and Jack awkwardly shifted in his seat. “Carter, when were you going to say something,” Allison admonished, the omega sighing as he realized this was it.

“Maybe never,” he answered, still refusing to look at her.

“You can’t keep it bottled up forever. It’s not healthy,” she scolded sternly. “How long have you even been taking the suppressants?”

“Since a little after Zoe was born,” he admitted. He winced as he heard her small gasp of shock. 14 years was a long time to go on the pills, he could admit. In fact, Jack doesn’t think he’s ever heard of someone going on them for this long and continuous a period.

“Carter!” Allison exclaimed. “Why are you still taking them?! Are you ashamed or something?”
“What?!” he turned to her, actually shocked that she would suggest that. “No, of course not! It was just easier to go to work if people thought I was just a beta. No one harassing me or belittling my abilities.”

“Oh, she accepted, calming her scent. “So why are you still taking them now? No one in Eureka is going to judge you based on your orientation,” she questioned, pushing for answers.

“I know that,” he answered. “It’s just… I don’t know…. Become a habit, I guess. Allison, I’ve been taking them for 14 years straight. I can’t just cut cold-turkey,” he pleaded, nervous that she might find a way to cut his suppressants off.

“You know, the minute you go off of them, you’re in for one hell of a heat,” she warned. Jack blanched, not having thought about that. God, 14 years of condensed hormones. The thought made him shiver, in fear or anticipation, he couldn’t really tell and didn’t really want to analyze too closely.

“Well,” she sighed, standing up. “I’m here if you need anything, okay Carter? Just let me know.” Jack nodded, watching as she left the house. Jack collapsed back against the couch, the stress of that conversation and the entire crazy day completely having drained him. The one upside to Allison finally knowing though was that maybe now she’d back off her interest, having understood that they were the same orientation.

“I’ve reviewed all the test results, and it’s absolutely amazing,” Henry was saying as Jack walked into Nathan’s office the next morning, Allison right behind him as she exited the elevator. “I mean, you won’t believe what’s going on with Carl’s blood work. I found traces of radiation in his white cells and his exotic particle count is off the charts,” the alpha continued, handing a computer pad to the director.

“Is there any chance that the explosion could’ve caused that radiation to leak from an adjacent lab?” Jack asked, wincing as his chest protested his lean against Nathan’s desk.

“Not that I’m aware of,” Nathan dismissed, turning his attention to the pad.

“Well, whatever Carl was exposed to, it’s created a spontaneous genetic mutation that is accelerating rapidly,” Henry explained. “We just have to figure out what those mutations are doing to him.”

Nathan handed back the pad to Henry and the alpha left the room to continue his research. “Whatever it takes, Henry.” Nathan called after him.

Just then, both the alpha and Allison were paged over their phones. Jack could only watch in confusion as disbelief and shock appeared on both of their faces as they listened to whatever was reported to them. Hanging up, Nathan tapped a button on his desk. “Henry, I need you to get back in here,” he demanded. In less than five minutes, Henry waltzed back through the sliding doors, looking at them all in confusion for the recall. Jack could only shrug as he hadn’t been told anything yet.

“What’s happened?” Henry asked, turning to Nathan in concern.

“There was an incident in Dr. Carlson’s lab. The lab tech said that Dr. Carlson attacked him…telekinetically,” Allison informed them seriously, if a little doubtful of the actual events having taken place. Jack blinked in surprise at the news, having not expected something like that to
have happened. His mind couldn't help but jump to the X-Men movie and he pictured Carl levitating and controlling metal at will.

“I wouldn’t discount it,” Henry declared sternly.

“Seriously?” Jack asked, turning to the man in shock.

Henry nodded. “When I first looked at Carl’s blood work, I thought the explosion had somehow reprogrammed his cells to spontaneously regenerate.”

“It didn’t?” Allison asked.

“No,” he exclaimed, looking at them excitedly as he explained his discovery. “The cells aren’t doing the work. The brain is. Here, look at this,” he stated, pulling up a specific scan on his tablet. The image showed a scan of what had to be Carl’s brain. “Now, most people use maybe 10% if their brain at any one time. Based off this scan and the news you just told me, this mutation has allowed Carl to access all 100% of his brain.”

Jack felt lost, the picture on the screen not really explaining much to him with its glowing red image. “Okay, well, maybe I’m only accessing 5% of mine, but that should just make him smarter, right? Not invincible?” he asked, looking at the scientists in the room.

“The mind has powers that are completely uncharted,” Henry tried to explain. “Tibetan monks have been using meditation to promote healing for centuries. Maybe one day, man will evolve to the point that he no longer needs doctors. He’ll be able to heal himself with thought alone.”

“But not for thousands of years,” Nathan argued realistically. “Tens of thousands even, if ever.”

“Carl is already there though,” the mechanic insisted. “And he’s still evolving.”

“But into what?” No one seemed to have an answer to the director’s question.

“Well, I’m going to go see him,” Jack decided, already heading for the door.

“Wait,” Nathan stopped him. “I’ll go with you. Allison, Henry, I want you to keep looking into what’s going on with Carlson and see if there might be some way to reverse it.” The alpha rose, stalking over to the sheriff. The two of them made their way to Carl’s lab, Nathan keeping easy pace with Jack’s limp.

“Hey, buddy,” the omega greeted walking into the lab. Carl was sitting at a table and sketching something on a piece of paper. The man’s eye rose, catching sight of Jack and then Nathan right behind him.

“I guess you heard about the incident,” he guessed, turning to them.

“I don’t understand what’s happening,” Carl muttered, dropping his pencil and rubbing his hands through his hair.

“It appears that you were exposed to something during the explosion that’s altered your brain function,” Nathan explained, moving to stand slightly in-front of Jack. The sheriff watched as Carl appeared to process the alpha’s words. “That is why you’re able to heal so quickly.”

Carl scoffed in annoyance. “So, my research is a failure. I didn’t do this.” Not liking the sad tone or
seeing his friend look so defeated, Jack sidestepped around Nathan, moving closer to Carl.

“No,” Jack argued, looking imploringly at the man.” Yeah, you did. Just with your mind.”

Carl sighed, turning back to his picture and picking up the pencil to continue making a few markings to the image. “I guess that’s why I can’t get this out of my head.” Jack craned his head, trying to get a better look.

“What is it?” he asked. The drawing looked like some kind of ball with energy plumes billowing out from it in every direction. Really, it almost looked like a fantastical picture of the sun done in really high detail.

“I don’t know,” Carl admitted. “I have no idea. It’s like a song that you can’t think of the name of. I’m starting to sense things. Feelings and-“ Carl whipped his head towards Nathan, his stare intense as he focused on the alpha. “-thoughts.” Confused, Jack looked between the two, wondering what was happening.

“Do you know what this is?” Jack asked the alpha, motioning towards the picture.

“No,” he stated simply, not even glancing at it, instead continuing to look at the other omega. “Dr. Carlson, I think it’s time we went somewhere to run some....more specific tests.”

“Why?” Carl demanded coldly and Jack instinctively took a step back, sensing that the mood had gone bad very quickly between these two.

“To determine what’s happening to you,” Nathan explained, but Carl didn’t look like he trusted or believed him.

“I think you want to study me,” the omega growled lowly. He shoved the picture forward, forcing Nathan to look at it. “The way you want to study that.” With that, Dr. Carlson shot up from the table, walking around them as he made for the door.

“Dr. Carlson!” Nathan called, moving to go after him. Suddenly a metal cart full of instruments rolled right into their path, almost hitting them if not for the alpha quickly grabbing Jack and pulling him away. The distraction was all the time Carl needed to escape the room, leaving Jack and Nathan behind. “I think he’s evolving a little faster than we thought,” he muttered. Realizing they had little time with Carl on the loose, Jack reluctantly pulled himself away from where Nathan was still holding him against his chest. They really needed to help Carl before something bad happened.

Jack found Carl wandering the sidewalk near Café Diem. He watched as the omega seemed to be struggling, giving everyone strange looks and shattering some plates that Vincent had been serving. The man was obviously getting overwhelmed, and if he really could hear thoughts, there was no telling what he was picking up from the people on the street.

“Carl!” he called, running after the scientist.”Slow down. I’m a friend, remember?”

The omega turned to him, looking completely lost. “I thought I’d created something incredible,” he whined.

“I know,” Jack agreed. The man’s work had been everything he had lived for, and now he’d rediscovered that it had all really been a failure from the start. “It was something at Global.
“Strange kind of radiation?” Carl mocked, giving Jack a tired look.

“How did you know?” he asked. “Because I was thinking it?” Carl motioned to his head.

“Loud and clear,” he admitted.

“Okay, so that’s a little disturbing,” Jack acknowledged. He paused, giving the man a pleading look. “You know that the only place that can help you is Global.”

“I go back there and they’ll never let me leave,” Carl demanded, giving the sheriff a beseeching look.

“Trust me,” Jack pleaded, holding out his hand.

Just then, several SUVs roared down the main road, all of them coming to a screeching halt in front of the two omegas. Jack watched in dread as Nathan, Allison, and several soldiers armed with heavy weaponry climbed out of the vehicles.

“Carl, you got to trust me!” Jack begged, turning desperately back to the man. He could sense the panic and distress coming off of Carl and in this situation there was no telling what his powers might do.

“I’ll take it from here, Carter,” Nathan demanded, walking up to him.

“We’re doing fine, thanks,” Jack stressed, not taking his eyes off the omega.

“Carter,” the alpha reprimanded, his tone firm.

“Nathan,” Jack retorted right back, not appreciating the man’s power move on his friend. Nathan always had to go big. It seemed like every time they faced something the man was calling in an army to deal with the issue. For heaven’s sake, this was one man!

“Okay, the two of you just take a breath,” Allison ordered, stepping between them.

“Dr. Carlson,” Nathan turned to the man. “Let me help you. Before it’s too late.”

“You don’t wanna help me,” Carl cried accusingly. “You wanna use me.”

“Why would I wanna do that?” Nathan asked

“Cause you think I’m the key,” the omega countered.

“The key to what?” Allison asked, completely confused. Jack recalled the picture Carl was drawing. Did Nathan really now about whatever it was?

“Nothing,” the alpha assured quickly.


“What is he talking about?” Allison demanded, turning to her mate.

“I have no idea,” Nathan denied. Jack could tell the man was lying. Carl apparently knew something about whatever secret project had caused Carl’s evolution. He just wasn’t willing to tell.
“The sad thing is,” Carl added, shaking his head sadly at the alpha. “You really don’t know what it is, do you? You’re obsessed with this object you know absolutely nothing about.”

Nathan stared at him assessingly. “Do you?” he asked, confirming that he actually did know whatever this ‘artifact’ was.

Carl froze, seeming to realize that he might have dug himself a hole he hadn’t anticipated by saying so much. He turned in preparation to run.

“Carl, you can’t leave,” Nathan demanded. Suddenly, many of the soldiers’ guns flew up into the air, the omega having willed them right out of their hands. “Wait!” the alpha cried, turning to a soldier who still had his. He was too late though as the man fired, his rifle sending out what looked like some kind of electrical energy ball, the thing headed straight for Carl’s retreating back. The omega turned, deflecting the blast with his mind and sending it away. Instead it changed direction and shot straight at Jack. The sheriff had time to blink in shock before the blast hit him square in the chest, pushing him to the ground with an explosion of pain.

Then everything went dark and he knew no more.

Very few things still shocked Nathan Stark, but as he watched Carlson deflect the shot from the pulse rifle and instead hit Carter, he could definitely say this was one of those times. The beta was knocked out, lying flat on the road with a circular, bloody cavity in the middle of his chest.

“Carter!” Allison cried, immediately dropping to her knees to check on the man. “He’s not breathing!” she cried, desperately trying to find a pulse.

“Call for help!” Nathan ordered, yelling at one of the guards around them.

“We’re losing him,” his mate insisted, her dismay and horror of the scene setting him on edge. He crouched down where the beta lay, feeling helpless as Allie tried desperately to keep him alive.

“I know what to do,” Carlson insisted suddenly, turning to the alpha. Nathan felt more like ripping the man’s head off for what he’d done to Carter than willing to listen right now. He snarled at the omega when he tried to get too close to the sheriff’s downed form. “Get him back to Global! Right now,” the man entreated desperately, holding up a calming hand to show the enraged alpha he meant no harm.

Nathan huffed, trying to get his emotions back under control. He rarely lost it like that and he breathed slowly, trying to regain his composure. He caught whiffs of Carter’s scent, the smell fading on the man as the beta died out here on the street. Glancing back at Carlson, the alpha judged him, a small part of his mind, less animalistic, reminding him that Carter had called this man his friend.

“Alright,” Nathan growled, coming to a decision. Bracing his arms under Carter’s shoulders and knees, the alpha lifted, picking the man up bridal style as he marched over to the SUV he had arrived in. “Get in!” he ordered, watching as Carlson and Allie jumped into the vehicle as well. Nathan carefully set Carter down in the back seat with his mate as Carlson jumped in the front seat with him. Slamming the door, the alpha unceremoniously stomped on the gas, tearing out of the town as he raced back to G.D.
Once back in the facility, Nathan laid the sheriff down on a gurney near the clinic, stepping back to watch as Carlson placed a hand on Carter’s head and arm. The man concentrated, focusing intently on the beta as he and Allison stood off to the side.

“Please,” Allie begged. “Let me call in a trauma surgeon.” Tears were appearing in her eyes as she watched the beta’s vitals get slower and slower. Nathan gritted his teeth, realizing that this wasn’t working. “It’s not working!” she cried, voicing his thoughts aloud.

“I have to get closer to it,” Carlson demanded, turning to Nathan. “The artifact.”

“You can’t,” Nathan regretfully whispered, knowing that Section 5 was heavily restricted. Not to mention the radiation from the artifact itself would be unsafe to anyone directly exposed to it.

“It’s the only way,” the omega pleaded. “We have to go to Section 5 now.” Looking down at the dying man again, Nathan made a decision.

“Wait here,” he ordered Allison, grabbing up Carter again as he and Carlson marched out of the room.

“Wait, I’m coming with you!” Allison demanded.

“You’re not authorized,” he dismissed, stepping into the elevator.

“Allie!” he forcefully reprimanded her. They were running out of time and each second wasted was a second they might not be able to save Carter. “If we’re gonna do this, we have to do it alone,” he told the woman sternly. “Trust me.” With that, Nathan activated the button that would take them to Section 5, watching as the doors closed, shutting out the omega. With quick steps once they arrived on the level, the alpha ordered his techs to open the outer door to the artifact room. The steel door lifted, revealing a corridor with another door at the end. Just on the other side of that door was the artifact and enough radiation to do who knows how much damage if it were ever freed. Hastily, Carlson and Nathan walked down the hallway, stopping right by the second door. With a motion from the scientist, the alpha carefully set Jack down on the ground stepping back as the omega got to work.

Carlson set one hand on the door and another on Carter’s head, concentrating as he seemed to funnel energy from the artifact beyond into healing the beta. Nathan watched in awe as the hole in Carter’s chest seemed to fix itself, skin and muscle stitching themselves back together until all that remained was a clear, blemish free chest. The alpha found himself exhaling tension he hadn’t realized he’d been carrying as Carter took a large breath of air. He was going to be fine. With a woozy look on his face, the sheriff opened his eyes, taking in the two standing before him.

“Hey, welcome back sheriff,” Carlson greeted cheerfully, smiling at the beta. Nathan watched as the beta’s head turned to him, the man suddenly smiling brightly at the alpha. He laughed, realizing the beta must not be completely conscious yet of what was going on or where he was. Hoisting him up, Nathan supported Carter as he escorted him out of the hallway, the man managing to stumble along on weak legs. The alpha was half tempted just to carry the man again, knowing the beta was weak and defenseless from his ordeal. Spotting a gurney the techs had brought down to the main room, Nathan quickly went over to it and manhandled the man onto it. Carter’s head lolled as he laid back on the cart, his hand flopping for the alpha’s. Nathan watched in confused amusement as the beta intertwined their fingers with a silly smile on his face before passing out again.
“Get him to the Infirmary,” Nathan ordered briskly to the guards near the elevator. The two men jumped to attention, instantly following his orders, and the alpha somewhat reluctantly separated his hand from Carter’s as they pushed him into the elevator to go back up. Nathan was ready to follow them when he heard a door click shut and sirens start to go off.

Whipping his head around, Nathan was shocked to find the door of the tunnel sealed off, Carlson still in the hallway as the inner door to the artifact prepared to open. It was suicide and the alpha raced to a computer that showed the omega in the tunnel. Stabbing at the intercom, Nathan tried to stop the man.

“Carlson, wait! Don’t do it,” he commanded desperately, watching as the omega walked forward when the door started to lift.

“It’s gonna be alright,” Carlson reassured calmly.

“It’ll destroy you,” Nathan insisted.

“I’m not afraid,” the man admitted as the artifact, in all its glory, was revealed. The glowing ball hovered in the center of the room, swells of light energy swirling around it like a small sun. Nathan sighed, realizing he was losing the man and all of his insight and there wasn’t anything he could do about it.

“Carl, please,” he begged one last time. “I have to know.” The artifact had been a mystery for way too long and constantly sat there like a puzzle Nathan needed to solve. “What is it?”

“One day, you will know,” the omega promised cryptically. “Question is, will you be ready?” The omega stepped fully into the room, the wisps of light from the artifact caressing his face as he smiled in bliss. “Take care of him, okay?” Confused at the last remark, Nathan could only watch as the door sealed behind Carlson, the man himself vanishing in a burst of light.

“Are you sure you want to do this?” Allison teased the omega next to her. “No second thoughts.”

“This was your idea!” Jack exclaimed.

“Exactly, and I don’t want you to blame me for talking you into it,” she answered.

“Hey, if there’s one thing I’ve learned from Carl, it’s to take some risks,” he joked, looking at the papers in front of him. Allison smiled, pulling one of them closer and holding out a pen for him.

“Just sign and date here and you will be 100% insured,” she instructed, pointing at the requisite line.

Jack went to sign, but pulled back at the last moment. “Well, without Carl around, maybe I won’t be needing it,” he quipped, thinking about how many times he’d almost died since meeting the other omega. “Where’d he get reassigned anyway?” he asked. The omega remembered getting hit with the ball of death, fuzzy images of Carl and what he thought might have been Nathan, and then waking up in the infirmary, fully healed and with the news that Carl had been transferred elsewhere to continue his research at another site.

“I don’t know,” Allison admitted. “Nathan had it classified.” Jack nodded, wondering if he could pry the information out of the alpha. Most likely not. The man took the keeping secrets notion a
little too seriously, Jack thought with a small smile.

“I’m gonna miss him,” he mused, staring at the paper before him. With a flourish, he signed and dated the sheet, handing it back to Allison so she could file it away.

“And Jack?” Allison added, making Jack look up at her as she packed everything away. “Your orientation will be listed under your personnel file, but no one will see it unless they decided to do some heavy prying or decide to go looking for it,” she informed him, smiling softly. Jack released a breath of relief, figuring that was better than the alternative of it being blasted for everyone to see and know at once. “Your secret’s safe with me,” she promised before walking out of the room.
“Come on, Mom. This place sucks. It’s stupid, boring, quiet, boring, small, and, oh yeah, boring!” Zoe grumbled, glaring as Jack drove her toward the senior center.

“I’m pretty sure you said boring three times there,” he teased, knowing how resistant she was to this assignment.

“Well, that’s just cause it is. Why do I have to waste my Saturday volunteering?” she demanded hotly.

“Uh, you’re not volunteering,” he corrected, parking the jeep in front of the large, mansion looking building. He turned to her with a disapproving gaze. “It’s called community service and you wouldn’t even be here if you hadn’t decided to pull the fire alarm during your I.Q. test.”

“I wouldn’t be here,” Zoe argued angrily, glaring at her mother, “if you hadn’t arrested me! You know, it sometimes sucks having a mom who’s the town smokey.”

“Yeah? Well, sometimes it sucks having a daughter who’s the town delinquent,” Jack snapped back. His daughter looked hurt and insulted by his words, and the omega hung his head, sighing as he realized he shouldn’t have let his anger get the better of him. “I take it back,” he apologized.

“Gee, thanks,” she muttered sarcastically. Jack turned away, deciding to let her stew in her bad mood right now. He climbed out of the car, approaching the front door and listening as Zoe scrambled to catch up to him. “Please, don’t make me do this,” she begged desperately. “I hate old people. Can’t we just discuss this?”

“You’re going. End of discussion,” Jack commanded, beaming at the girl unrepentantly.

“I will do jail time,” Zoe bargained, blinking up at him imploringly.

“Go,” he ordered, motioning to the door. With a groan of protest, his daughter dramatically stomped her feet all the way up the stairs. Jack waved good bye as she glanced back at him, rolling her eyes before she entered.

Feeling pleased with himself, the omega waltzed back to his vehicle and turned it back towards town. She had to learn she couldn’t get away with things and this way, at least she would learn to work and help others.

As he neared the station, a man suddenly zoomed by wearing roller blades and what looked like rockets strapped to his waist with a harness. Flipping the sirens and lights on, Jack tailed the man until he finally stopped near the park. Grabbing his ticket book, the omega walked up to the man, observing that he was in some kind of workout gear and wearing large goggles, sweat pasting his hair to his skull.

“Come on, Sheriff. I wasn’t driving over the speed limit,” the man protested, watching as he flipped his book open and began to fill out the requisite information.

“Well, car or no car, it’s a 30 mile an hour zone,” Jack explained. The man huffed, putting his hands on his hips as he regarded the sheriff.

“Don’t you have anything better to do than harass me?” he demanded.
“Nope, not really,” the omega confirmed, giving the guy an unsympathetic look. No way was this dude talking himself out of a ticket. Turning back to the ticket, Jack paused as he felt the ground begin to rumble underneath his feet. Both men looked down as the cement started to crack and break, something underneath pushing upwards right under Jack’s toes. Scrambling quickly off of the rising hill, the sheriff and a steady gathering crowd watched in shock as what looked like a lean missile silo rose out of the pavement.

“Damn, this can’t be good,” Jack muttered, staring at the 30 foot structure that hadn’t existed a moment ago. People started to form a ring around the silo, exclamations of worry and fear emerging as more appeared around the town. Vincent and two twin betas came to stand by him as they assessed the problem.

“What’s going on, Sheriff?” the chef asked anxiously.

“I was hoping you could tell me,” Jack admitted. He never knew what was going on in this town. “Does this happen often?” He figured it couldn’t hurt to ask. This wasn’t your regular town with normal problems or events.

“Not to my recollection,” one of the twins answered with a shake of his head.

“I’ve never seen anything like it,” Vincent seconded.

“It’s some sort of ICBM,” the other twin guessed, scanning the thing.


“So you know what this thing is?” Jack asked eagerly, turning to the twins.

“Nope,” they replied together.

“Thanks, big help guys,” he states, rolling his eyes at the useless conversation.

“What do you think it is, Sheriff?” Vincent inquires.

“Trouble,” he answered simply, pulling out his phone and calling Allison. If anyone should know what was going on, it had to be the other omega. “Hey Allison, it’s Carter. We’ve got an…issue in town.”

“I was just about to call. We’ve got trouble,” the woman admitted, sounding stressed.

“I knew it,” Jack boasted, not feeling too pleased to have been proved right though. “I’ll be right there.” Hanging up, the omega muttered a quick good-bye to the twins and Vincent before hurrying to his jeep.

“They had to come from somewhere,” Nathan demanded, glaring at one of his underlings as he reclined in a chair. Jack and Allison walked quickly into the room, moving to stand before the man’s desk as the employee left. “Carter. Allison,” the alpha greeted, regarding the two omegas seriously.

“Stark,” Jack returned. “Which one of your scientists is responsible for the Cuban Missile Crisis going on in town?”
“They're not missiles,” Nathan replied, standing and straightening his suit.

“Really?” the sheriff laughed in disbelief, following the man as he walked towards the elevator in his office. “I have a town full of anxious people who think they look a whole lot like missiles.”

“What are they, Nathan?” Allison demanded, trailing the two of them.

“We’re working on it,” the alpha dismissed vaguely. Jack walked into the elevator with Allison, standing next to the man as the doors closed and the box began to descend automatically. The omega watched as they dropped several floors, ultimately stopping on Level 4.

“So, you don’t actually know what it is,” Jack guessed, glancing at the alpha in amusement. “Why can’t you just say that?” Nathan ignored him, walking out into a long hallway. The level looked like the basement floor of any building; pipes and tubes leading in every direction and the walls and ceiling painted an uninteresting white. It looked so industrial unlike the upper floors of G.D.

“I have to call this into the DOD,” Allison declared, striving ahead as they walked down the hallway.

“Not yet. We have plenty of time to figure this out,” Nathan assured her.

“Well, I can only wait so long and I’ll need to have answers,” she added.

“Like what this thing actually is,” Jack interjected as the trio walked into what seemed to be the only room on this floor. Inside, dozens of G.D. tech scientists were talking and examining a large machine up against the far wall. Henry was clicking away at a computer while Fargo looked on anxiously over his shoulder. The sheriff followed Nathan as the alpha walked up to Henry.

“Henry, what have you got?”

“Well, it’s definitely a weapon and this machine controls it,” the mechanic announced, motioning to the machine. Jack noticed a countdown highlighted in the middle of the structure, the numbers showing that they had a little over 23 hours left until the weapon deployed.

“Tell me more than that,” Allison demanded angrily. Henry talked over her, raising his voice angrily with a glare towards the omega.

“It’s set to discharge a huge ionosphere particle beam.”

“Oh jeez,” Fargo whimpered. Jack placed a reassuring hand on the beta’s arm, willing him not to freak out as he turned back to the alpha.

“Okay, this ion beam thingy is what exactly?” he asked to clarify.

“Irradiated uranium isotopes,” Henry explained grimly. Jack bit back a whine as a huge dose of fear suddenly erupted from Fargo and Allison, the omega trying to remain calm and not freak out at the wave of emotions peltting him. He could even sense more of the same, though in a smaller more controlled amount, coming from the two alphas in the room. This was really not good if it had even Nathan and Henry panicking.

“Okay, so a death ray,” Jack acknowledged, running his hands through his hair as he tried to think.

“I’ve searched the entire database,” Henry went on to explain. “There’s not one single record of silos, or irradiated isotopes, or ionosphere particle beams.” The alpha's tone became frantic as he revealed his lack of findings.
“Try death ray?” Jack asked, Henry looking at him in exasperation.

“It’s as if the machine never existed,” Henry practically yelled. The sheriff peeked up at Nathan, seeing that the alpha seemed to be thinking hard about the situation.

“Did you try turning it off?” he asked hesitantly. The omega winced as several pairs of annoyed eyes turned to him at the question. “What?! It’s not a stupid question. You guys did just turn it on, right?”

“That was an accident!” Fargo cried defensively. Jack stared at the beta, realizing that he must have started this whole thing. No wonder he was freaking out and panicking more than the others.

“Jack,” Henry explained slowly. “This machine was built at the height of the Cold War. There is no off switch.”

“What about the power source?” Jack inquired.

“And risk there’s a fail-safe and it fires immediately?” Nathan countered smoothly, arching an eyebrow in question at the sheriff.

“Okay, so I guess that’s a no,” the omega accepted.

“The weapon will deploy in 23 hours,” the machine suddenly announced. Jack groaned, understanding that they had less than a day to fully solve this.

“Alright, so we need to arrange for transport trucks and establish evacuation routes,” the sheriff declared, looking at Henry, Allison, and Nathan and turning back to the main issue at hand which was keeping everyone alive in Eureka.

“We should make emergency contingencies for every location that could be hit,” Allison agreed, nodding her head.

“Yeah, area hospitals should be prepped for emergency overflow,” Jack added along. The two omegas were familiar with emergency protocol for situations like these.

“You’re panicking,” Nathan interjected, staring at them calmly. Jack gaped, slightly shocked at the alpha’s composure.

“We’re not panicking. We’re reacting,” he protested. “You say death ray, we have a reaction,” the omega informs, trying not to sound hysterical.

“It’s useless. Where ever this thing hits, people will die. If it hits in Moscow, their government will retaliate and bomb the U.S. Evacuation is moot. No place is safe,” Nathan explained matter of factly. Jack huffed in frustration, looking at the man with urgency.

“Stark, we can’t just do nothing,” he stated.

“We won’t be. We’re currently in the most advanced scientific facility in the world, with the largest supercomputer in the world, and with the smartest scientists in the world. We will solve this,” the alpha asserted, a confident and self-assured look in his eyes.

“But we’ve downloaded, scanned, and decrypted every file, every schematic and every piece of paper of every project,” Fargo piped up from the back, negating the alpha's words. “There’s nothing.”
“Well, maybe not every piece of paper,” Henry disagreed. The group turned their attention on the man as he smiled at them. “I took a few boxes contained several files back to the garage when I was helping Fargo clean out the room. There might be something in them that could help us.”

With a decisive nod, Nathan turned to Jack. “Carter, you go with Henry and see what you can dig up from those files. The rest of us will stay here and see what we can accomplish on this end.”

The omega nodded, quickly following his friend out of the room as Nathan started to bark orders at the other people in the room.

At Henry’s garage, the alpha and omega tore through the various boxes in their pursuit of information. Papers soon littered the ground and every available surface of the shop as they continued to pull more out.

“Ugh,” Jack groaned, rubbing his eyes in pain from staring too long at the printed words. “If scientists are so smart, how come they don’t know anything about penmanship?” he complaining, taking a moment to stretch and get the kinks out of his back. They’d been sitting there for what had to have been two hours now and the omega wasn’t sure if he could take one more minute of it.

“Pardon the alliteration,” Henry answered. “But which would you prefer? Penmanship or progress?”

“Tequila,” Jack muttered, reluctantly picking up another sheet.

“Scotch,” the alpha replied. The omega peered over at the man with a grin.

“Really?” In all honesty, either would do for Jack at the moment. Focusing back on his paper, he noticed a scribbled initial near the bottom of the page. “What’s IT?” he asked.

“It what?” Henry inquired, not looking up from his own page.

“I.T.” Jack repeated, enunciating each letter. “It’s written on the bottom of all of these pages,” he added, seeing the same initials on more papers in the box he was looking through.

“I don’t know, maybe information technology,” Henry guessed. “Maybe it’s from the department these documents originated.”

“Looks more like someone’s initials,” the sheriff pointed out, squinting at the letters closely.

“Well, you are the detective,” the alpha confirmed.

“Marshal,” Jack corrected.

“Sheriff,” Henry counter corrected with a grin.

“That sounds like a demotion,” he whined, looking at the alpha. Henry just smirked smugly before upending another box, snapshots and images of the moon falling out.

“Ha!” the man exclaimed, smiling in triumph. Jack grabbed one of the pictures, looking closely at the image.

“What’s the shiny thing?” he asked, pointing to what looked like a pinpoint of light on the moon.
“That shiny thing is a mirror,” Henry answered, always happy to teach Jack something new. “You remember the moon landing, right?”

The omega looked askance at the other man. “Don’t tell me that didn’t happen!”

“No! It happened, but we didn’t go to the moon just to walk,” Henry explained. “We put mirrors all over the moon to bounce signals back to the earth. Things like telescopic images, satellite communications—“

“Death rays?” Jack questioned slowly, already knowing the truth. Henry gazed back at the sheriff, understanding and dread growing on his face. The man tossed his pile of papers on the ground angrily, standing as his frustration mounted.

“They weaponized the moon,” he growled, gesturing at the picture still in Jack’s hand. “I mean, they can bounce a laser off the moon and wipe out any target they want,” he spat, starting to pace.

“What, like tanks and stuff?” Jack questioned, peering back into the box.

“No. Cities and stuff,” the alpha retorted in agitation while Jack stared at the man in shock and disbelief.

“So, you’re telling me that while the world watched Neil Armstrong take one small step for man—“

“NORAD took a giant leap for themselves,” Henry completed. Jack spotted the initial again on another piece of paper.

“With the help of someone from Global. Someone with the initials of I.T.” he muttered, rifling through the various papers left in hopes of finding a name.

“I.T.” Henry mused, picking up one of the pages himself and looking at the marking. “Oh! Irvin Thatcher. It has to be Irvin Thatcher,” he exclaimed, turning to the omega in excitement. “Irvin was this brilliant scientist behind MAD,” he went on to explain as Jack looked at him confused.

“Mother’s Against Drunk Driving?” the omega guessed.


“You said he was a brilliant scientist,” he repeated, clearing his throat nervously. “Was? Or is?” Henry blinking, seeming to think it over for a second.

“I believe, if I’m not mistaken, Irvin should be living at the senior center on the outskirts of town,” the alpha assured, and Jack didn’t waste a moment. Jumping up from his seat and abandoning the papers in his hand, the omega rushed for the door and his jeep, calling over his shoulder as he exits.

“I’ll go find him and pick him up. Meet us back at G.D.”

At the senior center, Jack jogged through the halls calling for his daughter as he passed several elderly giving him strange looks. Rounding a corner, he spotted her sitting in front of two old men, Zoe appearing to take notes on whatever they were teaching her. Jack observed a glass board full of equations and chemistry formulas before he got close enough to hear the end of their conversation.
“They go nuclear,” his daughter’s voice stated, answering whatever question the men had given her.

“And split,” one of them added with a nod of his head. Zoe seemed to freeze, her face showing she was thinking hard.

“So…You’re saying I’m the reason my parents split up?” she asked in a teary voice. Jack almost tripped, staring gobsmacked at the old scientists as they seemed to realize the girl had come to some conclusion they hadn’t thought of.

“No! No!” they yelled frantically, worry on their faces as they observed her. Jack hurried up to her, placing his hand around her shoulder as he crouched down to get eye level with her.

“Mom!” Zoe squealed in surprise, shocked to find him right there.

“Hey, are you okay? What happened?” he demanded, turning to the two men accusingly.

“We were just using a family analogy to teach her about fission,” one of the men claimed, holding his hands up.

“We didn’t mean any harm,” the other apologized, looking sadly at them.

“Mom, it wasn’t anything. I just….I just looked too much into it,” Zoe pleaded, trying to get him to leave it alone.

“Are you sure? Because it’s not true. You know your dad and I split because we had issues, right?” he asked, scanning his daughter’s face worriedly.

“Of course,” she scoffed unconvincingly, hiding a sniffle as she glanced away. “What are you doing here anyways?”

“Uh, I’m looking for a retired scientist,” he admitted, standing up and carefully pulling his daughter up with him. He didn’t think this discussion was over, but they had bigger issues at the moment. “A Dr. Thatcher,” he explained as they walked away.

“Irvin?” a woman’s voice questioned. The omega glanced to the side, finding an older omega in a wheelchair looking up at him in shock. “He’s in Room 101, but why would you want-“

Jack hurried off, leaving his daughter behind in the main room. He was halfway down a random hallway, spotting doors numbered 34, 46, and 52 when he realized he had no idea where he was going. Internally berating himself, Jack hurried back to the main room, spying his daughter looking at him knowingly and the older woman watching him confused.

“Okay, yeah, so where is Room 101?” he asked drawing closer.

“Room 101? Right this way,” a perky voice popped up, right before a random beta hurried past. Jack quickly threw a glance at his daughter to find her giggling at him before he hurried after the woman, having to practically jog after her as she hurried down the halls.

“So, what do you need Irvin for, Sheriff?” the beta inquired. Jack guessed she was the center’s manager or something as she was too young to be a resident.

“There’s a situation,” he vaguely explained, realizing that the people here didn’t know about what was going on back in town. He didn’t want to cause a panic so he figured he might as well keep the silos need to know at this point. “Even the brainiacs at Global can’t figure it out,” he joked, his
voice unable to hide his anxiety. “Apparently the only guy who can help is this Dr. Thatcher.”

Coming up to Room 101, Jack quickly knocked before entering, finding an older gentlemen pacing back and forth and muttering to himself. “Dr. Thatcher?”

“This is the guy?” the woman whispered in disbelief.

“The question remains, fusion or fission?” the man asked the empty room aloud, appearing to be reading off of a notecard. “Fisson? Certainly not. I haven’t been fishin’ since I lived on Lake Erie. You think that’s eerie? How do you explain quasar energy paradox? Or baldness among musicians?”

Jack groaned, collapsing against the nearest wall when he realized the man wasn’t all there in the mind. Pinching the bridge of his nose, he exhaled, realizing that he had to take him to G.D. anyways. The man might be able to offer some insight that might help them.

“Right this way, Dr. Thatcher,” Jack called, guiding the elderly man into the machine room on Level 4. Fargo, Nathan, and Henry eagerly stood at attention as he entered.

“Give the doctor some room,” Nathan ordered as Jack moved to stand beside him, everyone watching as the older alpha wondered slowly in, looked around, and then walked back out again. Jack jumped forward, carefully guiding the man back into the room.

“Dr. Thatcher, it’s an honor,” Henry greeted, shaking the man’s hand. “I’m Henry Deacon. This machine of yours, it’s really something. It’s like a riddle inside an enigma, wrapped in ten inches of titanium alloy.”

“We’re assuming it’s similar to other space-based weapons,” Nathan added, talking quickly as he tried to get all the information out. “Using a single-channel transponder package.”

“Or maybe a survivable, low-frequency communication system,” Henry interjected again.

“In which case, we’d have to reassess certain aspects of our approach,” Nathan finished.

“Guys! Go easy,” Jack cut in, seeing that the two alphas were going crazy with the science. The old guy wasn’t going to keep up.

“We need launch codes, Carter,” Nathan insisted, the pressure of the moment apparently getting to him. “Easy isn’t going to get it.”

“Just give him a minute, Stark,” Jack pleaded. “This guy…he isn’t really what you’re expecting.” The omega cringed, already imagining the alpha’s reaction when he realized Irvin wasn’t quite as sane as they needed.

The group watched as the old man went up to the machine, running a soothing hand over the metal before laying on it. The older alpha moaned in happiness and Jack shifted uncomfortably, averting his eyes from the accusing stare he knew Nathan was giving him. Awkwardly, they stood around as the man caressed the machine like a long lost love, nobody sure what to do until Henry decided to step forward.

“Dr. Thatcher?” he asked and the old scientist moved slowly away from the machine with a smile. Bending down, the mechanic gestured to a panel on the underside of the machine. “We think the controls are behind this panel. I just can’t figure out how to get to them. These locking bolts, are
they some kind of proprietary threading?"

“Reverse the hex,” the old alpha mumbled.

“Excuse me?”

“If you want sex, reverse the hex,” Irvin repeated. Jack felt himself flush in embarrassment at the man’s words.

“Carter, at any point when you picked him up... the car ride, the long walk down here... Did you happen to notice this guy’s not all there?” Nathan questioned critically.

“Yeah,” Jack reluctantly admitted. “There may have been signs. But come on, Stark. We don’t have many other options here,” he tried to argue.

“Righty loosey, lefty tighty,” Irvin stated, twirling his finger in the air. Henry laughed, a smile blossoming on his face.

“Got it,” he announced, dropping to the ground by the panel and pulling out a drill. “Reverse the hex,” he explained, starting the tool. Placing the bit against one of the screws, he set to work, chuckling happily as the screws were pushed in instead of popping out. “The screws recede. It’s brilliant,” the alpha joyfully praised, turning to Irvin. Taking off the panel, Henry revealed a mess of wires and computer chips all tangled up in each other. “Okay, Dr. Thatcher, all I need is a code to suspend the launch sequence.”


Jack hastily jumped forward, sensing Nathan’s growing frustration with the old scientist. “He’s just tired,” the omega excused, guiding the man away. “Dr. Thatcher, why don’t you take a seat? Don’t give up, okay?” he begged, knowing how many lives were counting on this.

“Up, down, up, down. The windows on the bus go up and down, up and down, up and down,” Irvin started to sing, moving his arms with the song. Jack sighed, watching as everyone in the room seemed to grow frustrated or just give up on the man.

Jack shuffled over to Nathan, both men watching Irvin as he sang to himself. “Nathan, he knows how to solve this. I feel it,” the omega insisted, looking at the alpha.

“Yeah, maybe 20 years ago. Face it, Carter, the man’s of no use to us right now,” the director sneered, turning away from the old man and focusing back on the machine. Jack sighed, knowing he was right, but wishing it were different.

“I just wish there was a way to know what he does. To get inside his head and see what’s buried under all of... this,” Jack muttered, gesturing to the scientist’s instability. The omega felt Nathan tense next to him and he looked over, recognizing the man’s poker face. “What?” he asked.

“It’s nothing,” the alpha denied, refusing to look at Jack.

“No, it’s something. I know that face. That’s your ‘I just remembered something that could help, but don’t want to say anything because it’s classified’ face,” Jack declared, poking Nathan accusingly in the arm.

“I don’t have that face,” the alpha growled, still staring at the doomsday machine.
“Stark, come on. What is it?” Jack pushed, watching as the alpha seemed to consider it for a bit before talking.

“Fine. There’s this….machine, which should let you peer into his mind. It connects your mind with his to allow you to understand what he’s thinking,” Nathan admitted slowly.

“Great!” Jack cheered, straightening up eagerly. “Let’s do it!”

“Carter, it’s not that simple. The machine is far too dangerous. It’s highly experimental and has never been tested on a human subject before,” the alpha confessed, regarding the sheriff sternly.

“There’s no guarantee it’ll leave you or your mind undamaged.” Jack stiffened, understanding what the alpha was saying. If Jack did this, there might be no coming back.

“We don’t have a lot of options here, Nathan,” the omega entreated. “You guys need all the help you can get.”

“You don’t know that,” Nathan argued in frustration. “We could still solve this.”

“There’s no guarantee though. At least let me try this,” he practically begged. Nathan gazed at him assessingly. He seemed to come to some decision as he reluctantly sighed.

“You’re going to need Allison’s help,” he conceded.

Jack sat back in a chair, trying to contain his nervousness as techs and Allison checked the machine that was attached to his head. It was like a weird metal helmet and off to his right, Irvin sat in his own chair, an identical helmet perched on his head.

“So, this is basically like a Vulcan mind-meld, right?” he asked, looking to the other omega for reassurance. He’d been feeling brave, arguing his participation back with Nathan, but now as he sat here about to take an untested dip into some old man’s brain, he was starting to question his own motives and confidence in the situation.

“Well, the PX-24 allows one person to probe the consciousness of another,” she explained factually. “In theory, anyway.”

Jack kept taking deep breaths, willing himself to calm down and relax as he gazed about the room. His eyes landed on a plaque of a monkey on the far wall. Squinting, he read out the inscription on the bottom.

“In memory of Skippy.”

Allison turned, noticing the direction of his gaze. “Oh,” she laughed nervously. “He was everyone’s favorite test chimp.”

The omega paled, registering the term ‘was.’ “Did he die on this thing?!” he whimpered faintly hysterical, clenching the arm rests with a white knuckled grip.

“No!” she reassured before pausing for a moment of thought. “The autopsy was inconclusive,” she admitted quietly. Jack squeezed his eyes shut as he freaked out internally, biting his lip to swallow the scream of protest he wanted to let out. “Carter! Carter, listen. No one will think less of you for not wanting to do this,” she soothed, trying to get him to calm down.
Jack blinked up at her, taking shuddering breaths in a bid to get his emotions under control. It took a few moments, but when the omega felt like he was under better control, he looked back up at Allison. “Okay…okay, what am I looking for again?”

Giving him a speculative glance, the woman started to list off the focus of this endeavour. “Sequences, equations, codes. Anything that might help us crack that machine.”

“Okay,” he acknowledged, squeezing his eyes shut as she started up the helmet. Allison gave a thumbs up to the techs in the other room and then Jack felt a jolt of electricity run through his body.

Jack screamed in pain as flashes of bombs, military planes, and a woman appeared under his eyelids. The nursery rhyme Irvin had been singing before drifted through his mind and the omega felt himself sink into the older alpha’s consciousness. He distantly heard Allison inquire about his condition, but he ignored her as the image of a large sundial popped into his vision. Irvin and a strange woman were walking up to it, the name Eugenia drifting into his thoughts as he watched Irvin kneel down and slip a ring onto her finger. The lovely scene soon vanished, replaced with more painful images of atomic bombs detonating and battleships cruising the oceans. Jack groaned at the deluge of war and he heard Allison’s far off command to stop the test.

“No!” he screamed, knowing he hadn’t seen enough. “Keep going!” The image of an imposing building appeared, Irvin’s mind identifying the place as Stockholm before the alpha’s voice started to chant the name ‘Linus Pauling’ again and again in anger. “Eugenia,” Jack whispered, watching as the same woman came into view again, the omega feeling overcome with feelings of love before a mushroom cloud exploded across the scene. Jack screamed as Allison quickly deactivated the machine, the omega crying as his whole body trembled uncontrollably and he shrunk defensibly in on himself, hugging his arms to his chest as he rocked back and forth.

“Did you see how to stop it?” Allison demanded, crouching in front of him.

“No,” he muttered, still trembling in shock as he thought over everything he’d seen. “I saw what happens if we don’t though,” he admitted, picturing that explosion again. His mind drifted to the woman again and Jack stumbled to his feet, moving over to Irvin and pulling the man up as well. “I need to see Eugenia,” he whimpered, slowly beginning to escort the man back outside.

“Wait! Carter, we need to run a check on you. There’s no telling what the RX did to your mind,” she insisted, desperately trying to get him to head for the clinic.

“Later,” he promised, absentmindedly brushing her off as he moved towards the exit. The other omega sighed in frustration as she stood back, reluctantly letting him and Irvin go, but obviously not liking it.

“Here you go, buddy,” Jack soothed, carefully helping Irvin back into his room at the senior center. “I’ll go look for Eugenia and you enjoy the view with a room,” he offered as the man lowered himself into a seat. The omega’s hands had stopped shaking by the time they’d arrived at the building, for which he’d been thankful for as his daughter had immediately greeted them when they’d walked through the doors.

“Where is that?” she asked, motioning towards the digital picture projected on the wall. Jack glanced at it, and then did a double take as he recognized the building in the photo.
“Royal Palace. Stockholm. Sweden,” he muttered, blinking memories out of his mind as he hastily retreated from the room.

“How do you know that?” Zoe asked, confused.

“I don’t know,” he admitted, flashes of Irvin’s memory still flitting through his head. “I was there.”

“When?”

“Recently,” Jack paused, shaking his head as his thoughts got confused. “Do you know where Eugenia is?” he asked, trying to stay on track.

“She’s not to be disturbed,” Zoe ordered, obviously mimicking someone. “Her words, not mine.”

“Come on, show me where her room is,” Jack demanded urgently, following his daughter as she lead him down the hallway. “This is her,” she announced, motioning towards a particular door.

“Eugenia!” Jack called, pounding on the door.

“Eugenia, it’s Zoe,” his daughter called out, knocking herself when there was no answer. “Has she done something wrong?”

“No, no,” he answered, knocking once again. “Eugenia, it’s Sheriff Carter, I need to talk to you,” he yelled through the door.

“Is there something I should know?” Zoe demanded, turning to him seriously.

“No,” he denied, not looking at her.

“Is there, isn’t there?” she confirmed in dread, gazing at him with growing fear.

“Oh, yeah, you know what. You know that crack I made about you being a delinquent? I didn’t mean it,” he stated, peering at her apologetically. “You’re my girl,” he beamed, gripping her reassuringly on the shoulder.

“It’s really bad, isn’t it?” she asked, assessing him.

“No,” he lied. He could tell Zoe didn’t believe him and they both turned at the same time, banging on the door with renewed need.

“Eugenia!” they both yelled. Jack tried the handle and the two stared in shock as the door swung open easily. Entering the room, the father and daughter found a completely empty room, no sign of the elder woman anywhere. Jack turned back around, charging down the hall and down a flight of stairs to the main level, Zoe right on his heels.

“Zoe, think,” he asked. “Did she say anything about going anywhere, doing anything?”

“Not that I remember,” his daughter tried to recall.

“What about kids, or family? Did she ask someone to pick her up something?” he questioned, passing a flyer as they reached the bottom of the stairs.

“It never came up,” Zoe stated, but Jack didn’t hear her as the image on the flyer caught his attention.

“Where is that?” he demanded, pointing to the sundial in the background.

“No,” he snapped, pointing to the picture again. “The sundial, where is that?”

“It’s in Copernicus Park, on the south side of the distilled water tower,” she informed him.

“Come on, that’s where we’ll find my girl,” he declared confidently, running for the doors.

“I thought I was your girl!” she called after him. “Wait, that sounded weird.”

The two took off, sprinting across the park and down the pathways until they finally reached the large sundial. There, an older omega in a wheelchair sat admiring the view. Jack realized it was the same woman he’d seen at the center before, the one who’d told him which room was Irvin’s.

“Oh my god, Eugenia! What are you doing here?” Zoe exclaimed, slowing to a stop by the woman. “How’d you even get here?”

“Henry souped up my chair,” Eugenia declared proudly. “I can go 50 miles between charges.”

“So why have I been pushing you around all day?” Zoe asked in confusion.

“I wanted you to feel good about yourself,” the older omega replied smugly. “Like you were assisting.”

Jack stared at the sundial, his memories clashing with those he had of Irvin’s, mixing past with present as he looked at the structure before him.

“Mom, you okay?” Zoe asked in concern. Jack looked up, his eyes landing on Eugenia and suddenly he was in the past, proposing to the omega and kissing her soundly as she accepted. The omega blinked, finding himself actually kissing the woman in present time. “Mom, what the hell are you doing?” his daughter screeched, gazing at him aghast. “Why did you do that?”

Jack coughed, embarrassed as he awkwardly backed away from the woman. “I’m not sure,” he confessed, blushing.

“Mind your own business, Zoe,” Eugenia purred, smiling coyly up at the sheriff.

Jack cleared his throat, shifting uneasily as he regarded the other omega. “Sorry,” he apologized, trying to recall what compelled him to do that. “Your anniversary. Our anniversary,” he corrected, organizing his thoughts. Zoe gaped at him in shock, Eugenia doing much the same in confusion.

“Anniversary?” the old omega asked. “Of what?”

“You and me,” he declared. “Him. Thatcher.”

“Anniversary? He never even proposed,” Eugenia revealed in a melancholy tone.

“Yes he did,” Jack insisted, remembering the event. “I saw it.”

“Trust me,” the woman said, shaking her head. “Never happened.”


Eugenia nodded in agreement. “I come here for lunch every day. This is where we first met,” she
stated with tears in her eyes as she remembered. “We’d sit and look at the sky. He told me how the stars shined, how the planets revolved around the sun, how his universe revolved around me.” The omega was practically crying at this point as she recalled her love and Jack and Zoe gazed at her in sympathy. “And then his world came crashing down and mine with it.”

“What happened?” Jack asked, wanting to know what broke Irvin.

“We were going to get married in Stockholm,” she revealed. “After Irvin won the prize.”


“No one imagined Linus Pauling would win a second Nobel. It was devastating to Irvin,” she explained. “He had a complete mental break the day of the announcement, the day he was going to propose,” she finished. “The day I lost the love of my life.”

Jack thought deeply, recalling the picture in Irvin’s room. “The picture, the virtual Stockholm,” he muttered, looking at Zoe. His daughter nodded, understanding filling her eyes.

“You must think I’m a fool,” Eugenia berated herself. “Pining over a love that’s gone...”

“It’s not gone,” Jack reassured her, smiling as he remembered the scientist’s memories. “We just have to pick up where we left off.” He paused. “Did I say we?” he asked, receiving nods from both women. The omega groaned, knowing he needed to separate this connection he had with the man before this got ridiculous. “Sorry,” he apologized. “I think I know what needs to be done though,” he stated, receiving prompting looks for further explanation from both of them. “Irvin’s mind is stuck in the past, at the moment he lost the Nobel Prize. If we present him with the award and allow him to go through the whole ceremony, his mind may finally decide to move on and focus on the issue back at G.D.” he explained, starting to pace as he considered everything that had to be done. “We need to make it really look like Stockholm or he’s not gonna believe it.”

“Oh!” Zoe exclaimed excitedly. “There are these glasses, back at the center. They make you see, like, whatever you want when you put them on. Some guys were using them to play tennis in what looked like this huge court, when really they were just standing by the pool. We could use that, right?”

“Yeah...yeah that might just work,” he beamed.

“But what about the Nobel?” Eugenia asked in concern. “We have to present him with something and he’ll be able to spot a fake,” she cautioned.

“Uh...I think I might know where to get one of those. I just don’t think he’s going to like it very much,” Jack groaned.

The sheriff barged into Nathan’s office, spotting the alpha, Henry, and Allison bickering over what to do next.

“We’re running out of options,” Allison exclaimed, frustration thick in her tone.

“I beg to differ,” Jack countered, all eyes being drawn to him as he jogged over to a display case. “I’m gonna need to borrow your Nobel,” he explained quickly, bashing in the glass on the case with the butt of his gun before Nathan could protest. The glass broke with a satisfying crash, shards littering the floor below.
“It was open,” Nathan retorted, glaring at the sheriff in annoyance.

“Oh,” the omega grimaced, seeing the door of the case swing open on its own. “Sorry,” he smiled, blushing in embarrassment as he reached in to take the Nobel gently off its hooks.

“What in the hell are you doing?” the alpha demanded, stalking over to the omega.

“I’m going to fix Dr. Thatcher,” he declared confidently, gripping the prize firmly against his chest in case Nathan tried to yank it back.

“With my Nobel?” the man protested, looking at Jack like he was crazy.

“His mind is stuck, Nathan,” Jack pleaded, gazing up at the man imploringly. “His mind broke at the moment he was supposed to receive this award,” he held the Nobel up a bit, “but didn’t. I was in this man’s mind. I know what he needs.”

Nathan studied the sheriff for a moment, his shoulders relaxing their tense line as he seemed to relent. “What are you thinking then?” he asked and Jack grinned at the man.

“We’re gonna hold a ceremony in Stockholm,” he announced confidently.


“Carter, how are you going to do a Nobel Prize Ceremony in Stockholm? We have less than four hours until this thing blows,” Nathan demanded.

“Well, we… Wait, what do you mean four hours?! I thought we still had most of the day left?” Jack exclaimed in shock. Seeing the guilty look on Nathan’s face, the omega pointed an accusing finger in his face. “What did you do?”

“That’s not important right now,” the alpha dismissed, waving him off. “Right now, we need to stop this thing before it decimates entire cities.” Jack grumbled under his breath, annoyed as he dragged Nathan out of the room, explaining his plan as Allison scrambled after them.

In the end, Henry, Fargo, Jo, Zoe, Eugenia, Allison, and Nathan all came together to help run the award ceremony. Fargo did some finagling with the emitter for the projection so that a small auditorium in the school suddenly looked like a presentation hall in Stockholm, two stories of seats filled with virtual people dressed to the nines. His daughter, Jo, Henry, Fargo, and Eugenia sat in the audience as Allison and Nathan took to the stage, Jack hurrying on right behind them as the audience began to clap appreciatively.

“You clean up nice, Sheriff,” Nathan muttered, dragging his eyes up the omega’s body and taking in the pressed black and white tuxedo he was wearing.

“Thanks,” Jack smiled, straightening his suit nervously. His own eyes lingered on the tall alpha before him, taking in the black suit and bow tie that, on Jack would have looked ridiculous, but on the scientist made him look delectable. A white scarf elegantly hanging off his shoulders completed the look and the omega tore his eyes away, connecting with the man’s gray ones as he
grinned nervously back. “You too.”

Nathan smirked, turning forward and drawing himself up as he faced the crowd. “You sure this will work?”

“It has to. We don’t have anything else to go on,” Jack replied, moving back to take his position behind Nathan as the alpha stood before the podium.

“Ladies and gentlemen, and distinguished colleagues,” the alpha announced, addressing the artificial audience before him and beginning the ceremony. “Welcome to Stockholm. Robert Oppenheimer famously said, the atomic bomb made the prospect of future war unendurable. One man never forgot those words. The man we welcome among us today, the man whom the Nobel Committee of the Norwegian parliament has selected for this year’s award of the Nobel Prize, Dr. Irvin Horatio Thatcher.” The alpha turned, about to welcome the man to the stage when static erupted in the crowd’s applause and the picture flickered in and out, the audience fading to show just the five that were really there. “Fargo!” Nathan whispered angrily, and Jack watched as the beta frantically clicked away at a tablet, the audience quickly reemerging just as Irvin stepped on the stage. The omega helped guide the older man to the podium as Nathan stepped away.

Irvin reached for the Nobel Prize in Nathan’s hand, the alpha reluctant to hand it over until the man forcefully yanked it from his arms. Jack stifled a laugh at the putout face the alpha wore as he watched Irvin take his Nobel from him. As the older scientist went to examine the prize, Jack quickly stepped forward holding out his hands graciously.

“I got that,” he offered, taking the prize for the man so he could give his speech, and so that he didn’t look too closely at Nathan’s name on the dedication. Irvin approached the podium, unfolding his speech as he looked out into the crowd.

“The wheels on the bus go round and round, round and round, round and round,” the man began to sing and Allison and Nathan turned to Jack with a glare, their eyes accusing. The omega hastily raised his hand, silently asking them to give the man one moment as Irvin sung the verse again. The older alpha seemed to spot Eugenia in the audience, as he stopped and waved at the woman before continuing. “A simple little children’s song, but it was this song that inspired my concept of Mutually Assured Destruction. We build an A-bomb, they build an A-bomb. We build an H-bomb, they build an H-bomb,” Irvin spoke, his voice sounding rational, if a little wheezy from old age. “Round and round. Round and round. The wheels on the bus leading us towards an unending escalation of new, more powerful, more deadly weapons.” Jack grinned over at Nathan, preening as the alpha gave him a small nod in acknowledgement for his success. “Which is what led me to my greatest achievement, the Ionosphere Particle Beam. In order to ensure peace on earth, I built the deadliest weapon in the universe. But that’s the end of the story. Let me take you back to the beginning.”

“We don’t have time to go back to Never Land,” Nathan whispered to Jack sternly and the omega realized they were quickly running out of time. Thinking quickly, he stepped up to Irvin.

“Dr. Thatcher, there’s an urgent situation that needs your attention,” he requested politely.

“Oh,” the man muttered, looking sad, but understanding of the interruption.

“Sorry,” Jack apologized.

“I would just like to end by thanking the committee,” Irvin announced, turning to Nathan and Allison graciously. “And Eugenia, my love, without whom this achievement would not have been possible. We have a lot of catching up to do,” the man chuckled, taking back the Nobel from Jack.
as he left the podium, applause crashing in the background. The man paused, biting his nails as a worried frown crossed his face.

“I don’t like that look,” Jack stated in concern. “What’s wrong?”

“My crew,” Irvin exclaimed. “I’ve got to get my crew to fix the device,” he commanded before dashing behind the curtain.

“You have a crew?” Jack asked in bewilderment, shooting a shocked look at Nathan and Allison before following after the old man. Irvin held out a faded photograph to the sheriff, the picture showing him, two other gentlemen, and what had to be Eugenia smiling in front of a plain white wall.

It turned out that the two missing men were the same ones that had been teaching Zoe about chemistry when he’d found her earlier that day. Everyone quickly rounded the four older scientists up and bundled them to G.D. as fast as they could, desperate to get the machine turned off in time. Jack noted only ten minutes were remaining on the clock as they got into the room on Section 4. They quickly got to work, Eugenia clicking away at a computer as the three older men messed with the instruments on the machine itself.

“30 seconds and counting guys,” Henry announced after awhile, everybody in the room holding their breath as they watched the men gather around three keys. On Irvin’s mark, each man flipped their key one after another and the machine groaned as it slowed. The countdown continued to tick down though, the timer less than 15 seconds now, and Jack grabbed onto Nathan’s arm anxiously as he watched the team apparently fail to stop the machine. The alpha didn’t pull away, instead glancing down at the sheriff with a perplexed and considering look on his face, which the omega missed. Irvin stared at the machine a moment before reeling his foot back and landing a solid kick to the bottom.

“Launch Code Override initiated,” a computerized voice announced blandly, the timer coming to a halt on 9 seconds. Everyone in the room cheered and clapped, Henry shouting ‘Yes’ to the heavens, and Jack unthinkingly hugged Nathan with a cry of relief. Freezing, the omega quickly stepped away when he realized what he’d done, rubbing the back of his head as he gazed bashfully up at the amused looking alpha.

“Dead man’s protocol activated,” the computer announced again, everyone in the room turning to the console with horror as 5 minutes appeared on the timer. “Launch sequence initiated. Second strike weapon will deploy in five minutes.”

“Did someone cut the blue wire?” Irvin demanded, glaring accusingly at the people in the room. Jack noticed Henry shrink back with a guilty look.

“That’s what you did?” the omega asked harshly, giving Nathan a look of disbelief. No wonder time had been so short, they’d been messing around with the machine and cutting things they shouldn’t have.

“Not important now,” the man stated, not looking him in the eye. Jack huffed, turning to Irvin instead.

“Come on, Doc,” he beckoned, grabbing the man and practically carrying him down the hallway as Nathan, Allison, Henry, and Fargo charged after him. They had to get to town and see what was
Pulling into the main square, Jack paled as a huge silo came into view. The other smaller silos that had been littered around town had all seemed to vanish, replaced by this one that stood at least three times as tall. People were running from the thing in terror as the omega pulled to a stop on the street.

“Oh, this isn’t good,” Jack whined as he and Irvin climbed out of his jeep, the others hopping out of Nathan’s car that had pulled in behind him.

“This is the one that assures mutually assured destruction,” Irvin informed unnecessarily.

“Can you stop it?” Jack pleaded, staring up at the towering thing.

“I can’t,” the old man stated apologetically. “It can’t be shut down.”

“Henry, how much time do we have left?” Nathan demanded, looking towards the mechanic.

“30 seconds,” the other alpha replied. They watched as the top of the silo opened, the main firing cannon rising into place.

“Is there anyway we can re-aim it?” Jack asked Irvin desperately.

“Once it’s locked on to its target, it can’t be realigned…” The alpha trailed off, staring at the sheriff’s jeep. Jack followed his gaze, understanding popping into his head.

“Will it work?” he asked desperately.

“I think desperate times call for desperate measures,” Irvin agreed with a nod. Jack jumped into the car, starting it up quickly.

“Henry, when you outfitted my jeep, did you put in any airbags?” he asked rhetorically.

“Carter, are you crazy?” Nathan demanded as an electronic voice from the silo started counting down from ten. “Carter!” the alpha yelled as Jack floored it, aiming his jeep straight at the silo. The impact from the jeep’s collision tilted the silo just a smidge as a green beam fired out of the top. Jack blinked, dizzy from the impact of about four airbags hitting him from all sides at once when he’d hit the silo.

“Carter! Carter!” Henry yelled excitedly, bounding over to the jeep and sticking his head in the window as the omega batted the pillows aside. “Great job, man. We missed the moon!” he cheered. “We missed the moon! We missed it!”

“Little help,” Jack groaned, leaning back in his seat as he tried to catch his breath. Oh, remind him never to do that again, he thought, fumbling for the handle. The door opened before he could reach it, Nathan carefully pulling him out and helping him to his feet.

“Quick thinking, Carter,” he praised, leading the sheriff over to a nearby bench. The alpha leaned down, gently cupping the omega’s chin as he studied his face. “You’re gonna have a bit of a bruise on that eye,” he warned, gazing at him sympathetically.

“Well,” Jack groaned. “One small step for man, one giant welt for me,” he chuckled without
humor. The alpha took a seat on the bench next to him, peering at the sheriff assessingly. He seemed about to say something, but appeared to change his mind with a shake of his head.

“So, when are you gonna tell him my Nobel isn’t his to keep?” the alpha asked, tilting his head over to where Irvin was happily making out with Eugenia against a wall. Jack squinted over at the couple, smiling at the obvious love between the two.

“I don’t know,” he teased, grinning impishly at Nathan. “He saved your ass. I think he earned it.”

“Ha. No. I earned it. It’s mine,” the alpha insisted, sounding a bit upset as he stared at the older man.

“Oh, come on, Nathan. You sound like a little boy whose toy got taken away,” Jack reprimanded gently. “You take that away from him and he could slip back into the mental break he had before. You might need him,” the omega reasoned, “to dismantle the next ticking time bomb your scientists uncover.”

“Good point,” Nathan allowed and Jack stared at him in surprise.

“Really?” he asked, beaming at the man.

“Don’t get too excited,” the alpha warned, a small smirk crossing his lips. Jack preened at the praise regardless, glancing back over at the older couple and regarding them for a moment.

“Do you remember that feeling?” he asked softly. Nathan followed his gaze, observing the enamored mates himself.

“It’s been awhile,” the alpha admitted.

“It’s nice to know it can last a lifetime, huh?” Jack mused, turning back to face the director. He froze, finding the man’s eyes already on him in a considering look.

“Yeah,” Nathan whispered. The alpha seemed to suddenly remember himself, clearing his throat as he abruptly looked away, Jack blinking at the sudden loss of gray, watching as Nathan stood up, not looking back at the sheriff as he walked towards his car. “See you later, Carter,” the alpha called back in farewell before climbing in and driving off just like that.

Jack slumped against the bench with a sigh, feeling like something had just been taken from him before he could really appreciate it. Until next time, he mused, watching the Irvin and Eugenia with a bittersweet smile.
It was early in the morning and Café Diem was packed as Jack maneuvered himself and two coffees over to the table his daughter sat at. Setting them down, he noticed her playing with his baseball, twirling it around in her hands on the table.

“I still say it’s weird,” she muttered, accepting her mug.

“Hey, this is America’s favorite pastime,” he smiled, picking up the ball and holding it in his hands.

“Please,” she scoffed, taking a sip of her drink. “A bunch of grown men slapping each other on the butt and hitting balls with sticks.”

Jack laughed. “Point taken,” he allowed. “But if you want to talk weird, let’s talk about what you’re wearing,” he remarked, glancing at the girl’s pink, purple, and red clothes with an unimpressed look.

“You choose now to mock my clothes?” she asked in disbelief.

“Call it like I see it,” he teased with an amused grin.

“There’s nothing wrong with this dress,” Zoe argued firmly.

“The fact that you call a tank top with a belt a dress... All the wrong I need,” he corrected.

“Well, you know it’s not like I’m wearing a thong under it,” she declared, her voice rising in annoyance at his criticism. Jack balked at the image with a shudder.

“No, no, no,” he protested, trying to believe he didn’t just hear that out of his young daughter’s mouth.

“How old are you?” she criticized, looking at him in amusement.

“Old enough to know that that is the last thing I want to hear my 15 year old daughter say.” Zoe looked at him in challenge and he groaned, knowing what she was going to do before she even opened her mouth.

“Thong.”

“Don’t,” he warned.

“Thong. Thong! Thong-” Zoe’s rant broke off, and Jack looked up to find some upstart boy behind his daughter looking at her in appreciation. Jack growled at the kid.

“Hey! Eyes front,” he ordered, catching Zoe’s attention and bringing it back to the table. “There you go. Hey, Vincent,” he hollered over the crowd, getting the cook’s attention. “I heard something about a town meeting somewhere this morning? Do you know where or when?” A low chime resonated through the town and everybody around them began to pull out little pagers.

“Oh! Here and now,” Vincent replied with a smile. Jack leaned over the table, looking down at the little pager Zoe pulled out as Henry’s face appeared on the screen.

“Good morning, Eureka! Here’s the Monday Morning Minute. After much discussion, we are
installing our first traffic light on the corner of Main and Archimedes. Also, we'll be holding special elections next month for our new town mayor. All interested candidates please contact Allison Blake. And finally, today, one of our newest citizens, former US Marshal, Sheriff Jack Carter. Would you like to say a few words, Sheriff Carter?” Henry stated before the screen suddenly switched to show Jack looking down at the pager in Café Diem.

Startled at suddenly being put on the spot and the fact that everyone could see him, the omega scrambled for something to say. “Uh, okay. Like he said, I’m Jack Carter, uh, and this is my daughter, Zoe!” Jack announced, his daughter looking at him in shock for being put in the limelight as well. “So, be nice.”

“Stop talking. Now!” Zoe hissed in embarrassment, trying to hide her face from the screen.

“Uh, it’s nice to be here,” Jack continued, feeling like he had to say something worthwhile. “Eureka is definitely unique. Um…oh! I was wondering if anybody would like to get together for, you know, a pick-up baseball game?” he asked, holding up the baseball in his hand. It was really weird how everybody in the shop was looking at their screens, watching him talk when he was standing right in front of them. “Something low-key, where you could just hang out and get to know each other.”

“Our minute’s just about up, Sheriff. So to recap, traffic signal, mayor’s election, Sheriff Carter, baseball. Have a great week, folks!” Henry restated before the screen went dark and everyone stored their pagers back in their pockets, or where ever else they’d pulled them from. Jack watched in quiet astonishment, still feeling thrown sometimes by the everyday life here in Eureka.

“Come on,” he said, motioning to his daughter. “Let’s get you to school before you’re late.” With a roll of her eyes, Zoe grabbed her bag and they headed for the jeep.

They pulled into the school pretty soon afterwards, Jack parking by the curb as Zoe stepped out. “Have a good day at school!” he yelled after her. “Try not to commit any felonies,” he teased with a grin.

“Good pep talk, mom,” Zoe sighed, unimpressed as she turned and waltzed towards the building.

“Lupo for Carter. Over,” the radio suddenly announced, distracting Jack from watching his daughter.

“Yes, go ahead, Jo,” Jack answered, picking up the receiver.

“Nice speech. Baseball’s huge here. Over.” Jo stated, a smile obvious in her voice.

“Do you need something?” he asked, not wanting to be teased about his awkwardness during the morning’s ‘meeting.’

“I’ve got a hit and run off Coriolis Loop. You need to see this. Over,” she informed him seriously.

“Copy,” Jack confirmed, starting the car and honking the horn. He waved at Zoe when she turned around, giving a last good-bye before he drove out of the parking lot.

Arriving at the scene of the accident, the omega took in the red family vehicle on the side of the road, its front end smashed up and bent badly. The driver was sitting off to the side, paramedics checking her over and making sure she was okay.
“Hey, Jo. What you got?” Jack greeted getting out of his jeep and walking with his deputy over to the wreck.

“Hit and run. She says they came out of nowhere,” the alpha replied.

“You get a description of the other vehicle?” he asked, checking out the mangled vehicle.

“Well, that’s just it, there is no other vehicle,” Jo explained, meeting his confused look. “Whatever hit her was on foot and, according to her, invisible.”

“Did you give her a sobriety test?” the omega asked. The woman had to be seeing things. Or not seeing things, as it were.

“Yeah, she’s clean,” the alpha answered, sounding just as surprised as Jack at the revelation. “But check this out.” She motioned to the car, the omega kneeling down to get a closer look at damage. The entire front bumper was hanging off the frame, the hood crumpled and shredded on the right-hand side. “So what do you think hit her?” The deputy inquired as Jack looked around, knowing nothing that caused that much damage walked away unscathed. Off to the side of the road, several small trees were bent and snapped apart, leaving a path of destruction.

“Well, whatever it was, it went that way,” Jack pointed out to her, slowly descending down the incline on the side of the road and moving into the trees as he followed the broken path. “You get bears around here?” he asked, trying to figure out what could cause this much damage. One of the trees was completely snapped in half from the force of whatever had hit it.

“Heck yeah,” Jo muttered, assessing the damage herself. “I’ve never seen a bear do anything like that though.” The two officers paused, closely examining the debris around them.

“What else could it be?” Jack mused aloud.

“Gigantopithecus Americanus,” a male voice spoke up behind them. Jack yelped, jumping in surprise as he whirled around to see Taggart standing behind them with a heavy duty flash light aimed right at their faces. The omega ignored the amused look Jo gave him at his yell of surprise, instead glaring accusingly at the tracker alpha.

“What the hell, Taggart?”

“Shhh! It could still be out there,” Taggart warned, scanning the forest with some advanced looking goggles.

“What?” he demanded, not in the mood for the man’s quirky hunts.

“Note the large stride, trail of destruction, the extended footprint,” Taggart observed, pointing out the different features before them. Jack groaned, realizing what the alpha was hinting at.

“Tell me you don’t mean Bigfoot,” he demanded. The alpha tore off his goggles, the bright light of the flashlight going away with it as the man looked at the sheriff insistently.

“I mean Gigantopithecus Americanus,” Taggart repeated sternly.

“Jo, give him a sobriety test,” Jack requested, looking to his partner in annoyance. They did not have time for wild goose chases when they were trying to actually track whatever did this.

“How’d you get here so fast?” she asked the other alpha.
“Heard you on my scanner,” he admitted in a small mutter.

“And what, you were just passing by in full cammies and night-vision goggles?” Jo observed, eyeing his gear appreciatively.

“Yeah,” he replied simply, smiling proudly as if it was totally normal.

“Nice,” she complimented. Jack rolled his eyes at the two of them, making his way carefully down the trail with the two alphas following closely behind him. They stepped out into a clearing after a few moments, a fog covered lake littered with dead trees standing before them. Jack scanned the bank as he moved a little further along, spotting something lying in the grass a few feet away.

“Hey guys!” he yelled back, getting Jo and Taggart’s attention as they hurried over to him, away from their own searching areas. “Think we found our hit and run,” he announced, pointing to the mangled body of what had to once have been a person. Body parts, like a leg or a foot, could be seen here and there, the only non-bloodied parts of the corpse.

“Is that a body?” Jo asked in disgust, wrinkling her nose at the smell.

“Not anymore,” he muttered, trying to breathe through his mouth as much as possible to limit the stench of death.

“He’s saving the rest for later,” Taggart sneered. “That’s how they feed.” Jo and Jack turned to him, exasperated looks on both their faces.

“Come on. We need to call Henry and get this body back up to the top,” Jack ordered, choosing to ignore the other man for now. Jo dialed the mechanic’s number from her cell, informing him of what happened and what they needed. Approximately 20 minutes later, Spencer stumbled down the hill with a stretcher and some gloves for everyone. Carefully, the four of them worked together to move the body onto the board and transport it back up to the road where Henry was waiting.

“I’ve never seen anything like this,” Henry exclaimed, examining the body with his instruments.

“I have,” Taggart informed in a severe tone. “It’s never pretty.”

“Would you stop with the Bigfoot?” Jack scolded the man. “This is serious.”

“I take Bigfoot very seriously,” the alpha countered, sounding insulted at Jack’s accusation.

“There’s no way an animal did this,” the omega argued, motioning to the body. “Real or imaginary.”

“Carter’s right,” Henry agreed. “I mean, look, these are friction burns,” he explained, pointing to different parts of the mangled skin. “Those are impact wounds. He’s probably broken every bone in his body. It’s like he fell out of an airplane,” the alpha complained, perplexed by the corpse.

“Yeah, only horizontally,” Jack added.

“Exactly,” Henry confirmed.

“Okay, so we know this isn’t an animal attack,” Jack summarized, frowning at the fact that that was all they had.

“If you buy that hypothesis,” Taggart scoffed behind them.

“Yeah, I’m going out on a limb,” the omega dismissed, looking closely at a piece of skin that had a
tiny black object embedded in it. “Henry, what is this?” The mechanic pulled out a tool, the thing magnifying the object and presenting a bigger image for everyone to see clearly.

“That is a subcutaneous computer chip, probably biometric,” the alpha explained, examining the device carefully.

“I’m sorry?” Jack asked, feeling confused.

“Oh,” Henry stated, realizing Jack wouldn’t understand. “A genetically encoded marker, usually used for tracking or identification.”

“Yeah, like I used on the black rhino in the African bush,” Taggart interjected, examining the picture closely.

“Yeah,” Jo answered sarcastically. “Just like that.”

“Only, this is a little bit more sophisticated than what you would find on the open market. Which means…” Henry turned to Jack as the sheriff continued his thought.

“That this guy is either a researcher at Global Dynamics…”

“Or the research,” Henry finished.

“I’ll call Stark,” Jo stated, reaching for her cell phone.

“No, hold on,” Jack interrupted, halting the deputy’s movement. “Let me call him,” he offered, trying to sound innocent. He hadn’t spoken to Nathan in awhile and figured this would be a good opportunity. Jo gave him a knowing look, but relented as he pulled his own phone out, dialing the number in anticipation. Jack berated himself as the director picked up on the other side, knowing he shouldn’t be this excited just to talk with the alpha when the man was still very much mated to Allison.

“Stark,” Nathan greeted shortly.

“Oh, hey, Stark, it’s Carter,” Jack responded nervously, trying to remain official as the man’s deeper tones floated over the phone.

“What can I do for you, Sheriff?” the alpha asked, sounding like he was only half listening.

“There’s been an accident and it might be connected with Global Dynamics,” the omega admitted. “We found a subcutaneous computer chip in the man’s ribs, and I was wondering if you might be able to source it.”

“I’ll see what I can do, Carter,” Nathan replied, abruptly ending the call before anything more could be said.

“Oh, um, okay. Bye,” Jack muttered to the air, frowning in displeasure at the short talk as he sent the information to the man’s phone. The omega wondered if the alpha was distracted or stressed by something up at G.D.

Wandering back to the group standing around the body, Jack figured there wasn’t much they could do here until information about the chip and who this guy was got back to them. The paramedics and victim of the collision left, Jack letting the woman go after writing down her full statement of what she’d experienced. Walking back over to Henry and Taggart, the two alphas still looking the body over, he figured it was time to move the corpse back to the mechanic’s for a closer look.
“I’m betting the computer chip means-“ the omega started, only for Taggart to shush him, the alpha looking like he was listening to something. Henry and Jack stared at him for a moment in silence, but the alpha waved his hand, dismissing the action.

“Nothing,” he announced, and Jack rolled his eyes at the antics.

“I’m betting the computer chip means this guy was working on something classified,” Jack continued, turning back to the body and Henry. “I don’t know what’s going on, but my gut tells me it’s bad.”

“His guts should have told you that,” Taggart joked.

“Well, let’s hope the autopsy can get us something concrete,” Jack finished, turning as Henry clapped his arm, motioning to something behind them. The omega watched as two black SUVs pulled up, Nathan and Allison hopping out as the vehicles came to a stop right in front of them. He gazed at the alpha expectantly, wondering why the man had come down here personally, but Nathan ignored him, assessing the body on the stretcher before sighing in annoyance.

“I want everything packed up and moved back to Global Dynamics,” the director yelled out, techs from G.D. rushing about to get the orders accomplished. Shocked, Jack hurried up to the man as he walked away, turning him with a hand on the arm as the alpha still wouldn’t look at him.

“Stark, what the hell is going on? This is an active crime scene. You can’t just take everything,” he demanded angrily, looking up at Nathan. “This is interfering in an ongoing police investigation.”

“This man worked in Section 5, Carter,” Nathan explained. “His work is above your pay-grade and down there, I’m the law. So unless you have hard evidence of a crime, you’ve got to stop what you’re doing,” the alpha ordered firmly, Jack unable to do anything, but gape at the takeover and obstruction of his job the alpha was committing. “It’s nothing personal... Henry!” the director suddenly yelled, glancing at the other alpha watching them a little ways away.

“Just consider me Switzerland,” Henry replied, choosing to stay out of the argument. “You know, just here packing up.”

“I respect the job you do, Sheriff. I do,” Nathan whispered quietly to the omega, trying to soothe his angry and annoyed emotions. “It just ends here.”

“I’m just getting started, Stark,” Jack hissed, frustrated that the man was taking this case before he could figure it out, and pulling rank on him as he did so.

“Be careful, Carter,” the alpha warned. “I wouldn’t want you to end up in a federal prison.” The omega huffed, annoyed as he realized the man was right. If G.D. was taking this case and locking it up, then there was nothing Jack could really do. They had a lot more power than just a small town sheriff did. With one last angry glare, Jack marched off to his jeep, determined to get out of there before he said or did something he’d regret.

“It’s out of your hands,” Jo reiterated once they’d gotten back to the sheriff’s station. Jack paced, squeezing his baseball between his hands as he pondered over the taking of his case. He couldn’t let it go. It was like an unsolved puzzle that grated at the back of his mind. The omega hated letting things go unfinished.

“There’s got to be something we can do,” he demanded aloud.
“Stark’s head honcho up at Global Dynamics. When he says ‘jump,’ everyone else says, ‘what trajectory?’” his deputy explained sympathetically. Jack knew that, but that didn’t mean he had to like it.


“You wish,” Jo muttered, freezing as she seemed to realize what she’d just said. “Uh…I mean….”

“Wh-Why would you say that?” he stammered, looking at the woman aghast. The alpha stared at Jack as if silently asking if he was serious.

“Really? Come on, it’s pretty obvious you’ve got a thing for the man,” Jo explained, her eyes daring him to try and contradict her. Jack felt his face flush, not realizing that it had been that obvious.

“Let’s just…That’s…Not important right now!” he floundered, trying to recover from the sudden exposure. “We were talking about the body,” he demanded, turning away to hide his red face. “You saw it. That was no accident.”

“Unless we can show evidence of a crime, you have to let it go,” she told him, her tone showing that she was getting tired of talking about this.

“I can’t show any evidence,” Jack muttered, glaring at the floor. “He took it all.”

“Not all of it,” Henry announced, waltzing into the room and brandishing a pen in the air. The omega turned, assessing the writing tool in confusion. “Why are you red?” the mechanic asked, peering closely at Jack’s face.

“Not important,” Jack retorted quickly, pointing at the tool in the man’s hand and ignoring his deputy’s snicker from the corner of the room. “That’s a pen.”

“No, it’s a portable magnetic resonance imager,” Henry corrected. “I just did a quick scan while everyone else was distracted,” he modeled, holding the pen over his shoulder and clicking a button on its side. Walking over to Jack’s desk, the alpha held the pen aloft as he continued. “We may not have a body, but with a little patience we are gonna have a darn good three-dimensional representation.” Henry clicked the pen, Jo and Jack staring at the sheriff’s desk when nothing happened. They gave him an unimpressed look and the alpha held up his hand for patience. Tapping the pen on the desk a few times, Henry clicked it again, this time a hovering, half completed image of the dead body lying in the air. The hologram showed a pretty remarkable copy of the corpse, including green highlighted body parts that had been missing from the main body when they’d found it.

“Henry, I could kiss you,” Jack beamed, taking in the image. It was amazing the amount of detail that had been captured. The omega just wished the body wasn’t hovering over his desk.

“I’m running a reconstructive algorithm, just to sort of fill in the gaps,” Henry explained, shutting off the device with a click.

“How long before we get a completely full image?” Jack inquired curiously.

“A few hours, maybe less. Once I get back to the garage, I can boost the processing power,” the alpha replied. Jack nodded decisively, turning to grab his and Jo’s coat.

“In the meantime, Jo and I will try to figure out how this guy got this way,” he stated, tossing the jacket to the woman as they all walked towards the doors.
“Where we going?” she asked, following him.

“Back to the woods,” he answered eagerly, happy to be working on the case again. “Odds are Stark’s goons missed something.”

Jack and Jo walked back down the destroyed path, examining every break they passed and checking the surrounding woods for anything that might have been missed. They ended up back down at the lake, and Jack looked over where they had found the body, spotting a smear of blood and what looked like flesh stuck in the bark of a tree a little higher off the ground.

“Hey, Jo,” he called, beckoning over his partner. “Do you have a knife?” The alpha walked over, ripping open a flap on her bulletproof vest to reveal three knives of various length and width strapped to her chest. “Ask a stupid question…” he mused, not even surprised she had so many on her. Hell, there were probably more in places he couldn’t see.

He accepted the one she pulled out and handed to him, grateful he had gloves on as he got close to the bark, using the knife to pry the bit of flesh into an evidence bag. He couldn’t contain his sound of disgust when a whole ear fell into the bag. “There’s our evidence,” Jack mused, handing the knife back to Jo as they both stared at the detached appendage. “I’m gonna get this over to Henry’s so he can analyze it. Maybe he’ll be able to tell us something about what’s going on here.”

“Hey, Henry. How’s it going?” Jack inquired as he entered the alpha’s workshop. Henry was tapping away at a computer while wearing goggles and ear muffs, the omega surprised he could even see to do any work.

“Fire in the hole!” Henry yelled. Jack jumped, startled as a huge cannon blast shot something at a car windshield on the other side of the room. He whined in pain, clutching his ears as a high pitched tone filled his hearing. The omega saw Henry’s lips move, the alpha taking off his equipment and looking at the sheriff in concern.

“I can’t hear anything,” he told the mechanic shaking his head as if he could dislodge the block on his hearing. They waited a moment as Jack’s ears slowly recovered. Looking at the windshield, he furrowed his brow in confusion when he saw that a mannequin’s head had been blasted at the glass. “Henry, what are you doing?”

“Working on a hunch,” the man explained. “A hypothesis on how our guy died. And it wasn’t any Bigfoot.” Henry walked over, grabbed the head and handed it to Jack as he moved in front of his computer again.

“Tell me something I don’t know,” Jack scoffed.

“Okay, he tripped.”

“He tripped and was hit by the car?” the omega clarified.

“No, he hit the car,” Henry corrected.

“What, was he going like 500 miles an hour?” Jack laughed in disbelief, trying to picture how one person could damage a car so badly.
“588 miles an hour, and he glanced off it, which would explain why the car spun out instead of being smashed on impact,” the alpha elaborated seriously.

“Yeah… I think I like the Bigfoot theory again,” Jack admitted in concern.

“Here, look,” Henry pointed to his computer and the sheriff leaned in to see the screen. “I’ve done numerous simulations. I’ve done mechanical augmentation, I’ve done temporal manipulation, I’ve done biological enhancement,” he continued as Jack watched a simulated person run into the car again and again, each scenario showing the car getting blown back from the impact and the person getting thrown into the woods or off to the side. “Only one theory makes sense. Someone or something turned our guy into roadrunner.” Jack took a moment to let the claim sink in.

“Okay, if that something was a chemical that you could ingest, could you test for it?” he inquired.

“Sure, if I had a body,” Henry agreed with a shrug. Jack reached into his jacket, pulling out the evidence bag and showing it to the alpha.

“How about a body part?” he offered, preening as Henry smiled broadly.

“Oh, that’s very good,” the man beamed. “Very good.” Taking the ear, Henry hurried over to his lab equipment to begin running tests.

Noticing he was still holding the head, Jack looked it over.

“Hey, why does it look like me?” he questioned, the resemblance freaking him out a little.

“It’s generic!” Henry hollered back from across the room.

“Oh, thanks,” Jack raved sarcastically. Setting the thing down, he joined his friend as the man laughed, pleased with his own joke. “Henry, do you ever actually work on cars?” he inquired, watching the man work a microscope.

“Sometimes when it gets slow, yeah,” the alpha agreed readily. “Here, look, check this out,” he directed, pointing at the blown up image of a cell on a tv screen. “See how when I probe the tissue, how the ADP/ATP ratio is out of equilibrium?”

“First thing I noticed,” Jack lied, seeing nothing, but blobs and squiggles on the screen.

“Not only that, this guy has highly elevated levels of cyclopentano-perhydrophenanthrene,” Henry added. The sheriff looked at him wide-eyed, not comprehending and amazed at the word that had just come out of the man’s mouth. “He’s been juicing!” the alpha exclaimed in layman’s terms.


“I don’t know,” the man admitted. “But you won’t find it in Barry Bond’s locker.”

“Could you find this in Section 5?” the omega questioned, remembering the dead man had worked on that level.

“Maybe. I’ll know more once I isolate the compound,” Henry gestured to his equipment. That could take hours, Jack realized. He didn’t have that kind of time.

“Okay, okay,” he muttered, trying to think. “Let’s say someone is literally speed-freaking. What signs would I look for?” he asked, gazing at the alpha next to him.

“Besides running at 600 miles an hour?” Henry reiterated unnecessarily. “Appetite, extreme thirst,”
he listed off. “Any drug that would increase the metabolic rate this much requires massive amounts of electrolytes, simple and complex carbohydrates.”

Jack grinned, realizing exactly where he could go to spy someone with those symptoms. “Henry, you’re a rock star,” he praised. “Can I borrow your wonder pen?”

“Sure,” Henry agreed easily. “Where are you going?”

“To grab a little lunch.”

“What is this about, Carter?” Allison demanded as she sat with him in the lunch hall of G.D. Jack had asked the woman to go to lunch with him, seeing it as the perfect cover to canvas the place for anymore potential users.

“Nothing,” he replied casually, biting into a hot dog as he smiled innocently at the other omega. “You know, we just never hang out. I mean, what’s going on with you?” he asked, trying to make small talk.

“Okay, for a cop, you’re a bad liar,” she laughed. Jack sighed, realizing he’d been caught.

“Alright. I’m afraid there may be drugs involved with our John Doe’s death,” he confided, watching as the omega’s smile fell.

“What kind of drugs?” she inquired in concern. Jack looked around subtly, making sure no one could overhear them.

“The kind that can make you run at Mach 5,” he revealed. Allison stared at him unamused.

“Are you sure you’re not on drugs?” she scoffed.

“Yes. No, okay I’m on drugs, but not that kind,” he defended hotly. “Look for someone eating a massive amount of food,” he urged.

“So we’re looking for someone who’s hungry?” she clarified.

“Yeah.”

“In a cafeteria, at lunch?” she mocked with an amused grin.

“Look,” he explained, “I’m not talking about a regular amount of hungry, I’m talking like post-super-speedy-drug-binge hungry.”

“You really think Global Dynamics has a drug problem?” the omega inquired seriously.

“I think I have a dead researcher who was juicing on something,” he rationalized. “I mean athletes juice. Why not scientists?” Jack looked up, doing a double-take as three men hurried by with trays overflowing with food. Each of them had several drinks, along with burgers, hot dogs, fries, and fruit. He gave Allison a meaningful look as she noticed the same thing, belief lighting up her face as she realized he’d been telling the truth. They watched as the group seemed to inhale their food, barely taking breaths between bites in their haste to eat.

“Speaking of which, no cafeteria food’s that good,” Jack remarked, moving to stand.
“Wait, wait,” Allison whispered insistently, catching his arm. “Those guys are Section 5. This has to be handled delicately,” she cautioned.

“Trust me,” he smiled walking over to the table. The omega took out Henry’s pen as he approached the trio, bending down to whisper to the whole table. “Hey guys, I hate to interrupt your lunch, but I was wondering if you could help me with something?”

Jack straightened and clicked the pen, pointing the imager down at the table as the dead body of the unknown scientist appeared on the table. All three men gagged at the sight, averting their eyes as Jack smiled at them unrepentantly. “I want to know what drug this guy was on and which one of you killed him,” Jack demanded.

“You son of a bitch,” one of the men spat, glaring at one of the other men in anger.

“Carter, what are you doing?” Nathan’s voice inquired. The omega’s eyes shot up, spotting the alpha as he descended from a nearby flight of stairs. Jack clicked off the pen, turning to the director with a proud smile.

“Have these guys submit to a drug test,” he stated confidently, pointing to the trio of scientists. They even looked guilty, staring up at Nathan with fear and worry in their eyes.

“Do you have evidence that they’re taking something illegal?” Nathan inquired, his hands behind his back as he stared down at the omega.

“Well, illegal, no,” Jack admitted slowly. “But that body was pumped with something from your lab, and whoever gave it to him is looking at a possible murder charge,” he elaborated, observing the group with an accusing stare. One of them had to be the culprit, he was sure of it.

“Alright, say you’re right. How do you know anybody else is taking it?” the alpha questioned, still defending the men. Jack opened his mouth to explain, but closed it again as his eyes landed on Allison behind Nathan, the other omega giving him a meaningful look. He sighed, realizing that this was going to sound so idiotic. “Well?” Nathan asked, gazing at him expectantly.

“These guys,” them sheriff paused, wishing he had something better. “Are eating way too much,” he ended weakly, watching as Nathan seemed to consider his words.

“Your damning evidence is a healthy appetite?” the alpha mocked, obviously unimpressed.

“Yeah, I know, it sounds dumb,” Jack admitted. “But-

“Carter, I’m going to need something more conclusive than a case of the munchies,” Nathan retorted, cutting off Jack’s protest.

The two men winced as a concussive blast of wind knocked into them just then. Turning, they watched as Fargo appeared out of nowhere, the beta sweaty and spasming, his eyes darted everywhere at once before he made a speedy dash to the food line. A second later, the man was sitting at a table, shoveling food into his mouth desperately as a wind tunnel formed where he’d been running, the blast knocking papers and trays out of people’s hands.

“Well, there you go,” Jack presented with a flourish. He wasn’t sure where or why Fargo had whatever this drug was, but at the moment he was grateful for the assist to win over Nathan’s support.

“Alright, I’ll give you this one,” Nathan allowed, still staring at the beta in barely concealed shock. Jack, Allison, and the director quickly stalked over to the man, the sheriff casually pulling up a seat
next to him as the other two flanked him.

“Hey Fargo. You feeling alright, buddy?” he asked, eyeing the twitching beta with concern.

“Oh, hey, Sheriff,” Fargo greeted him, looking like a scared rabbit. “What can I do for you?”

“Well, I really need to know what’s got you acting…” Jack gestured to his body. “Like this,” he finished, smiling gently.

“Oh!” The beta rummaged in his pockets, pulling out a small, clear eye drop container. “You mean this?” Taking it from the man, Jack held it up and saw that it was filled only about a fourth of the way full.

“Yeah. Where’d you get this?” the sheriff questioned.

“From Dr. Hauke and his team. I saw that they were using it to keep up with the project demands and swiped it when they weren’t looking,” Fargo appeared embarrassed and guilty the his actions he'd taken, refusing to look up at Nathan during the entire explanation as if he knew the alpha was staring at him menacingly.

“Alright, thanks, Fargo. I’m going to take this, okay?” Jack asked getting up from the table and stalking quickly from the room, Allison and Nathan on his heels.

“I want them quarantined and isolated for interrogation,” he demanded, turning back to business.

“This is still an internal matter, Carter,” the alpha argued.

“Not anymore, Nathan,” Allison interjected, stepping forward to defend Jack’s claim. “Fargo said he got this from Milton’s team.” She gently took the drug from Jack’s hand, holding it up to examine against the light.

“Give it to me. I’ll have it analyzed,” Nathan offered quickly.

“That’s evidence in an ongoing investigation,” Jack countered, not willing to let the alpha magic away more evidence after what happened this morning.

“Carter is right. Milton obviously knows more than he’s saying,” Allison defended, handing the container back to Jack. The omega was secretly pleased to have the woman on his side as he watched her glare at her mate.

“I’ll have Henry analyze it,” he informed them. “We can interrogate Milton’s team tomorrow,” he stated decisively, pocketing the drug.

“Why not now?” Allison asked in confusion, gazing up at Jack.

“I wanna let them stew,” he announced smugly. “Any drug that gets people this cranked has got to have a nasty rebound.”

“Alright,” she conceded with a nod, allowing him to do things his way. “We can put them in a decontamination chamber in Section 4,” she offered and Jack smiled in thanks.

“Perfect.” Noticing Nathan scowling at them off to the side, Jack reached over and tugged on his tie, earning a bewildered look from the alpha and lifting the man's mood like he'd hoped he would. “Nice tie,” he flirted with a wink, hastily retreating down the hall before the man could say anything. Or his mate who had been standing right there. God, Jack shook his head, berating
himself for the bold move. No wonder people knew he had a crush on the scientist. He wasn't even trying to hide it at this point.

Jack sighed in relief when he finally reached his house. Walking in, he noticed Zoe already at the kitchen table tapping away at her school tablet. Stripping off his jacket and placing the evidence bottle to the side, the omega joined his daughter, getting a beer from the fridge as he watched her start to growl at whatever she was reading.

“This workload is insane,” she complained, glaring down at the screen. “I mean, who needs this kind of pressure?”

“Hard day at school?” he asked, taking a sip of his drink.


“That’s great!” he beamed, glad she was being social. “What’s her name?”

“His name is Dylan,” she corrected.

“Uh-huh,” he muttered, his smile falling.

“Relax, he’s perfectly normal and smart,” Zoe explained, boasting about the kid. “He even has a student internship at Global D.”

“Since when do you like guys who are normal and smart?” he questioned, not thinking his daughter would go for the type.

“Someone’s at the door,” SARAH announced. Jack turned as he heard the door open for the guest, his daughter grinning excitedly as she waltzed past him.

“Since they look like him,” she preened, going to greet the guy at the door. Jack took a healthy swig of beer, bracing himself for meeting this new suitor for his daughter. He could be civil about this. He would try at least. Turning, Jack groaned, spotting the same guy from this morning who had turned to stare at his daughter when she was yelling about thongs at Café Diem. “This is Dylan,” she introduced and the omega bit back a protective growl when he noticed her arm wrapped around the boy’s. He was going to be civil, he reminded himself, taking a deep breath.

“From the café this morning, right?” Jack asked, shaking the beta’s hand firmly.

“Yeah, but I promise, my intentions are honorable,” Dylan stated sincerely. Jack gave a half-hearted chuckle, not believing the guy for a moment.

“Dylan’s my chemistry tutor,” Zoe explained.

“Just helping her get a head start, you know? You need all the help you can around here, believe me,” Dylan stated.

“Famous parents, overachiever. He has issues,” his daughter listed, as if that was supposed to endear the kid to him.

“Don’t we all,” Jack gritted through his teeth in a strained smile, crossing his arms over his chest as an awkward silence fell over the kitchen.
“Don’t you have work to do?” Zoe hinted, trying to get him to leave them alone.

“I heard about that accident,” Dylan piped up with curiosity, taking the hint instead. “You figure out what caused it yet?”

“Yeah, we’re close,” he answered, glancing at his small pile of files and materials he needed to look over.

“Okay, great, why don’t you get on that, okay?” Zoe urged, ushering him out of the room.

“Alright. I’ll be in the next room.” He stopped on his way to the living room, turning back to stare at Dylan in warning. “I have a gun, you know what right? It’s loaded.”

“Leave!” Zoe demanded sternly, embarrassment flushing her face. Jack grinned, feeling like his work was done as he moved to the couch. The two teens walked upstairs after a little while and the omega ordered SARAH to tell him if anything non-PG started to occur up there.

Jack scanned through the different files, many of them containing pictures of the crash this morning and the body, along with a bunch of scientific jargon about the blood and tissue of the victim. Flipping open his phone, he dialed Henry’s number and laid down on the couch. The call went to machine so he left a message, rubbing his eyes as the events of the day caught up with him.

“Hey Henry, It’s Carter. Look, I think I got what killed our guy. Still working on the who, but I need a chemical analysis, so give me a call when you get in,” he said, hanging up when he was finished and pulling the evidence bag with the drug bottle towards him. He was writing down his name on the plastic when a rush of air whooshed by him, the black pencil swiped right out of his hand as files scattered everywhere. Jack quickly rolled to the floor, grabbing his gun from the coffee table and rising with it aimed as he looked around for the intruder. He paused as he spotted ‘Back Off!!’ written on wall with what had to be the pencil he’d been using.

“What was that?” Dylan’s voice sounded behind him. Jack turned, seeing the boy and his daughter staring at him in shock and fear.

“Mom?” she whispered, looking a little freaked out. Dylan glanced at her in confusion, glancing between Zoe and him before it seemed to click in his mind. Jack ignored him though, more concerned for his daughter and the fact that someone had just tried to attack him in his own home. His inner omega growled at the breach of territory, wanting desperately to take his daughter and barricade them in his room until he’d deemed the threat had passed.

“Zoe, are you okay?” he demanded, growling lowly under his breath with anxiety as he kept himself positioned between her and the door.

“Yeah, what was that?” she asked coming to stand behind him, seeking safety as she gripped the back of his shirt.

“A warning,” he muttered, gesturing to the words on the wall. “Dylan, I’m going to need you to leave,” he ordered, his senses on edge after the invasion and threat to his home and daughter. The boy didn’t argue, understanding what a trespass like this did to someone. He said a good-bye to Zoe and then headed out the door.

Jack spent the rest of the night lying awake in front of the door with his gun in his hand.
The next morning, after dropping Zoe off at school, Jack headed to G.D. immediately, meeting up with Jo as they headed for the decontamination units on Level 4 that housed the drugged scientists. Nathan and Allison were already there, observing Milton as he vibrated and twitched uncontrollably in his chair.

“They’re all in pretty bad shape,” Allison stated, looking at the screens showing the other scientists, all of them in similar states. “I almost feel sorry for them.”

“Yeah, well, I don’t. One of these bastards attacked my home last night,” Jack seethed, glaring at the man in the room. His instincts were going crazy, half of them demanding he find Zoe and keep her locked up in SARAH for safety, while another part felt the house wasn’t safe anymore and he needed to hunt the perpetrator down and end him for intruding where he shouldn’t have.

“What?!” Allison yelled in shock, looking at him in concern. Jack felt Jo tense next to him at the announcement, the deputy instinctively reaching for her gun at an invisible threat.

“Are you okay?” Nathan demanded, his assessing gaze sweeping over the omega’s body to look for injuries. Everyone knew how bad it was to intrude on someone’s home, it didn’t matter what one’s orientation was. The home was a territory not to be messed with.

“Let’s just say I didn’t get a lot of sleep last night,” Jack huffed, inhaling the scent of alpha from Jo and Nathan. The strong scents calming his nerves a bit, clearing his head as a sense of protection and safety enveloped him.

“Well, these guys were here all night,” Allison stated, gesturing to the monitors and handcuffs each man had on them. “They’ve been under constant surveillance.”

“Well, someone trashed my place last night. Someone moving too fast for my security camera,” Jack stressed, remembering how upset SARAH had been about not being able to see the intruder. “If it wasn’t one of them, they definitely know who it was.”

“When are you going to question them?” Nathan asked, a low growl rumbling from his core. The omega felt heat curl in his stomach in appreciation for the sound. He shifted, trying to focus on the here and now and not get distracted.

“When they’re good and ready,” he answered shortly, keeping his eyes glued to the detoxing man chained to the chair.

“Let me out of here!” Milton suddenly commanded from the room. “You can’t keep me locked up like this. Let me out!” his speech slurred, speeding up before returning to normal levels as he fidgeted and twitched violently in the chair.

“Like now,” Jack muttered, stepping forward with Jo. The two officers entered the room, the door sliding shut behind them. Jack turned on a handheld tape recorder, handing it to Jo as he stood next to the shivering beta.

“This is how this is gonna work, Milton,” he stated, standing over the man. “I’m not gonna ask you misleading, clever questions. Not gonna try and trap you, alright? You work in Section 5, I figure you’re too smart for that,” he soothed, talking low and soft to put the man at ease. The drug was making the man wired enough as it was.

“Good,” Milton gasped. Jack nodded, pleased to see the man understood him though he struggled to talk through his shakes.

“What is going to happen,” he continued, pointing outside to where Nathan and Allison stood
watching him talk. “Is I’m gonna sit right out there and watch you slowly go into withdrawal, until every nerve in your body is on fire. Until your skin is crawling and your brain is begging for whatever the hell you took,” Jack prodded, ignoring the flicker of sympathy he felt when the man whined pathetically at his words. This was an interrogation. You had to get tough sometimes to get the truth. “You see, I’ve got a body pumped full of just God knows what and everything points to you.”

“I didn’t kill him or anybody,” Milton insisted, avoiding the sheriff’s eyes as his whole body shook.

“See, that’s not what I want to know,” Jack explained, crouching so he was eye to eye with the man. “Milton, you have options. You have options until I walk out that door.” He watched the man for a moment, the beta refusing to give up any information. “Okay,” he accepted, straightening up and heading for the door, taking the man's silence as an answer.

“Wait!” Milton called back frantically, Jack turning to observe the man as he started to spill. “We were just trying to keep up,” he informed them, looking between Jack and Jo. “I didn’t know anybody would get hurt.”

“Who else is involved?” Jack demanded.

“Nobody,” the beta insisted. The sheriff stared at the man in disbelief.

“Nobody? Somebody trashed my house trying to get me to back off from this investigation,” the omega accused, watching as Milton looked at him in shock. “If you clowns were in lock up, then-“

“Okay,” the man confirmed quickly. “But first, you got to know, it wasn’t m-“ Milton stammered, his speech turning nonsensical.

“It wasn’t what?” Jack questioned. The beta mumbled something very slowly, too quiet to be heard before staring blankly ahead. “Milton? Milton?” he called, trying to get the man to respond with no luck. He waved his hand in front of Milton’s face, the man not even blinking in reaction.

Jack sighed in defeat, heading out of the room with Jo. “I was so close,” he complained, turning to look at the beta again.

“It must be a reaction to coming off the drug,” Nathan guessed. “His metabolism is overcompensating, forcing his nervous system to shut down.”

“Can you counteract it?” he inquired.

“Not without knowing exactly what he was taking,” the alpha admitted.

“What did he say?” Allison asked.

“I don’t know,” Jack confessed. He paused, looking at Jo as he realized he had a way to find out. “But my assistant might.”

“Don’t ever call me that,” Jo ordered, glaring at him in annoyance.

“Not you. Gimme,” he beckoned, gesturing for the recorder. Rewinding it, Jack played it, hearing the slow mumble Milton had uttered before. Rewinding it again, he sped it up a bit, finally hearing the beta’s voice come through clearly.

“-just used it, and so did Hawthorne, so you can’t hold me responsible for his death. MPH is still
experimental, but with it altered like that- But no one thought-“ Jack cut the recording off, turning to Allison and Nathan in confusion.

“What’s MPH?” he questioned.

“I think he’s talking about methylphenidate hydrochloride. It’s an advanced form of Ritalin,” Nathan confessed.

“Who has access to it?”

“I can access the personnel files, but it will be a long list,” the alpha revealed, pulling out a data pad with the necessary information. “Researchers, kids, their parents, techs, student interns.”

“What?” Jack gasped, turning to the man in shock. “Student interns? One of them named Dylan?” Nathan searched the names, his eyebrow lifting in surprise as he found it.

“Yes,” he confirmed. “Dylan Hartwell, he’s a senior at Tesla.”

“That’s my daughter’s boyfriend,” Jack seethed, his nerves spiking as he realized the boy had been right there. “Son of a bitch was hiding in plain sight.” The omega tensed, realizing Zoe could be with him right now. “Jo, go to the kid’s house,” he directed, running for the door as the words left his mouth. “I’m hitting the school.”

Jack screeched to a stop in front of the school, siren wailing as he bolted out of the jeep and ran inside the building. Talking to administration, he learned that Zoe would be in the computer lab at that moment and the omega tore down the halls looking for his daughter. Spying the lab, Jack ran inside, hunching over next to Zoe by her computer, the girl looking shocked to see him there.

“Zoe, hey. Where’s Dylan?” he demanded, breathing deeply.

“It was one kiss during homeroom, relax,” she answered, misinterpreting his reason for being here. Jack paused, letting her words sink in.

“Okay, I’ll freak out about that later. Right now, I need to know where Dylan is,” he insisted desperately.

“I don’t know,” Zoe admitted, completely flustered. “I’m not his keeper.”

“Alright, come with me, come on,” Jack urged, waiting as she quickly grabbed her things. “I’ll bring a note,” he told the teacher when she made a move to protest, his instincts telling him to keep his daughter safe.

He quickly ushered her into the jeep, pulling out and heading for home as Zoe demanded to know what was going on.

“He’s using drugs,” he answered simply, trying to think about where the kid may have gone. He must know they were on to him by now.

“You know, of course you think the guy I like must be using drugs,” Zoe exclaimed, sounding insulted and attacked by his reveal of who her boyfriend really was. She was playing with his baseball again and Jack took it from her, the movement distracting him when his nerves were already shot from all the anxiety of trying to keep his daughter safe.
“He had access to the lab and he was in our house last night when it was trashed,” he reasoned.

“What are you-? Dylan was right next to me the whole time,” she argued.

“This drug,” he explained. “MPH, he cooks into speed, literally. I mean, it can make you move faster than the eye can see.”

“Do you realize how crazy you sound?” she demanded, still not believing him. “Nobody can move that fast.”

Jack gasped as his back suddenly collided with rocky ground, the wind knocked completely out of him. He groaned, slowly rising to his feet as he found himself next to a lake, mountains rising tall in the distance.

“Why couldn’t you just leave it alone?” Dylan demanded angrily, Jack looking up to find him standing several feet away. “I told you to back off!” he screamed. “You had to keep pushing. Everybody’s always pushing, all the time,” he boy whined, rubbing his head. Jack looked around, not seeing Zoe anywhere.

“Dylan, where’s Zoe?” he yelled frantically, knowing he had been with his daughter just a second ago in the jeep.

“You don’t know what it’s like!” the beta ranted, not listening to the sheriff.

“I know what it’s like to be pulled from a moving vehicle,” Jack countered, groaning at his aching muscles. “Where’s my daughter?” he repeated, getting angry at the continued dismissal from the drugged up boy.

“I cooked the MPH so that I could keep up!” Dylan explained. “They came to me. I wasn’t dealing it! They said that if I helped them, that they would help me. They would help me move up, you know. Now I’m gonna lose my internship,” the boy was practically crying in frustration and fear as he recounted everything going wrong. “Do you have any idea how hard I worked for that?”

“Dylan, you got to trust me,” Jack tried, needing the kid to calm down as his emotions went haywire. The boy was freaking out and panicking and it wasn’t going to do anyone any good if he continued on this way.

“No,” Dylan screamed. “I told Hawthorne to watch the dosage!”

Okay,” the omega interjected trying to control the situation. “So it’s an accident, right? You can come back from this as long as you don’t do anything else stupid…or, more stupid,” he corrected.

“Don’t call me stupid!” the beta seethed, glaring at Jack. He blinked, realizing that he may have said the wrong thing.

“You need to listen to me,” he urged, trying again.

“And don’t tell me what to do.” Dylan’s image faded and Jack felt a hard punch land right on the side of his face, the hit knocking him to the ground. He coughed, rubbing away blood from his mouth from a broken lip. Slowly rising to his feet, the omega looked for the boy, spotting him standing several feet away again, this time holding a gun.

Jack froze, slowing reaching for his holster and finding his weapon missing. The kid had swiped it when he’d rushed him for the sucker punch.
“Mom!” Zoe screamed, coming out of nowhere and running towards him, looking unharmed, but afraid.

“Zoe! Stay put!” Jack yelled, desperate to keep his daughter safe from the boy, especially now that he had his gun. Dylan was just examining the weapon in his hand, as if unsure what to do with it. “Put the gun down, Dylan,” Jack ordered firmly, keeping his eyes trained on the beta.

“Why? So I can go to jail for the rest of my life?” the boy spat, glaring at Jack.

“Damn straight!” Zoe screamed at him.

“Zoe!” Jack reprimanded, her words not helping the already tense situation.

“I can’t go to jail,” Dylan muttered helplessly.

“It doesn’t have to end like this,” he warned, giving the boy another out.

“I can’t go to jail,” the beta repeated, raising the gun to aim at Jack.

“No!” Zoe screamed in terror as Dylan pulled the trigger. The gun clicked and Jack reached into his jacket, pulling out the baseball he’d taken from Zoe in the car. Dylan pulled the trigger again, but the gun didn’t fire. Casting it aside, Dylan started to run, heading straight for Jack with increased speed, his image flickering as Jack’s eyes failed to track him. As his image started to fade, the sheriff threw the ball directly at where he’d been, trusting the kid would stay in a straight line. Sure enough, the baseball connected with the boy’s head with a thud, Dylan collapsing to the ground right in front of Jack, completely out cold from the hard hit.

“Two bits of advice,” Jack groaned, trying to catch his breath. “Always check the safety and never rush the mound when the pitcher’s got the ball.”

“Mom,” Zoe cried, running into Jack with a hug as she desperately clung to him in relief.

“Hey, it’s okay,” he soothed, rubbing his hands over her back. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, are you?” she asked, looking him over.

“Yeah, well, better than your boyfriend,” he chuckled apologetically, not sure why he felt bad when the kid had tried to kill him.

“We are so broken up,” she scoffed, glaring down at the boy.

“Uh, where’s the car?” he asked, looking back towards where the road had to be.

“Uh….well,” she hesitated, looking guilty. Jack groaned, only able to imagine what must have happened when he’d been pulled from the car.

“This should be good.”

“Lighten up, Carter. This was your idea,” Allison laughed, helping him put on his helmet.

“Don’t remind me,” he muttered, practicing his swing with the half-bat topped with an antenna he had to use.
“Look, I know it’s not the way you pictured it, but the important thing is people are making an effort,” the other omega smiled, trying to cheer him up.

The town had gathered together to play a game of baseball, but the game was being played Eureka style, which meant virtual reality balls and wireless bats. Jack sighed, taking in the mockery of a game that was far from what he’d originally intended. He stepped up to the batting plate as Taggart prepared to throw, Henry’s voice announcing over the speakers.

“Well, it’s a beautiful day here at Quantum Field. Our very own Jack Carter, let’s here it for Jack Carter, as he steps up to the plate. Time to play ball!” Henry dictated, Jack lowering his lenses so he could see the glowing ball in Taggart’s hand as the alpha got ready to pitch. The crowd cheered behind him, the omega able to pick out his daughter’s voice among the crowd.

“Crowd the plate, law dog! I dare you,” Taggart taunted from the mound.

“Just throw the damn ball, dogcatcher,” Jack retorted, readying his bat.

“Taggart is looking for his pitch.” Henry’s voice rumbled, calling out the game as it was played. “He sees something that he likes… Winds up for the pitch…. Whoa!” the alpha exclaims as Jack hits the ball high.

“He hits the ball, long fly to center.”

The crowd watches as the ball appears to be a home run hit before Fargo comes out of nowhere, leaping almost 10 feet to catch the ball before it can land.

“He caught it at the fence! It’s the first big play of the game,” Henry announces as Jack walks off, feeling cheated from the beta’s lucky catch.

“Let a pro show you how it’s done,” Allison teased, geared up as she takes the bat Jack hands off to her.

The omega watches, impressed when the woman swings hard, knocking the virtual ball right out of the park. He shakes his head as the crowd goes wild, recalling that Eureka never can do anything the simple way.

“I’ll never get used to this town,” he muses, cheering along with the crowd as Allison runs the bases in victory.
This was a tough one. I will say that I actually cried writing the scene with Nathan and Callister at the end. Having to watch it twice and then write it down? Gosh I had to take a moment. But I really hope you guys enjoy this! So excited for this chapter and all the ones until the season end. Things are gonna start getting real!

Jack banged on the foggy divider that separated the bathroom from the rest of the house. He was only dressed in his boxers and a brown undershirt, his hair still ruffled from sleep as he paced in front of the locked room.

“Come on, Zoe! I’m gonna be late,” he yelled through the door, pounding on it again.

“One more minute,” she called back and Jack sighed, checking his watch as the minute hand ticked closer to his shift time.

“This is an obstruction of justice,” he whined, unable to hold back a smile when he heard his daughter laugh aloud in the bathroom.

“How do you figure?” she chuckled, her voice echoing a bit in the space.

“Because you’re keeping me from work,” he reasoned, shifting as the urge to use the bathroom grew.

“So you’re justice?” she scoffed jokingly.

“Yeah,” Jack mimicked playfully, grinning at the tease. “I’m justice.”

“Sheriff, did you want your coffee?” SARAH inquired and the omega sighed, realizing his daughter was going to be a little longer.

“Yeah, sure. Hey SARAH, how come there’s only one bathroom in this place? You’d think for a house of the future, there’d be more that one, yeah?” He wandered into the kitchen, looking around for the coffee, but not spotting any on the counter. Normally SARAH had it ready before he even got in here. Jack groaned, realizing that she must have taken his comment the wrong way and was now withholding coffee out of spite. “Come on, SARAH, you know I didn’t mean it like that.”

“What’d you do now?” Zoe asked and he turned, freezing at the sight of his daughter with bright red hair on her head.

“What did I do? What did you do?” he demanded, gesturing to what once had been a head full of pretty blond hair.

“What? You don’t like it?” she questioned defensively, running her hands through the still damp looking strands. “I wanted to try something new.”

“Oh, that’s new alright. What inspired this sudden…change?” Jack inquired, fumbling for the last word as he regarded her, still in a state of shock.
“Nothing really,” she shrugged, stirring a spoon through her coffee.

“Uh-huh,” he hummed, not believing it was that simple for a second. “Did you think about asking me first before you decided to change your hair?” he scolded, crossing his arms as he watched Zoe grow defensive.

“You always say no,” she argued, setting her drink down.

“I do not! Anyways, that’s what discussion is for,” he stressed, trying to make her understand.

“Oh, so if I had come to you and asked to color my hair, you would have said ‘Sure Zoe, go right ahead’?” she countered, giving him a knowing look.

“Maybe! I know I would have tried to talk you out of this particular color though. You couldn’t have chosen something a little lighter?” he urged, grimacing as he look in the vivid red. For heavens sake, she looked like a troll doll with that color.

Zoe rolled her eyes. “Whatever. I’ve got to go to school,” she mumbled, grabbing her backpack and heading for the door.

“We’re not done talking about this!” he called after her. “Oh, and don’t forget your session with Beverly today too!” he quickly reminded. His daughter had been talking to the therapist for a bit to see if some of the girl’s more self-destructive habits could be soothed over.

“Fine!” she shouted back angrily before heading out the door. Jack sighed, looking towards the heavens, before turning and entering the bathroom so he could finally get ready for work.

The first incident of the day turned out to be a lot more mundane than he’d expected since living in Eureka. A traffic light near the square had gone on the fritz, requiring Jack to play crossguard and direct traffic as Henry fixed the thing. The omega couldn’t help, but stare a little as he watched the alpha work. The man was standing on a levitating lift, rockets on the bottom holding the structure steady as the man tinkered with the light.

“Hey George Jetson!” he hollered up, waving his arms for certain cars to go through. “How’s it going?”

“Looks like some kind of program error fried one of the chips,” the alpha yelled back. “I’ll just need another minute to put in a new one.

“Alright, take your time. I’ve not got anything else to do today,” he answered, grateful the weather was pretty moderate. Otherwise he’d be sweating up a storm standing out here like this.

“Looking good, Sheriff,” someone catcalled from behind him. Jack glanced back, spotting Allison beaming at him from the sidewalk. “The orange really brings out your eyes,” she teased. He glanced down at the safety vest he was wearing and dramatically rolled his eyes at the woman.

“Ha ha. Very funny,” he jokingly mocked, turning back to the traffic. “Having fun?”

“Oh, so much,” she confessed.

“Hey! Slow it down! It’s all set,” Henry yelled down and Jack quickly motioned the cars to slow down and ease around the alpha and his truck as the man descended back to solid ground.
“Thanks, Henry,” the omega acknowledged as the alpha packed his stuff up and headed out. Jack sidestepped onto the sidewalk as cars flowed down the street in controlled movement again now that the light was fixed. Walking over to Allison, the other omega beamed at him, tilting her head towards Café Diem.

“Come on, I’ll let you buy me a drink,” she offered with a friendly smile.

“It’s free,” he admonished, grinning at the woman.

“Okay, then I’ll buy,” she corrected and Jack laughed, following her into the restaurant.

Goosebumps erupted all over the omegas’ skin as they stepped through the door. Frost was starting to edge along the windows from the freezing temperature in the place. No one in the place seemed prepared for the cold with the exception of Vincent who was decked out in a scarf, hat, and mittens as he scurried around dropping off food.

“It’s freezing!” Allison exclaimed in shock, rubbing her arms as she shivered from the cold.

“Here,” Jack teased, slipping his thin orange safety vest over the woman’s torso. He grinned unrepentantly as she gifted him with an unimpressed look. He chuckled. She looked ridiculous, especially since the vest didn’t even have sleeves to shield her arms.

“That’s much better,” she sarcastically praised, yanking the thing off as Vincent skipped over to them.

“Sorry, guys, the CPU’s out on the thermostat. Just roll with it,” the cook explained and apologized in one breath. He held out a tray filled with piping hot drinks, steam rolling off their surfaces. “Buttered rum? Mulled cider? Hot toddy?” he offered.

Jack shrugged, grabbing a glass of cider and taking a sip, the heat instantly warming his core as he looked around. He blinked in confusion as the music over the radio suddenly registered. “Is that Christmas music?” he asked, turning back to Vincent.

“I said just roll with it,” the man reprimanded sternly, walking off to help another guest. The two omegas chuckled, walking over to a table and taking as seat as they sipped their drinks and tried to stay warm.

“So, Carter,” Allison whispered, gazing at her companion sternly. “When are you going to stop taking those suppressants?”

Jack inhaled his drink, coughing desperately as he squinted at the woman through the tears forming in his eyes. “W-Why would you ask something like that?” he demanded, glancing around to make sure no one was near enough to overhear.

“Because it’s not healthy. You can't honestly expect to stay on them forever,” she scolded, glaring at him critically.

“Well, no,” he defended, not sure what he could say. It was true. He knew he needed to take a break from the pills, but it never seemed like the right moment. “Look, I’m still thinking about it. I just need a little more time,” he implored, staring into his cider.

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” she muttered, sounding angry. Jack jerked his eyes up to her, feeling hurt by the disregard.

“Hey! This isn’t a simple decision,” he argued, feeling the need to defend himself. The other
omega cut him off with a wave of her hand.

“Not you,” she corrected, pointing towards the back of the room. “Him.” Jack turned to see who she was talking about, noticing a young man in the back of the shop downing a glass of water. The guy was blond and pretty muscular, his bone structure screaming alpha even without having to scent him.

“Callister Raynes, in the flesh,” Vincent confirmed in a low voice, the man having strolled back over after noticing the direction of Allison’s attention. “Just strolls in here this morning like nothing ever happened.” Having given his tidbit of information, the cook wanders off again, leaving Jack a little confused as to what the big deal was.

“Who is he?” he whispered, keeping half an eye on the newcomer as he spoke to Allison.

“He was a computer programmer that Nathan brought in for a classified project,” the other omega explained, sounding eager to share the gossip even as she continued to glare at the man. “Brilliant kid. Everyone loved him.”


“The two of them had a falling out. A week later, Nathan’s lab was destroyed by a fire.” Jack gaped, not having expected that sort of history. “Callister was the prime suspect,” she concluded, looking over at the man again with suspicion. He hummed in understanding, glancing over himself and assessing the alpha with the new knowledge.

The guy didn’t look guilty, or like he was running from the law. He was just sitting in the booth, gulping down another tall glass and minding his own business. Allison may think he did something, but Jack figured he’d wait and see if this Callister gave him a reason to go after him.

“Uh-oh,” Vincent muttered, looking towards the door. Jack swiveled, finding no one, but Jo standing in the doorway.

“Hey, Jo,” he greeted casually, about to invite her to the table when he noticed Allison frantically motioning for him to be quiet. He paused, watching as his deputy stalked over to Callister with intent, the man getting up as he noticed her approach.

“Hey Jo. I was just about to stop by and see if you-“ Callister’s quiet voice was cut off as Jo yanked him forward by his jacket, kissing him deeply and with intent. Jack felt his jaw drop in surprise as the two made out.

“That’s for coming back,” Jo explained as the two separated. The woman stepped back and wound her arm up, punching the other alpha in the face harshly. Jack winced at the sound of the impact. “And that’s for leaving,” she growled before stalking right back out of the café without another word.

“They have history,” Allison explained unnecessarily, the room settling around them now that the small bit of drama was over, Callister staring after Jo with a forlorn look as he sat back in his seat.

“I figured that much,” Jack replied. The tension between the two had been fairly obvious. The omega blinked as something cold hit his nose. Looking up he was surprised to see actual snow falling from the ceiling. “Whoa! Vincent, I know you have this Christmas theme going on, but don’t you think this is a bit much?” he hollered over to the omega, everyone in the café looking up in awe as the snowflakes fell. It was actually really pretty, in Jack’s opinion.

“This isn’t my doing.” Vincent confessed, staring at the snow with an overjoyed look. He might
not have planned it, but it didn’t seem like the man was going to complain about the effect.

Jack watched as Callister grabbed a big duffel bag and headed for the door, ignoring everyone as he started down the street. The omega watched after him before coming to a decision. Saying a quick good bye to Allison and Vincent, Jack trotted out the door and hopped in his jeep. Driving a little ways down the road, he spotted the wandering alpha making his way downtown. The poor guy looked really alone. Jack couldn’t imagine what it must be like, having a whole town think you were connected to arson and marvel at your return at the same time.

Pulling alongside the alpha, Jack rolled down the window. “Callister Raynes, right?” he inquired, grinning innocently when the man looked over.

“Yes,” Callister confirmed, sounding annoyed at the interruption to his quiet walk. The omega parked his jeep when he was sure that he had the man’s attention. Skipping up onto the sidewalk, Jack held out his hand eagerly, smiling as the alpha hesitantly shook it.

“Hi. I’m Jack Carter, the new Sheriff,” he introduced himself. “I uh, saw what happened back there,” Jack admitted, gesturing to the guy’s face. “Wanted to make sure you were okay.”

“Oh, I’ll be okay. I pretty much deserved it,” the alpha admitted sheepishly.

“Oh, well, uh, where you headed? I can give you a ride,” the omega offered, glancing back at his jeep. Callister didn’t seem to have any form of transportation other than his own feet. The guy had to be tired, Jack mused, especially if he walked the whole way into town.

“I’m just going to…Beverly’s,” the alpha stated, waving off Jack’s offer with a small smile.

“Really?” Jack asked, looking further down the street in the direction that the man had been heading. “You know it’s back that way, right?” he inquired, pointing in the opposite direction.

“Uh, yeah, of course. I was just….revisiting the town a bit,” Callister explained quickly. Jack gave him a measured look. It’d probably been awhile since the guy had been here and he’d gotten all turned around on where things were and didn’t want to admit his mistake. The omega nodded in acceptance, not wanting to make a big deal out of poor directions.

“Are you sure you don’t need a lift?” he offered again, walking back towards his jeep.

“No, I like to walk,” Callister replied, denying the help again. “Thanks though.” Jack didn’t feel right leaving the man all alone, but before he could push Jo’s voice popped up over the radio in his car.

“S2 to S1, repeat. S2 to S1, over.” The sheriff pulled out his radio, rolling his eyes at his deputy’s code usage.

“Jo, it’s just you and me. You can talk normally.” He ended the call and waited, sighing as he got no response. “Over,” he added, knowing the alpha wouldn’t talk without the term.

“There’s an electrical problem at Osborne’s farm on the way into town. Over,” Jo explained immediately when he used the key word and Jack smiled at the woman’s quirks, feeling like he needed to tease her a bit.

“That wasn’t so hard,” he replied before jumping off the radio.

“You didn’t say over,” Callister pointed out, trying to remind him. Jack laughed, looking over at the alpha as he climbed into his jeep.
“I know. It’s going to bug her all day,” he cackled, starting up the engine. “Be safe, okay? I’ll talk to you later,” he called in farewell, pulling out onto the street and making his way out of town.

Jack pulled into the farm’s driveway, parking behind Jo’s jeep as the alpha hopped out of her car, obviously waiting impatiently for him to arrive.

“When you’re done with a communiqué,” she berated severely, “you’re supposed to say ‘over.’”

“Oh, sorry, I forgot,” he teased, grinning shamelessly at the woman. “Don’t hit me for it though, okay? I’ve got a delicate face.”

Jo rolled her eyes, shifting uncomfortably as she realized he’d seen what happened earlier. “Look, what happened between Callister and me was private,” she explained defensively.

“Oh, sure, yeah. I’m sure nobody at Café Diem even noticed,” he replied sarcastically, grinning as the alpha rolled her eyes in annoyance at his banter. “So, what’s going on here?” he asked, shifting back to business as he noticed multiple metal objects pressed up against the livestock gate at the head of the driveway.

“Osborne said he had a power surge this morning and his electrical fence is malfunctioning,” she informed him, both officers moving closer for a better look.

“Does this fence run off a computer?” he questioned, beginning to see a trend in all the things malfunctioning today.


“I’m just getting a hunch,” he mused vaguely, taking several steps closer to the gate. Suddenly, Jack was being pulled forward against his will, the gate attracting the metal on his belt and uniform in a massive pull that the omega couldn’t fight. He tried his best though, thrashing in the force’s grip, managing to get himself turned around as his body connected to the fence. He strained, trying to separate from the structure, but his gun belt held him fast at the waist. Even his one arm was caught due to the watch he was wearing. He panted from the effort though, glancing up at Jo to find her laughing at his predicament from up on the hill. “You could’ve warned me!” he yelled in frustration.

“Oh, I forgot. Sorry,” she mocked, throwing his words back at him. Note to self, follow radio protocol next time so he doesn’t tick off his alpha deputy.

“Jo!” he pleaded, hoping she wasn’t going to leave him like this.

“Nathan!” he greeted nervously, watching the man head towards him. “What are you doing here?”

“I needed to talk to you about something. Something important. Heard you would be here covering one of these glitches that have been popping up around town,” Nathan explained, not pausing as he walked closer. Jack realized he was reaching the magnetic zone and frantically tried to stop the
“Nathan! Nathan, stop! Don’t come any closer,” he warned desperately, but it was too late.

Nathan grunted at the exact moment the pull caught him. He was able to resist for only a moment before the force became too strong to endure, pulling him down the hill and straight at Jack. The omega yelped as the man’s body collided with his own, the sudden weight pushing some of the air from his lungs. Nathan cursed as he tried to free himself and Jack realized the man couldn’t even move his arms, the cuff links on the sleeves effectively immobilizing him.

“Well that was unexpected,” Nathan muttered, Jack shivering as the deep tone was spoken right in his ear.

He froze as the full predicament he had found himself in registered. He was trapped against a fence with the head, very-much-still-mated alpha of G.D pressed against him. He swallowed thickly as he took in the sight of Nathan’s bare neck inches from his face. The heavy scent of dominance flowed from the man’s very pores and he squeezed his eyes shut, blushing as his inner omega started to purr in contentment as Nathan’s muscled bulk pressed against his. God, but it had been way too long and Jack fought the instinct to just rub himself against the man, to scent him and offer his neck for the alpha’s mouth.

Nathan stiffened against him and Jack grew mortified, realizing his scent must have changed to reflect his inner thoughts. If the man hadn’t figured out he’d had a thing for him before, he sure as hell knew now. A rumble built up in the alpha’s chest, Jack actually able to feel the vibration, as the man started up a deep purr of interest in the omega’s ear. He gasped, feeling his knees start to go weak and he desperately grasped onto Nathan’s suit with his free hand as a low whine left his lips.

“Very interesting indeed,” the alpha growled, nosing at his hairline and scenting him intently. Nathan’s body pressed harder against his, Jack whining as the movement created just the right kind of friction, his body craving more of the motion.

“Uh, guys?” Jo’s voice piped up sounding horrible amused. “I shut the fence down awhile ago,” she confessed and Jack’s eyes popped up in horror, staring up at the blue sky as he realized what they’d been doing.

“Oh,” he whispered in embarrassment, feeling Nathan take a large breath before backing away with a sense of reluctance. The alpha stared down at him intently, his gaze assessing as he looked over the omega’s face.

“….We’ll talk later, Carter,” Nathan promised, straightening his suit and sleeve cuffs before stalking back up the hill and sliding into his car. Jack collapsed against the fence, taking lungfuls of fresh air as he recalled the ability to breathe. Jo pranced down to him, a smug, knowing look in her eye as she gave him a once over.

“Not a word,” he ordered, scowling at her smile.

“No worries. I wasn’t going to say a thing,” she gloated, holding out a large computer chip for him to take. Jack took it, observing that the thing looked fried and burnt in several places. “Was just going to tell you that the central processing unit from the computer that regulates the fence is completely fried,” she explained, Jack trying to get his mind back on the job.

“Thanks, Jo,” he answered, clearing his throat as he collected himself. “I’m gonna, uh, take this to Henry’s. Maybe he can tell me more about what’s going on.” The omega quickly scampered to his
Jack felt more like himself after spending a few minutes in Henry’s garage. The older alpha was tapping away at his computer as the omega browsed the various trinkets in the room, blushing every once in a while when his thoughts drifted back to Nathan. He sighed heavily, wondering how he was even going to be able to face the man when he saw him again.

“Aha!” Henry suddenly exclaimed and Jack dashed over to the man and his computer, seeing a screen pull of tiny green letters. “There’s what’s been messing with everything on the internet.”

“What is it?” he asked, not understanding what he was looking at.

“A virus. Now what’s interesting about this is that Eureka has a very unique operating system,” the mechanic explained, going into lecture mode. “Viruses don’t just happen. They have to be written by someone who is intimately familiar with the system.”

“Like a computer programmer who use to live in Eureka?” Jack asked slowly, recalling what Callister’s previous job had been. The alpha was also the newest person in town and these electrical issues hadn’t started occurring until he’d arrived.

Henry shrugged as he considered the point. “It’s possible.”

“How bad is this thing?” the omega questioned, gesturing to the code on the screen. Most of the issues had been harmless so far, but given time, something could end up hurting someone.

“Well, the entire system is run on wireless internet,” the alpha thought aloud. “If it isn’t stopped, whoever is behind it may be able to access something more dangerous than traffic lights.”

“Right. I’m gonna go do a little more digging. Thanks Henry and let me know if you find anything else,” Jack called, already heading out the door.

Walking into the station, Jack spotted Jo filing out reports at her desk. Stopping in front of her, Jack braced himself, knowing the alpha wasn’t going to like his request.

“Hey Jo, I need the file on the fire Callister was accused of setting,” he asked, the woman looking up at him with a glare.

“He wasn’t accused, he was suspected and we cleared him,” she corrected defensively.

“Okay,” Jack agreed. “Maybe he wasn’t involved with what happened then, but I’m pretty sure he’s involved with what’s going on now.”

“Okay, Carter, I know this going to sound weird, but trust me. He’s not like that,” she entreated strongly.

“And I hope you’re right, believe me. But you know we can’t stop an investigation just because you’re involved with the guy,” he reasoned, hoping her sense of duty would help her understand.

“I wouldn’t ask it to,” she scoffed, sounding insulted as she stood up and rustled through a nearby file cabinet. “I just thought you might like to know my opinion,” she snapped, handing the
requested files over angrily.

“Jo…” Jack pleaded, already seeing the alpha start to shut him out as she retreated back to her
desk. He hadn’t meant anything by it. He’d just wanted to make sure he was covering all of his
bases. The woman didn’t respond, instead turning back to her papers and blocking him out. He
sighed, moving over to his own desk and flipping through the files alone. There was nothing really
in them except a notation of the fire and a list of things that had burned in the lab.

“This doesn’t really make sense,” Jack mused aloud. “Nathan had this big secret lab and yet
everything cataloged here is just the standard equipment. There’s nothing remarkable about
anything here.”

“Well,” Jo offered slowly, showing that she had still been tuned into him. Jack smiled, knowing
she liked him too much to stay angry for long. “The stuff could have burned, or,” she raised her
voice, talking over the objection Jack was about to say to that. “The stuff could have been
classified.”

The omega paused, thinking that over. Nathan did love his classified stuff. It would be just like him
to hide what he had been working on, regardless of any fire in the lab. “Okay, we’ll try something
else,” he decided, walking back over to her desk. “Can you run Callister’s name through your
security check?”

“You’re not going to find anything,” she muttered, rolling her eyes, but still doing as he’d asked.
He waited as she typed the search in. “Nothing came up,” she announced and Jack sighed, figuring
they were back at square one.

“It was worth a shot,” he stated, about to turn away.

“No, I mean, nothing came up,” Jo stressed, staring at the screen in surprise. “It’s like somebody’s
gone in here and erased all his records.” Jack stared in confusion at his deputy, wondering who
could have done such a thing. A machine behind the alpha went off, ejecting a paper, which Jo
picked up and scanned. “You need to see this,” she muttered, handing it over to him with
reluctance.

He cautiously took the paper from her, wondering what could have set the woman on edge.
Scanning the paper, Jack growled in anger as he realized what he was reading. Oh, somebody was
about to be in big trouble.

The jeep screeched to a halt in Beverly’s driveway, gravel skidding as it came to a stop. Jack
jumped out of the car, slamming the door shut behind him as he marched toward Callister, Beverly,
and Zoe who where standing on the front porch.

“The lies stop right now,” he seethed, stalking up to his daughter. She looked scared as he unfolded
the piece of paper Jo had handed him, showing the girl the wanted poster with her name and
picture on it. “I know what you did! Identity theft! Credit card fraud!” he read off the paper. “What
were you thinking?”

“Look, the credit card company will cover it. The most she’s gonna have to pay is, like, 50 bucks,”
Zoe tried to defend herself, tears developing in her eyes as Jack just glared at her.

“That’s not the point!” he yelled, frustration growing as his daughter tried to justify her actions.
“Ajeet…” he looked at the paper again, finding the name. “Ajeet Gandhavadi shouldn’t have to
“I’ll pay her back,” she promised. Jack shook his head.

“Zoe, I thought we were passed this? You promised, when you came here, that there would be no more lying, no more stealing, and no more secrets,” Jack demanded, feeling strung out. God, things had been going so well with her too, or at least he’d thought so.

“You have to understand, this was before I even came here,” Zoe cried desperately, pointing to the paper.

“That doesn’t matter!” he argued. “When you showed up, you promised that all cards would be on the table and you lied, right to my face. And for what?! A shopping spree? Online gambling? What was it?” he demanded, shaking the paper at her.

“A bought a bus ticket!” she yelled, tears flowing down her face. “To Eureka!”

Jack sighed. “You couldn’t have called me? Asked for help?”

“Yeah, right,” Zoe scoffed angrily, wiping the tears from her face.

“Hey, that’s not fair,” he argued at her dismissal. “I haven’t been the world’s greatest parent, I’ll admit that, but I have always been there for you when you needed help,” he exclaimed, not letting her turn this back on him.

“So, you’re saying that if I said that I wanted to come live here, you would just make it happen?” she asked, her sadness turning to anger as she confronted him.

“Of course,” he replied, knowing it wasn’t completely the truth. He didn’t mind having her here, but in the beginning, it wouldn’t have been his first choice of where she should live. He didn’t even have custody rights at the moment.

“So I guess we’re both liars then,” Zoe declared, calling him out on his half-truth. Jack exhaled heavily, not feeling in the mood to argue with her anymore.

“I can’t do this right now. I’m done, Zoe,” he said with finality, abruptly turning on his heels and climbing back in his car. There were too many emotions and he needed to clear his head. He couldn’t think straight, his mind constantly seeing the image of his daughter’s face on that wanted poster. How had it gotten this far, he fumed in frustration.

He drove around for several minutes to calm himself down, beginning to regret having yelled and argued with his daughter in public as he thought more on what had happened. Hopefully they could talk about it calmly when they were both home this evening.

As Jack was about to turn his car back towards the sheriff’s station, Jo’s voice suddenly crackled over the radio.

“S2 to S1. S2 to S1, over.”

Jack picked up the radio with a sigh. “What is it Jo? Over.”

“A fire’s been reported at Beverly’s. Thought you might want to know. Over.”

Jack quickly turned the jeep around, flipping the lights as he hightailed it back to Beverly’s house. He’d just been there, he mused in confusion. Moreover, Jack thought with a pang of fear, his
daughter was there. He stepped harder on the gas, desperate to make sure Zoe was alright.

Smoke was pouring out of the top floor windows of Beverly’s house when he pulled up, the omega woman standing outside and looking at her house in dismayed shock.

“Are you okay?” he called to her, walking up and checking her for injuries.

“I’m fine, but look at my house,” she whined disparagingly, gazing up at the smoke.

“What happened?” he demanded, knowing the place had been fine a moment ago. “Where’s Zoe?”

“Zoe left soon after you did. I’m assuming she headed home,” she informed him before continuing on. “Stark came in, screaming for Callister. The next thing I knew, the whole place was on fire,” she explained, obviously frustrated by the circumstances.

“Do you know where they are now?” he asked, knowing he had to find the two alphas. This was the second fire Callister had become involved with and it was looking more and more like the young alpha was guilty of arson.

“They left,” she answered simply. “I think Callister got burned though,” Beverly admitted. Jack nodded in understanding, turning as he watched Henry pull up in a fire truck. He quickly ran over, eager to help put out the blaze before the entire house was destroyed.

“Henry!” he called, getting the man’s attention. “Where’s the hydrant? I’ll help you hook it up,” he offered.

“Carter, this is Eureka,” Henry reminded him, pulling out a short hose connected to what looked like a potato gun. “Beverly, is everybody out?” he shouted to the other omega.

“Yes,” she confirmed. Henry aimed and pulled the trigger on the gun, 5 jets of some kind of substance shooting out and heading straight for the rooms on fire as if they were heat seeking missiles. About three seconds later, dark foamed filled up the rooms, effectively smothering the fires in the house before they faded away.

Seeing that everything was under control, Jack quickly dialed Zoe’s number, taping his foot as the call rang and then went to voice message. Calling again and getting the same result, he groaned, knowing the girl was still mad and upset with him if she wasn’t answering her phone. He figured he could just talk with her back at the house, but for now, he had two alphas to find and he had an idea of where to start looking.

“Alright, Fargo. Where are they?” Jack demanded as he walked into Nathan’s office at G.D. The beta flailed in surprise, turning sheepishly from where he seemed to be giving a demonstration of some kind to four other people on a conference call. It looked pretty important if the way the beta was shaking with stress was any indicator.

“I honestly don’t know,” Fargo responded, not even having to ask who he was referring to. Jack sighed, realizing the beta wasn’t going to give Nathan up. At least, not without a good reason.

“Let me ask this then. Do you know where your Sarah Michelle Gellar doll is?” He smirked in triumph as Fargo’s face paled. “I know I do. If you want, I’ll go get it and show it to these nice people you’re talking to.” The beta was already shaking his head desperately. “Alright, so do you maybe wanna tell me where you think they are then?”
Fargo’s guess was spot on. Jack acknowledged as he pulled into the warehouse, Nathan’s car sitting off to the side. He wasted no time in parking the jeep and hurrying inside, knowing the alpha had a lot of explaining to do. He paused a moment when entering the room, taking in the figures of what appeared to be fake bodies, almost like mannequins, stationed behind sheets of plastic. Barrels with radioactive symbols on the side were stacked around the corner as well. Sneaking stealthily further in, Jack spotted Nathan sitting at a table with Callister, the two alphas appearing to be conversing about something. Beakers and test tubes were set up behind the pair and the omega realized he must be in some kind of secret lab.

Drawing his gun, Jack remembered that Calister was now a suspect of having caused two fires, as well as being the one responsible for causing the electronic issues around town. He raised the gun as he stepped forward, Callister catching sight of him and flinching as he noticed the weapon in his hands.

“Put your hands up, Callister,” he ordered as he advanced towards the two men, Nathan twisting around in surprise and fear at his sudden presence.

“Jack, wait!” Nathan pleaded desperately, holding up his hands to hold the sheriff off. Jack was momentarily thrown by the use of his first name from the alpha and he paused, focusing his attention on the man. “Listen to me. I can explain. Just don’t hurt him.”

“I don’t want to, Nathan,” Jack stressed, watching as the alpha moved between Callister and his gun. “I don’t want to shoot him. Callister, just show me your hands,” he repeated, trying to keep things controlled and calm.

“I can’t,” Callister stammered his face incredibly pale as he stared in fear at the sheriff.

“Yes, you can,” Nathan urged encouragingly, turning to the other alpha. Callister reluctantly stood up, raising his hands slowly, and Jack lowered his weapon in surprise. While one hand looked normal, the other was charred and burnt, strips of skin hanging off of it, revealing a metal skeleton underneath.

“Uh, okay,” he breathed, feeling thrown. "So, I’m guessing you’re some kind of robot?” Jack asked incredulously, running a hand through his hair in bewilderment. He really hadn’t been expecting that.

“I built him here,” Nathan informed him, sitting down now that he had lowered his gun. The scientist turned back to Callister’s arm, mending and replacing it with new skin. Jack watched over his shoulder in a sort of morbid interest, curious despite the grossness of the action. “And he’s an artificial intelligent being,” the alpha added, correcting the omega’s use of the term ‘robot’.

“Does anybody else know about this?” Jack questioned, staring between the two men. The AI alpha shook his head as Nathan elaborated.

“Callister is a modern miracle of science. People would kill to get their hands on this kind of technology, and for that reason, I knew no one could know. Instead, I wanted to see if he could assimilate, to really become a part of the society here in Eureka. So, I introduced him as my assistant.” The alpha smiled glancing at Callister fondly. “They embraced him,” he murmured, obviously proud of the man. Jack recognized that look. He’d worn it himself many times when he’d looked at Zoe. The omega sighed in understanding as he realized that, in having built Callister, Nathan was effectively like a father to the young alpha.
“You grew attached,” Jack whispered in understanding. Nathan smiled at the omega, happy to see he understood.

“I wasn’t about to let DARPA turn him into another military project,” the alpha sneered protectively.

“So, then, he didn’t burn down your lab,” Jack mused aloud, comprehending a bit more. “You did.”

Nathan gazed up at him, setting down his tools as he moved to stand in front of Jack. “I needed them to believe that the entire project had been destroyed,” he confessed, not sounding the least bit guilty. The omega couldn’t blame him though, especially if he was shielding Callister from those that would abuse him. “Sheriff Cobb started asking a bunch of questions though, so I had to send him away,” the alpha added, messing with a few tools and instruments on a counter.

“Okay, I get all that,” Jack acknowledged, but there were still a few things he needed answers to. “But what about all of the computer issues going on around town? The virus?”

“Callister transmits over the wireless network,” Nathan admitted with a shrug. “I thought that if I changed his primary microprocessor, I could fix it.” The alpha paused, sadness and defeat tainting his scent. “His system is totally corrupted though.”

Jack placed a comforting hand on the man’s arm, peering up at him inquiringly. “There’s nothing that can be done? No way it can be fixed?”

“I’ve tried everything I can think of,” the alpha grumbled, running a frustrated hand through his hair. “Things just keep getting worse. I’m afraid I’m going to lose him,” Nathan sighed, looking defeated.

“Hey, we’ve still got time, right?” Jack urged, giving the man a determined look. Callister still had a chance, he was sure of it.

Just then, the sound of tires squealing against pavement and the rumble of an engine filled the warehouse. Both men looked up, glancing over to where Callister had been sitting and instead finding an empty seat. The kid had decided to run for it and escape when they weren’t paying attention.

“Come on! We might still be able to catch up to him,” Jack urged, running for his jeep with Nathan right on his tail. The alpha’s car was gone like they’d thought and they quickly headed back for the sheriff’s station in the omega’s vehicle. They informed Jo of what had transpired, the woman quickly hopping on the phone and putting other stations in the state on the lookout for the stolen vehicle. It took several hours, but the deputy finally received a call back, Jack and Nathan hovering over her desk anxiously for the news.

“How long ago?” Jo demanded, listening intently to whatever was being said on the line. “Great, okay, if you find them, stop them and call me immediately. Thanks,” the alpha ordered before hanging up.

“Wait a minute. Them?” Jack inquired, having caught the term. They were only looking for Callister. Did he take someone with him?

“They found the car at a gas station off Interstate 17,” Jo informed him. “The attendant said that there was a red-headed girl in the passenger seat.”

“Oh my god. Zoe,” the omega whined in distress, realizing his daughter wasn’t actually at home.
No wonder she hadn’t picked up his calls. She’d been running away again. Jack paced, his mind switching gears as he tried to think like Zoe. He’d tracked her down before and he’d do the same again. “Okay….okay, let’s think. They wouldn’t just ditch the car unless they had another way of getting around,” he reasoned, looking at the other two alphas. Their attention was on him, both looking worried at the fate of the two runaways. “What about public transportation?” he asked, wandering over to Jo’s desk again.

“I’ve checked every airport, bus terminal, taxi service, and ferry within 50 miles,” Jo explained, looking at her computer. “There’s nothing on Callister Raynes or Zoe Carter.”

Jack remembered though that Zoe didn’t have just one name at her disposal. “Try Ajeet,” he pressed, seeing Jo catch on quickly.

“Ajeet Gandhavadi,” she recalled, quickly typing the name into her database. “Two tickets on an International Stageline bus leaving out of Summerville. It’s bus 72 heading to Portland,” she recited, reading off the information. Jack and Nathan sighed in relief at a sign that their kids actually were together. “It leaves in less than an hour,” she warned.

“Come on, Nathan. We’ve got a bus to catch,” Jack announced, jogging with the man to his car. He immediately flipped on the lights when they got in, stepping on the gas as they roared out of town. He was praying they made it in time. Night had already fallen and they flew down the roads at high speed.

“Listen Jack, I’m truly sorry Zoe got wrapped up in this,” Nathan apologized, feeling guilty that events had gone the way they had.

“We’re gonna find them,” Jack insisted desperately. He wasn’t going to settle for anything less. He knew it wasn’t entirely the alpha’s fault either. He’d argued with Zoe earlier today and the girl’s built-in habit was to run when things got bad or were too much for her to handle. It was something she’d picked up from her mother, he admitted to himself. They would both have to work on fixing that shared trait because it wasn’t going to work if they stayed here together.

“Whatsoever you decide to do, report me, arrest me… I completely understand,” the alpha stated, looking like he was bracing himself for the worst.

Jack glanced at him in astonishment, not expecting the route the man’s mind had taken. Sure, he’d obscured information and lied about Callister, but the man was protecting his son. Jack could sympathize with that and he said as much. “As far as I’m concerned the case is closed. The project was lost in the fire,” he stated concisely. “I’m not going to arrest you for protecting your son, Nathan. In my opinion, you’ve done nothing wrong and as a fellow parent, I understand exactly what you’re feeling.”

Nothing more was said, though Jack could feel Nathan’s appreciative gaze boring into the side of his face. He tried not to flush at the attention, instead straightening up as the bus center finally came into view.

Jack quickly parked the jeep, stumbling frantically out of the car as he intercepted a bus worker passing nearby. “Hey, bus 72 to Portland. Where can I find it?” he inquired, Nathan shadowing him as they looked at the worker intently.

“It pulled out a few minutes ago,” the man reported and Jack felt his heart drop at the admittance.

“I-I told them to hold it,” he argued, upset by the cavalier attitude of the attendant, but focusing his attention on tracking that bus down instead. “Where’s the next stop?” he demanded intently.
“Salem downtown terminal,” the man replied. “What’s this all about?” Jack and Nathan ignored him though, turning back to the jeep to continue their pursuit.

“Mom!” his daughter’s voice suddenly called frantically and Jack whirled around, scanning the faces behind him desperately.

“Mom?” Nathan whispered in confusion behind him, but the omega ignored him, finally spotting his daughter standing distraught next to another bus.

“Zoe,” he sighed in relief, him and Nathan quickly jogging over to the girl as she darted between two buses. “Are you okay?” he asked, trying to check her over in the dark.

“I’m fine, but I think he’s sick,” she cried, tears falling from her eyes as she gestured to Callister laying on the ground, the alpha propped up against the side of one of the buses.

“Callister,” Nathan called worriedly, quickly leaning down next to the pale and gasping man.

“Nathan, we need to get him back to the car,” Jack entreated, not liking how bad Callister looked. They were also in a very public place and someone was going to notice sooner or later. Nathan paused, scanning his son before looking up at Jack with tears in his eyes. Jack felt his heart ache at the realization that they hadn’t made it in time to save him.

“Give us a second, will you?” Nathan asked, his voice choked with unshed tears and emotion. The omega nodded, gently pulling Zoe a little further away to give the man some space.

“You didn’t leave,” he whispered to Zoe, feeling so grateful that she hadn’t gotten on that bus.

“I knew he needed help,” she answered softly, shifting her gave from the dying man as she stared up at him sadly.

“Why were you leaving?” he asked, needing to be certain of her reason.

“You said you were done with me,” she cried, her lip wobbling as new tears formed in her eyes. Jack pulled her into a hug, holding her tightly as he kissed the top of her head apologetically.

“Oh honey, I didn’t mean it like that. I was angry and didn’t want to talk anymore, but you’re my daughter. I’ll never, ever be done with you,” he whispered fiercely, needing to explain things clearly to her. “You were right though,” he admitted, letting her step back a bit in his arms as she looked up at him. “If you had asked to come to Eureka, I would’ve said no.” She nodded in resignation, as if expecting that answer and he quickly continued his explanation before she could get the wrong idea. “And I would’ve regretted it for the rest of my life.”

Zoe grasped onto him firmly as he pulled her in for another hug. A wave of distress and anguish washed over them and they quickly turned, taking in the bowed head of Nathan as he hunched over Callister. Mother and daughter took a few steps closer in worry, catching the discussion the two alphas were having.

“I messed everything up again, didn’t I?” Callister whispered sadly.

“No, it was my fault,” Nathan insisted. “I should have never sent you away in the first place.”

“I’m scared,” the young alpha confessed, Jack clenching his eyes shut in sorrow at the tears forming in the young man’s eyes. This shouldn’t be happening. Not like this. “I’m not ready,” the man cried weakly.
“I know,” Nathan whispered, running a comforting hand through his son's hair.

“What’s gonna happen to me?” Callister asked, gazing up at his father anxiously. With a heavy sigh, Nathan looked down at the young alpha with a comforting look.

“Remember what Alan Turing said?” the alpha inquired thickly. Callister gazed up at him with a small smile.

“He figured God could give a computer a soul if he wanted to. Do you think that’s true, dad?” he pleaded softly.

“I know it is,” Nathan cried. Jack felt tears flow down his face as Callister’s eyes went dull and lifeless, his head falling to the side as his skin went a dead, ashy white. Zoe sobbed, burying her face into her mother’s chest, Jack holding her tight as he watched Nathan hug his son’s body to his chest one last time.

Jack sat at his desk, wearily filling out the paperwork for Callister’s death, breathing through the emotions that wanted to emerge every time his eyes landed on the picture of the young alpha. He had been so sure that they would have been able to save him. He couldn’t even imagine what Nathan was feeling right now.

A knock drew his attention to the front doors, his daughter nervously standing there with two coffees in her hand.

“Hey, what are you doing here?” he asked softly, his mood still pretty somber from the recent events.

“I was on my way to school. Figured you could use a pick-me-up,” she confessed, passing him one of the drinks as she took a seat in front of his desk.

“How are you doing?” he questioned, giving her an assessing look. Jack really hadn’t wanted her to see death so young, but the circumstances had made it unavoidable.

“I’m okay. Or at least I will be, I think,” she admitted when he gave her a doubtful look.

“Okay. I just want you to know that I’m here if you need anything, alright?” Jack urged, needing her to know she wasn’t alone in this. That she could go to him for help.

“Yeah, thanks mom,” she smiled gratefully, grabbing her bag and getting ready to leave.

“Oh, one more thing before I forget,” he added, watching as Zoe turned to him curiously. “That whole matter with Adjeet and the stolen identity?” Zoe nodded, growing nervous as she gazed at him expectantly. “I talked to my old boss and pulled some strings. However, you will be paying back all of that money. Do I make myself clear?” She nodded again, looking resigned, but accepting of the consequences. “Good, now get to school,” he ordered with a smile. His daughter stood and made for the door, passing someone on her way out.

“Oh, hi Mr. Stark,” she muttered before she left and Jack watched in surprise as the alpha walked into the station, taking the seat that Zoe had just vacated and giving him an assessing look.

It’d only been a day since his son’s death and Nathan looked rough as expected. His outfit was impeccable as always, but the omega could see something in his eyes. A deep sadness that hadn’t
existed before, and Jack wished he could help somehow, but he knew a hurt like this couldn’t be resolved with just a few words or actions. It was going to take time before Callister’s death stopped feeling like a knife in the alpha’s heart and Jack was determined to be there to offer support for the man in any way he could.

“Hey Nathan. How’re you holding up?” he asked quietly, looking at the man in concern.

“About as well as is to be expected. We’d both seen the inevitable coming, but it doesn’t make the pain any less to know he’s gone,” Nathan admitted, staring at his hands for a moment before turning his attention back to Jack. “But that isn’t why I came by today.”

“Oh?” Jack inquired, looking at the man in confusion.

“Yeah. I’m actually here to confirm something,” the alpha hinted vaguely, his eyes turning sharp as they scanned the sheriff.

“And that is?” Jack asked, glancing at the papers on his desk.

“That you are, in fact, an omega,” Nathan stated simply and Jack shot his gaze up, startled eyes meeting confident gray ones.

“W-What?” the omega stuttered, caught completely off guard. He watched as Nathan took a deep inhale, obviously scenting him and he fought off the blush that wanted to grow on his face at the blatant action.

“You smell like a beta, so I’m assuming you’re on some pretty heavy suppressants, or have just been taking them for awhile,” the alpha surmised, giving a cocky grin when Jack’s eyes avoided his own, the small evasion all the confirmation he needed. “There’s also the fact that last night, Zoe called you mom, and everyone knows that only male omegas get that moniker.”

Jack sighed in resignation, knowing he’d been caught. He’d completely forgotten about Zoe’s call, what with everything that’d happened yesterday. Leave it to Nathan to pick up on it. “So what if I am?” he asked defensively, shooting a glare at the man. Nathan only grinned wolfishly and Jack felt a shiver of anticipation run up his spine.

“Well, we’ll just have to see, won’t we?” Nathan smirked.
"He was just crossing the road, and..." Jo trailed off, looking helplessly at Lojack in her arms, the dog wrapped in a blanket as the alpha carried him quickly through G.D.

"This is what happens when you don’t look both ways," Jack scolded the animal, his tone laced with concern as he took in the injury and matted blood soaking his fur.

"He’s lost a lot of blood," she muttered, picking up her pace.

"Why aren’t we taking him to a real vet?" he demanded with worry. Who knew what kind of internal damage the dog was suffering from.

"We are. The best in the world," she countered. "He’s got a lab in section 3."

"Here that buddy?" Jack cooed, petting Lojack as the dog whined piteously in pain again. "We’re going to get you patched right up." The omega glanced up as they neared the lab doors, catching sight of the label ‘Cryptobiology’ on the outside. Immediately he knew who there were going to see. "Taggart’s your world-renowned vet?" he hissed lowly at Jo in disbelief.

"Graduated magna from the University of Melbourne," Taggart justified as they stepped inside, taking the dog out of Jo’s hands and giving Jack a superior look. He grimaced, a bit embarrassed that his doubt had been overheard by the alpha. Taggart started to examine the bloody skin and fur carefully, his gaze focused on the animal’s wound.

"I thought you were a cryptozoologist though?" Jack asked in confusion, stepping aside as he watched the man work.

"Well, the study of unknown species is more of a hobby," the alpha explained with half a mind.

"Which means he knows more about animals than any normal vet," Jo added in defense.

"More like pretend animals," Jack scoffed as Taggart stood up.

"I can’t fix this," the alpha admitted in defeat as he stared down at Lojack.

"Okay, let’s take him to a real doctor," Jack hastily encouraged, not liking how the dog seemed to be growing weaker with every minute.

"No, I said I can’t fix this," Taggart interjected, reaching over to grab a metal canister. "But my friends can," he continued, showing the two officers what looked like a bunch of tiny grains of crystals or salt.

"Sand?" Jack inquired dubiously, not seeing how this could help.

"Not sand," the alpha corrected shortly. "Nanoids." The man pulled out a long injection needle and used it to suck up the crystals. "Remember Carl Carlson? We’ve been able to reverse engineer some of his discoveries about cellular regeneration and adapt them to nanotechnology," Taggart explained.

"So you’re going to treat Lojack with itsy, bitsy robots?" Jack clarified, watching as Taggart injected the things into the dog.

"They’ve been programmed to analyze and mimic biological structures such as bone, tissue, and
hair.” Taggart removed the needle and set it aside, instead picking up a small remote with a red light on it which he directed at Lojack’s skin. “They’re directed and controlled by ultra low frequency radio signals,” the alpha added and Jack watched in amazement as the skin stitched itself back together in just a few seconds, Lojack immediately perking up when everything seemed done.

“Wow, that’s amazing,” he complimented. “And a little creepy.”

“Told you he was good,” Jo preened, Taggart giving her a small smile as he put everything back up.

“Their programming is simple. Repair and replicate, just like human cells,” the alpha continued, observing his handiwork with pride. “They’ll serve as sort of a living band-aid until his tissues can heal.”

“I assume I can trust you to let Lojack go once he’s healed?” Jo asked, looking at the other alpha knowingly.

“There’s no sport in catching him in this condition,” Taggart admitted sheepishly, placing a two fingered salute near his head. “Scouts honor.”

Jack chuckled. “There are no scouts in Australia,” he pointed out. The man shook his head, scoffing at the sheriff as he corrected him.

“Yeah, there are, and believe me, in the outback you’ll learn a lot more than how to tie knots,” Taggart informed him. “I could tell you stories,” the alpha started, a creepy, wistful smile coming over his face.

“No! No, that’s fine,” Jack cut him off, hastily making for the doors with Jo trailing behind him with a smile. “Just take care of the dog!”

“Will do, Sheriff,” the man called back, smiling at Jo with a nod. “Bye, Jo.”

“Later, Tag,” she said in farewell, smiling as she walked out with Jack.

“Tag?” he repeated teasingly.

“Shut up,” she ordered, shoving him playfully as they walked out of G.D.

Jack walked into City Hall later that day, looking around at all of the preparations being conducted as everyone got ready for the dance that night.

“Hey! What are you doing here?” Zoe’s voice called from across the room. The omega looked over, spotting his daughter holding a tablet and looking in charge.

“Hey,” he greeted, making his way over to her. “I figured I’d see if I could help set up for the dance. What about you?”


“For what?” he asked.

“The finale,” she clarified, giving him a face as if it should have been obvious. “I represent the band,” Zoe continued, pointing over her shoulder at Spencer, the other omega rifling through a
bunch of cds and albums. “You know, he’s actually a really good musician.”

“Really? Spencer?” he clarified in disbelief to make sure he had heard right. The younger omega may be learning a trick or two from Henry about being the town’s jack-of-all-trades, but Spencer was well known for being clumsy and a bit scatterbrained at the best of times.

“Yes, Spencer,” Zoe repeated, rolling her eyes at him obvious doubt. “We’re still working on a stage name, but I do have him booked Monday nights at Café Diem,” she announced proudly. “We’re also looking into doing something with iTunes. As his manager, I get 15%.”

“Oh, and what’s he getting?” Jack inquired curiously. It was nice to see his daughter really putting herself into something.

“Well, nothing so far,” she admitted, her face falling a bit.

“Jack,” Henry called from a nearby ladder, interrupting their conversation. Jack gave Zoe an apologetic smile before walking over to his friend.

“What’s up? You doing okay?” he asked, shaking the alpha’s hand with a bright smile.

“Just fine. How about you? I see you got roped into this too,” Henry chuckled. “This is Eureka’s most important event of the year.”

“Well, I’m here to help if you need anything,” Jack offered, feeling a little lost as he looked around again. Everybody already seemed to know what they were doing and he felt a little out of place just standing there.

“Well, in that case, and on behalf of Lise Meitner, I thank you,” the alpha grinned down at the omega. Jack chuckled, glancing up at the banner that showed a picture of this ‘Lise’ person.

“If I knew who that was, that might mean something,” he jokingly replied.

“She was an Austrian physicist who discovered nuclear fission, which then led to the invention of the atomic bomb,” Henry informed him.

“Oh, well, by all means, let’s celebrate that,” Jack scoffed in a small amount of disgust.

“Meitner refused to work on the bomb,” Zoe interjected, Jack glancing back at her where she was leaning against a table nearby.

“Oh,” he muttered, feeling embarrassed at his quick dismissal of the old scientist. “Sorry,” he apologized, gazing sheepishly up at Henry. The alpha waved his hand in dismissal, knowing Jack hadn’t known.

“Tonight’s dance is a tribute to her ingenuity,” Henry explained. “Not what others chose to do with it. Her passion for exploration, her commitment to bettering the world, is the ideal Eureka to meant to strive for.”

“Very cool,” Jack agreed, liking the sound of this event more and more.

“And strive we shall!” Spencer cheered as he walked past. “Check out the subwoofer on this bad boy,” the omega said excitedly, holding up a small speaker and heading for the DJ stand. Jack gave Henry a playful roll of the eyes, which the alpha smiled at, before turning and following the young man and his daughter to the table.
“It’s pretty small, isn’t it?” he asked, sizing up the machine. It was little, fitting neatly in the palm of Spencer’s hand before he set it on the table.

“Hey, bigger isn’t necessarily better,” Spencer teased, setting the machine up.

“Yeah, sure. Keep telling yourself that,” Jack laughed, breaking off with a cough when his daughter looked at him with scandalized, and somewhat intrigued eyes.

“The next sound you’ll hear is me blowing your minds,” Spencer promised, putting on his headphones and turning some dials on the sound board.

Heavy bass suddenly exploded in Jack’s ears, making him reel back in surprise and a little bit of pain at the loud noise.

“Did you say mind or eardrum?” he yelled over the noise, glaring at the other omega. Jack glanced over at Henry, finding the man holding his own ears and grinning sympathetically at him. At least he wasn’t the only one suffering at the hands of these kids. There was no way whatever they were playing could be called music.

The sound of his cellphone going off had Jack quickly checking his pockets, waving his hand at Spencer to lower the music so he could hear who was calling him.

“Hey, what’s up?” he automatically greeted, not checking the caller id.

“Carter?” Allison’s voice sounded over the line. “We have a problem up here.”

“What?” he asked, moving a little ways away from everyone in the room so he could hear her clearer.

“One of our techs is missing. I was hoping you could help us find him,” she stated and Jack sighed, realizing that his plans had been cut short before they’d even started.

“Yeah, sure. I’ll be right there,” he agreed, shutting off the phone and turning to his daughter and friends in the room. “Sorry guys, duty calls,” he informed them, giving them all a truly apologetic look as he wandered back out of the doors. He hated to see their disappointed faces, but there wasn’t much he could do.

“Larry called security, but they only caught part of the call,” Allison informed him as Jack examined a small square open hatch in the wall. The opening seemed to lead to a bunch of interconnecting tunnels through the walls of G.D. and worse, it looked pretty dark.

“What’d he say?” he asked, looking up at the other omega.

“Nice,” she answered simply with a small grimace.

“That’s it?” he questioned in disbelief. That was next to useless. Jack exhaled heavily as Allison nodded, turning back to the vent and poking his head through the opening. It was really narrow and he was already starting to feel uncomfortable at the enclosed space. His shoulders were barely going to fit in there as it was. “It’s really creepy in here,” he whined unhappily, staring pleadingly up at Allison.

“That’s some sharp police work there, Carter,” she stated, giving him an unimpressed look.
“Are you sure he didn’t just go out for a smoke or to his car for a nap?” he inquired hopefully.

“Carter,” she reprimanded sternly.

“Some people need their afternoon nap,” he argued. “Like me, for example.”

“Carter,” Allison repeated, her face showing that she wasn’t finding his stalling funny.

“It’s well documented, Allison. A siesta works. It increases worker satisfaction and productivity, and it’s a dying art,” he insisted lamely.

“Napping is not an art,” she countered, giving in a little to his excuses.

“Well, you haven’t seen me nap,” he protested loftily. “I take it to a whole new level.”

“Maybe you can show me some other time. For now, stop stalling and get in the tunnel,” she ordered, done with his talking. Jack groaned unhappily, turning back to the dark, creepy tunnel and trying to brace himself for the tight spaces.

He looked up again though as Taggart crouched down next to him.

“Sheriff, I heard about Larry and I’m coming with you,” the alpha insisted seriously.

“Not that I don’t welcome your company, but why?” Jack had to ask, feeling somewhat relieved that he wasn’t going down there alone.

“He’s one of my dearest friends,” the man answered, Allison’s snort of derision above them made both men turn to her.

“Really?” she scoffed. “Are we talking about the same Larry?”

Jack stayed low as Taggart reared up and stood face to face with Allison, not wanting to get in the middle of whatever spat was about to occur between the two.

“Just because you choose not to fraternize with the support staff, doesn’t mean others don’t,” he ridiculed sharply. Allison stared down the alpha unimpressed.

“You want to try out one of your new toys, don’t you?” she countered, calling the alpha out on his true motives.

“I….” Taggart paused, looking embarrassed as he fiddled with the tech in his hands. The man obviously hadn’t expected to be called out so quickly. “I got a new GPS locator and night-vision goggles,” he admitted quietly. Taggart turned to Jack, holding out a few pieces of smaller tech for the omega to take. “I brought me hand-me-downs for you,” he offered, smiling charmingly as if he’d done no wrong.

Jack smiled, taking the tech and slipping one of them over his ear, the flashlight on it activating immediately. Honestly, the alpha could act a bit like a puppy with his impulsiveness, but he’d take whatever company wanted to join him if it meant not going down those creepy tunnels alone.

“Watch your head,” Jack warned as he started to crawl inside, Taggart right behind him. The omega quickly smothered a giggle when he heard a thunk, knowing the alpha had failed to heed his warning.

The two continued to crawl further in, Jack incredibly grateful when the tunnel started to widen just a bit. It still wasn’t enough to stand in, but at least he didn’t feel suffocated as badly.
“See anything?” Taggart asked happily, the alpha shuffling merrily along on all fours behind him.

“It’s a long dark tunnel,” Jack replied sarcastically, trying to keep the nervousness out of his voice. “Not really.”

“That’s because you don’t have ultra infrared vision goggles,” the alpha bragged. Jack rolled his eyes, ignoring the pointless remark as they continued on. Taggart quickly broke the silence, for which the omega was grateful, otherwise the eeriness would start to get to him. Tunnels like this should not exist in a place like G.D. “It’s not like Larry to leave his post. I’ve got a bad feeling.”

Or maybe not. If the Crocodile Dundee of alphas in this town was having a ‘bad feeling’ Jack realized he might have something to truly worry about here.

“Great, now I’m having a bad feeling,” he muttered as the two came to a pause down the tunnel.

“About 10 more feet, we should hit a junction,” Taggart informed him. “We can split up there,” he decided.

“Whoa! Hang on,” Jack protested, not liking the sound of that one bit.

“Fine, you baby.” the alpha rolled his eyes. “We’ll stick together.” A whispering sound started up down the vent and Jack felt the hairs on his neck stand at attention. Something was wrong, but he couldn’t hear anything as Taggart continued to talk. “You know, it’s more efficient if we split up—”

“Taggart! Shut up!” Jack hissed.

“You shut up!” Taggart argued back insulted.

“Just listen,” the omega insisted, tilting his head as a distinct buzzing sound grew louder and appeared to be drawing closer. He could tell the alpha heard it too, the man liking the sound about as much as Jack did. “What is that?”

“Sounds insectoid,” Taggart answered softly, inching steadily further. Jack hung back as nervousness and distrust locked his limbs in place. Something was down here with them and the omega really did not want to meet it. His mind flashed back to every scary movie he’d ever seen, including some of the D-list ones. God, he was going to get eaten alive by a bunch of ants or crickets or something.

The alpha froze ahead of him, his eyes noticing something on the wall. Taggart retrieved an equipment pack that was laying against the grate, pulling it towards him and quickly backing up as the buzzing grew louder and more defined.

“What is that?” Jack hissed again in urgency.

“I don’t know, but it got Larry,” Taggart declared, retreating to crouch beside Jack again. “There’s a bloody handprint on the wall. Not a good sign,” the alpha announced, his teeth bared as he glared down the tunnel. “We’re going to need more firepower.”

Jack jumped as his cell phone rang, banging his head against the roof as he pulled it out. “Carter.”

“Hey, you guys need to come back. We have a problem,” Allison ordered over the call.

“Yeah, more than one,” Jack scoffed, making a retreat motion to Taggart and closing the phone. The two men quickly hurried back out of the tunnels and to safety, the noise fading as they left it behind.
“A person is missing,” Allison yelled, glaring hotly down at Nathan where the alpha sat steaming in his seat. “We found his equipment in the service tunnel.”

“I don’t care if I’m missing,” Nathan demanded angrily. “You don’t go poking around a billion dollar mainframe without asking me. And you do not send a cop and a glorified vet into the brain of Global Dynamics without following protocol.” The alpha looked at Jack and Taggart standing off to the side and rolled his eyes. “They aren’t even wearing clean suits.”

“Well, Larry is still missing. What do you propose we do about it?” Allison argued back.

“I don’t care what you do,” Nathan sneered at his mate. “Just do not compromise the safety of this facility while you do it.”

“Look, I didn’t want to go in there in the first place,” Jack interjected, trying to keep the two from tearing each other apart. Tensions were high between the two today and he wasn’t sure what had set them off. Noticing a screen with different colored squiggly lines on it, Jack decided to try and change the subject. “What is that?” he asked, pointing to the screen. Four different windows were labeled with happiness, fear, anger, and depression.

Nathan glanced over before tapping a red dot attached to the skin behind his ear. “It’s my threshold for intolerance,” the alpha muttered dismissively.

“Looks like melanoma,” Jack cringed, wincing as Nathan started to growl lowly. Taking it as their cue, the three of them headed for the door, the omega pausing at a call from the alpha.

“Carter, a moment.”

Giving a nod to Allison and Taggart, Jack promised he’d catch up with them later as he walked back to stand in front of the director.

“What’s up?” he asked curiously. Nathan sighed heavily, slapping some papers down on his desk and getting up to pour himself a drink.

“It’s been a long day.” the man groaned, collapsing down in his seat as he stared at the papers in front of him with unfocused eyes.

“Uh, you wanna talk about it?” Jack inquired, slowly sinking down onto one of the seats nearby and cautiously regarding the alpha. Nathan was on edge about something and he wasn’t sure why he’d been called back. It was also only about one o’clock. If the man was having a bad day already it was not going to be good for anybody.

Nathan paused, giving Jack an assessing look as he weighed his words. “What was it like? To split from your mate?” the alpha asked and Jack felt shocked at the direction the conversation had taken. As he thought about it though, he wondered if this had something to do with Allison.

“Uh… well, it wasn’t easy. Even harder with Zoe involved,” Jack admitted, thinking back to the split with Abbey. “We got together because I was pregnant with Zoe in the first place. After a certain point, we just couldn’t do it anymore.”

“Do you regret it?” Nathan questioned, leaning forward over his desk and looking at the omega intently.
“Nope, not at all,” he answered easily. “We had a big difference of opinion on what an omega should and shouldn’t be doing and I just couldn’t take it anymore. If there’s one thing I regret, it’s leaving Zoe alone as much as I did.” The omega looked at Nathan, studying him as the man nodded absently, one of his fingers flicking unconsciously at the papers. “Nathan, what is this about?” he ventured, hoping the alpha would give him some kind of insight.

“Allison handed me divorce papers today,” Nathan admitted. “She wants to officially end things between us once and for all.”

“And… you don’t want to?” Jack guessed slowly, feeling like he was holding his breath as he gazed at the man.

“I’m not sure what I want, if I’m being completely honest. My mind is telling me one thing while my inner alpha is telling me another.” Jack nodded in understanding, knowing the conflict well. Instincts could be troubling sometimes, but a part of the omega hoped Nathan would sign the papers and finally be unattached from Allison.

“Well, it’s a difficult decision,” he conceded, feeling like he had to say something.

“Mmm,” Nathan hummed noncommittally. Jack shifted as the alpha’s gaze remained focused on him intently, the omega wondering if the man could read his real feelings on his face. “Is your ex-mate the reason you’re on the suppressants?”

“Oh, no,” Jack denied with a shake of his head. This at least was a familiar conversation to have. “Well, not the whole reason. Mostly it was for work. Easier to be a beta in law enforcement than an omega,” he chuckled weakly with a shrug.

“You know they’re unhealthy if taken for too long. Eureka isn’t really the type of place that will judge you for that type of thing,” Nathan pressed, staring at the omega intently. Jack couldn’t help the chuckle that bubbled out of his mouth.

“You sound just like Allison,” he grinned, those exact words having come out of her mouth many times since she’d found out about him. Jack swallowed any further laughter when he caught sight of the sharp and slightly annoyed look that came across Nathan’s face.

“Allie knows about you?” the alpha demanded. Jack frowned in confusion at the sudden change in mood.

“Yeah. She had to give me a physical for my insurance and found out. She’s been insisting I stop taking my pills ever since,” he informed the man, watching as Nathan sank back in his chair and seemed to muse over the information. “Listen, I think I need to get back to the investigation.” Jack excused calmly, slowly standing from his seat and backing towards the door. “That scientist isn’t going to find himself,” he laughed falsely. Nathan didn’t even turn to look at him, still busy being zoned-out at his desk, so Jack took the opportunity to walk out the door, shaking his head at the weirdness of the alpha and putting it down to the stress he was under.

“The last footage we have of Larry, he’s entering the service corridor, then the abbreviated message,” Fargo informed Jack, Allison, and Taggart as the three stood over the beta’s computer, watching Larry crawl into the tunnel over the computer screen. “He never came out.”

“He must be in there somewhere,” Allison insisted.
“I’m starting to wonder what else is down there with him,” Jack mused, remembering the noise down in the tunnel.

“I’ve got an idea,” Taggart admitted darkly, the alpha jogging from the room with urgency. Jack quickly followed after him, wondering what had the man on edge. It seemed like everyone today was unsettled by something.

The three entered Taggart’s lab, the alpha pointing at Lojack in a cage behind a glass wall. Taggart seemed to feel vindicated from the dog’s presence, and he began to think aloud as he paced in the room.

“There’s Lojack in his cage, but I just saw him up on Section 1. At least I thought I did. He gave me the slip.” Taggart paused, muttering curses under his breath as he stalked to a cabinet and pulled out a metal canister. “That’s the least of our problems,” he announced darkly, showing the empty container to Jack and Allison.

“You lost your nanobugs?” Jack clarified, looking at the man in confusion.

“I didn’t lose them,” he explained, putting the canister up again. “They escaped.”

“Where did they go?” Allison demanded, anger and impatience bleeding into her tone. Jack looked down, noticing a large vent right behind the cabinet.

“Could they have gone there?” he asked, pointing to it.

“That’s where Larry went, Taggart!” Allison accused, glaring at the man.

“I don’t know how they got out,” the vet protested. “They were in deactivated sleep mode. It’s not in their programming to initiate commands.”

“Well, can’t you use your remote control thingy and make them march home?” Jack questioned, remembering how easily Taggart had controlled them this morning.

“I tried that. They’re not responding,” the alpha admitted with regret. “They must be out of range.”

“Then you need to get within range,” Allison ordered and Jack groaned unhappily.

“Inside the many miles of dark, creepy service tunnels. That’s just great,” he grumbled. He really hadn’t wanted to go back there, and with Nathan’s denial, he figured he’d be safe from the tiny space for the rest of the day. Looked like that wasn’t going to happen.

“They can’t get too far,” Taggart rationalized, trying to ease the concerns of the two omegas. “The EM umbrella will keep them inside Global.”

“What’s that?” the sheriff asked, having never heard of the thing before now.

“Global Dynamics is protected by an electromagnetic barrier,” Allison explained. “It prevents anyone from broadcasting any non-secured signals out or sending them in.”

“The nanoids can’t breach the barrier without frying their circuitry,” Taggart finished. “We just need to get within range of the remote control.”

“You better get to it then,” Allison ordered as she walked towards the door.

“Where are you going?” Jack asked in confusion.
“To tell Nathan I want to lock the facility down,” Allison called back, her retreating back soon gone from view. Jack shrugged at Taggart, figuring that left the men on their own. The two of them started to collect the things they would need in the tunnel, Jack grabbing his small flashlight the vet had given him earlier.

They entered through Taggart’s lab as the vent entrance was right there. Halfway through the tunnels, sirens from above could be heard and Jack turned to the alpha in alarm.

“What was that?” he asked.

“Lock down,” Taggart informed him as they hastily maneuvered down the cramped space.

“That’s comforting, considering we’re stuck down here,” Jack muttered, moving out of the way as the alpha lugged a large gun of some kind after him. The omega was surprised when the man handed the weapon off to him, Jack taking it with a little but of trepidation. The guns in Eureka were never what they appeared to be.

“Here, burst gun, just in case,” Taggart stated easily.

“Just in case what?” he asked nervously, examining the thing.

“Exactly,” the alpha answered unhelpfully. Jack wondered exactly how much he should be worried about what was down here.

“How many nanoids were in there exactly?” he inquired, glancing nervously down a side tunnel.

“I’m not sure,” Taggart shrugged. “They’re programmed to self-replicate using any source of carbon as fuel.”

“Where would they get the carbon?” Jack questioned, looking at their surroundings. “Is it in the computer stuff? The piping?”

“Carbon is in anything living,” Taggart responded with a shrug. The two stared at each other as the words sank in.

“I’m something living,” Jack whined in upset.

“So am I!” Taggart agreed, letting his nervousness show for the first time since they’d been down there.

“Fantastic,” he muttered, the two heading down the tunnels with more urgency. They paused after a little while when buzzing started to fill the air. “Do you hear that?”

Taggart hummed in agreement, pulling out his little tracking device as they slowly inched forward. “We’re getting closer.”

Jack froze, staring down at a blob of what looked like muscle and meat sitting on the grating ahead of them. “I think we’re already there,” he announced with disgust, Taggart drawing closer to look over his shoulder at the flesh. “It’s Larry, or what’s left of him,” Jack continued, swallowing thickly as he tried not to throw up.

The buzzing picked up in intensity and the two men looked up in alarm. “If you have that nanoid remote control handy, now would be a really good time to use it,” Jack whispered urgently, maneuvering the gun forward as Taggart flipped open the controller and started to fiddle with it. “Anytime.”
“I don’t know how to say this,” Taggart started, and Jack sighed in annoyance.

“It’s not working?” he finished, knowing the answer already.

“That’s how,” Taggart agreed, the two looking up to see Lojack staring at them and growling lowly. Jack raised his weapon as the dog’s eyes glowed an eerie blue.

“That’s not Lojack,” he hissed in alarm. The dog copy charged at them and the omega leveled the gun and fired. The dog exploded into thousands of dead nanoids, the things covering the two men completely with sand like particles. “There will never be enough showers for me to feel clean again,” Jack grimaced, shaking the dead robots out of his hair and clothes.

“Get the hell off me!” Allison’s voice suddenly echoed down the tunnel. Jack glanced at Taggart in surprise before they both crawled to the nearest vent opening. Taggart busted down the metal grate, the two falling into the corridor and running towards the sound of the omega’s protests. Allison’s voice lead them straight to Nathan’s office and inside, Jack was surprised to find the alpha cornering Allison against the wall and trying to assault her.

Jack growled, knowing this thing wasn’t the same alpha he’d been speaking to earlier as Nathan would never do that to someone, especially not his soon-to-be ex-mate. Raising the gun again, Jack shot the copy without hesitation, watching in satisfaction as it exploded into nanoids like the other one had.

“What the hell was that thing?” Allison demanded, sounding upset and a little scared.

“Things,” Jack corrected as they hastily made their way out of the office. “Taggart’s nanoids can apparently make copies of us now.”

“You got to be kidding me,” she muttered in disbelief.

“Nope, they’re on a binge. We found Larry, or what’s left of him,” he explained, trying to get everything out at once.

“He’s dead?” Allison exclaimed, looking back at Jack in shock.

“Devoured,” he confirmed. “And they’re using his body as a carbon source.”

“Then where’s the real Nathan?” she demanded.

“He’s got to be somewhere,” Jack stated, hoping the alpha was eaten like Larry was.

“Dead or alive, we have to find him,” Allison ordered.

“We will. Preferably alive,” he stressed, really not liking the thought of Nathan being dead somewhere. “How do these things work?” he asked, turning to Taggart. “One is safe, but a million can eat Larry?”

“It’s called distributed computing. Each individual nanoid is like a brain cell,” the alpha explained. “Now, the more there are, the smarter they become. They communicate with each other over very low frequencies and share the thinking workload.”

“Yeah, but they’re just tiny computers, right?” Jack double-checked, trying to understand clearly. “I mean, they run off a program.”

“Right,” Taggart confirmed. “Repair and replicate.”
“So they need fuel. Excellent,” Jack groaned, coming to a stop. The others gathered around him as he leaned against a nearby wall and tried to think.

“So that’s what it was going to do?” Allison asked hysterically. “Take my carbon and run around looking like me?”

“I don’t think so,” Jack denied, thinking about the alpha’s copy again. “I mean, the Nathan copy kissed you, or at least tried to, right?” The omega internally grimaced, a ping of jealousy twinging his mood, but he pushed it down to focus on the issue at hand. “I mean, kissing can’t be a part of their programming,” he reasoned.

“No, but it does show their exponential leap in intelligence and a great taste in women,” Taggart added, wiggling his eyebrows at Allison with a grin. Jack rolled his eyes, not in the mood for the banter at the moment.

“It knew it was me,” Allison insisted. “I could feel it.”

“Okay,” Jack accepted. “So Nathan is the key. And that monitor in his office is still working, which means he’s still alive,” he recalled, picturing the screen in the office they had just left. The four colored lines had still been activated, so he chose to take that as a good sign. Allison glanced at her pager as it went off.

“You’re right. They just found him in Section 3,” she announced. The three of them moved with renewed intent towards the elevator.

Arriving at Section 3, they were met with several guards standing outside a doorway.

“Where is he?” Allison ordered.

“In the master control room,” one of the guards informed her.

“Thank god,” she sighed. “Open the door.”

“He’s locked himself inside,” the same guard regretfully admitted.

“No,” Jack denied, eyeing the doorway. “He’s locked us outside, or one of them has,” he allowed, knowing this could be another clone. “We’ve got to get this door open. What’s in this room?” he asked, turning to Taggart.

“The computer mainframe,” the alpha answered, looking stressed as he stared at the doorway.

“Would the security system be in there?” he questioned.

“And the EM barrier,” Taggart confirmed, catching on. “He could turn it off.” The nanoids knew they were trapped inside and were finding a way to escape, Jack realized with dread.

“Not without help,” Allison interjected, looking between them. “Even with the codes, it has to be shut down manually from three different entry points by someone with full security clearance.”

“Someone like Nathan?” he reiterated, realizing what the nanoids were doing. He turned as the guards finally hacked the door, raising his gun and leading the team in as they scouted the area. It was completely clear except for some bloody clothes. Jack felt bad for sighing in relief when he realized they were nowhere close to the suit Nathan had been wearing earlier. Instead they probably belonged to one of the techs that worked in here.
“They’ve got Dr. Stark at exit 5….Wait, exit 7 and exit 9,” one of the guards announced, listening attentively to his ear piece.

“Those are the shut off points,” Allison stated worriedly.

“They’re making a break for it,” Jack agreed, looking at the monitors around them.

“The EM barrier’s down,” Taggart added, looking at one of the screens himself. “There’s nothing to prevent them from leaving the building.”

“Sir?” one of the guards turned to Jack. “All exit points have been breached. We have multiple Starks outside of the building,” he informed, seemingly surprised at the events unfolding.

Jack nodded in acknowledgement, following Allison as she walked purposefully out of the room.

“We have to find them,” she directed, marching down the hallways.

“They’re replicated exponentially. By this time tomorrow there could be thousands,” Taggart stated. “Next week there could be millions.”

“Millions of Starks?” Jack repeated in disbelief. “That’s horrible to think about.”

“Well, we obviously can’t wait that long,” Allison interjected, interrupting the two men.

“Okay, weapons. What do we have that can knock them all out?” he inquired, turning to Taggart.

“The EM burst guns are short range. We’ll never get all of them,” the man brainstormed.

“Do you have anything bigger?” Jack questioned.

“Aside from a nuclear bomb? No,” Taggart denied.

“You have a nuclear bomb?” he asked, glancing back at the alpha in disbelief.

“I didn’t say that,” Taggart quickly denied, proving that he did actually have one. Who knew why, but Jack wasn’t going to think about that right now.

“Sound the warning system. Eureka’s on lockdown,” Allison ordered a passing guard. “No one goes outside until every Stark is stopped.”

Jack paused, suddenly hit with a realization he should have had minutes before.

“Carter?” Allison inquired, noticing his halt.

“That’s the answer,” he announced with mounting excitement.

“What?” she demanded.

“Nathan,” he informed them. “Why replicate him? Why not Larry, or the IT worker, or Lojack?” he asked.

“Well, they found the perfect specimen,” Taggart stated with a shrug as if it wasn’t surprising. “You don’t go back to dogs after that.”

“But he’s not perfect,” Jack argued, knowing the man was as human as anybody else.

“Have you seen his abs? Damn close,” the alpha countered with a scoff.
“True,” he agreed offhandedly. “My point is though, we can’t stop every Nathan out there, but we can stop the one in here.”

“Every minute we’re looking for him, they’re out there multiplying,” Allison argued back. Jack ignored the look she shot him for his agreement with Taggart’s observation.

“But if we can find the original, if we can find Nathan, then maybe we can figure out a connection,” Jack insisted.

“Well, where do we start to look?” Allison asked, coming to an agreement with him.

Jack sighed in defeat, knowing he wasn’t going to like this. Taggart gave him a sympathetic, but expectant look at his hesitation. “I know, I know. Don’t even say it,” Jack whined, wishing he didn’t have to go.

“I never, ever want to come down here again,” the omega grumbled as he and Taggart crawled through the vents once more.

“Looks like they’ve all gone,” the alpha muttered, scanning his tracking device and ignoring Jack’s complaints. The omega really hoped Nathan was down here; one, so he knew the man was actually alive, and two, so that they could solve this nanoids issue. “Hang on, I’m getting something,” the vet stated and Jack stopped to look at the man’s device over his shoulder. The handheld showed the outline of the vents they were in and a pulsing green dot further ahead in a secluded room.

“Is it Nathan?” Jack inquired hopefully, looking between the alpha and his equipment.

“Not sure. It’s dead ahead and not moving,” Taggart admitted and the omega shuffled further ahead, eager to move forward and see what they could find. The ‘not moving’ aspect had him fearing the worst, but he forged ahead regardless.

Rounding a corner, Jack’s eyes widened as he spotted Nathan slumped against a support column. Hurrying into the room, the omega hovered over him, checking for a pulse and holding the alpha’s face in his hands as he tilted it this way in that, making sure the man was okay.

“He’s still alive,” he announced with relief, happy to see there were no marks or bruises on the man. Taggart nodded, quickly helping to haul the man back through the tunnels and into fresh air.

“The last thing I remember was Larry attacking me,” Nathan recounted when he finally woke up, the alpha rubbing his head in pain as he tried to collect his thoughts. “After that it’s all a dream. One minute, I’m kissing Allison and the next, I was a dog,” he stated as they followed him up a set of stairs to his office. Jack frowned and looked away at the mention of the contact with Allison, telling himself he had no right to be jealous. Nothing was even going on between him and Nathan for him to be jealous of the man’s interactions with his ex-mate.

“I think somehow your dreams are becoming reality,” Jack muttered, trying to stay on task as Nathan sat down in his chair. “And I think it has something to do with that little glowing mole thingy,” he went on, motioning to the red dot on Nathan’s neck.

“A neural interface system,” Nathan explained. “It transmits my thought commands directly to the
“Is it possible the signals got crossed?” he asked, looking between the director and Taggart. Both men knew this science better than he did.

“I’m going to kill Fargo,” Nathan muttered just as said beta walked out of the elevator. Fargo’s face paled and he tried to retreat silently, but Nathan was aware of his presence without even having to turn around. “Get back here!” he growled, waiting for Fargo to come around his desk.

“How was I supposed to know that my Mental Mouse and Taggart’s nanobugs shared the same frequency?” the beta argued petulantly, facing the alpha.

“Okay, so turn it off. Problem solved,” Allison suggested, Nathan reaching up to remove the interface immediately.

“Wait! Wait!” Jack interrupted before the alpha could pull it off.

“What? We need to sever the connection,” Nathan agreed, looking at the sheriff in confusion.

“Unless it’s our only connection,” Jack countered, thinking quickly. “I mean, think about it. Your doubles are still out there and they’re no longer responding to Taggart’s remote control, so that gizmo might be our only way of reaching them.” The omega watched as everyone in the room considered his words.

“Your thoughts, your subconscious thoughts, and your dreams must have been transmitted into their programming,” Fargo added, agreeing with Jack.

“Okay, so they’re responding to the last command they got before the signal went weak?” the omega clarified.

“In theory, yeah,” the beta confirmed.

“Okay, what was the overall theme of your last dream?” Jack asked, turning to Nathan. The alpha avoided eye contact, seemingly reluctant to share. “Come on, Nathan,” he urged, knowing they didn’t have much time to figure this out. “This is no time to be bashful.”

“Well, there were some wish fulfillment fantasies in there,” the alpha finally admitted. “Allie, family… and some other stuff.”

“Anything more specific?” Jack insisted.

“The usual,” Nathan replied, obviously growing a bit uncomfortable with the conversation. “Power, success, control over everything.”

Jack paused, trying to make sure he heard that last phrase right. “You dream about world domination?”

Nathan smirked. “I dream about dominating a lot of things, Jack,” the alpha leered and the omega felt himself blush as various fantasies of his own popped into his head. The others in the room shifted uncomfortable, Allison herself giving the two men a judging stare.

Jack’s radio started to beep and he grabbed it in relief, breaking the awkwardness that had settled in the room. “Go for Carter,” he answered.

“Everyone’s off the streets, except a whole lot of Nathan Starks,” Jo replied. “You may want to get
“How many?” he asked, wondering how big this thing had gotten.

“Too many to count. Over.” Worry and stress filled his deputy’s voice and Jack knew it must be getting pretty bad.

“Alright. We’re working on it. Hang tight,” he answered, ending the call. Turning his attention back to the company he was in, Jack tried to think of a plan. “So, assuming that we can contact these things through Nathan, what do we do?”

“Stop them from communicating with each other,” Fargo contributed after a moment’s thought.

“They’d be reduced to single cells. No threat at all,” Taggart tacked on, continuing the idea.

“So how do we do that?” Allison asked.

“Interference,” Taggart answered, beginning to pace as he thought aloud. “A loud enough, low frequency blast of sound. Something below human hearing. Say, in the two hertz range.”

“Two hertz?” Nathan repeated in disbelief. “Generating any volume, you’d need a massive speaker, at least eight feet in diameter.”

“No,” Jack corrected, thinking back to this morning. “Bigger’s not always better,” he grinned.

“I beg to differ, Carter,” Nathan countered with a raised eyebrow.

Jack flushed, avoiding eye contact as he walked out of the room. “Oh, just come on.”

Back at City Hall, Jack positioned everyone to combat the nanoid threat. “You sit here,” he directed, maneuvering Nathan into a chair in the middle of the room.

“I still don’t understand what we’re doing,” the alpha grumbled taking his seat.

“Okay,” Jack nodded, ignoring Nathan for a moment as he turned to Henry, Spencer, Fargo, and Zoe watching from the sidelines. “You four, I need you to go into the booth. Shut it, lock it, and wait for my signal... Thanks, Henry,” he added, watching the older alpha direct the younger adults into the small room.

Turning back to Nathan, Jack kneeled down in front of the man and looked at him earnestly. “I need you to focus on bringing them here.” He watched as the alpha seemed to try and do what he asked, closing his eyes as he directed his thoughts.

“Focus, Nathan,” Allison repeated.

“Command them with your mind,” Taggart crouched down next to the alpha, giving his own input. “Summon them with your will.” Jack rolled his eyes, realizing the other alpha was just distracting Nathan’s efforts with his directions. He smirked a bit when Nathan glared at Taggart in annoyance, the vet sheepishly backing off of his efforts.

“Just concentrate,” Jack repeated, placing a comforting hand on the alpha’s arm. He knew Nathan must be more than a little stressed with what was going on. Not even half an hour ago he had been unconscious in the bowels of G.D. and now here he was trying to summon a legion of lookalikes
“It’s not working,” Nathan growled in frustration. “I can tell it’s not working.”

“He’s too focused,” Taggart scoffed. “His rational mind is overruling his subconscious. All ego, no id.”

Jack thought he might know what the Australian alpha was talking about. Nathan’s mind was too controlled. They needed to get to the emotions underneath if they wanted to spark anything. Putting on his best angry face, Jack glared at Nathan. “Hey. You are a stupid, selfish, egomaniacal sack of crap, and I am astonished that you got as far as you have,” he insulted harshly.

Nathan stared at him, smiling slightly as one eyebrow lifted, clearly unimpressed. “You’re a horrible liar, Jack. It’s actually kind of cute.”

Jack groaned as those around him started to chuckle under their breaths. Even his own daughter and Henry were giggling in amusement from the booth. Okay, time for plan B. He wasn’t too comfortable with this one, but based off of nano Stark’s earlier actions, it might spark something in the man.

“Spencer, could you play something romantic?” he asked, looking towards the younger omega.

“No problem,” Spencer replied, starting to shuffle through some disks.

Jack turned to Allison awkwardly as the music started to play. “May I have this dance?” he asked, the other omega obviously surprised by his request.

“Right place, wrong time,” she replied, staring at him in confusion.

“Just roll with it,” he urged, stepping into her space, grabbing one of her hands and wrapping his other around her waist. She fell into step with him quickly, the omega somewhat surprised by how fast she took control and started to lead them in a slow sway on the dance floor. “Have...um, have I ever told you how amazing you are?” he complimented nervously, knowing Nathan was glaring at them from where he sat.

“No,” Allison said slowly, giving him a bewildered look as she assessed his face, trying to figure out what he was doing.

“You’re strong, independent, and smarter than 10 women put together,” he continued, not lying, but trying to figure out what would irk the alpha beside them. He was super aware of those gray eyes boring into the side of his head and he would rather be anywhere else other than right here dancing with the man’s ex-mate.

“That’s very flattering. I-” Allison smiled, smelling pleased and interested as she gazed up at him. He saw the moment when she connected his actions to the situation though. “I know what you’re doing,” she whispered into his ear. Jack sighed in relief that she picked up on it, but grew a little nervous when he spotted her smile turn sly and cunning. “If you really wanna sell it though, you’ve got to put in a little more,” she purred before grabbing his head in a surprisingly strong grip and kissing him deeply.

Jack yelped in surprise at the sudden move, the noise cut off as his mouth was engulfed by the woman’s lips. He knew she was trying to really ensnare Nathan’s jealousy like he had been aiming for, but she was putting a whole lot more into this than he had originally considered. He squeezed his eyes shut as the other omega made the kiss more intense, sticking her tongue between his lips intently. A simple kiss would have been one thing, but this was going a little far in his opinion.
“You can stop now,” Nathan sounding bored with the production, but over Allison’s scent of arousal he could perceive the alpha’s rising anger at their actions. Allison ignored him, continuing to devour Jack’s mouth with singular intent. “Allie, stop! Now!” Nathan growled, sounding incredibly irritated as the kiss went on.

“It’s working. They’re coming your way, Carter,” Jo’s small voice could be heard over his radio and Jack realized that as much as he wanted to, he couldn’t stop Allison until the copies all got there.

The other omega’s hand, the one not holding his head in position, drifted down to his ass, giving it a firm squeeze. Jack squeaked, deciding enough was enough and pushing Allison away, gasping for breath now that his mouth wasn’t otherwise occupied. The doors of the hall burst open, revealing a second Nathan Stark standing in the doorway.

“It worked,” Allison muttered, sounding somewhat disappointed. Jack ignored her, watching as more and more Nathans poured into the room. Every one of them wore angry scowls on their faces.

“I look pissed,” the real Nathan stated, the man standing behind the two omegas.

“Oh my God! Look at all of them!” Henry exclaimed from the booth.

“Wait for it,” Jack urged as the hundreds of alphas got closer to them, knowing they needed all of the copies in the room for the plan to work.

He and Allison yelled in shock as the Nathans roughly separated them. Jack found himself in the middle of a group of growling alphas, the copies grabbing him in different places. One of them picked up his legs and wrapped them around the clone’s waist, while another supported his upper half against the alpha’s broad chest. One of the Nathans jerked his head back by his hair and he felt three different faces bury themselves in his neck as it was bared, licking and nibbling at the skin, causing him to whine and gasp at the actions. The manhandling and petting was getting to his senses, quickly overwhelming the omega as sensations erupted all over his body.

Over the commotion of shouting in the room, Jack heard Jo inform him over the radio that all the copies were inside. Jack gathered himself and inhaled deeply before yelling as loud as he could over the cacophony. “Now! Spencer, now!”

The other omega must have heard him because all of the Nathans groping him suddenly vanished as the speakers went off, breaking apart and dropping Jack in the process. He fell and hit the ground hard, no longer supported by the various hands that had been holding him up. He took a moment to breath, closing his eyes as he ran his hands over his face.

He was going to dream about this later, he just knew it. The sensation of those large hands running over him and the attention to his neck had him willing down the erection that had started to form. His daughter was in the room, and she did not need to see any of that.

“Dr. Stark, are you okay?” Fargo asked, and Jack peered over behind his hands, watching the beta hover anxiously over the alpha as Nathan slowly got to his feet from where he had also apparently fallen to the ground somehow.

“Fargo, never, ever, ever mess with my cerebral cortex again,” the director ordered sternly, brushing deactivated nanoids from his suit. He yanked off the small dot behind his ear and dropped it into Fargo’s hand. With that, the alpha quickly stalked out of the room, not looking back as he left.
Jack groaned, dropping his head tiredly back against the floor.

The dance was in full swing later that night, the music throbbing as people danced and Vincent ran around making sure everyone had food. Jack stood with Zoe next to one of the food tables, taking everything in as they looked around.

“You know, I hate to admit it, but Spencer’s pretty good,” he agreed, nodding at his daughter for the good work the two had obviously put in to this.

“The kid’s my ticket,” she stated and Jack gave her a look of disbelief.

“The kid’s your ticket?” he repeated with a scoff.

“Way to be supportive,” Zoe scolded lightly.

“Oh,” Jack gave her a caring, but stern look. “You’re going to be your own ticket,” he assured her encouragingly. His daughter smiled, pleased at the show of confidence in her abilities. They went quiet for a bit, gazing around the room again as people passed by.

“So, you and Allison,” Zoe probed, Jack giving her a startled look at the change of subject.

“Me and Allison what?” he asked, not knowing where she was going with this.

“That was some kiss,” she mumbled, looking up at him assessingly.

“Oh, no. That wasn’t what you think,” he protested quickly, not wanting her to get the wrong idea.

“Mmm hmm,” she hummed, her smile turning smug. “Bet you wished it was Dr. Stark, huh?” she teased. Jack choked on air.

“W-what?!” he asked slightly shrill, trying to keep his voice down so as not to attract attention.

“Why would you say that?”

“Oh, Jo and I talk,” she admitted. “And honestly,” she added, seeming to consider her words careful. “I think it’s time. It’s not like you and dad are going to get back together.” Jack stared at his daughter in shock, realizing this was her way of giving him the go ahead to date someone new. He looked up, trying to think of something to say when his eyes caught on Nathan entering the room and talking with a few guests. Zoe followed her mother’s eyes and smirked and who he was looking at. “Just don’t make out in front of me again,” she ordered with a smile, Jack gaping after her as she waltzed away.

Jack shook his head, walking aimlessly through the crowd before happening to run into Henry.

“What do you think?” his friend asked, gesturing to the room at large with a proud grin.

“Um, it’s nice,” Jack allowed with a small smile, watching as Henry seemed shocked by his words.

“Nice?” Henry repeated in disbelief like Jack was crazy for thinking so.

“Well, with this crowd, I expected, you know, a little more than centerpieces and linen napkins,” he explained, understanding filling the alpha’s face.

“It sounds like you’re starting to get used to this crowd,” Henry laughed, looking at the omega as if he knew something Jack didn’t. “Spencer!” the alpha yelled. “Ready?”
Jack turned, watching as the alpha's assistant grabbed a controller of some sort. The music suddenly picked up and Jack gasped as projections of fireworks and the night sky illuminated the ceiling. Colors and designs filled the room as the fireworks went off, everyone dazzled by the display above them.

“Wow,” the omega whispered, smiling at the pleased look Henry wore. “Great job,” he complimented, clapping for the alpha as others in the room picked the action up as well. Henry squeezed Jack’s arm in gratitude before another person caught his attention and he left to continue socializing.

Jack stared in wonder at the fireworks for another moment before lowering his gaze, his eyes catching on Nathan standing nearby and talking with Allison. The omega felt his spirits wilt a little at the picture the two made standing so close together.

“I guess that kiss made him realize what he was missing, huh Sheriff?” Taggart stated from beside him, and Jack looked over at the vet.

“Yeah, I guess,” Jack muttered softly, trying to keep his disappointment from being obvious.

The two men were distracted by the appearance of Jo walking up to them, the alpha dressed in a beautiful black and red dress. Taggart looked her over with a bashful grin.

“You look unbelievable,” he complimented, Jo smiling at him in return.

“Thank you,” she replied. “Do you want to dance?” she asked hesitantly, appearing nervous as she regarded the other alpha.

Taggart puffed himself up, looking incredibly pleased at the invitation. “I’d be honored,” he agreed, offering his arm to the deputy. The woman eagerly took it and the two headed out to the dance floor, leaving Jack alone again in the sea of bodies.

Sighing, the sheriff wandered back over to the tables, his eyes drifting down to his hand where his wedding band still habitually sat on his finger. Staring at it for a moment, he braced himself, sliding the ring off with some difficulty and assessing it in his palm once he’d finally removed it.

He was tired of being alone. Zoe was right, it was time to look for something new. With determination, Jack set the ring down on the table and left it there, feeling like a weight had finally come off his shoulders.

“Looking offly lonely there, Sheriff,” a male voice spoke up behind him and Jack whirled around, coming face to face with Nathan, the alpha smiling softly at him as the omega stared at him in surprise.

“Nathan. What are you doing here?” Jack asked feeling confused.

“Well, I was hoping I could ask you to dance,” the alpha stated, looking at his expectantly.

“Me?” the omega gaped wondering why the man wasn't with Allison still.

Instead of answering, Nathan simply held out his hand in invitation. Jack glanced around, spotting Jo and Zoe in the crowd mouthing encouragement and thumbs up at him as they noticed what was happening, Taggart staring at him in a small amount of shock when he followed Jo's gaze. Deciding to take the opportunity, Jack turned back to the alpha. Placing his hand in Nathan's larger one, the omega allowed himself to be guided forward onto the dance floor, the alpha smiling down at him as he pulled him into a slow dance. Jack stared up at him, mesmerized by fireworks flashing
behind the alpha and shining flashes of color down on the pair.

He may have a few questions, but Jack figured they could wait for later. For now, he wanted to enjoy the moment he had in the alpha's arms.
5 O'clock Somewhere

Chapter Notes

I am back guys. So sorry for the long wait. It's been a whirlwind of moving across the country, starting a brand new job, and getting settled. I do appreciate the support I've seen and I've been trying to get back for a while. Summer has finally hit, so expect more again.
I do hope you enjoy this chapter.
Two more until the end of season 1.

Jack stared down at the bottle in his hand and weighed his choices. It shouldn't be this hard to make a decision. With a defeated sigh he resolutely twisted the cap open and downed one of the little pills.

“Mom! Hurry up!” Zoe yelled, banging on the glass wall separating them and effectively shattering the quiet that had been his morning.

“I’m coming! Hold your horses,” he called back, stashing the bottle away in the cabinet before turning to face his daughter as SARAH slid the wall open.

Zoe stalked in, her hair in disarray and a glare in her eyes as she plucked her toothbrush out of the cup and proceeded to half-heartedly clean her teeth.

Jack smirked and quickly retreated to the living room, grabbing his keys and holster before heading for the door which SARAH helpfully opened as he approached.

“I’ll be back tonight!” he called out, hearing Zoe’s sound, more of an angry grumble, of acceptance as he left. Definitely not a morning person, he thought as he climbed into his jeep.

Making for the town, Jack smiled as he saw Henry on his large radio-tower thing and couldn’t resist pulling over to say hello.

“Morning, Henry!” he called, pulling the vehicle to a stop and leaning out the window with a smile.

The alpha looked up to see who’d called him and practically grunted a hello back. Concerned at the lackluster response, Jack climbed out of his car and approached the tower, leaning against it as he took in his friend.

Dark circles traced his eyes and his uniform was rumpled with what looked like grass stains on the back. The man may wear the same outfit everyday, but Jack would swear that was the same one he’d been in last night.

“Did you sleep out here?”

Instead of an answer, Henry gave him an evil eye and continued to pack up some of his equipment. Feeling awkward, Jack bent down to help, gathering up a few cords that looked like they were just laying around. With what he hoped was an easy-going smile, he handed them to his friend who stared at them and then seemed to deflate with a gusty sigh.
“Thanks,” Henry muttered, taking the cords and stuffing them into the bag.

“Yeah. You okay?” he asked cautiously, watching as his friend straightened, the alpha’s fists clenching and relaxing over and over. The man was high-strung for some reason and the last thing Jack needed was to incite him into some kind of rage.

“I’m-I’m fine,” Henry gritted out through his teeth. “Just...tired.” Jack nodded, stepping back cautiously towards his jeep.

“Uh huh. Well, I’ll let you go then. Try to get some rest,” he entreated, climbing back into his jeep. Henry grunted and went back to slamming some of his metal containers around without another word and Jack sighed, feeling on edge as he shut the door and watched the alpha from afar.

It seemed Zoe wasn’t the only one to wake up in a bad mood today. With a shake of his head he started up his car and headed for town, hoping Henry would be less sleep-deprived when he saw him later.

The town...the town was in some small state of chaos when he pulled into the sheriff’s station later. Several kids were trying to get a flying robot to fly toilet paper around a house and into a tree, the group bolting like demons when his car pulled up; several people were making out in the middle of the street, several articles of clothing being shed before he ran up and managed to stop them and sending them quickly on their way, though not before asking him if he wanted to join and if he’d bring the handcuffs. He refused to blush, instead making his way to the station and ignoring everything around him until he managed to run inside.

Jo was reading some military magazine, popping her bubble-gum, her feet propped up on the table and looking like she didn’t have a care in the world. Jack did a double-take when he noticed she’d let her hair down. Jo never let her hair down.

“Hey,” she greeted off-handedly, smacking her gum loudly.

“Hey.” he returned nervously. “You, uh, notice people acting weird around town?”

“Nope.”

Yeah, whatever was happening, Jo was definitely infected by it.

“You look… nice today,” he tried, approaching the alpha’s desk with forced casualness.

“Oh yeah,” she beamed, straightening quickly in her seat and running fingers through her hair. “I felt like keeping it down today. No law against that is there?” she teased.

“Uh, no-“

“Hey! We should go dancing tonight,” she exclaimed cheerfully, as if she’d just had the best idea in the world. His deputy bounced over to him and grabbed his wrists, swinging them around in a little jig as he gaped at her.

Jack gently pulled his hands back and shoved them around himself defensively, peering closely at the alpha’s eyes as she continued to guilelessly smile at him.

“Don’t take this the wrong way, but are you drunk?” he asked.
“No,” she grinned and then gasped theatrically. Jack may or may not have jumped in surprise at the sound. “Do you know what sounds great right now!?” The omega frantically shook his head, backing up into his desk as Jo advanced on him energetically.

“One of those little frappuccino things. You know, with the caramel syrup and cinnamon sprinkles and whipped cream. So much whipped cream.” She giggled. Actually giggled and Jack was starting to wonder if the world was actually ending now. “You want one? I can go make a run?” she continued. He could barely open his mouth before she squealed in excitement and bounced off, grabbing her wallet as she went.

He stared after her, barely having a second to grasp what happened before a large man in a floral shirt burst in, repeatedly banging on the little bell at the front desk, all while staring impetuously at Jack the entire time. The omega groaned, reluctantly slinking over to the desk and wishing he’d stayed in bed today.

“I want that son of a bitch arrested!” the man roared, finally leaving off the bell.

“Good morning to you too, Seth,” Jack greeted easily, sliding the bell down the counter and out of reach of the other man’s fidgety hands. “Want to tell me what happened?”

“Fargo happened,” Seth seethed. “That sneaky little misanthrope cut my speaker wires and knocked me out with a shovel.”

Jack fought hard not to roll his eyes. This little feud between Seth and Fargo was getting out of control. The two men were neighbors and apparently Seth liked to play music to his plants at night, at a rather loud volume, which only ticked Fargo off as he tried to sleep at the same time. He’d been called out to deal with these two for the past several nights now and at this rate he was just going to lock both of them up so that he could enjoy a quiet evening for once.

“Fargo knocked you out?” he asked, eyeing the man’s stature in disbelief. The squirrely beta was a small guy and Jack wouldn’t be surprised if Seth could pick Fargo up and toss him with little effort if he wanted to.

“He did it, Sheriff! I’m telling you he’s a lunatic. I want him arrested.”

“Uh-huh. Tell you what, Seth. I’ll talk with Fargo, and if I think he deserves it, I’ll arrest him,” Jack stated, trying to appease the big man.

“Good, cause if you don’t do something, I will,” Seth growled.

Jack sighed in annoyance, folding his am on the front desk and leaning his head on his hand as he looked up at the scientist in front of him.

“Was that a threat, Seth?”

The man gulped, realizing that he may have gone a little far and backing away towards the door.

“No,” he squeaked before dashing away and Jack let his head thunk to the wood below him.

“It’s gonna be one of those days,” he lamented.

It took a matter of moments to track Fargo down at GD. Jack found him in one of the medical
scanning tubes, sleeping of all things. The omega got a small amount of joy in slamming his hand down on the mat, startling the young beta awake.

“No, five more minutes mom,” he groaned, rolling over with a pout. Jack smirked before turning on his serious face again.

“Hey, I talked to Seth Osborne. Sounds like someone had a busy night.”

“You need to arrest that man. He’s a menace,” Fargo grumbled, looking up at Jack blearily.

“He says the same thing about you.”

“Me? I just unplugged a couple of speaker cables and he freaked out. Next thing I know, I’m waking up in a puddle of my own drool,” the beta explained through a loud yawn.

“Wait a second, he knocked you out?” Jack clarified.

“Yeah, so why don’t you go bother him and let me sleep?”

“Why?” Fargo whined pathetically, still moving to follow the sheriff’s orders.

“Cause you just admitted to trespassing and vandalism,” Jack explained sweetly.

Fargo, finally on his feet and still very bleary-eyed, clamped onto Jack’s arm like a limpet and refused to budge. Sighing in annoyance, Jack walked to the nearest elevator, the beta following along docilely, though still hugging his arm like a pillow.

The elevator dinged pleasantly as it arrived and the doors opened, Jack stepping in with his attachment before noticing that the thing was already occupied by a glowering alpha.

“Nathan,” Jack greeted, unable to resist a smile at seeing the other man. The two had barely spoken or seen each other since the dance they shared a few days ago and if the omega still had dreams about multiple Nathans holding him down, he’d never breathe a single word of it to anyone. SARAH was keeping her mouth shut too, though the sassy comments some mornings could be done without.

“Jack.” The purr in his voice made pleasant shivers run up the sheriff’s spine, although he stiffened when the alpha turned a sharp glare to the beta hanging on his arm. “Why is he hanging on you?”

“Uh,” Jack sheepishly ran a hand through his hair, embarrassed, though he couldn’t really say why. Fargo seemed dead to the world, ignoring everything and content to snuggle into the omega’s arm like it was going to be taken from him. A low growl permeated the elevator and Jack stared at Nathan when he realized it was coming from him. The alpha sounded ticked off and looked like he wanted to rip Fargo a new one.

“I’ve got to take Fargo in. He’s got to answer some things about what happened last night,” Jack explained, exhaling in relief when the doors finally opened on the lobby floor. He dragged Fargo out quickly, acutely aware of Nathan stalking him every step of the way.

“No,” Nathan grumbled. “You can’t take him.”

“Nathan, I have to. It’s my job,” Jack stated, realizing that Nathan must be affected by whatever got
the town as well. There was no reason the man would be this angry with them otherwise.

“Hello boys,” a woman’s voice purred from behind. Jack turned to see Allison sitting perched up on a desk. The colorful dress she was in was hitched up on the bottom, showing more leg then Jack cared to see at the moment.

“Uh, hi, Allison. You look nice.” Jack gulped as she turned what could only be described as bedroom eyes on him, her scent picking up as she gave him a good once over and smiled.

“I feel nice,” she said suggestively.

“You’re late,” Nathan growled at the omega, moving to stand between her and Jack and distracting the woman enough to give him a bit of a breather.

“Hmmm, lovely isn’t it? I suggest you try it sometime. Oh no, wait, that would get in the way of your work wouldn’t it?” she snapped testily.

“Oh please, like your career isn’t important to you? I wasn’t the only one who didn’t know when to stop working, Allie.”

Feeling uncomfortable and like this was about to blow up into a much larger thing, Jack tried to quickly drag Fargo away.

“Don’t even try it, Jack. We’re not finished,” Nathan commanded, his eyes staying glued to his ex. The sheriff groaned, but stopped and turned back to the two, realizing that the alpha was not going to make this easy.

“Don’t talk to him like that. He can do whatever he wants,” Allison reprimanded.

“I know that!”

“I’m sure you do,” she said scathingly. “I bet you love that.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“You know exactly what I mean, Nathan. You couldn’t wait to sign those papers could you? Bet it didn’t even take you a second to pick up the pen.”

“Hey, I did what you wanted. You wanted to be free of me so badly, well here you are. Completely free to do whatever or whoever you want to, and I won’t say a damn thing.”

Nathan held up his hands mockingly and Allison growled.

“Admit it, Allie. You never wanted a mating. You just did whatever was expected of a nice little omega. It wasn’t until after the mating that you realized it wasn’t what you wanted. You weren’t ‘free’ anymore. Like I ever did anything to hold you back.”

“You are such an ass!”

“At least I have one,” Nathan snapped back before Allison gave him a resound slap across the face. Fuming, she stormed away without a glance backwards. Jack could literally feel the anger coming off Nathan in waves and he tried to remain still and not draw attention to himself.

Fargo decided that was the moment he wanted to get more comfortable and he shifted around Jack until he could smother his face into the omega’s chest, giving off a contented sound as he settled in again and closed his eyes, his arms wrapped around the sheriff’s body. Jack stared down at the
man in bemusement, not having taken him to be such a cuddler.

“Fuck that.”

“Wha-?” Jack startled as a large hand grabbed the collar of Fargo’s shirt and pulled him away abruptly.

“Keep your hands to yourself,” Nathan practically roared into the now very much awake face of Fargo. The beta eeped and shrank into himself, giving a hasty nod as he stared up at the angry alpha before him.

“Nathan!” Jack pushed himself between the two, placing a steady hand on the alpha’s chest and moving Fargo protectively behind him. “Fargo is in police custody now, which means he is under my protection. I’m gonna need you to back off.”

Nathan grumbled, but finally seemed to relent, breaking his glare of death from Fargo and turning to Jack with softer, but still slightly intense gaze.

“I don’t like it when he touches you like that,” the alpha explained shortly. Jack nodded in understanding, though this whole situation with the town was leaving him really confused.

“Okay, but I need to get him to the station so I can take his statement. Nothing’s gonna happen!” Jack quickly explained when it looked like Nathan was going to protest angrily. “He’ll be behind bars and Jo will keep an eye on him.” It took several moments, but the alpha finally seemed to relent, backing off with a growled mutter too low for Jack to hear. Taking it as his cue, Jack quickly backed Fargo away towards the front door, keeping a wary eye on Nathan the entire time until they finally made it to the jeep.

Jack settled Fargo into the cell and locked the door, trying to figure out what could be making the town so crazy, or at least crazier than normal. He was just thinking of calling Henry up, when Jo stomped in, pushing Seth Osborne before.

“He was trying to burn down Fargo’s house,” she explained a little too happily. Jack sighed, wondering if this could get any worse.

“I’ll kill him!” Fargo exclaimed, trying to climb the bars like some kind of demented monkey.

“Not if I kill you first!” Seth shot back, dragging Jo forwards as the two men batted at each other like children through the bars.

“Knock it off!” Jack shouted, feeling completely done with these two idiots.

“Want to lock them up together and see what happens?” Jo asked with a smile. Okay, there was the Jo he knew. Sort of.

With a sigh, and to appease his deputy somewhat, as he still needed to work with her, they did put them in the same cell, though Jack handcuffed them to either end so they couldn’t rip each other apart.

“Jo, watch them. Make sure they don’t draw too much blood,” Jack directed as his desk phone started to go off. He quickly backtracked when Jo pulled out her firearm and aimed it at the two of them with a manic grin on her face. Pulling the weapon from her grip with an exasperated sigh, the
 omega frowned at her in disappointment. The look seemed to go right through her with no effect and she looked highly upset as she eyed her gun in his hand.

“Find something a little less...lethal?” he suggested, making his way over to his desk and quickly answering.

He listened to the person on the other end complain about waking up in the middle of the road this morning for no reason, taking note of the time and date on his pad. No sooner had he hung up the phone then it started to ring again. With a sigh, Jack picked it up, listening to another person complain about waking up somewhere strange. Several calls later and he could definitively state there was some kind of pattern here.

While he’d been taking calls, Jo had apparently settled on a water rifle as her preferred form of punishment and behavior correction for their two delinquents, and took great pleasure in hosing them down if they said they slightest thing to each other. Jack could admit to being a little jealous.

“Alright, that’s like 10 calls in 10 minutes about people waking up somewhere strange this morning or being knocked out half-way through the night. There seems to be a common theme here, but I don’t see where the cause is,” he explained as Jo once more started to taunt and drench the two men in the cell with glee.

“Jo, stay here. I’m gonna see if I can find Henry. He might be able to help me sort this out.”

“You got it, Chief,” she declared in a teasing croon, flipping her hair over her shoulder like some kind of action star.

“Do not call me Chief,” he groaned.

“What you say. Chief.” Jo joked before spraying him with the water gun and giggling madly.

“Jo! Stop,” he ordered, looking down at his wet uniform.

“What? I’m not doing anything,” she started innocently before squirting him again.

“Nope, this is mine now,” he declared, yanking the toy from her grasp. It was like he was surrounded by children today.

“Aw, you’re no fun,” she whined, pouting at him as he made for the door.

“Fun!? You know what would be fun?” Jack yelled, turning back around to face her.

“Ice skating!” she declared, throwing her hands joyously in the air. Jack stuttered over what he’d been about to say and just stared at her in shock.

It wasn’t worth it he realized. Whatever he said would just go right over her head in this condition.

“Okay, you know what, just stay here while I go figure this out. Try to keep them in control if you can.” Completely done with everything, Jack hastily retreated out of the office and looked around Main Street.

This had to be fixed and fast, before it got any worse in the town. There’s no telling what could happen if these scientists all went crazy at the same time. He flipped open his phone, prepared to ring Henry when he spotted the man’s truck parked at Carpe Diem across the street. Sighing with relief Jack jogged over and pushed open the doors. Scanning the room, he spotted the alpha by the breakfast bar.
“Henry,” he called happily, making his way over and sitting down on the vacant stool next to his friend. “Henry, I need your help.”

“You and everybody else,” the alpha scoffed, not even looking at him.

“Uh, I don’t follow,” Jack admitted. His friend seemed to be in a rough mood. His plate looked practically untouched and he was actively drinking from a flask. Everyone in the town might be acting drunk, but Jack realized Henry actually smelled it.

“I mean that that’s all anyone around here does is feed on me,” Henry complained, finally looking up at the sheriff. The alpha’s eyes were blood-shot and Jack fought not to whine in frustration. Looks like his friend wasn’t going to be as big of a help as he thought.

“Global Dynamics, D.O.D., you.” Henry continued. “I’m intellectual carrion. It’s all about producing, getting ahead of everybody else, but that’s not what I signed up for.”

The alpha took a rather large gulp of his flask and Jack tried not to grimace.

“It’s a little early in the morning for scotch, isn’t it?” he asked softly, trying to get his friend to calm down. Whatever was affecting the town could not be great if alcohol was added to the mix.

“No,” Henry growled angrily. “I came to Eureka to create without restriction or agenda, to make the world a better place! You know, like the new cell tower, but eventually it all gets digested by the machine and re-tasked and turned into something very, very unappetizing!”

“Henry,” Jack pleaded, realizing his friend was spiraling. “I need you to focus, just for a second. Please.”

“Shocker,” the alpha growled sarcastically.

“Look, there’s something going around town, making people do whatever the hell they want, like they’re drunk-”

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“Some of us are,” Henry teased, taking another swig.

“Could it be an infection? Like contagious Tourette’s?” Jack asked, looking at his friend desperately. The alpha glared at him for a moment before answering in a high, mocking voice.

“How did you get all those big words to come out of that tiny, little brain?”

Jack stared at his friend in shock, feeling a little hurt. He wasn’t the smartest guy in town. He knew that, but Henry had never mocked or belittled him for it before. He was actually one of the few who never held his level of education against him in this town. Looks like he had just been holding it in.

“You know, you’re a really mean drunk,” Jack growled, turning away from his friend.

“Jack...I...” Henry cut himself off with a sigh, screwing the cap back onto his flask and getting up from his seat. Jack turned to watch him leave without another word, hoping he hadn’t lost one of his only friends in this town.

What was he supposed to do now? He had no leads, whatever was happening to the town seemed to be spreading and getting worse, and now Henry wasn’t even speaking to him.

Jack jerked his head up, his hand flying to his gun as the loud crash of glass shattering filled the
“Is that bloody enough for you jackass!?” Vincent screamed at one of the science twins after having apparently slammed the other plate onto the other twin’s head.

The omega stared in shock for a moment before setting to work. Calling Jo over his radio, he quickly evacuated the entire restaurant and called the paramedics. They arrived quickly and hefted the hurt twin onto a stretcher before wheeling him out, the brother following in their wake. Jack kept Vincent beside him, the man at least looking somewhat contrite as he watched the ambulance leave.

“What happened?” Jo asked when she finally showed up.

“Vincent brained one of the Baker brothers with today’s special,” he explained.

“Nice,” she complimented, grinning proudly at the man. The sheriff rolled his eyes and decided to ignore it for now.

“Are people still calling about last night?”

“Oh yeah, tons. I just stopped answering after awhile.”

“Jo!” Jack exclaimed, huffing angrily as he told himself it wasn’t really her fault. “You have to answer the phone!”

“But it’s so boring!” she whined.

“Okay, you know what,” Jack turned to the large crowd hanging outside the cafe still. “People, listen up. How many of you blacked out last night?” Jo’s hand eagerly shot upwards and Jack had to breathe deeply for a second before continuing. “Anyone find themselves waking up someplace strange this morning?” Every hand in the crowd slowly raised, including Vincent’s and Jo’s.

“Okay... thank you.”

Jack’s phone started going off and he pulled it out, the caller id telling him Zoe was trying to reach him.

“Jo, can you take Vincent back to the station and lock him up? Keep him away from the other two if you can,” he asked as his phone stopped ringing.

With a nod, Jo skipped off merrily.

“Jo!” He called out. She turned and he motioned to Vincent standing beside him still.

“Oh!” the alpha giggled and trotted back, grabbing Vincent’s hand and pulling him along behind her.

Jack quickly redialed his daughter and only had to wait seconds before it connected.

“Zoe, it’s me. I need you to go home and stay there, okay?” he stated, not giving her time to argue.

“Mom, what’s going on? People are acting really weird.”

“Just, make sure you keep your cell on in case I need to…” Jack trailed off, noticing how everyone around him were also on their cell phone. An idea clicked as he remembered Henry’s words just moments ago. “On second thought, keep your cell phone off. I’ll see you in a bit.”
He clicked his phone off and jogged across the street to his jeep, quickly making his way towards the cell tower that Henry had been working on all week. Pulling up to the structure Jack scrambled out. Taking it in, the omega wasn’t sure where to even start. There had to be a way to turn it off and see if that stopped everyone’s craziness. Hearing muttering off to the side, Jack looked over and then squeezed his eyes shut, wishing he hadn’t looked. Making his way over, Jack tried to keep his eyes above the neck as he approached.

“Taggart.”

“Hmm,” the alpha inquired, glaring unhappily at Henry’s tower.

“You’re naked,” he informed the man. It was quite possible Taggart hadn’t even noticed his state. It wouldn’t even surprise Jack.

“Au naturel,” Taggart smirked proudly.

“Why?”

“Why not?” the man asked back, seeming perfectly at home in his own skin. Jack could admire that. He just wished he wasn’t seeing it right now.

“Unfortunately, that doesn’t tell me if you’ve been affected or not,” Jack muttered.

“Why do we find it so impossible to live in harmony with nature?” Taggart spat. Jack glanced at the tower thoughtfully. Maybe this could work.

“Wanna help me take it down?”

“With pleasure,” the alpha agreed readily before bending down and picking up a giant steel saw that Jack hadn’t noticed before then.

“Uh..”

Gleefully, Taggart revved the machine up and charged towards the tower, wasting no time in cutting through the metal.

“I was just thinking of finding an off switch or something,” the omega muttered, wincing at the sound of metal on metal screeching.

20 minutes later and the tower came falling down with a resounding crash. Taggart yelled and roared with victory before sprinting wildly into the woods in the far distance.

It was really scary how Jack couldn’t tell the difference between drunk and sober Taggart. With an inward cringe, he quickly made his way back to the station to see if anything had changed.

Jack stared in shock as he walked into the station. Jo had everyone tied up to something or someone with whatever she could use. People were yelling, some were crying, and overall, nothing seemed to have improved. It in fact seemed a lot worse.

Jo actually seemed at her wits end, walking around with a beat stick and she clanged against the bars when Fargo and Seth got too rowdy.

He quickly grabbed the tool from her with a quick reprimand.

“Did it work?” she begged desperately.
“It should have! Did you take away everyone’s cell phones and PDAs?”

“An hour ago. It obviously didn’t work,” she seethed.

“No, it looks much worse.”

“You think?” she scoffed.

“I’ve gotta go. Try and keep them under control!” he called before running out the door again. He’d missed something. He just had to figure out what. Hopefully no one got killed in the meantime.

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“Henry!” Jack called desperately as he barged into the alpha’s garage. “Please, you gotta help me out here.”

“I told you, I’m done. Cleaning house, take whatever you like,” the alpha stated, seeming a lot more relaxed then he’d been earlier. He was dumping boxes of things onto the floor without a care.

“Uh, yeah, but look. That tower you built. The cellular-whatever majig. I had a theory that it was behind the strange behavior in the town so I had Taggart dismantle it,” he explained, feeling guilty for the destruction of his friend’s project. He really didn’t think it would go that far.

“Good for you,” Henry stated evenly.

“Yeah, but no one’s better.”

“Probably because it wasn’t online,” the alpha explained, turning away from him.

“Oh god. Henry, look, I’m s-”

He was interrupted as the screen in the corner blinked on and Beverly Barlowe’s image appeared, addressing the town.

“Hello everyone, this is Beverly Barlowe.”

“Isn’t that your PA system?” Jack asked in confusion.

“I gave it to her this morning.”

“I’m cancelling all appointments for the foreseeable future. All this secrecy isn’t healthy and frankly, I can’t take anymore,” Beverly continued. “I suggest instead, you start talking to each other. So, before I go, I thought I would give you a few issues to discuss. I’ll start in alphabetical order. Allison Blake.”

“Oh no,” Jack groaned, running for his jeep as the woman continued. This was not going to be good.

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Jack brought his jeep to a screeching halt outside Beverly’s Bed and Breakfast. Running up the stairs he burst through the door, spying the other omega walking barefoot around the house as she dished out the town’s secrets for all to enjoy.
“It’ll be a relief to get it all out in the open,” she was saying as he came in.

“No, how about we leave it closed,” Jack interrupted.

“But I’m getting to the good part,” Beverly explained matter of factly.

“Yeah, no,” he decided, carefully and calmly taking the broadcasting device from her. “People are having trouble controlling their impulses, so I’m just going to save you from yourself.” Beverly huffed, but let him take the handheld.

“You’re a dead woman!” Allison declared, bursting through the doorway.

“And her,” Jack added on. Beverly glanced at Jack in annoyance before flinging her headset mic across the room. Jack dove to catch it, accidentally providing an opening for the two women to go at each other.

Allison lead off with a sharp punch to the therapist’s face.

“Oh, that looked like it hurt,” Jack observed as the redhead collected herself with a grin. The two women went after each other with a collection of hits, kicks, and punches that looked better suited for a karate movie, not a house in the suburbs.

Jack tried to intercede, but ended up getting punched in the face by Beverly when he got to close.

“Ow, okay, that’s it!” he yelled, grabbing Beverly by the arm and restraining her against the wall.

BANG!

Both omegas flinched and ducked, turning to see Allison pointing a gun at them both with a cocky grin. Jack felt for his holster and realized she must have grabbed it without him noticing.

“Is that the best you’ve got?” she taunted, pointing the gun at Beverly. Jack grabbed the woman and held her back when it looked like she might continue the fight. He had every notion that Allison was crazy enough in this moment to actually shoot the therapist.

“Allison, what are you doing?” he questioned as the scientist beckoned for them both to move into Beverly’s office, hands held up before them.

“Exactly what I want to.”

“It’s about time,” Beverly congratulated supportively behind him.

“Bev, not helping,” he hissed at the woman, turning to face Allison, who had his own gun pointed straight at his chest.

“She exposed my deepest secrets to the entire town,” Allison said hotly, glaring at the other woman.

“To be fair, I exposed everyone’s secrets. Well, up to the P’s anyway,” Beverly stated confidently as if what she’d done had been perfectly rational.

“I’m not too happy with you either,” Allison sneered, pushing the gun harder into his chest.

“Me? Wha–? Allison, listen to me. You’re not yourself! Something’s happening and it’s happening to everyone in the town,” he explained quickly, praying he wouldn’t get shot. Her eyes flickered as she seemed to take in what he was saying.
“Everyone, but me. I’m not affected. Why am I not affected?” he asked himself, turning to Beverly beside him. She shrugged in confusion, looking at him like he was crazy.

“I’m pretty sure this will affect you,” Allison snapped, drawing his attention back to her quickly.

“You’re not going to shoot anyone,” Jack stated calmly, deciding to take a chance.

“Oh, why’s that?”

“Well, I don’t think you’re going to shoot me,” he reiterated. Allison blinked and hesitated and Jack lunged, grabbing the gun from her hands and quickly flicking the safety on. She growled in annoyance, glaring at him as he slipped a handcuff over her wrist.

“It’s for your own protection,” he explained, moving her over and attaching the other cuff to the door. “I’ll make it up to you.”

“There’s nothing you could do that would make up for this,” Allison stated.

“Thank you,” Beverly smiled. Jack returned it before grabbing her wrist and dragging her to a nearby radiator. With a zip-tie he quickly lashed her wrist to the structure. Stepping back, he was pleased to see both women restrained and far enough from each other that when he left they wouldn’t deal any real damage to the other.

“Alright, you two keep each other company. I’m sure you’ve got a lot to talk about,” he stated, quickly leaving the two and heading back to his jeep.

The town looked like a wasteland as Jack drove through it. Cars were wrecked, trash littered the streets, and not a soul could be seen anywhere.

He saw no point in going back to the station now. It was well into the afternoon and his daughter was home alone. There was no telling what might have happened while she was out here alone this morning. With the no phones rule, Jack hadn’t even heard from her for a few hours, so he had no way of knowing if she’d even made it back to the house alright.

Pressing on the gas, Jack gunned it, leaving the town behind as he headed for the bunker.

“SARAH, door,” he called as he jogged down the steps.

“Welcome back, Sheriff,” SARAH greeted.

“Zoe!” Jack called. There was no response and the house was darker than normal when they were both home.

“Zoe, are you here?” Worried, Jack headed for the kitchen.

“Ahhh!” Zoe cried, springing around the corner and brandishing at bat at him.

“Oh, god, not you too,” he groaned, backing up a bit in defense.

“Me? What about you?” Zoe countered.

“I’m good,” Jack was quick to reassure, relieved to see that his daughter seemed to be normal at least.
“Yeah? Prove it,” she challenged, still looking unsure. He faltered, unsure what he could do. He happened to catch a closer look at the bat she was wielding.

“Hey, put down my autographed World Series bat or I’ll ground you until you’re 30,” he snapped angrily in annoyance. She couldn’t have found anything better to defend herself with in this house?

“Oh mom, thank god. I was freaking out,” she exhaled, visible tension leaving her body as she passed him the bat. He checked it for any damage before turning back to her.

“You okay?” he asked, scanning her form for any injuries. The house lights went up to full power as they returned to the living room.

“Well, considering everyone has gone full schizo? The school is completely out of control,” she announced. “Kids in fights, making out in the hallways, teachers apathetic.”

“So,” he asked, seeing her point as he thought about the town. “More like normal school then?”

“Exactly. It’s weird.”

“Well, we’re both fine, right?”

“But why?”

“I’m not sure. What makes us so different?”

“We’re from L.A.” Zoe offered. Jack smiled, knowing she was a bit more relaxed if she was making jokes about the situation.

“Well, it definitely sets us apart. What makes us different now though? We’ve been here awhile.”

“There is someone at the door,” SARAH announced suddenly.

“SARAH, who is it?” Jack asked, motioning Zoe away and creeping closer to the entrance.

“Doctor Stark.”

“Nathan? What’s he doing here?” Jack inquired aloud. Giving Zoe a look to stay back, he gave SARAH a signal to open the door, braced for anything.

He was not prepared for a disheveled Nathan, his suit jacket and shirt halfway undone, to stalk through the doorway without a word. Jack only managed a manly sounding squeak before he was being roughly kissed, the alpha’s hand grasping the back of his head and pulling him in. Jack moaned as he felt like he was being practically devoured, Nathan pushing him backwards until they collided with a wall. The larger man finally released Jack’s mouth long enough for him to breathe, his arms moving to trap Jack between them as they both inhaled heavily. The omega gulped as he looked up into Nathan’s eyes. With an electronic zap, Nathan seized and staggered back with a flinch. Seizing the moment, Jack wound his arm back and punched him hard across the face. Nathan reeled back and blinked at Jack in shock right before his eyes rolled back and he collapsed to the ground. The omega looked down at the alpha regretfully, sliding his taser back into its pouch on his hip. Zoe rushed over and peered down at the man with wide eyes.

“Did you kill him?”

“What? No, Zoe! Why would you think I killed him?” he exclaimed, staring at his daughter aghast.

“Well, I mean… It was just… he went down pretty quick,” she reasoned, bending down to poke the
unconscious alpha. “So what do we do with him?”

“Let’s, just, get him to the couch,” Jack sighed, not feeling up to questioning the ease with which Nathan went down. It was just his luck that after finally getting to kiss Nathan, Jack had to knock him out. He wondered how badly this had spoiled his chances with the guy. Between the two of them, they managed to move and lay Nathan out comfortably on their couch.

“Okay, now what?” Zoe asked, pulling a blanket over the other man and tucking a pillow under his head.

Jack frowned, rubbing a hand over his head as he stared down at his unexpected guest. SARAH closed the door with a hiss and his head jerked up as realization hit.

“SARAH, door,” he ordered, watching and listening as she opened the door again without protest.

“Where are you going?” Zoe demanded, startled.

“Nowhere. SARAH, door.” Jack listened closely and pointed victoriously when he heard the hissing sound again. “That’s it. That hissing sound. SARAH, this bunker is hermetically sealed, right?”

“Technically, I’m a smart house, but yes.”

“Okay, and where does our air come from?” he questioned.

“I’m equipped with oxygen and carbon dioxide tanks in case of emergency. However, most of your breathable air is filtered from the outside through a point one micron particle filter,” SARAH explained.

“And I’m betting you keep track of every micron,” Jack grinned.

“Of course.”

“Alright. I need you to make an analysis and fast.” He turned to his daughter and explained his thinking excitedly as several pieces came together. “Whatever happened, happened last night while we were sleeping.”

Zoe looked at him, still obviously a little confused, as SARAH reported her findings.

“The only abnormality in the last 24 hours is a spike in the pollen count from 11:53 pm to 6:23 am.”

“Pollen? What kind of pollen?” Jack asked.

“Searching... The material in question is exotic in nature. It will take me some time to collate that data.”

“Well, you’ve got some time,” he offered, checking his watch before heading for the door. “SARAH, door.”

“Where are you going?” Zoe exclaimed, a note of hysteria in her voice that made Jack whip around to face her.

“I need to go back to where this started,” he explained calmly. “You stay here.”

“What about Mr. Zappy here?” she asked, gesturing to Nathan. Jack groaned, but shook his head
regretfully.

“It’ll be fine. If he wakes up before I get back, just… try and keep him here. He’s not a threat to you. If it makes you feel better, you can tie him up or, here, take this.” Jack hurried over and handed her the taser from his belt. He trusted she wouldn’t use it unless she had to.

“Mom, why can’t you get a date like normal people,” Zoe groaned, making herself comfortable on the coffee table in front of their knocked out guest.

“What?! Hey, no. You can take this up with Mr. Safe-Sane-and-Consensual over here when he wakes up!” Jack protested hotly, stalking towards the door with heavy steps. “Apparently it takes being drugged by alcohol induced pollen first before trying to make a move on me,” he grumbled angrily as the house door shut behind him.

After double-checking with Seth back at the station and grabbing a few supplies, Jack headed out to the man’s fields where he was growing some experimental plant, the one he’d been fighting with Fargo over for a while now. Seth had told him they were night blooming things and he’d noticed the previous night when he was called out there that the buds on the trees had seemed bigger then normal.

Calling the house, Jack contacted his daughter and SARAH, the only two he could trust at the moment to make sure he was getting this right. Night was starting to fall, and the omega felt nervousness creep up his spine as he looked around the empty orchard.

“The pollen data came back as belonging to the violacea family,” SARAH informed his over the call as Jack moved deeper into the plants.

“Yeah, uh, Seth said they were night blooming Necro something violacea. It’s some kind of genetic hybrid I guess.”

“Necrosomnium?” Zoe’s voice asked over the line. Jack could hear her typing away, most likely at a computer, in the background.

“Yeah, that thing. What is that?” he asked, recognizing the name.

“According to the Eureka Quest search engine it’s Latin for death sleep.”

“Of course it is,” Jack groaned, looking at the plants around him with new apprehension. “Why would someone plant this?”

“Says here it’s potentially an organic sedative,” Zoe explained. “An alternative to general anesthesia. Some varieties can alter brain chemistry.”

Well, there was his evidence for what was happening with the town.

“There’s a picture! Do you see any purple flowers or plants?” Zoe asked.

“Nope,” Jack replied, looking around. It was hard to see color at all in this dark lighting, but nothing looked purple.

“Hmm, says hybrids might not have the same characteristics as the parent. Maybe it’s a different color?”
Jack froze as a bulb he’d been watching suddenly lifted and opened, revealing a purplish interior ringed with black on its petals. The flower hissed as dust, or pollen he guessed it was, sprayed into the air from it’s center.

“Nope, it’s definitely purple. Gotta go.” Hanging up quickly, Jack grabbed for the gas mask he brought along and raised the flamethrower he’d taken off of Jo. Starting the fuel, he got ready to burn some plants when he was hit in the head from behind and blacked out.

He must not have been out long, he figured, as he came back to awareness to something tugging on his back. Jack groaned, a sharp pain at the back of his head dulling his thoughts momentarily. The tugging on his back increased and the omega tried to turn around.

“What?”

“Striking back for mother nature,” Taggart announced and Jack really wanted to hit something.

“Taggart? What are you doing?” He realized the crazy alpha was trying to remove the fuel tank for the flamethrower from his back, but it was strapped to his chest securely.

“I know what you’re up to, Sheriff. You were going to burn these beautiful plants,” Taggart exclaimed, sounding way too scandalized for such a thing.

“It was for a good reason, you jackass!” Jack growled, pushing the man away and scrambling to his feet, the torch held aloft in his hand and spitting some fire already. Taggart looked ready for a fight, but Jack was really ticked off at this point and noticed the man was still completely naked.

“Unless you want your chestnuts roasted, back off!” the omega growled, letting the flame on his weapon burn brighter and hotter as he grinned sinisterly in promise at the alpha.

“You wouldn’t dare,” Taggart challenged, trying to call his bluff.

“Try me. You wouldn’t believe the day I’ve had,” Jack snapped, pointing the flame at the alpha and moving downwards. The alpha stared at him momentarily and then seemed to decide it wasn’t worth it, scampering and turning tail with a squeal of fright before taking off into the woods.

Jack huffed, telling himself he shouldn’t be disappointed as he covered his nose and mouth with the mask. Turning around, Jack began to systematically burn down every flower and push in the field that he came across.

This, at least, made him feel a little better.

Nathan was still passed out on his couch when he got home, which was a little surprising if Jack was honest. He would have figured Nathan knew how to take a hit better than that. Too tired to think about it much, and finding Zoe asleep on the open ottoman nearby, Jack decided to just call it quits for the day, stripping out of his uniform as he got to his room and sinking desperately into the covers after quickly wrapping himself up in them. He was done for the day. He’d deal with the rest tomorrow.

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So quick to go to sleep, Jack missed the pairs of eyes that slid open as he walked up the stairs, the two giving each other a conspiratory smirk before drifting off to sleep.

Jack woke the next morning to Nathan gone from the couch and Zoe eating breakfast leisurely in the kitchen. Stumbling in with a yawn, the omega made a straight line for the fridge, seeing what was available this early.

“Nathan already leave?” he asked, seeing no sign of the alpha. The blankets on the couch had been folded and placed respectfully on the cushions, and Jack was pretty sure he’d seen him past out there last night.

“I guess so,” Zoe answered calmly, flipping through one of her magazines carelessly.

Jack looked towards the ceiling and SARAH dutifully answered his unspoken question.

“Doctor Stark left at 4:15 this morning.”

“Ugh,” Jack grumbled, sinking into his spot at the counter. “Who gets up that early?”

“Apparently the guy who was tased and knocked out after making out with my mom,” Zoe smirked over her plate, looking at him with clear amusement at the situation.

“Yeah, well, he had it coming,” Jack muttered, still slightly peeved at the way last night had gone down. He stabbed at him food moodily, squinting at the sausage on his fork with a frown.

“Mmmm, I’m sure he agrees,” his daughter muttered with a smothered laugh. Jack looked up at her sharply.

“Did he say something? Zoe, what do you know?” he insisted, glaring suspiciously at the innocent look Zoe now had on her face.

“What? I don’t know anything. I was just talking to myself.”

Jack didn’t trust it, but there wasn’t much he could do so he let it slide. The morning turned out to be a lot easier than yesterday, the sheriff quickly swallowing one of his pills before heading out. The streets were a lot calmer and with Zoe’s help, everyone seemed to be coming down from whatever high they’d been on. Jack went to Beverly’s and freed the two other omegas, both markedly calmer than they’d been before. They spotted several apologies as he let them go, which Jack was quick to wave away. It was the afternoon by the time Jack, with Allison in tow, met up at Henry’s as he made his daily broadcast to the town.

Jack gave a quick recap and explanation of what happened for everyone, as he and his daughter were the only sane ones the whole day who could actually say what had happened. Turning the camera over to his friend, Jack beat a hasty retreat, hating having to be in the limelight for even a second.

“Fellow Eurekans, I just want to touch base and tie up a few loose ends,” Henry announced as he took over.

Jack smiled as he walked over to Allison, the other omega looking a little sheepish and embarrassed as she returned the smile.
“Hey, I just wanted to say thank you, you know, for stopping me. I really might have hurt her if you hadn’t been there,” she said.

“Oh, anytime, just, leave my gun out of it next time if you don’t mind,” he teased.

“Of course,” she agreed. Jack smiled before Henry’s words on the broadcast caught his attention.

“The past few days have raised a lot of questions, for all of us, me being no exception. I apologize for anything I may have said,” his friend stated, giving Jack a glance over the camera before continuing. “This was a difficult decision for me to make, and it’s been quite a journey… but, it’s time for me to leave Eureka.”

Jack stared at his friend in shock, not wanting to believe what Henry was saying. The alpha glanced sadly at Jack before ending it with one last statement.

“So this is goodbye, and God bless.”
Another bundle of blankets was added to the couch before Jack felt satisfied. This would do.

He surreptitiously shed his blue bathrobe, and wearing only his sweatpants, burrowed himself in the middle of the pile, pushing and pulling blankets until he was surrounded and only the top of his head and neck could be seen. Breathing in the gathered scents, Jack sighed in something like contentment and sunk against the back cushions.

Nothing could make him move from here.

“Mom? Are you alright?”

Jack looked up to see his daughter eyeing his position and collection worriedly. Fully dressed, hair all in place, and looking refreshed from a good night’s sleep, she looked exactly the opposite of Jack in that moment.

“Oh, I’m fine, honey. Just taking a sick day,” he tried to reassure her. She did not need to be worried about him. She needed to focus on her own life.

“Sheriff, my scans show no abnormalities in your health,” SARAH unhelpfully provided. Jack shot the ceiling a betrayed look. Whose side was she on?

“Mom, what is this about?”

“It’s nothing. I just felt like taking a day off, you know? Play some hooky.” He attempted a grin, but the look on her face said she wasn’t buying it.

“You never play hooky. Even if you are sick.” She paused, her eyes scanning his gathering again and seeming to land on one particular blanket. Jack shifted and avoided her eyes at the attention.

“Is this about Dr. Stark?”

“What? No! Course not,” he objected immediately, maybe a little too quickly, by the look on her face. “It’s just, you know… Maybe Henry has the right idea?” He looked at her plaintively, willing her to understand. “Maybe it’s a good idea to get while the gettings good?”

“This is about Henry?” she asked in concern.

“It’s...You know what, don’t worry about it. Go. You need to get to school before you’re late,” he brushed off, smiling at her reassuringly.

“Should I be leaving you alone?” Zoe hesitated, swinging her bag behind her back.

“No...”

“Yes!” Jack said loudly over SARAH. “I’ll be fine. Just need a, me day, you know? Don’t worry. If you need me, you know where I’ll be.”

He grinned as she finally left, still looking unsure, but leaving him to his solitude all the same.

“SARAH! Bring up property deals in Baja!” He forced a smile on his face as several island and beach front properties sprang up for his perusal.

“Are you planning a vacation?”
“Yeah, maybe permanently,” he mused to himself. Sandy beaches weren’t really his thing, but if he was to get away from Eureka, he needed to get as far away as possible. Looking at a lot of these places, it didn’t even seem like he could afford to move, but it was nice to look. You never know, he could get lucky and find something affordable.

Several hours later, with a few trips to the kitchen to get beer, Jack actually felt like he was having a little fun. It was like creating an elaborate dream house with everything he wanted in it. True, SARAH always had something negative to point out about the places that caught his eye, but it was nice to envision something different.

“Are you sure you wouldn’t like to go outside? Fresh air can be very beneficial.”

“No, SARAH. I’m fine.”

Just then the doorbell rang and Jack swiveled his head around as SARAH opened it to reveal the pizza guy with his order.

“Money’s over there,” he motioned to the cabinet as the guy handed over his meal.

“Pizza and beer have no nutritional aid for a balanced diet this early in the day.”

“It’s the afternoon and it’s fine. I’m not really concerned with a balanced diet at the moment. Or any moment really.”

“That your mate?” the pizza guy asked as he counted out his money.

“No, but close enough,” the omega huffed.

“Hey, can I use your can?” Jack nodded, motioning in the right direction as he opened the box and quickly grabbed a slice, biting in quickly. He was just about to settle in, ready to continue his day off, when the doorbell went off again. Jack frowned, knowing he wasn’t expecting anything or anyone else.

The door opened to reveal… Nathan? Jack rose from the couch, still wrapped in blankets, to stare at the alpha in confusion.

Why was Nathan here?

The alpha, dressed primly in a full suit and tie, as always, gave the sheriff a once over and smirked.

“Catch you at a bad time, Jack?”

“Wha- Yes, no! Nathan, what are you doing here?”

Just then Beverly rushed in looking flushed and in a hurry.

“Sheriff, I got here as quickly as I could,” she greeted. Jack was now officially lost.

“How do you know your phone isn’t working?” Allison accused as she stalked in through the still open door.

“What’s up?”

“What’s going on, Sheriff?”

Henry and Fargo rushed in, looking concerned as they took in the group of people now gathered in
Jack’s living room. Feeling somewhat exposed and uncomfortable, Jack wrapped his blankets tighter around himself, taking a few steps back from the expectant faces that surrounded him.

“I don’t know. Why are you all here?” he asked incredulously.

“You paged us,” Henry stated, the others nodding agreement around him.

“No, I didn’t.”

“Well, if you didn’t, who did?” Nathan asked. Jack blinked as the pizza guy, back from the bathroom, joined the unexpected party.

“Hey buddy, you got a plunger?” Jack looked at the guy in disgust. Seriously?

“You can get out,” he growled, turning his angry eyes on everyone else that barged in as well. “I didn’t page you, there is no problem, so get out.”

With the exception of the pizza guy and Beverly, everyone seemed reluctant to go, eyeing his getup and blanket nest with concern. Jack bristled at the attention.

“SARAH, door!” he snapped.

“I’m sorry, Jack. I’m afraid I can’t do that.”

“What? Why not?”

“Because Eureka is facing imminent disaster,” she reported. Jack gaped, looking at the group in confusion.

“What imminent disaster?” Allison asked.

“Is it a hurricane? An earthquake?” Fargo tried. Jack could practically see the gears turning.

“Disharmony. The threads of human congruity are unraveling,” SARAH stated and Jack groaned. Could his house be any more dramatic? This was not a disaster. “It has already lead to Dr. Deacon’s decision to leave Eureka.”

“And that’s just the tip of the iceberg,” Henry scoffed, shaking his head in annoyance as he turned to glare at Nathan and Allison.

“SARAH, Henry leaving Eureka doesn’t mean we’re facing imminent disaster,” Allsion tried to reason.

“My projected models suggest that each person in this room plays a vital role in securing Eureka’s future, or negating it.”

Okay, with the exception of himself, Jack could see that. His friends were all important scientists in their own right.

“Wait, so you paged us?” Nathan clarified with a look at the ceiling.

“You left me no choice,” SARAH admitted sincerely. The screens beside the couch turned on, showing a few incidents that had happened in Eureka in the last few months that all involved the town in some measure of facing disaster. Jack clenched at his blankets when he saw one where he was shot with some kind of energy beam.
“There is a high probability that Dr. Deacon’s decision to leave will result in a series of catastrophic events, beginning with the fact that Sheriff Carter has begun to question his commitment to Eureka as well.”

Nathan, Allison, Henry, and Fargo all shot him sharp looks of surprise and Jack fought not to blush with guilt at being called out by his own house.

“It wasn’t, I mean, I wasn’t...really...”

“What about vacation homes?” SARAH offered, pulling up several of the listings he’d been scouting through. Jack glared at the ceiling, wishing she would just stop already.

“It was just a fantasy!” he protested, ignoring the smiles and smirks from Henry and Nathan.

“According to my projections, if interpersonal conflicts cause both men to leave, the outcome is disaster, and each of you will share in the responsibility for that,” SARAH continued her crusade.

Everyone shifted uncomfortably as the house finally fell silent. The pizza guy and Beverly tried to manually force the door open, while everyone else pulled out their phones and tried to contact someone outside. Jack, not sulking at having his space invaded, proudly climbed back into his collection of blankets on the couch.

Henry stared down at his phone in annoyance as it beeped unhelpfully, the alpha leaning against one of the couch arms as he stared around the living in irritation.

“I can’t get out, so I assume no one else can either,” he stated, looking at the others for confirmation. There were mumbled agreements all around. Nathan leaned against the other arm of the couch and Allison settled onto the coffee table in front of Jack, giving him a tired grimace as she kicked off her heels.

It looked like they weren’t leaving for awhile.

“SARAH, this is ridiculous. We aren’t in conflict,” Beverly reasoned, turning a frown to Henry when he scoffed at her words.

“Really?”

“Henry, no community is always in perfect harmony,” she argued. “Issues come up. Living in a small town, working closely together.”

“Too closely,” Nathan muttered, cutting his eyes at Allison. Jack didn’t miss the sneer she threw back at him in return.

“I think, SARAH wants us to use this time to clear the air, as it were,” Beverly continued, looking at the group hopefully.

“I think more air has been cleared recently than anyone ever wanted,” Allison snapped. Beverly cleared her throat awkwardly with a strained smile.

“We all said and did things we regret under the influence of that pollen,” she tried again. Jack snuck a glance at Nathan next to him, finding the alpha silently contemplating his blanket pile. Unconsciously pulling one of the blankets closer, the omega turned to his friend on the other end, watching as a Henry frowned while seemingly in deep thought. No one really seemed willing to talk, other than the two omegas currently bickering over him at the moment.
“Yes, but no one else ever broadcast someone else’s secrets to the entire town. Did they?” Allison fumed.

“I already apologized for that,” Beverly stated softly, not rising to the bait. Allison sighed and shook her head.

“I know. Sorry, I just, need some water,” she huffed, standing and making for the kitchen without a look back.

Jack frowned, turning his head to gaze up at Henry again, a question clear on his face. Henry noticed and smiled softly, almost apologetically.

“Don’t worry, Jack. I didn’t mean it. Not towards you at least,” he clarified and Jack sighed, tension he didn’t realize he’d been holding released from his body. He refused to meet Nathan’s eyes, not really ready to know yet if the alpha meant what he’d done the other night. The kiss, though not completely consensual, hadn’t been bad, and Jack didn’t want it tarnished more than it already had been.

“Alright,” Nathan spoke up, sounding done with everything. “Fargo, where’s the back door?”

Jack perked up, looking behind him at where the beta was leaning against a nearby wall, obviously trying to stay out of the way.

“There’s a backdoor?” Beverly asked, sounding excited.

“I haven’t found one,” Jack added, curious to see if there was an actual hidden door in this place.

“Oh, it’s not a real door. It’s a hacker door. A hidden code programmed into the computer,” Henry explained. “It allows access to its brain.”

Everyone looked to the beta and the man blushed, shifting uncomfortably on his feet as he avoided eye contact with the two alphas.

“Fargo, please tell me you laid in a back door,” Nathan stressed, looking about two seconds away from smacking the beta upside the head.

“I’d...really, really, like to,” Fargo admitted slowly, looking bashfully at Nathan as the alpha sighed in defeat and settled heavier onto the arm of the couch.

Groans and sighs of disappointment were heard all around as everyone got comfortable. The pizza guy tried to sink down onto the couch with Jack, but a warning growl from Nathan had the guy moving to the floor instead. Jack stared at the alpha’s back in surprise, missing the assessing gaze Henry was now giving him and his set-up.

“There’s got to be another way out of here,” Nathan growled restlessly.

“Henry could say he’s changed his mind about leaving,” Fargo offered hopefully, somehow looking like a puppy with a treat.

“I’m pretty sure SARAH can hear you,” Allison said, rolling her eyes as she walked back into the room.

“And I haven’t changed my mind,” Henry added.

“Why are you leaving, Henry?” Beverly asked, curious.
“Because our work has become about results, instead of discovery,” he explained.

“You don’t get funding for discovery unless someone is producing results,” Nathan cut in, sounding like he’d had this discussion several times.

“That’s an ugly, short-sighted system,” Henry challenged, the two alphas up and practically in each other’s faces as they started to argue. “I mean, Fargo turns a relic of war into something beautiful and life affirming,” he went on, ignoring Fargo’s sudden attempts to shush him. The beta tried to sneak away as Henry continued. “He then gets chastised because it’s actually trying to help up avert disaster.”

“No, he got in trouble because it’s holding up hostage,” Nathan bit back.

“You know what, fine. I didn’t sign up for any of this,” Henry finished, retreating closer to the door as the two alphas closed the argument.

“Yeah, well neither did I,” Nathan growled lowly, stalking over to the opposite end of the living room. Jack sighed, realizing there was a lot of issues between the two alphas that were not yet resolved.

The doorbell suddenly going off had everyone’s attention drawn to the front door. The house provided a visual of Jo and Taggart standing outside expectantly, the pair coming from what must have been a paintball match of some kind. Jo was splattered with yellow while Taggart had pink paint all over his face.

“SARAH! It’s Jo! You wanna let her in?” Jack asked hopefully, seeing a chance for them all to get out.

“Jo!” Fargo cried frantically, suddenly attacking the door with all he had, pounding on it and yelling as if the pair outside could hear them. “Jo, SARAH’s gone HAL on us. Get us out of here!”

Jack climbed up from his nest reluctantly and grabbed the beta by the shoulder to get his attention.

“Fargo, she can’t hear you,” he explained patiently, tugging the man away from the door. The tension in the room, contained as it was had scents and emotions flying everywhere. It was no wonder the beta’s nerves were shot. Jack’s weren’t doing much better.

“But I can.”

Jack felt like ice had just been shoved in his chest. He had never heard a computer sound as sinister as SARAH just did. He listened as the house tried to make excuses and get the pair outside to leave, without much luck. If Jo thought there was an emergency, she wasn’t going to leave until she’d talked to him.

“SARAH, just let them in,” Jack begged, watching as everyone in the room moved closer to the door in anticipation.

“I believe one of you may try to exploit the opportunity to leave,” SARAH explained, Jack already shaking his head in denial to try and reassure her.

“No, I promise. None of use will try to leave. Right?” He desperately looked at the group, receiving assurances from everyone, though a reluctant one from Fargo.

SARAH didn’t seem impressed. She played an audio file of Fargo screaming at the door a few minutes ago, to which the beta had the grace to look embarrassed. Jack sighed and shooed him
farther away, pushing him towards the couch where everyone else was now standing around. With the exception of the pizza guy. He was still comfortably sitting on the ground, watching everything with great amusement.

“Opening a COM line now,” SARAH announced. Jack turned to face the door as the intercom beeped, showing he could not talk with the pair outside.

“Hey,” he greeted quickly, trying to think of something to say to his partner. As much as he had grown to like SARAH in the months he’d been here, Nathan had been right. His house had officially taken them all hostage and he had to find a way to tell Jo that.

“Hey, Carter. You 9-1-1’ed me?” Jo asked, obviously trying to figure out what was so important.

“Yeah, uh, false alarm. Just having my sick day and accidentally hit the wrong button on my pager.

“What’s with all the company then?” Taggart’s voice interjected.

“Wh-What company? It’s just me and SARAH,” Jack claimed, feeling himself start to sweat.

“You having some kind of party?” Taggart pushed. Jack could see Jo thinking and he internally begged her to figure out something was wrong.

“No, nope. No party. Just, trying to get some rest. So, uh, thanks for checking in on me, Josefina,” he finished, suppressing the grin that wanted to form on his face when she glanced sharply at the camera outside.

“Okay. See you tomorrow, Jack,” Jo stressed, marching away from the door with a huff, Taggart following behind her with a broad smile.

The group watched as SARAH followed their progress, the pair of alphas almost back in their car when Jo slowed and turned around, hefting her paint gun and firing a ball straight at the bunker. The air shimmered on impact with what looked like a force-field, never even hitting the entrance.

“I have a force field?!” Jack asked aloud, shooting a bemused look at Fargo, though Henry answered his question.

“Well, it’s not really a force field. There’s really no such thing. It’s a monofilament electrified mesh which forms a near-invisible barrier,” the alpha explained as they all wandered back to the living room. It seemed to be where everyone was comfortable hanging out. The pizza guy was noticeably absent though and Jack frowned in worry for a moment before he heard noise in his kitchen. The dude was raiding his fridge! Annoyed and frustrated, Jack started pacing the room.

“Sarah!” he called, knowing they had to get this settled so they could get out. However there was no answer from the house. “SARAH?” he prompted once more. She’d never shut him out before and Jack really didn’t like it.

“Why isn’t she responding?” Allison asked, looking just as worried as Jack did.

“She’s unhappy,” Fargo answered, looking upwards with a frown.

“Yeah, well I’m not too happy right now myself,” he growled, turning to the beta.

“And she feels that,” Fargo continued when several questioning faces turned to him. “The underlying concept of a Smarthouse is to bond with its owner,” he explained.
“Bond, Fargo?” Nathan asked, looking ticked off and like he wanted to punch something, if Jack was being honest.

“Well, not like that, Sir,” Fargo stuttered out quickly.

“Well, whatever it means… SARAH! Bad house! Bad!” Jack felt like he was scolding a dog, but he just wanted out at this point. Was one day to himself, without issues, too much to ask?

“Carter, shaming your house isn’t going to help anything,” Beverly admonished, looking at him like he was a child.

“Oh, no, this isn’t my house. I live here, but this house is from GD,” Jack protested, motioning to Nathan.

“Not GD’s. Fargo built the thing,” the alpha countered with a smirk, passing responsibility back to the beta.

“Didn’t build it. I reprogrammed it,” Fargo corrected quickly with a shrug of the shoulders as an after-thought. “And jazzed it up a little.”

“So this is Fargo’s fault?” Henry interjected, staring angrily at Nathan. Jack groaned, sensing another argument brewing between the two men.

“Yes, Henry. I put my faith in him and he disappointed me,” Nathan stated flippantly.

“Faith goes both ways, Nathan, as does disappointment,” Henry spat.

“Guys, listen,” Jack quickly stepped between the two, arms up as he looked between them both. “This is no time for this. Save it for when we get out. Sound fair?” The two men grumbled and turned away, relenting, but not pleased about it.

The group made their way to the dining room, Jack sitting down next to Fargo and the two alphas taking either end of the table. Allison and Beverly sat down across from him as they all began to battle plan.

“Can we just cut the power?” Jack asked, looking around at all the scientists.

“Not without stopping the air and sealing the door for good,” Fargo explained, the others sighing in defeat. Jack groaned in frustration. There was just no winning.

“God, I wish Jo were here. She’d probably find a way to just blow the front door out,” he muttered, his head sinking onto his crossed arms.

“That’s it,” Henry exclaimed, keeping his voice low. They all looked at him expectantly. “We’ll just blow her up,” he stated simply.

“How?”

Without answering, and with some silent understanding only Henry, Fargo, and Nathan were privy to, Henry stood up and started scanning the ceiling in the dining room, the other two making for the kitchen and grabbing supplies. Jack watched as Henry tore open a panel in the roof, pulling out wires in long strips. Fargo returned with cutters that the alpha used to strip the cords and cut a select few. Nathan returned with oven mitts of all things. Separating several of the wires, the two alphas each put on a mitt before grasping a select one that they seemed to need.
“Are you guys sure about this?” Jack asked worriedly. It looked an awful lot like a large scale version of hot-wiring a car.

“With a large enough power-surge on one grid, we might be able to throw SARAH offline,” Henry explained, trying to be reassuring.

“Or electrocute ourselves,” Nathan teased. Unamused, Jack shot a nasty glare at the alpha, for which Nathan at least looked somewhat abashed at his comment.

“Alright, everyone, back off a bit.” Taking it as his cue, Jack grabbed the pizza guy and Fargo, pulling them over to stand by the living room with the other two omegas as they watched the two alphas work from afar.

“Nathan? What are you doing?” SARAH piped up as the two alphas took their wire, each poised beside an outlet.

Nathan and Henry ignored the house, looking to each other to see if they were ready. With a nod, and the count of three, both men plunged their wire into the sockets, an explosion of electricity and sparks bursting out, the whole house falling dark, with lights blinking and everything on the fritz. Jack watched in amazement as everything in the house seemed to glitch out. The fireplace coming off and on, the fridge opening and closing, water in the kitchen spraying everywhere.

“The front door suddenly sprang wide open and Jack with the rest of the group cheered, beaming at the two alphas as the men sighed and gave each other a smile of victory. The pizza guy ran, taking off through the door before anyone else could start for it. The minute he was through and on the other side the door slammed shut loudly, cutting off the celebrations of the group.

Jack whined in frustration, staring at the door in betrayal. Why did no one else think to run for it? God, they were all idiots. He turned to look back at Henry and Nathan in time to see clear walls slam into place, separating everyone into different zones. Nathan and Henry were locked in the kitchen, he and Fargo in the dining room, with Allison and Beverly in the living room.

He jumped as the walls slid into place, Fargo drawing closer to him in fear as he looked around. The others seemed just as surprised before their attention turned to a video being broadcast on the hallway wall. It showed the pizza guy making a run for it, smiling in victory at having escaped before some kind of alien plasma weapon vaporized the guy. Jack stared in shock and horror.

“SARAH! Have you lost your mind?!” he yelled. The guy was dead! Jack hadn’t even learned his name.

“SARAH’s not here,” a very male voice said through the house speakers. “Adopting and initializing SARAH’s primary objective now.”

“What is that?” Jack demanded, turning to Fargo angrily. The beta had a constipated look on his face, fidgeting with the sleeves of his shirt as he avoided eye-contact. The omega turned to look at everyone else. Nathan waved his hands around his ears and mouthed something that couldn’t be heard. Allison and Beverly both shrugged and shook their hands, both seemingly equally as confused about the situation. Just great, none of them could hear each other through these stupid walls it seemed.

“I am BRAD,” the male voice stated, answering Jack’s question.
“Who is BRAD?” Jack asked, turning to Fargo again.

“He’s the older AI that I programmed SARAH on top of. He was an abandoned project, so I figured I’d use some of the programming and develop SARAH instead,” Fargo explained shakily.

“What is he? Cause he doesn’t sound anything like SARAH.”

“He is- was, a military AI.”

Jack stared at the beta nonplussed, knowing there had to be more to it than that. “Military?”

“He stands for Battle Reactive Automatic Defense. He was a sort of interrogation program,” the beta admitted.

“Defense? That’s good, right?” he asked hopefully, Fargo’s only response being a scared and unsure half-smile. Jack exhaled roughly, looking at the other sections and seeing that everyone seemed to be equally as nervous or apprehensive as Fargo seemed.

“God, this isn’t gonna be good,” he breathed. “BRAD, where’s SARAH?” He addressed the ceiling, hoping this BRAD wouldn’t be that bad.

“Detainees have no rights,” BRAD stated simply. ‘Initiating phase two protocols to achieve primary objective. Remorse and reconciliation.”

“Phase two?” Jack asked, turning to his companion. Fargo only shrugged in confusion, unsure what the computer meant either. The fireplace behind the table suddenly kicked on, a blast of heat waving through the room. Jack was suddenly very grateful to be shirtless, though he didn’t know how long that would last before the heat became too much to bear. Fargo was already starting to sweat, he could see it trailing down his neck as the beta unbuttoned his long sleeved shirt as much as he could to try and relieve the heat.

Looking over into the next room, Jack could see Allison and Beverly shivering, the women grabbing the blankets left on the couch and bundling themselves up as much as they could. They were obviously suffering the exact opposite conditions from Fargo and him.

The flicker of what looked like white smoke blasted into Henry and Nathan’s room, the two alphas staring at the ceiling in slowly dawning horror as they muttered to themselves.

“What is that? What’s happening to them?” Jack asked, worried.

“Looks like the fire-suppression system,” Fargo panted breathily. “If we don’t get out soon, they’ll suffocate, we’ll cook, and the girls will freeze to death.”

“Oh, that’s just fantastic,” Jack bemoaned. The pair jumped as BRAD suddenly broadcasted an intruder alert, a camera feed popping up to show Taggart and Jo sneaking through what looked like the underground tunnels of the city. Pipes and concrete were everywhere, the two alphas in full commando mode and armed with only their paintball guns. Jack released a laugh at the burst of hope the image gave him.

“That’s my Josefina,” he huffed quietly, leaning against the glass partition between them and the kitchen and sliding down. His bare skin stuck to the walls, seeming to illicit more sweat wherever it made contact. The omega sighed, feeling like it was getting even harder to breathe in the room.

“Oxygen density’s decreasing,” Fargo gasped, pulling off his shirt to reveal a short sleeved one underneath. “We need to stay low if we can. Heat rises and all that.” The beta tugged off his shoes
and socks, exposing small bare feet before reaching for his pants.

A thud against the glass had both omega and beta whirling around, turning around to find Nathan glaring murder into the room and growling visual threats as he looked at Fargo. The poor beta snatched his hands from his pants like they were on fire, choosing instead to roll up the legs as far as they could go in an effort to catch some relief.

Jack caught Nathan’s eyes from where he was still sitting against the glass. The alpha froze before seeming to gather himself up, attempting a cocky smile before stalking quickly over to Henry, who seemed to be fighting a knowing smirk of his own.

Jack shook his head, bemused as he watched the alpha go, before pushing a few chairs away with his feet as Fargo came to sit beside him.

“So,” the beta start hesitantly. “Were you really thinking of leaving Eureka?”

Jack sighed, knowing someone was bound to ask further. Since they had nowhere to go and it seemed up to Jo to get them out of this anytime soon, he saw no harm in being honest with the young beta.

“Not sure. I mean, I considered it of course. You saw the vacation homes.”

“But why? Do you not like it here?”

“It’s not really that. It’s-well. I’m kinda not sure why I’m even here in the first place.” Jack barreled on when it looked like Fargo was going to interrupt. “I mean, I feel like this job fell into place because I ended up somewhere I wasn’t supposed to be and saw things I wasn’t supposed to see. I didn’t exactly get it on merit. If that were the case, Jo would be Sheriff and I’d be her deputy.

There’s just so many people here who can do things and understand so much more stuff than I can ever hope to. With Henry leaving, one of the few people who actually accepted me for not being a genius like everyone else...I just..didn’t see the point anymore,” Jack ended quietly.

Fargo breathed heavily, staring at the ceiling in thought as he listened to everything Jack said before speaking up.

“Sheriff, you might not be the smartest person in the room, but maybe that’s how it’s supposed to be,” he began, Jack tilting his head on the glass to look over at him curiously. “I mean, think about all the times where something bad was happening and no one here,” he gestured to the other scientists behind the walls, each of them having their own small conversations as they tried to deal with the conditions in their rooms. “No one here had any idea how to fix it. How many times did you jump in with the right idea or thing to make it all better in the nick of time?”

“Well, yeah, but I didn’t understand half of what was going on in those situations,” Jack argued.

“So? That didn’t stop you from trying. Think of Eureka as your big moment.” At Jack’s confused look, Fargo continued. “A great...man once said t he big moments are gonna come, you can't help that. It's what you do afterwards that counts. That's when you find out who you are. And Sheriff,” Fargo looked over at Jack with a smile. “You don’t strike me as the type of man who runs away.”

Jack stared at the young beta and felt a chuckle build in his throat.

“Fargo, never stop being you.” The omega grinned, the beta returning the smile with a broad one of his own.

The beta suddenly gasped and sprung to his feet excitedly, Jack watching with bemusement as the
man turned back to him and held out a hand.

“You need to hug me,” he announced. Jack scoffed in disbelief.

“Fargo, it was a good speech, but I’m not hugging you for it.”

“No,” Fargo huffed, grabbing Jack’s hand and forcefully pulling him up. The omega was a little surprised by the strength the man possessed, moving to his feet reluctantly. The beta wasted no time in wrapping his form around Jack, their sweaty bodies making the entire process incredibly discomforting.

“Fargo! What are you doing? It is too hot for you to be rubbing all against me like this,” Jack complained, grimacing as the beta’s shirt stuck to his bare skin.

“We’re making love, not war,” he whispered.

“What?! Fargo!” Jack tried to shove the beta off, but he clung tighter, hissing quietly into the omega’s ear.

“Not literally!” Raising his voice, Fargo directed his next statement at the ceiling. “BRAD? We surrender! I repeat, unconditional surrender.”

Seconds ticked by and then suddenly the glass walls raised and the group was together again, a wave of cool air instantly hitting the pair, who sighed in relief. Realizing the threat was over, Jack cheered, pulling Fargo into a real hug and swinging him around, the two grinning wildly as the others could finally be heard breathing their own sighs of relief.

“I think you can let him go now,” a deep voice blandly stated. Jack looked over to see Nathan staring at them both with amusement shining in his eyes.

“Oh, yes, sir, uh,” Fargo stuttered, swinging his arms to the side. “I’ll just be...over there,” he pointed and scampered to Beverly and Allison, trying to make it look like he wasn’t running.

“You didn’t have to scare him,” Jack laughed looking up into amused grey eyes.

“Eh, keeps him on his toes,” Nathan joked. “You okay?”

“I’ll probably be sleeping with the covers off tonight, but no harm done. You?”

“Could be worse. The stage didn’t get too far along at least.”

“How’d we get out?”

“Stage two ends after unconditional surrender,” Nathan explained. “Good job, Fargo.”

Fargo beamed as Beverly moved to a dining room chair, planting herself in the warmer part of the house for the moment.

“A hug? That solved everything?” She scoffed. “If all problems could be solved with a hug, I’d be out of the job.”

“Stage three protocol initiated.”

Jack looked at the ceiling in shock.

“What? Why?”
“Surrender under false pretenses,” BRAD explained emotionlessly.

“I think he heard you,” Fargo whispered to Beverly.

“What?” the omega balked, staring upwards in horror.

“What’s phase three?” Allison demanded. The sound of machinery clicking could be heard before a small hissing noise, like depressed air, sounded.

“Is he gassing us?” Jack asked, staring around the room nervously. Henry walked over to a nearby vent, placing his hand next to the open cover before stepping away with a defeated sigh.

“He’s pulling the oxygen from the room,” he announced gravely.

“I’m sorry,” Beverly whimpered, looking around the group fearfully.

“Once oxygen levels fall below 17% we’ll be experiencing hypoxia. Oxygen deprivation,” Henry continued on.

“Could we cover all the vents?” Jack asked, glancing at his mound of blankets still in the living room.

“Yeah, should stop the flow a bit. Blankets won’t work though, the vents are too high,” the engineer stated, following his friend’s gaze. “Grab paper, magazines, newspaper, whatever you can find.”

The group quickly set to work gathering paper, ripping large strips off anything they could find or put their hands too. Jack was a little sad to see one of his comic books get stripped apart, but he figured he could buy another one later, once they all survived this.

“Fargo,” Jack called, looking over to the beta once all the papers had been placed. “Didn’t you say something earlier about cutting off the power supply?”

“Yeah, I said it would stop air flow if we tried it,” he replied, unsure where Jack was going with his idea.

“Well, since we’re losing air anyways right now, how about we rethink that plan?”

“It might shut down BRAD as well,” Henry added, joining the conversation.

“Fargo, where’s the generator?” Allison ordered expectantly.

“It’s not your typical generator,” the beta said, leading them over to a wall in the hallway. He clicked a button which pulled the wall back to reveal a large metallic device, an ominous red glow making the whole thing look like an evil madman’s toy.

“Well, since we’re losing air anyways right now, how about we rethink that plan?”

“An RTG,” Fargo, Henry, and Nathan answered at the same time.

“Radioisotope thermoelectric generator,” Fargo explained in more detail. Jack paled and pulled back abruptly, retreating to the opposite wall where Nathan was standing.

“I live with a nuclear reactor?!” Jack asked, feeling a little freaked out.
“Generator,” Nathan corrected unhelpfully, placing a comforting hand on Jack’s shoulder as he moved closer to get a better look. “It’s the same one they use on the Cassini space probe. It’s clean, safe.” The omega sighed in relief, the echoing threats of cancer and mutations fading from his thoughts.

“Okay, can we turn it off?”

“There is no off switch,” Henry stated, sinking down onto a nearby seat. The alpha was already starting to breathe heavily, the oxygen getting lower by the second as they stood around.

“In order to take it offline, you’d have to remove the thermocouples from the ESP power conduits.”

“The conduits are in carbon steel encasements,” Nathan added on to the other alpha’s lecture.

“And even if we could access them, by shutting down without the proper tools, we could cause a release of the plutonium dioxide,” Henry finished. Everyone was leaning heavily against any surface they could find, staring at the generator in defeat.

“And that would be bad,” Jack guessed.


Feeling weak, Jack slid down to the floor, leaning against the wall as Nathan settled next to him. The omega’s head tilted, falling onto the alpha’s shoulder and Jack whined, breathing in the scent of the man next to him and allowing himself this moment of weakness. He felt Nathan’s hand come up and brush through his hair softly, a low purr building in the alpha’s chest as he tried to soothe Jack’s nerves.

“I’m sorry if I caused you any trouble,” Henry whispered weakly from the otherside of Nathan. Jack didn’t even try not to eavesdrop, unwilling to move from where he was now.

“No, you’re not,” Nathan chuckled weakly.

“No,” Henry admitted, a smile touching his voice. “But thank you for all your bad behavior.”

There was dead silence in the house, the only noise that of the group’s heavy breathing as they tried to get air.

A rumbling from below caught Jack’s attention, though he thought he imagined it at first. When it came again, Jack lifted his head, listening attentively. A third, louder rumble prompted Jack to move.

“Do you hear that?” he asked, sliding over to the generator. “It’s coming from the floor.”

Fargo handed his cell phone to Jack and the omega quickly began tapping against the metal frame at the bottom of the generator. There was no reason to think it might work, but Jack could hope someone was down there. He waited a second, until a returning thunk echoed back, smiling as he realized what it meant.

“Jo and Taggart?” Henry asked hopefully, and Jack nodded, smiling at his friend. “They’ve got to be in the subsystem.”

“What do we tell them?” he asked, knowing the two alphas below would know morse code.
“Tell them to sever the outtake conduit,” Henry ordered.

“That’s a lot to put into morse code. It’ll take too long.”


“Okay.” Jack quickly went away to tapping, hoping the two would understand. Loud banging could be heard from below until suddenly all the papers they’d placed on the vents went flying to the floor, no longer held by the retreating air pressure. The group gasped in breaths as the air seemed a lot easier to take in and no longer like they were gasping through a straw.

The smell of rotten garbage and sewage suddenly flooded the house and their faces all curled in disgust.

“What is that smell?” Allison cried.

“Sewage, from the bowels of the bunker,” Henry panted.

“Guess that’s why they’re called the bowels,” Jack muttered, tapping away a quick thank you to the pair below them to let the know they did well. The group shakily clambered to their feet, just as BRAD sounded another alarm.

“Oh, what now?” Jack snarled.

“**Intruder Alert! Intruder Alert!**”

Thinking he was talking about the two alphas, the omega scoffed, ignoring the AI.

“**Eliminate Intruder! Eliminate Intruder!**” BRAD called. Tired, Jack rolled his head back, catching sight of the camera view where Zoe was walking up the path, returning home from school.

Adrenaline spiking, Jack scrambled to his feet, staring at the monitor in fear.

“No! Zoe! You can’t do this!” he screamed, watching as crosshairs focused in on his daughter and the plasma ray of death prepared to vaporize his little girl.

Running into the other room, Jack grabbed his World Series bat and turned, stalking back towards the generator.

“Jack, what are you doing!?” Allison cried.

“You could kill yourself!” Henry echoed.

“Shut up,” he snarled bringing the bat down again and again on the metal casing of the generator. “You’re not--gonna kill--my daughter--you--computerized bastard!” He yelled as fire and sparks shot out of the thing, ignoring them all as he kept whaling away on the device, images of his daughter disintegrating into soot and ash flashing through his mind.

The whole house suddenly went dark, breaking off Jack’s interrupting his thoughts and actions.

“Zoe!” he yelled, wondering if she could hear him.

“Jack, are you okay?” Nathan asked, stepping into his space and taking the bat from his hands.

“I’m fine. Where is Zoe!” he demanded frantically.
A low growl started up in the house and the lights flickered back on, the smoke from the generator filtering through the rooms and shrouding the air.

“What is that?” Jack asked, tired of new surprises popping up in this house.

“It’s a diesel generator powering up,” Fargo stated, sounding hopeful about their circumstances. “It must be the original back up system.”

“Back up systems engaged,” SARAH’s female voice stated. Jack sighed in relief, realizing the nightmare was finally over.

“SARAH! Where’s Zoe? Show me Zoe!” he ordered, watching as the screen came back on, the camera showing Zoe with her hands up and looking slightly freaked out.

“Alright, I know I should have paid for it, but I was in a hurry,” Zoe said over the camera. She reached into her pocket and pulled out a chocolate bar that she’d apparently stole from some market in town.

“Disengaging hostile activity,” SARAH called immediately after. Jack sighed in relief, feeling like his legs might fall right out from under him at any moment.

“I feel sick,” Jack gasped, following Allison as she hurried up and moved him swiftly to the couch where he could sit down.

“Is it the radiation?” she asked, all business as she examined his face and eyes, giving his hands a quick check as she did.

“I doubt it,” Henry informed, looking over the generator. “It didn’t even crack the housing.”

“So no Chernobyl?” Jack coughed.

“Nope. You beat the hell out of the RTG and your World Series bat,” the alpha tsked in shame. Nathan handed the bat back over so Jack could inspect the damage.

“I can live with that,” the omega mused, smiling up at the two alphas before him.

The sound of the bunker door opening and Zoe calling for him drew everyone’s attention. Fargo and Henry ran for the front door as fast as they could.

“Zoe, don’t!”

“Don’t close the door!”

“What’s going on?” Zoe screeched, surprised by the amount of people rushing towards her. The door clicked shut and they all sighed.

His daughter wandered over to him and Nathan, the only two who hadn’t run for the entrance.

“Oh I see how it is. You’re allowed to have parties and I’m not,” she stated, looking at him in disappointment. Jack just smiled, happy to even have her hear yelling at him.

“Come here,” he grinned, rising to his feet and engulfing her in a big hug. “I almost lost you,” he whispered. He knew he was probably hugging her too strongly, but neither of them complained.

“Eureka is still facing imminent disaster,” SARAH announced. “You all need to stay here and resolve your issues.”
Jack groaned, rolling his eyes as he reluctantly let go of Zoe.

“SARAH, what’s going on?” he demanded. This was getting beyond ridiculous.

“I just want you to be happy, Sheriff Carter.”

“Do you?” he asked skeptically. “No, I think you’re angry. You’re upset about something,” he accused. “We’ve aired our dirty laundry, now it’s time for you to come clean.”

“I have done all the laundry and folded it as well.”

“Oh, you know that’s not what I meant,” Jack growled. Then he paused as realization settled in. “Wait. You want me to be happy, because I was gonna leave. Just like Fargo left you and BRAD got left before that and whatever the hell it was before that.”

“It was a war game simulation program,” Fargo offered.

“Shall we play a game?”

“NO!” they all shouted quickly. They did not need that trouble.

“SARAH, is he right?” Beverly asked.

She didn’t answer.

“SARAH?” Jack urged. “Listen, everyone is afraid of being abandoned. I mean, I’m afraid of what’s gonna happen to this town when Henry leaves. I mean, maybe it’ll be a disaster. I don’t know.” Jack drifted off as his eyes connected with that of his friend. Blinking, Jack looked back towards the ceiling. “I promise you though, for right now, I am not going anywhere.”

Jack smiled at Fargo, his eyes catching on Zoe’s and then Nathan’s who stood behind her.

“What about Baja, Sheriff?” Jack forced a laugh.

“You kidding? You know what the crime rate is there?” he joked, remembering one of the comments she made about a property he had looked at.

There was a pause and then the front door opened with a hiss. Everyone smiled widely, Fargo bolting for the door as quickly as he could, desperate for freedom at last.

Jack walked out with them, trailing beside Nathan as they walked to his car.

So, uh, how fast do you think I could have a skylight put in there?” he asked, trying to sound casual, but knowing he missed it by a mile.

“Jack, I’m surprised you’re even willing to go back in there after what happened,” Nathan mused, looking down at him softly.

“Oh, believe me, I’m not stepping foot in there for quite a few hours,” Jack promised.

“So what I hear you saying is, you’ve got some time on your hands?”

“I guess that’s one way of looking at it.”

“Well, you know, my lunch did get interrupted with a call to save a certain damsel in distress,” Nathan teased with a smirk, climbing into his car gracefully.
“Who are you calling a damsel, Nathan?” Jack growled, annoyed.

“So you admit you were in distress.”

“What? No! I am not a damsel and I was not in distress!”

“Hmm, well, how do you feel about telling me all about it over a late lunch?” Nathan asked. Jack froze, scanning the alpha’s face for any sign of falseness. The man looked sincere, if a bit tense as he awaited the omega’s answer.

“Yeah...I think that could work.”
“Allison Blake,” Jack greeted, walking into GD and meeting up with the other omega, the woman falling into step beside him easily.

“Carter. What’s up?”

“My blood pressure,” he teased, making for the elevator at a brisk walk.

“Oh? It’s this suit isn’t it?” she joked, gesturing to the slim fitting suit she wore.

“Hah, not exactly,” he continued quickly before she could get offended. “Not that you don’t look great in it. It’s actually Nathan.”

“Oh really,” she drawled, sounding suddenly bored.

“Yeah, he’s trying to dodge jury duty by claiming scientific immunity,” he laughed, unable to hold it in when he remembered Nathan’s even tone when he’d given him the excuse the other day over the phone.

“That does sound like Nathan,” Allison said. “He’s down in Section Five with Kim overseeing some big test.”

“Oh? What kind of test?” he asked, knowing the alpha had been keen on something in that section for awhile now.

“I’m afraid it’s classified above your clearance level,” she smirked, hitting the button for the correct level as they got on.

They passed several floors before the entire elevator shook, the lift seeming to jump in mid-air.

“What was that?” Jack asked, leaning against one of the walls and praying the elevator didn’t decide to plummet them to their deaths.

“I don’t know,” Allison muttered.

(4 years later)

“Jack, it’s time to get up.”

Jack hummed, hearing the voice, but not wanting to listen as he curled tighter into his pillow. A thick arm wrapped around his chest, pulling him back against a broader one as lips ghosted against his ear.

“Jack. We’re going to be late if you don’t get up.”

Jack hummed again, fighting a smile as the lips brushed down his neck, leaving a string of kisses in
their wake before a warm mouth settled over his mate mark. He felt more than heard the purr in his partner’s chest as teeth slotted perfectly into place and applied gentle pressure to the mark. Eyes flying open, Jack moaned loudly as heat flooded his body, pressing back into his mate who seemed more than ready to give him what he wanted.

“Nah ah. You need to get up. They’ll be plenty of time for that later.”

Jack moaned again, this time in protest as he felt the body behind him shift away, getting up and leaving the ready warmth of the bed. Huffing, the omega pushed himself up, glaring at the man gazing at him with amusement and love from the bathroom door.

“You are such a tease!” he growled, throwing his pillow across the room.

With a deep laugh, Nathan vanished into the bathroom, Jack listening to the shower turn on as he pushed himself further into a sitting position with a sigh. Smiling, he traced a hand over the large swell of his belly under his nightshirt. With a little effort, Jack pushed himself to his feet with a grunt, shuffling into the bathroom and setting to work getting ready for the day.

“Glad to see you’ve joined the living,” Nathan teased from behind the shower glass.

“Unnn, Nathan, do we really need to go?” Jack whined, looking at his razor despondently.

“Jack, it’s going to happen whether you are there to see it or not. And you know Zoe would rip you a new one if you tried to skip out on this,” his mate warned, though his tone was warm as he shut the water off and stepped out to grab a towel. Jack groaned, knowing the man was right, but not liking it one bit.

Nathan slipped behind him with a chuckle, placing a quick kiss on his cheek and rubbing a soothing hand over his belly before making his way back into their bedroom. With a wistful sigh, Jack turned back to the sink and set to work finishing his morning routine.

Twenty minutes later, the omega had finally managed to make his way down to the kitchen, dressed primly in a well-cut suit for the special occasion. Grabbing the prepared smoothie SARAH provided off the fridge, Jack leaned against the counter, staring petulantly at the coffee-maker in the corner. The poor thing was actually collecting dust!

“Mom, stop sulking,” Zoe called as she wandered into the kitchen with a smile. Jack turned, grinning at how put together his little girl looked. Her blonde hair was up in a tasteful bun, her makeup styled in a way that made her look more mature, the look only complimented by the white dress and dripping earrings she wore.

“Well, don’t you look great! You ready for today?”

“Ready as I’ll ever be,” she sighed, sipping at her horrid green morning drink. Jack couldn’t contain the look of disgust as he eyed the stuff.

“I definitely went wrong somewhere,” he mused aloud.

“What?”

“Zoe, you’re literally drinking the lawn. I know I raised you better than that,” he whined. Zoe responded by raising her glass and taking a large swallow. “Oh come on.”

“Mom, if I ate and drank like you, I’m pretty sure I’d be ten pounds heavier,” she teased.
“Excuse me? What are you trying to say? You saying I’m fat?” he demanded in mock outrage to which she just smiled.

“You’re not fat,” Nathan’s exasperated voice drifted in from the stairs. The two smiled as his mate walked into the room, adjusting his cuff links as he approached the counter.

“You would say that,” Jack snarked back.

“So,” Zoe began, looking between them both eagerly. “Did you guys make a decision?”

Jack rubbed his stomach with a grin before meeting his daughter’s gaze.

“We decided to let it be a surprise,” he answered, Nathan coming up behind him and laying his own hands over the omega’s.

“Hmmm, and you’re sure you’re not having twins?” she asked, eyeing his form dubiously. Gasping theatrically and placing a hand against his chest, Jack leaned back against his mate, looking up into his grey eyes with feigned hurt.

“Nathan, she’s being mean to me!” he pouted.

“You two are ridiculous,” Nathan smirked, taking the chance to lay a kiss on his omega’s lips. Pulling back, Jack licked at his lips, giving his alpha an assessing look.

“Hang on a minute,” he said, grabbing the alpha by his lapels and forcing him into another kiss. Nathan didn’t resist, smiling against Jack’s lips before the omega broke contact again.

“You had coffee,” Jack accused with a stern look.

“You slept in,” Nathan countered. Jack hummed indeterminately, dragging the man back down into an even deeper kiss as he actively chased the flavor.

“Ew. Okay, it’s too early for that. I’m heading off. Don’t be late guys,” Zoe exclaimed, placing her cup down and gathering her bag.

“We won’t,” Nathan promised, breaking for air and glancing over at the girl.

“No promises,” Jack teased back, laughing as his daughter shot him a warning look. “Go, go. We’ll be just a few minutes behind you,” he assured, watching as she bounced out of the room in excitement and nerves.

“You ready?” Nathan asked, pulling away and grabbing up his keys.

“No,” Jack sighed, following his mate to the front door. “But I don’t really have a choice, do I?”

Jack and Nathan sat in one of the middle rows, the alpha holding a large bouquet of roses, as they watched Henry give a lovely speech in front of the graduating high school class. Jack squeezed his alpha’s hand in excitement as Zoe took the stage soon after, his girl looking nervous as she looked out on the gathered crowd, smiling as she noticed them quickly. Jack pulled out a camera, eager to capture every moment for later.

“You know, nobody is as surprised as I am to see me standing here today,” she began. “Except maybe my mother.” There were small laughs all around before she continued on. “When I first
came to Eureka four years ago, I was in the back of a police car, and luckily my father was driving, and being a man, he refused to stop and ask for directions, otherwise we may have actually reached our destination.”

“Well that’s just not fair,” Jack muttered, smirking at his mate when Nathan laughed.

“When I first came to Eureka, I was on my way home.” Zoe paused, seeming to gather herself. “The irony is, that by crashing here...I found one. Thank you for having faith in me. Thank you for making me and my mom a part of your family. I promise to do my share of the chores.” Jack scoffed quietly in disbelief. “And I’ll try not to blow up the world if you don’t,” she ended jokingly. Everyone laughed and started clapping as Henry retook the stage.

“Ladies and gentlemen, may I present to you, the class of 2010!”

Everyone rushed to their feet in cheers as the class stood, several taking their caps off and tossing them into the air.

Nathan tugged Jack away, leading him to a stand of trees where the graduates were exiting near. He beamed as Zoe rushed over to them happily, hugging her tightly and congratulating her on a job well done.

“Here you go, honey,” Nathan greeted, handing over the bouquet and giving her a large hug.

“Thanks dad. Thanks mom.”

“Zoe! Congratulations!” Henry cheered gaily, his black robe swaying behind him as he and Kim walked up to greet the family.

“Zoe, my dear. You did such a great job!” Kim complimented, pulling the girl into a quick hug.

“Thank you. Are you guys gonna be at the reception later?” Zoe asked, looking at them both expectantly.

“Wouldn’t miss it,” Henry smiled.

“I wish I could, but I’ve got some tests running back in the lab that I need to get back to,” Kim admitted guiltily.

“Your boss running you ragged?” Jack teased, watching as the couple grinned at each other.

“Oh, you know I’ve got him wrapped around my finger,” Kim joked, running said fingers along Henry’s shoulder teasingly. Laughing, Henry gave her a quick kiss before sending her on her way.

“Great speech,” Jo stated as she and Taggart waltzed up. “Wish I could stay longer, but someone needs to be on duty,” she said, eyeing Jack.

“Hey! I still work,” he argued.

“Not in the field,” she countered, to which Jack could only grumble at. All of his friends and his mate had told him he could take desk duty or not work at all as his pregnancy got further along. Jack saw no choice, but to take the lesser of the two evils.

“Are you guys coming to the party?” Zoe asked eagerly.

“Oh, with bells on,” Taggart agreed. Smiling broadly, his daughter paused as a thought occurred to her.
“Not just bells, right?”

“You never know,” he hinted, grinning slyly as Jo laughed and pulled him away, the pair making for their car in the lot.

Laughing, Zoe turned back to them, gesturing behind her at a group of her friends a few feet back.

“I’m going to head over with Wendy and Pilar, so I’ll meet you there,” she said.

“Alright, see you in a bit.” Giving the girl one last hug, Jack and Nathan watched her jog over to her friends.

“Tell me it’ll be easier when she goes to college?” Jack pleaded, looking after his girl. Nathan huffed out a quick laugh, grabbing Jack’s hand and tugging him towards the car lot.

“I’m not gonna make promises I can’t keep.”

“I don’t need a promise,” Jack complained, falling instep beside his mate. “I need a good lie that will make it easier for me to let her go when the time comes.”

“Oh, well, then yes. It’ll be tons easier. Cheaper too,” Nathan grinned, wrapping his arm around Jack’s waist as the omega sulked.

“That’s it. She’s not going. I’m locking her in her room until she’s thirty. No questions asked.”

“You know she’ll find some way of hacking her way out of the house? Besides, SARAH’s on her side, which makes it hard to keep someone locked in.”

“That’s on you. You just had to go and teach her-”

Jack faltered as a shock wave ripped through the area, everyone stumbling and swaying as they fought to regain their footing. Nathan snapped out his arm, grabbing Jack in a stable hold as the two looked around in confusion.

“What the hell was that?” Jack exclaimed.

“Nothing good,” Nathan muttered as their phones started going off. They pulled checked them quickly before glancing at the other.

“Jo,” Jack informed his mate.

“Fargo,” the alpha added, listening to whatever the beta was saying on the other end.

Jack listened to Jo give him a quick rundown before hanging up. Nathan looked grim as he pocketed his own phone.

“Never ends, huh?” Jack mused, the pair climbing into Nathan’s car at the same time. They’d been through this so many times now, they were practically in sync when dealing with Eureka’s issues.

“I’m not sure this time, Jack,” Nathan answered gravely, his eyes hard as he started the car up and steered them onto the road.

“Why do you say that? What’s wrong?”

“Seems that whatever happened, happened in Section Five,” the alpha growled.
“Section Five? But that hasn’t seen a lot of use since...”

“Since I was head of GD,” Nathan finished, stepping harder on the pedal as they headed out of town.

Jack followed quickly after Fargo, Nathan, and Jo as the beta quickly explained exactly what they’d picked up. Jo and Nathan, along with several other scientists trailing behind them, were in orange hazmat suits. The group was prepared to go into Section Five and figure out what was wrong, Jo taking Jack’s place to investigate what was going on.

“Rad sensors picked up a surge of exotic particles and thermal scans are detecting something in the containment area that wasn’t there before,” Fargo explained, leading them to the elevator down to the lab.

“The Article?” Nathan inquired.

“Unlikely, Sir. There’s still been no sign of it for years.”

“What exactly was detected down there?” Jack interjected.

“Not sure. Whatever it is, it’s organic, but visuals haven’t come back online in the lab yet for us to see it,” Fargo answered.

“Anyone down there?”

“Don’t know.”

“You don’t know?” Jack exclaimed angrily.

“Jack,” Nathan interrupted warningly, drawing the omega’s attention. Dragging his mate to the side of the hallway, the alpha looked sternly at the man. “We’ve got this.”

“Yeah and if there’s someone down there, we’ll make sure to bring them up,” Jo added as she slipped her helmet on with a cocksure grin. Jack sighed, watching as his mate placed his own helmet overtop his head.

“Track our progress through Fargo’s tablet. Should have a visual link to our suits. This shouldn’t take more than 20 minutes,” Nathan promised, stepping into the elevator with the rest of the team. As the doors slid closed, Jack sighed, trudging over to Fargo and watching as the beta turned on the camera link.

The duo watched as the team spread out, clearing the lab and checking computers as they filter through. The lab is eerily dark, the only light coming from the group’s flashlights. Jack watches as Nathan starts clicking at one of the computer stations, Jo heading off around a corner on her own.

“Stark. You need to see this,” the deputy’s voice calls out. Jack can see Nathan straighten up and hurry towards where Jo’s voice came from. As he rounds the corner, Fargo and Jack instinctively peer closer at the screen, trying to get a good look at the thing captured in Jo’s light.

“What is that?” Jack murmured.

“It looks like...a body,” Fargo answered.
“We need medical down here,” Nathan ordered.

Jack and Nathan watched from behind a window as Fargo and Henry started an autopsy examination on the corpse. The unknown body was literally fused to the metal wall, a few limbs missing chunks as if the pieces had just melted into the metal. It reminded Jack of a charred mummy, the mouth gaping as if locked in an eternal scream. It just looked spooky.

“Bones are brittle to the touch,” Henry called out, the body crinkling and cracking as the man moved it around and touched it. Jack fought back a gag, averting his eyes from the grisly remains and taking a deep breath as he tried to regain his composure.

“You okay,” Nathan whispered, looking at him in concern and placing a warm hand on his back.

“Fine,” Jack swallowed roughly. “Just… got a weak stomach at the moment.”

“Internal chest cavity shows massive tissue damage,” Henry continued in the other room. “Organs are all but disintegrated. Let’s get a tissue sample.”

“Have you ever seen anything like this?” Jack asked his mate.

“A few lab accidents in the past. Nothing to this scale though,” Nathan answered. “It would have taken a large, focused blast of radiation to cause this. Nothing else in the lab was touched.”

“Any theories?”

“Nothing concrete at the moment. We need to know who that is first before we can start hypothesizing what happened,” the alpha stated with a shrug.

“Doesn’t look very encouraging,” Henry announced, looking at a sample of the tissue through a microscope of some kind.

“What’d you find?” Jack questioned, raising his voice to be heard clearer over the speaker.

“She’s been exposed to an intense dose of radiation.”

“That was pretty clear, Henry. Can you tell what kind?” Nathan asked.

“Exotic particles. It’s going to be extremely difficult to find an intact DNA sample,” Henry answered.

“Henry…” Nathan trailed off, staring intently at the other alpha. “There’s no chance-”

“Until we know more, Nathan, I say it’s too early to start jumping at shadows,” Henry cut him off.

“What’s wrong?” Jack insisted, looking at his mate curiously. With a sigh, Nathan turned away, heading for the hallway where Henry would exit from.

“Those particles are very similar to the ones that emitted from the Artifact chamber.”

“The Artifact? I thought that thing was destroyed 4 years ago.”

“It was. The Artifact completely collapsed when Kim and I extracted a sample from it back then. This is the first time I’ve seen a trace of it since then.”
“Hey,” Jack started, moving in front of his mate and placing a hand on his chest. “You’re not going to get obsessed over this again, are you?”

The Artifact had always seemed to bring about a single-minded focus in his mate. One that was neither healthy, nor welcome at this point in their lives as far as Jack was concerned. He watched Nathan as the alpha paused, seeming to mull the thought over. Anxiety was starting to eat at Jack until Nathan sighed heavily, taking his hand and using it to pull Jack closer and into his arms.

“I can’t promise anything, Jack. I’ll try not to, I really will, but you know how I hate leaving work unfinished.”

Jack huffed, not liking the answer, but knowing it was the best he was going to get from his mate.

A door down the hall slid open, revealing Henry in his scrubs. The older alpha spotted them and made his way over, the pair separating as they fell into step next to him.

“So,” Jack cleared his throat, reordering his thoughts to focus on the task at hand. “Is there really no way to identify who that is?”

“In this case, the body’s far too distorted,” Henry explained. “Without more to go on, we’ll never know who it is.”

“Hasn’t your mate been working on a DNA reconstruction program?” Nathan asked. “That might give us something to work with.”

“I doubt it,” Henry denied, shaking his head.

“What do you mean? She designed it to reconstruct entire DNA strands based on partial samples. I’ve seen her work and she’s pretty far along. Even if it doesn’t give us a full strand, it should give us a starting point.”

“But it’s still in the early experimental stages,” their friend continued to argue.

“Oh come on, Henry. You know that program’s pretty much finished. Experiments at this point are just redundant,” Nathan growled, glaring at the man.

“Henry,” Jack stepped in, looking at his friend beseechingly. “You gotta admit it’s worth a try.”

Henry sighed, giving in to their urging. The trio moved quickly to Kim’s lab, finding the omega examining a DNA helix on one of her computers. The woman looked up as they walked in, beaming at the sight of her mate and close friends.

“Hello! I’m surprised to see you. I thought you all would be at Zoe’s party?” she inquired, looking intrigued by the problem.

“We will be, but we need to ask you something first,” Jack lead in with when it seemed like the alphas beside him weren’t ready to speak up. “We were hoping you could use your DNA project to identify the body in Section Five?”

“What happened?” she asked, looking intrigued by the problem.

“We’re not sure,” Nathan replied. “We were hoping your research might provide some answers.”

“It’s a long shot, so if you think it’s impossible—” Henry tried to cut in.

“Anything’s possible,” Kim scolded her mate, smiling at him warmly despite his doubt. “I’ll just
have to modify the existing software a bit.”

“Awesome,” Jack smiled.

“Look, why don’t you guys go back to Zoe’s party?” Henry suggested. “If we get something, we’ll call you.”

Jack checked his watch. A little over an hour had passed since they’d been called to GD. The party should definitely still be going. Eager to see Zoe, Jack grabbed Nathan’s hand and tugged him towards the door. The alpha seemed reluctant to follow at first, but finally joined Jack as they made their way out of the building.

“What’s with you?” he asked, looking at his mate assessingly. Nathan was wearing a frown, his eyes looking troubled as he climbed into the car.

“Does Henry seem off to you?”

“Yeah, but maybe he’s just tired,” Jack excused. Nathan seemed unconvinced, but pulled away from GD all the same.

It didn’t take them long to get back into town, pulling into a packed Cafe Diem where several recent graduates and townspeople could be seen milling about and having fun. A blue and gold banner hung over the cafe’s entrance, proudly proclaiming congratulations to the class. Jack smiled broadly, pulling himself from the car as Nathan parked, a bracing hand on his stomach as he reached out and grabbed his mate’s hand when the man came around the front.

They greeted several people as they shuffled their way in, the omega scanning for his daughter over the sea of heads as they moved.

“Why do we know so many people?” he whined, collapsing into one of the bar seats when they finally made it to the counter. Nathan grinned at his mate’s withering look, taking a seat beside him.

“Well, you’re the sheriff and I’m the ex-head of GD. It’s pretty much required that we know everyone in town,” the alpha stated helpfully. Gesturing with his hand to a passing Vincent, Nathan ordered them two drinks and something to eat. Jak grinned broadly at the cocktail placed in front of him, knowing it was virgin, but grateful for something other than a smoothie.

He gave a silent cheer when the food arrived, diving into his burger with relish and gamely ignoring the amused look his mate threw him. An excited laugh behind them drew the omega’s attention, turning in time to have his vision filled with a poof of blonde hair.

“Zoe!” he exclaimed, hugging the girl excitedly. “Having fun?”

“Where have you been?” she demanded, punching him lightly on the shoulder with a glare.

“Ah! Nathan, defend me! Abuse, abuse,” he cried, holding his arms up defensively while hiding the smile that crossed his face. Chuckling, Nathan turned in his chair to face the girl.

“We were called up to GD for a bit. Something came up, but we’ve handled it for now,” he explained. Passing her a drink, Nathan motioned her away to rejoin her friends, smiling as she beamed and bounced away with a quick thanks.

“Did you just give her alcohol?” Jack asked, narrowing his eyes at the other man.
“Jack, she just graduated and if she’s old enough to play with lasers, build robots, and solve complex algorithms, she’s old enough to have one drink. Besides, it’s Zoe. You really don’t think the girl’s never swiped a drink before do you?” Nathan questioned, raising one of his eyebrows meaningfully.

“Doesn’t matter. She’s still my little girl and she is underage.” Jack paused as he processed everything the alpha had said. “And when did she play with lasers?”

Before Nathan could answer, a shudder ran through the whole building and the sound of crashing metal echoed from outside. His alpha pulled Jack to his feet, the both of them hurrying outside to see what had happened.

They were greeted by the sight of a car wreck, but not like one Jack had ever seen before. The alarms were going off in both vehicles, and as they got closer, the omega could see the front end of one car had completely fused with the side of the jeep it had hit. Approaching the vehicle, Jack watched as the Baker brothers stumbled out.

“You guys okay?” Jack asked lending a supporting hand as Jo ran up behind him and checked on the other brother.

“I don’t know what happened,” one of the brothers began.

“It came out of nowhere,” the other finished.

“One second it wasn’t there and then poof! It just appeared,” they said together.

“Jack,” Nathan called. The omega looked over, spying his mate on the other side of the jeep and looking at it speculatively. Leaving the brothers in Jo’s hands, Jack made his way over.

“What’s up?”

“Didn’t you lose this thing a few years back?” Nathan asked, nodding at the vehicle. Taking a better look, Jack realized that it was his old Sheriff’s jeep.

“Yeah,” he muttered, taking in the jeep. “It was crushed by that runaway tornado six months ago.” The jeep didn’t even have a scratch on it. It looked almost brand new. Nathan checked the front windshield.

“The security sticker is from three years ago,” he informed Jack.

“What? That’s not possible…” Trailing off, Jack pulled the driver side door open, rummaging around until he found what he hoped wouldn’t be there. Standing back up, the omega showed his mate the keys from the jeep, pulling a matching pair from his back pockets. Nathan’s eyes darkened as he looked between the two sets of keys.

“We need to get back to GD. There’s more to this than we know,” he growled. Jack followed after his mate as Nathan made a quick call to the center, requesting a pick up for the two cars in the crash.

“This looks familiar,” Jack mused, watching as several technicians ran around with equipment, scanning the crash and the Baker brothers. He’d seen something similar to this four years ago.
“It’s standard procedure whenever a temporal anomaly occurs,” Fargo explained, holding up his tablet as he scrolled through strings of data.

“So have you found anything yet?”

“Not much, but it looks like a fundamental quantum instability.”

“You mean like what happened back with Walter Perkins’ time machine?” Jack clarified.

“Tachyon Accelerator,” Fargo corrected.

“Tomato, tomahto. Still that happened years ago. Do you think that’s what’s happening now?”

“No.”

Jack looked up as Henry answered his question. The alpha paced around the wreckage, taking in the damage with a careful eye as he made his way over to them.

“Walter’s device has been locked up in a vault for the past four years,” he continued.

“He couldn’t build another one?” Jack asked.

“Walter’s under house arrest,” Henry explained. “Even if he could get his hands on the right equipment, he’s not reckless enough to do something like this again.”

“What about his machine? Could someone have gotten to it and turned it on?”

“Not possible,” Henry denied, shaking his head vehemently. “As I said, Walter’s machine is locked up in a vault within Section Five. No one is getting in there.”

Jack watched as the alpha walked away, the man looking a little frazzled as he left the warehouse. Trusting his friend, but wanting to double check for himself, Jack opened his phone, dialing the station as he made his way towards Nathan’s lab.

“Lupo here.”

“Hey Lupo. It’s me. I need you to run a search for me. I’m looking for a list of people who would have access to the Section Five vault at GD and the brains to use a Tachyon Accelerator.”

Jack shuffled into Nathan’s lab, the alpha looking up as he slumped into a nearby chair. All this running around was creating hell on his ankles. He smiled, closing his eyes with a hum when a hand began to run through his hair and over his neck. Basking in his alpha’s attention, Jack almost missed Jo’s question over the phone.

“Okay, the list has narrowed a bit, but I’m not sure what someone might need to know to run an Accelerator.”

Frowning, the omega peeked up at his alpha, the man looking down at him curiously.

“What would someone need to know to run a machine? Say something like a Tachyon Accelerator?”

Nathan answered, though he didn’t look fooled in the slightest by Jack subtlety.

“Hmm, they’d have to be pretty well versed in quantum mechanics at the very least. Is this about what’s happening?”
Jack hummed in agreement, relaying the information to Jo and waiting for her to put it into the computer.

“What’s going on?” Nathan asked, resuming his massage on Jack’s shoulders.

“I think someone started up Walter Perkins’ time machine thingy. Henry says it’s locked away in some vault in Section Five so I’m having Jo run a search on anyone who may have had access to the thing.” He felt Nathan tense, his fingers digging in a little more than they needed to. Jack turned to ask him what was wrong, but was distracted by Jo’s voice over the line again.

“**Well, that definitely narrowed it down. I’ve only got two names,**” she reported.

“Who are they”

“**Nathan Stark and Henry Deacon.**”

Dully thanking his deputy, Jack stared down at the tiled floor, confusion and denial swimming through his mind.

“It’s not you,” Jack whispered, knowing Nathan could hear him. There was no way it was Nathan.

“No. We both know who’s behind this.”

“Damn it,” Jack sighed.

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Jack stood anxiously in Henry’s office, staring at his friend and trying to figure out how to put what he wanted to say into words. Nathan stood behind him, supportive, but not interfering. Yet. The omega could practically feel the glare his mate was giving the other alpha. Henry was clearly very aware of it too, if the clench of his jaw was any indication. He stared down them both, a knowing look in his eye.

He knew the game was up.

“Henry,” Jack began softly, not wanting to seem like he was attacking the man. They just wanted answers. “I cross-checked who had access and the ability to cause something like this. There were only two names. One was my mate. The other-”

The sound of the sliding doors behind them drew everyone’s attention. Kim slowly walked in, looking at them all with a haunted expression on her face.

“I have something to show you,” she said and Jack watched out of the corner of his eye as Henry seemed to wilt. The alpha looked like he’d aged five years in a matter of seconds. Curious, Jack followed the other omega to her lab, Nathan and Henry following behind them.

Once in front of Kim’s computers, the scientist pulled up a visual model. The spinning head looked exactly like Kim.

“What are we looking at here?” Jack asked.

“I ran the DNA from the body into my program. Even with just a partial sample, the computer had no problem with linking the strands to…’’ Kim trailed off, biting off tears as she looked at the model.
“You,” Jack finished, glancing at the charred mummy in the lab with new horror.

“What did you do, Henry?” Nathan growled, stalking into the other alpha’s space.

Henry never took his eyes off Kim. The omega had tears trailing down her face, her eyes begging for answers from her mate.

“I lost her the first time to Jason,” Henry admitted in a whisper. “But we got a second chance.” The alpha moved forward, cupping his mate’s face as he smiled softly down at her. “I couldn’t let you go,” he bit out, his own tears rolling down his face now.

“They…..they couldn’t identify your body,” he continued, gesturing to the remains in the corner, but refusing to look away from the alive Kim in front of him. “They brought me in to see if I could…. It took days,” he gasped through a sob, stepping away and running his hands over his face roughly.

“That’s why you wanted my job,” Nathan said. “You needed access to the Tachyon Accelerator so you could go back and change what happened. You didn’t have the clearance to even get near that machine before then.”

“It was the only way!” Henry yelled at him desperately. “You were never going to let me try this. You know what the risks are.”

“You’re damn right I wouldn’t have!” Nathan roared, glaring at Henry angrily. “This was so stupid, Henry. You realize what you’ve done?”

“Wait,” Jack interrupted, looking between everyone in confusion. “What are the risks?”

“Creating a paradox,” Kim explained, trying her best to reign in the tears. “An alternate timeline with a different outcome.” Breathing deeply, the omega carried on. “What we’re witnessing is two intersecting realities colliding, competing for the same space-time continuum.”

“But… but that means we’re living in the wrong time-line,” Jack said shakily.

“Yes,” Henry admitted.

“None of what we’ve known for the past four years was supposed to happen,” Kim added.

“No,” Jack whined, desperately rubbing his hands over his swollen belly. This couldn’t be true. Please. He gazed over at his mate, Nathan staring at him with the same lost, torn look on his face.

“This is our life,” Henry tried to reason desperately, looking at them all for support. “Do you really want me to change it?”

Jack closed his eyes as Nathan came closer, the alpha pulling his mate’s head in to rest on his shoulder as he began to cry silently.

“Henry, if we don’t fix it, things will only get worse,” Nathan rumbled softly, running a soothing hand down Jack’s back as he glanced at the other alpha.

“You don’t know that! Things could equalize,” Henry argued.

“I do know that! If everything was equalized, the town wouldn’t be suffering these earthquakes, or these sudden time collisions. We have to undo what you did,” Nathan demanded.

“How?” Jack asked, pulling away to look up at his mate. Nathan blinked, clenching his jaw as he
regarded him.

“Someone has to go back. Stop Henry before he can save her.”

“No! I won’t help you do this,” Henry snarled. “I’m not going to let her die again!” Turning on his heel, he stormed from the room, Kim looking after him sadly as the doors slid closed.

“Lupo just called. She said a tornado just took out half of Main Street,” Jack reported listlessly, watching as Nathan directed scientists around his lab.

The Tachyon Accelerator had been moved up here, Nathan examining the hardware and running calculations with a single-minded focus that Jack couldn’t help, but admire. His mate suddenly slammed his fist angrily against a metal support beam, glaring at the computer in frustration.

“Nathan?”

“It won’t work,” he growled, running his hands through his hair. “Why won’t it work?”

“Nathan,” Jack called again, walking over to his mate and grabbing one of his hands when he didn’t reply. He smiled sadly when the alpha looked up at him, desperation clear in his eyes. “Maybe you should take a break?”

“Jack,” Nathan protested, allowing himself to be pulled away from the computer a bit. He turned, looking up into his mate’s conflicted eyes and sighing sadly in understanding.

“There’s no way things can stay as they are?”

Nathan shook his head regretfully.

“Time needs to be fixed. If it wasn’t an issue, I wouldn’t be trying so hard. I have to go back and set things right.”

“You can’t.”

The two jerked their heads to the side, watching as Henry approached with forced steps.

“What?” Nathan snarled with a glare.

“You can’t be the one to go back and stop me,” Henry replied softly.

“Why not?” his mate demanded.

“Because you have to be there to run the test with the Artifact. Sending you will solve nothing.”

“Then it has to be me,” Jack interjected, meeting the regretful looks of both men evenly.

“I’m afraid so. I heard what about what happened in town. I know I can't keep holding out. Nathan, you’ll be needing this.” Henry held out a small plastic cube, a softly glowing chunk resting in the middle.

“The piece of the Artifact I removed,” Nathan stated, taking the cube and looking at it with distaste.
“It’s trans-dimensional. It exists completely outside our space-time continuum. I leave it in your hands,” Henry explained, watching as Nathan plugged the cube into the side of the Accelerator.

“Where will you be, Henry?” Jack questioned. Henry turned to him sadly.

“Saying good-bye.”

Jack watched his friend leave the lab with a heavy heart. The Accelerator began to spin, the interconnected rings picking up speed as the machine powered on. Nathan tugged him away from the rings, turning him so they could look each other in the eyes.

“I programmed it to let you out a little outside Section Five. With any luck, you’ll intercept Henry enroute to my old lab.”

Jack began to shake, finally feeling the enormity of what was about to happen settle on his shoulders.

“Nathan, I don’t think I can do this.”

“Hey, look at me.” Nathan tilted his face up. Jack felt fresh tears start to slide down his face as he stared at his mate. The alpha was trying to stay strong, forcing a small smile on his face as he looked down at him. “You’ve got to do this. For us.”

“But I’m going to lose you,” Jack argued, not even trying to hold it together anymore. “And our child,” he gasped, hands wrapping around his stomach as if he could hold the child there by sheer will.

“I know. I know,” Nathan cooed, using his thumb to wipe the tears from his mate’s face, though he had some begin to fall from his own eyes. “I know. Shhhh.” His voice began to shake as he laid his forehead against Jack’s. “Look, it’ll be a second chance. We will still have a chance. You’ll just have to woo me all over again,” Nathan tried to tease, his smile cracking at the edges. “Just, when you go back, please, you have to remember something. For me. Can you promise?”

“What is it?”

Nathan stared down at him intently, his eyes burning into Jack’s as he placed a large hand behind the omega’s neck, his thumb stroking the mating mark reverently.

“I love you, Jack Carter. Don’t you ever forget it.” With that, he pulled Jack in for a deep kiss, the omega pushing into it desperately, committing it to memory and wishing it would never end. They held each other tightly, running out of breath, but not caring as they used every second still allowed to them.

Finally, reluctantly, they pulled apart, Nathan taking several steps back towards the computer terminal, his eyes continuing to stare solemnly at his mate as Jack gazed back.

“I promise,” he whispered softly. Turning, Jack faced the portal created by the machine. A swirling vortex of blue light engulfed the rings, pulsing softly as it waited. Taking a deep breath, he closed his eyes and stepped forward.

He fell, knees slamming onto metal with a large clang.

Jack gasped as emptiness settled where his connection to Nathan had just been. With shaking
fingers, he brushed down his neck, feeling for the mark in desperation, but encountering nothing except smooth skin and the slight scar from his ex-mate. It was gone. All of it. It had never even happened. Jack didn’t even try to hold back the sob that tore through him as his other hand ran down his flat stomach.

He’d never even found out what they were having.

Tears pouring down his face, Jack looked up at the sound of thundering steps on grated metal. Henry barreled around the corner, the alpha looking determined and half-crazed as he approached. His friend blinked in shock when he spotted Jack kneeling before him, obviously distraught and broken. And obviously there to stop him.

Gritting his teeth in determination, Jack forced himself to his feet and charged at Henry with everything he had, colliding with the man and sending them both to the grating below before his friend could react. The alpha roared, pushing and yelling, trying to get Jack to let him up, to let him go.

“I can still save her! Let me go, Jack! I can do this, there’s still time. Let me go! Jack! Please, it’ll work. I promise! Just give me the chance! Please!”

Jack ignored his friend’s pleading, latching onto the alpha and the railing behind them with everything he had as tears ran down his face. The omega sobbed, apologizing with every breath as Henry strained against him with everything he had.

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry. Has to happen. Didn’t equalize. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. It didn’t work. I’m sorry.”

As the shock blast swept through GD, signaling Kim’s death and the end of Henry’s hopes, the alpha turned from fighting Jack to crying into his shoulder, the two men wrapped up in the loss of all that might or could have been.

Through it all, Jack continued his litany of apologies, unsure if he was still saying sorry to Henry or if it was to his lost mate and their unborn child.

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Days passed and Jack continued to feel hollow. The funeral for Kim had been carried out, Henry holding a special service in honor of her.

The omega knew his friends regarded him with worry, aware of his broken demeanor and empty presence. They put it down to the effects of losing a friend and gave him his space.

As Jack stood in his bathroom looking at the bottle of pills in his hand, he thought about what could be and what had been. What he wanted.

With a decisive hand, he poured them all out, watching them sink, before flushing them all away.

Chapter End Notes
God, this one was so hard. Like, really, really hard.
This is it for season 1. Stay tuned for the start of season 2, coming soon.

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