Rise of the Arcanist
by G8rguy

Summary

Welcome to Part 2 of the Teen Sorcerer story. Now that Stiles and the pack have dealt with his ascension and dealt with the Alpha Pack and the Darach, they must now deal with the aftermath of that battle and what Stiles' new situation means for not just Beacon Hills, but so much more.

Notes

Well, here we are at part 2. I have to admit I struggled with this for a couple of reasons. One, part 1 was long and when I started laying out part 2, I knew it would be longer. I like that online there are less restrictions so you get to include a lot more than in a traditional book, so I take advantage of it. Second, in some ways all the kudos, comments, and interest in part one, and thank you SO MUCH to everyone who enjoyed it and sent approval, was a barrier as I was worried about not producing something as good and 'messing' up the story. One of those things that gets in your head and hard to get out, but trying to let that go.

This story also is going to take some time to get going before we really get to action. I think
exploring the impact of what happened in part 1, as well as introducing new characters and figuring out what it all means for our characters, will take a while so I hope you enjoy that part.

Also, it's not going to be easy or quick for our heroes to resolve their issues so don't expect anything fast in the romance department either. Anyways, enjoy, have fun, and as always, any comments are appreciated. -G8rguy
Stiles opened his eyes and stared at the ceiling, focusing on the glow-in-the-dark stars that he and Scott had attached to the ceiling when they were in 4th grade. He took a deep breath and reached for his phone off the nightstand and checked the time…4:17am…before putting it back down with a sigh. The last day was still pretty much a blur and now he was lying in his bed uncertain about what to do next. Yesterday they had talked in Derek’s loft until just after lunch when his dad’s yawning finally got too much to ignore. He hadn’t really been much better if he was being honest and neither was anyone else once the adrenaline from the battle and everything else had worn off. Not wanting to deal with everything anymore, Stiles and his dad had returned home and both had crashed for several hours sleep.

The first time he woke up he heard his dad in the other room on the phone. The sheriff had called to check in and Stiles had been willing to struggle out of his bed when his door opened and his dad was standing there in sweats and a t-shirt. He told Stiles that he had told the station he would out until the following morning before hanging up. Stiles sighed in relief but dragged himself up and they ate a simple dinner without saying much, just enjoying the quiet. An hour later and both Stilinski men were back asleep. Stiles had woken up several times since then but now it seemed he was finished sleeping even if he wasn’t exactly ready to face the world.

He was a bit surprised he had slept so well, but he supposes that the combination of the battle, all the bad guys being wiped out, and a near impenetrable force field on his house translated into a pretty worry free sleep. Finally tossing aside his covers he moves over to his desk and thinks about going online, but he is fairly sure that he isn’t going to be able to find the answers to his current questions there. Glancing around at his books he can feel the subtle hum of magic that resides with them and sighs as he realizes with a sharp pang of regret that he would never get to visit the Majestic Library again.

Dropping to the floor, Stiles decides that if he can’t sleep or research, he would try meditation. Closing his eyes he finds himself grounding faster than ever before as he reaches out and touches the ley line running under the house and suddenly it felt as if he had grabbed a live electrical wire as he receives a burst of energy. It doesn’t hurt, more like when he mixed coffee and red bull that one time he doesn’t want to ever mention again. No, instead he feels supercharged, excited, and connected like never before. There is a moment of welcome, a flicker of recognition that he recognizes as the heart stone he tied all his protections to. The warder was like a dog, acknowledging him, but not standing down from its appointed duties, and with a mental pat the teen passes it by and Stiles can feel his senses rushing along the line until it crosses another line and then that feeling of connection multiplies and he is racing in three directions. Each time he crosses a line, his awareness expands as if he was exploring a spider-web of connections spread out all around him. He pauses for a moment, reveling in the feeling of being connected but something catches his attention on one line and his mind leaps forward and in moments he is outside of Beacon Hills and moving fast along the line.

Stiles doesn’t try to control how and where he was going, instead he just lets the flow carry him along and he suddenly realizes that the line has taken him west where it touches the Pacific Ocean and he smiles at the feeling of connection to the water. He frowns when he notices several smaller irritations that are nearby and he focuses his attention on them and suddenly he can hear singing. It’s a pod of merfolk! Eyes widening, Stiles can feel the fourteen individuals swimming beyond the
shore as they move closer, curiosity clear in their auras, as they search for the new presence they have sensed. Stiles pulls back and suddenly he is shooting along another of the lines, now heading north. He feels several wolves, both alone and in packs, and unlike the merfolk, it appears that most of them are unaware of any happenings to the south but Stiles can feel the energies of the land there shifting, becoming familiar like Beacon Hills, caressing him and welcoming him as an old friend finally come home.

He enjoys the warm glow of the feelings but he quickly realizes that the Alpha of one of the packs feels...’off’ somehow, like they are sick or something. Stiles is suddenly pulled along the lines again before he can focus enough to investigate, moving west this time. He feels a flicker of awareness, a bright, shiny mind that is significantly surprised at the connection but very much aware of him. Stiles doesn’t feel threatened. No. Instead he feels a tentative greeting, an acknowledgement of Stiles that disappears as he moves past the feather-light touch. Had someone actually recognized his presence? He doesn’t have time to consider as suddenly he is rushing south, but this time he slows his movement until he comes to a connection point of three strong Ley lines that shines brightly in his mind. Stiles touches the node and feels of surge of power as the magic gathered there yields to his touch, acknowledging him as a friend and partner. He laughs at the feeling from the magic, like it knows him and likes him!

“Stiles?” he hears his father’s voice, tentative and distant but with enough concern to alarm the teen. With an effort he pulls himself back and after a moment is coherent enough to look over to see his father standing in the doorway looking worried.

“Dad?” his voice feels raw as he answers and notices that the room is bright with light as he stares at his father, his human and normal father who’s aura is calm, restful and peaceful to his eyes. He also notices that the sun is now up and that means that he must have been meditating for several hours.

Noah Stilinski however was anything but peaceful. Waking up with the sunrise, he had come out of his bathroom when he felt a hum, a vibration that was thrumming through the whole house. Moving quickly to his son’s room, he opened the door onto a sight that had stunned him. Stiles was sitting on the floor, legs crossed, with his eyes open wide and a bright white light shining out from them. Noah had seen his son’s eyes like this before, but what he hadn’t seen before was his whole body engulfed in a rainbow of light and color, sparkles coming off him and moving around the room like miniature stars.

His first impulse was to yell but something about it made him pause. The lights were almost…joyful? He realized that they were not just moving, but they were dancing and as he watched Stiles’ face, his son was smiling gently, the stress and worries of the last year smoothed away. Noah finally called out, gently, but it was enough for his son to glance over in surprise before the lights faded away and the light around his son dimmed until it was only in his eyes before that too faded away, returning to the warm amber that always caused a slight tremor when he saw Claudia’s eyes staring back at him from Stiles’ face.

“Dad?” Stiles repeated as he slowly stood up. “Are you okay?” he asked sensing his father’s confusion.

“I think I should be asking that son” Noah said with a shake. “You were lit up like a Christmas tree.”

Stiles freezes before he barks out a nervous laugh and looks embarrassed. The two men head downstairs as the Sheriff describes what he saw when he walked in and Stiles shares his morning adventures. They have just finished breakfast when a sudden knocking on the door surprises both
of them. Noah opens the door and sees Isaac Lahey standing there looking half asleep. “Isaac?” the sheriff asks with his professional voice.

“Sir” Isaac says respectfully. “Lizzie wants to talk with Stiles but she can’t get in” he points to the street where the druid was currently standing and waving.

“I got it” Stiles yelled rushing past both of them to run over to Lizzie. Grabbing her hand he pulls her across the barrier with a sheepish look. “Sorry about that” he apologizes.

“Don’t apologize. Your protections are impressive” she says as Isaac heads back home to return to his interrupted sleep. “After I felt you riding the ley lines this morning I thought we should talk. I can only stay for a few days before I need to get back home, so I thought that maybe we could spend that time together” she offers.

Moving into the house, Stiles and Lizzie sit down while the Sheriff starts moving around the kitchen before returning with fresh coffee. “I’m still a bit confused about everything” he admits to the woman looking at his son with an apologetic glance. “But I’m afraid that I am going to have to deal with the FBI and everything that Blake did before I can even think about anything else.”

Lizzie nods in understanding and keeps things light until the Sheriff heads out to go to work. He advises Stiles that he will probably be late dealing with everything before leaving. “So” Lizzie says as the door closes “I think we should talk…Morgaine to Arcanist. I can tell you what I know about your powers and history, but I imagine that you will discover a great deal more through your own studies.” She smiles at his look of frustration “Besides, I think you could also use some intensive tutoring on Druidic magic and who better than me to provide it?” her eyes twinkle as she says it.

“You are going to teach me Druidic magic?” Stiles stammers but suddenly thinks about the texts he has been reading on Druidic magic and all of the questions he has. “I have so many questions!” he says with a gleam in his eye that causes the woman to laugh and settle down. She may only be able to stay a few days, but Lizzie plans to make the most of each one.

Derek jumps up from the push-ups to grab the bar for another set of pull ups as he moves through his morning workout. He needed to press as hard as he could, reveling in the physical strain and stress that allows him to stop thinking about everything that has happened in the last 24 hours. He had struggled after Stiles had left the loft with his dad, feeling out of sorts with the teen’s absence, but he knew he shouldn’t push or press too hard. Hell, they didn’t really know what it would mean…but Stiles had kissed him and Derek can still taste the other man’s lips.

“Oh god, don’t you ever rest!” Isaac groans as he walks back into the loft. He had left earlier with Lizzie because she wanted to see Stiles. The bigger frustration was the conversation she had with Derek before she left.

“I will have to leave soon, so I am going to have to monopolize his time. Use it to get your head on straight Alpha. The rush and pressure of the fight are fading but the choices you both made are not something that you can change. You will need to figure out how to be in a partnership together and I think both of you need to think about what that exactly means” she had told him.

Derek had bristled at her words, however kindly they were delivered. “I am not going to try to get out of my promise but I won’t force Stiles to do anything he doesn’t want to” he had growled.

Lizzie had laughed at that and smiled at him with what he could only call sympathy. “Derek…he’s
the Arcanist. If anyone tries to force him to do something he doesn’t want to do, they probably will not live long enough to regret it. I am more worried that you won’t push him when he needs it. You are going to face what basically amounts to an invasion of your territory by every supernatural being in range and probably by some that have been hidden for centuries. Heck, some that were thought gone forever might even show up. It affects you as the Alpha of this territory as much as it does Stiles. You are his mate. Other packs in his territory will be subordinate to you simply because you are his partner and he will not consider any other pack as being your equal. They will have to accept you as well.”

Derek looks lost at her words. “You expect other packs to come here?” he finally asks.

Lizzie smiles. “Derek, he was testing his borders this morning. He reached over a hundred miles in every direction. His territory is vast and will encompass the territory of several packs easily. Despite their previous independence, this land is now his and everything inside it will have to deal with that truth regardless of what it was yesterday. You are, for lack of a better word, the co-ruler of his territory and many beings will look to use you to get to him” she sighs as she looks at his sudden defensive posture. “Not all of them will try to use you like that. They will also appeal to you, entreat you, bribe you…all because you are the mate of the Arcanist and can support their positions to him. You are an avenue to power whether you want it or not. Some may seek to threaten you but I would not wish the fate that will land on those that threaten violence to what Stiles views as his.”

Derek froze for a second as he realized what she was dancing around. There would be those that would try to use him to get what they wanted. Derek was very familiar with that and he swore never again. He knew his eyes had flashed when Lizzie sighed again.

“Derek, please think carefully. Talk to your uncle. As much as there are those that want to use you, there are many ways you can help him. You can hear things he won’t and make sure he has good counsel. Think about it, just because there are those that will seek to use you doesn’t mean that you can’t turn it around to benefit your pack and mate” she smiles wickedly and Derek feels an atavistic shiver. “You two could truly be amazing.”

Derek had watched the strange woman leave on that note and had been left with his thoughts. Angry at the idea, he also sullenly realizes that she has a point. Peter had been his mother’s second and hadn’t hesitated to do anything that would benefit the Hale pack. His father had been the gentle one, the one the family would go to for reassurance. Could he be that for Stiles? Derek had never truly felt comfortable as the Alpha. He had always expected it to be Laura and he knows that he has not always handled things the way he should have but he likes to think that he has finally gotten to the point where he was starting to do a good job as Alpha, but he knows it will always be an effort for him, not like it would have been for her. But now? Now he could still be the Alpha, but in service to a greater Alpha? Stiles would ultimately have power over the territory and Derek could be his support without any loss of reputation or sign of weakness.

Watching Isaac return to his room Derek made a decision and reached for his phone. “Come over, I need to talk with you” he said into the phone without preamble.

Christopher Argent sits at the table in his kitchen, coffee in hand, and stares at his laptop, the empty document taunting him. He has been here all morning trying to think exactly what he is supposed to say to the family and the other hunters, but for the first time in his life he truly doesn’t know where to begin. Chris has dealt with magic before, you can’t hunt the supernatural and avoid it, especially if your name is Argent, but last night was something altogether different. What he
saw the kid do…that was just not something he was prepared for.

When it looked like Stilinski might die, Chris had a flash of relief followed by guilt about it, but the fact was the kid was powerful and powerful had always equaled danger. But sitting in the loft, listening to the Morgaine speak, had been enough to rattle the foundations of Chris’s world. And what little stability had been left had been shattered when less than an hour after returning home last night he found the powerful druid knocking on his door and coming in as if she owned the place.

“Allison isn’t here” he had told her hoping that she was actually looking for his daughter while knowing deep down that she must be able to tell that with her magic.

Lizzie smiled at him as she walked into his kitchen. “Would you like some tea?” she asked courteously and Chris had watched, torn between confusion and irritation, as she pulled out the tea, mugs, and water as if this was her own kitchen and not his.

“I thought you were going to try to sleep?” Chris said remembering the woman’s words as everyone began leaving after the sheriff and Stiles had left.

Lizzie looks at him and suddenly Chris feels a chill run down his spine as her eyes darken with ‘knowing’ as she stares right through him. “I will” she promises “as soon as we have our chat. I think you need someone to talk with about all of this.” She pauses as she looks at him with sympathy “You seem a bit…overwhelmed?” she prompts.

Chris snorts. “Overwhelmed? That’s a good word. What I have seen tonight…” he trails off as he sits down “…I didn’t know that kind of magic existed” he finally admits.

“No you wouldn’t. Hunters rarely see beyond their obsession” she muses as she pours the water into the cups. She laughs at his affronted reaction to her words. “Please Christopher, even you must recognize that hunting is rarely a sane choice, but rather is often an emotional response to overwhelming anger, grief, and fear.”

Chris swallows at that description and wants to argue with her but he knows that there is some serious truth behind her words. His father and sister were consumed by anger about the wolves, the fact was that they always seemed more interested in killing the wolves than protecting their victims. Chris thinks that if it hadn’t been for his uncle, his mother’s brother, he would have turned out like Kate. But Mark Argent had been his famous hunter uncle and Chris would follow him around like a puppy whenever he visited. He was strong and brave and fierce and never shied away from danger, but all of his stories ended with the protection of the innocent, not blood and gore. It had seemed that he didn’t like the bloody parts of his job, not like Gerard did.

Some family blowup happened when Chris was only thirteen which ended all contact between Gerard’s family and Mark Argent and Chris had always mourned that loss. His father turned even crueler and drove Chris and his sister even harder than before but his Uncle had given Chris something to hold on to. Something noble and worthwhile about what they did. He never forgot and Gerard never truly managed to twist his son like he did his daughter.

“Fine” he finally admits after the silence goes on too long. “But people do need protecting from the supernatural” he reminds her.

Lizzie laughs. “Christopher, I am a druid. We are the keepers of the balance. Hunters have a role, just as werewolves do. Other hunters know this and I think you do too. But you are not worried about wolves right now are you? I think you are worried more about a teenager” she says looking at him carefully.
“And you are going to tell me I don’t have to worry?” he asks sharply and sees her eyes crinkle with laughter.

“Oh no. Stiles’ magic is an unknown. His presence will make Beacon Hills shine not like a fire in the darkness but as a lighthouse reaching across the world. There will be many challenges and tests of his mettle in the days, weeks, and years ahead” she sighs and smiles. “But he is powerful, like the others before him. I do not doubt that he will ultimately triumph in his tests and will bring peace to the lands he claims. My concern is that you add to the triumph, not the challenges.”

Chris’s face doesn’t give anything away. He knows she is asking whose side he is on and he isn’t willing to commit yet. She sighs again and stands.

“Christopher, take some time before you act. Think carefully of what you know about Stiles and what he cares most about. He is a protector, a defender. He will not suffer the monsters you fear any more than you would. The difference is he doesn’t automatically assume that everyone that isn’t human is monstrous” she says gently.

“I know what he is like” Chris admits slowly “but power…power can change you. It twists your view on things and allows you to assume that what’s good for you is better even when it’s not” he says slowly. “I don’t know what the power will do to him.”

Lizzie nods but when Chris looks up he isn’t seeing the mild mannered English woman, he is seeing the ancient Morgaine. “Then understand this clearly Hunter. Act or assist any to act against the boy without absolute certainty of some crime and you will be declaring yourself his enemy and for all your toys, you would not win against him” she warns. She narrows her eyes and Chris feels his guts tighten in fear “and you would be declaring yourself my enemy as well and that is not a safe thing to be.” Morgaine turns and leaves the house and Chris can feel his heart racing at the implications. She is the High Druidess and at her word, every druid in the world would turn on him and his family not to mention how many magical beings.

Leaning back in his chair he decides that he is going to actually take her advice. Take a few days to think about this and talk with Allison…and maybe Scott. Even if Stilinski wasn’t his first choice to have that kind of power, he is definitely not the worse. Thinking of his father he shudders and even the hint of the idea of what Gerard would do if he could get his hands on the boy.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, just a fair notice, but this story will not be updated like it's predecessor. I had way more free time and no conflicts when I was writing part 1 and I also held off starting until I was over half done. This time, I am writing much closer to the story, so it will progress slower. I also struggle with WIPs so I have no problem if you want to wait till its done, but it may be a while.

Another note. I started this before Avengers IW and Endgame so they are not referenced. I am roughly placing it after Winter Soldier but before Civil War. Any errors in continuity are because...we are in the multiverse next door to the MCU, not the author's screw ups, so it must be intentional. (I totally see why you need whole rooms of writers to keep up with all the details!!!)

Thanks again for everyone who has enjoyed this story and asked for more.
Chapter 2

Stiles tried to shake off the lingering traces of the morning as he and Lizzie walked into the clearing, passing the new stone monoliths surrounding it that somehow already looked ancient and worn. “Why did you want to come here?” Stiles asks the woman as they sit down in the center of the circle.

“This is a place of power for you Stiles. This is where you ascended and became something new, where you bound yourself to your land, where the Fae Queens’ Court came and wrought High Magics, and where the ley lines of this place have shifted to connect as a temporary nexus until you settle into your formal home as long as you don’t venture too far away” she told him. “You have taken in the power of the Nemeton, but you haven’t fully stabilized it yet. The Queens helped to tether the magic here but it is straining to return to you and until it stabilizes and settles, things are…in flux. For now, this place will shine to those with the gifts to see it and so we can use it to help you connect to nature more easily as it is already doing that naturally” she adds with a smile. Stiles feels more than a little nervous about that but nods knowing that he can’t really stop it so he needs to learn how to manage it.

The next few hours fly by for Stiles as Lizzie explains the tenets of Druidic magic and shows him how to tap into the powers of his Druidic Mark. For Druids, there is less spellwork and structure, instead its core lies in understanding the interplay of the various magics of nature. Lizzie explains the flows of natural energy and how they manifest in plants, trees, animals, and rocks. “Our magic is about understanding how energy and power manifests in aspects of nature and how we can amplify, use, and manipulate those forces to do our bidding. Take the Rowan tree. It is a defensive power, especially against the supernatural, so it is best used for protection magic; barriers, shields, and wards. Made into mountain ash, it creates a barrier to keep out many creatures, but its power comes from the combination of the druid who created it, the inherent magic of the wood, and the belief of the caster who uses it.”

“So…” Stiles pauses for a moment as he thinks “…so it is limited by the caster and the druid’s beliefs and magic? So could the ash be made to keep out even non-supernaturals?” he asks after a moment.

“Yes. If you have enough power and will behind it. Your potions will be more effective, your charms more powerful, and your spellwork greater the more you believe in yourself and the more connected you are to your power base. I can make mountain ash barriers that can stop a tank. I would be surprised if you couldn’t as well” she replies and chuckles at the look of glee on his face.

The rest of the day passes quickly as they move to discussions about the plants and herbs around them. Stiles talks about some of what he has learned from his books but Lizzie’s explanations are a hundred times better and clearer and he picks things up rapidly. Stiles laughs the first time a flock of butterflies comes to his call and that’s when he notices that they are not as alone as he thought. Deer, squirrels, rabbits, foxes, coyotes, and more birds than he can count have invaded the clearing to watch the two magic users at work.

“Nature recognizes me as its champion and you as the warden for these lands and so the beasts of the earth and sky respond to you. I imagine there are numerous insects and other burrowing animals that we are not seeing that were drawn here as well” she says with a gentle smile as a young fawn daringly approaches to nuzzle her open hand. “You will find that this sense of connection is going to grow every day as you become grounded. Soon even the trees will recognize and acknowledge you” she adds with a wink as she watches the teen gently petting several nervous
looking rabbits.

“Why aren’t the foxes and coyotes…” Stiles pauses and gestures at the rabbits with a look that
Lizzie supposes is supposed to be fierce.

She laughs. “Our presence creates a sense of peace and serenity that calms those near us, but also it
is the magic of this place. I would bet that no normal animal will shed blood while we are here and
probably not within the circle at all. In some places there is a…truce in effect” she explains.

They end up spending the rest of the day in the circle as Lizzie explains more about Druidic magic
and nature and Stiles just absorbs it like a sponge, asking questions, and making leaps of intuition.
Lizzie isn’t sure if it is because he is the Arcanist or not, but if he had been a Druid, he probably
would have taken months if not years to comprehend and understand what he grasped in just a few
short hours. The world was definitely going to have to adjust to this one she laughed silently.

“It’s not that big of a deal Lyds” Jackson said as he held open the door to Beacon Hills Beans as
Lydia Martin walked inside the pack’s favorite coffee shop. “It doesn’t really mean anything” he
adds with obvious frustration.

“Jackson” Lydia’s voice is calm, cool, and collected but it doesn’t fool him for one second…she
isn’t happy. “You committed to the pack, that means you accepted Derek and Stiles as your
Alphas. Even if you didn’t you would still have to submit to him if you want to stay here” she
reminds him. Ever since yesterday Lydia had been considering what the Morgaine told them and
though it galled her, she did understand that things had changed. Stiles went from just being a guy
who used to have a crush on her to being the most powerful guy in town, literally. “We both do”
she adds wryly.

Jackson snorts at the idea of her ever submitting to anyone but wisely doesn’t say anything. The
fact was that during the fight Jackson had made the decision to be pack and he had felt the change
in his connection to the others. He still had issues with them, but he could feel the pack bonds
thrummimg and he knew that things were never going to go back to the way they were. “Besides,
aren’t you planning to go to MIT? That’s outside the territory” he reminds her.

Lydia glances at the line before responding. “I may, but Stanford is also an option. Either way,
Beacon Hills is part of us and I don’t want to have to avoid the place. Besides, you heard
Morgaine, things are going to start happening here.” Lydia’s eyes lose focus a bit and Jackson
groans at the look in them.

“You are obsessed with the queens aren’t you” he demands with a knowing look and sees Lydia
smirk back at him.

“Only a fool would ignore them and what they represent. Besides…Stiles is going to need people
to be his eyes and hands that can travel. Being connected to that kind of power isn’t so bad” she
adds with a toss of her hair.

“Oh, sorry!” a voice, cracking between a boy’s and a man’s, interrupts them as a shorter guy
bumps into Jackson, narrowly avoiding spilling his drink.

“Watch it kid!” Jackson snarls but Lydia immediately pulls him back.

“Sorry, still getting over the jet lag. We just got to California this morning” the boy said. Lydia was
startled at the intense green eyes under the jet black hair. He was close to their age.
“Are you new? I don’t recognize you?” Lydia said staring at the teen. “Where do you go to school?”

“Right…sorry” the teen replied looking away from Jackson to stare at the strawberry blonde. “Wow you’re pretty” he suddenly blushed and started choking.

“Oh man…not another one” Jackson whined and rolled his eyes. He had finally gotten rid of Stilinski and now here was a new stalker for Lydia.

Lydia merely raised an eyebrow at the blushing boy and waited. “Sorry, just…I mean…sorry. I’m Billy. Billy Dosonni” the teen stuck out his hand but pulled it back slowly at Lydia’s look. “My family just moved here and I am starting at Beacon Hills High. I’m a freshman” he adds with a stammer as he avoided meeting Lydia’s eyes.

“Well, I guess we will see you at school” Lydia says dryly and moves to the register to order. Jackson glares at the teen who quickly exits the shop after detouring widely to avoid getting any closer to the beta.

“Was that truly necessary?” Lydia asked him once they finally sit down.

“Necessary?” Jackson snorted. “No…but if he going to Beacon Hills High, he should know who to avoid and not piss off” he added with a smirk.

Lydia sipped her tea with a sigh. Jackson was an ass but he was hers and she took some comfort in the fact that most of Jackson’s arrogance was more habit than real now. He didn’t want to admit it but joining the pack helped settle him and she was hoping it would stick.

Noah walked into the station and he could feel the tension in the room like a palpable thing. He knew that his deputies wouldn’t be happy with the feds, but he was certain they would be professional. For them to be this anxious, something had to have happened. It took about ten seconds before his people saw him and he could see the relief on their faces. “Roberts” Noah says to the man at the desk “is Graeme in?”

“Yes sir. She is with Agent Jones in the conference room” he replies glancing in that direction. “The feds have set up in there” he adds and Noah can feel the disapproval rolling off the man as he delivers the line in a clipped voice.

Noah holds back the sigh he was feeling and heads into the station moving to the conference room and doesn’t pause before he pushes open the door to look around at the carefully controlled chaos in his station. Graeme and Parrish are both in the room and Tara looks like she is about to snap. There are four or five agents in the room but the older woman talking with Parrish surprisingly looks calm and professional. He doesn’t see why tensions seem so high.

“Glad you could bother to show up” a familiar voice says that makes Noah Stilinski’s skin crawl. He knew that voice. Glancing over he looks at the overtly smug look on Raphael McCall’s face. Noah sees both his deputies tense up and even the senior agent looks uncomfortable. “Sleep off your…‘condition’?” he adds in a suggestive manner with obviously false concern.

“You mean escaping from two serial killers, rescuing two civilians from them, and providing detailed descriptions of them. Killers that I might add have apparently been killing across the country without the Bureau even noticing? That condition? Yes. I got a good night’s sleep and had a wonderful meal with my son before coming back. I am sure you can appreciate how important it
is to spend time with your family” he says with a completely innocent smile.

He ignores Tara’s choked noise and turns to the female agent, ignoring the tic on McCall’s face though he imagines that he can actually hear the man’s teeth grinding together. “You are the senior agent, I presume. I’m Noah Stilinski, the Sheriff” he adds knowing it wasn’t necessary.

“Larissa Jones” she says extending her hand for a quick shake. “I am in charge of our team as we try to find these targets.” Larissa decides not to address the obvious prior relationship between McCall and the Sheriff but she suddenly realizes that the man’s insistence on coming and being here was not about the case but something else. However she doesn’t plan on getting in the middle of a pissing contest.

“Have you been able to find anything since yesterday?” Noah asks moving towards the table as Agent Jones indicates that everyone should sit down.

“We have established that Jennifer Blake is an alias, her credentials and entire identity was faked, very well done, but it didn’t hold up to an intensive review” she says shuffling some papers. “The man we have identified by several aliases but the most common is Deucalion Leidolf. He is from Boston as far as we can tell though he travels rather extensively. We have evidence of him all over the US.” The agent looks unhappy before she continues “and in just about every place we have evidence of him…there were also multiple unsolved homicides.”

“How many?” Noah asks after a pause where everyone looked extremely uncomfortable. He could tell that she was unhappy about this.

“Nineteen that we have information on” she says and Noah leans back at the implications of that. The feds are going to be furious that they missed this.

“This is all preliminary of course. We have no evidence that any of this is related to this situation, it’s all supposition and circumstantial evidence right now” McCall says glaring at the senior agent as if he is furious that she is implying it was their fault.

“We had no evidence that either were potential suspects until they overreached” Noah says thoughtfully. “Have you been able to find any known associates?” he asks the agent.

“We are still running down info. We have several possible leads, but I am not sure how many of those will turn out” she admits glaring back at McCall. What was the man’s problem?

“We should be easy to spot with his cane. If we find him talking to anyone we don’t know, we might be able to show their pictures to people in Agent Jones’ other cases. Maybe we will get lucky and get a hit” Noah says looking back at the Agent.

“Actually I can do you one better. Perkins!” she shouts and one of the Agents at a computer looks up. “Work with Deputy Parrish on his videos” she turns back to Jordan and the Sheriff. “We can use our facial recognition software to look through hours of footage in a fraction of the time. Once we have him, we can identify anyone he talks to.”

Jordan looks happy at the idea of not having to sit through all that footage. Noah nods and Jones pulls out another file. “We wanted to identify any pattern in their victims to see if that will help us. This is what we have so far” she begins and Noah settles in for a long meeting. He really wishes he could tell them that both of their subjects are currently buried in the Preserve but since that isn’t possible, he is going to have to put up with the agents until the false leads start coming in via the Argents.
Derek looks resigned as Peter opens the door to the loft and struts in looking entirely too pleased with himself. “Why are you so happy?” Derek growls at his uncle.

“Why my dear nephew” Peter drawls looking at Derek with a smile that did not bode well for anyone on the receiving end. “To get a call inviting me to speak with the Alpha of Alphas? I must admit I am overwhelmed with the honor of your attention.”

Derek growls at his uncle, his eyes flashing red and Peter’s responding automatically, his eyes that ice blue that Derek once saw in his own reflection. “This is serious Peter” he snaps and the other man drops the façade and rolls his eyes.

“Then perhaps you should try actually asking me to come over instead of snarling orders at me. I thought we were beyond all that” Peter says sitting down in the arm chair that Derek usually used. Derek frowned but since he didn’t really want to sit down, he was content to let Peter stay there while he paced. “Lizzie told me some things about Stiles and how it would affect the other packs in his territory.”

Peter sat up looking interested based on the gleam in his eye. “Do you know how big his territory actually is?” Peter asks with a calculating look. Derek just shakes his head and Peter sighs. “There are a number of packs in this part of California, ones that used to have understandings with us before. Both Talia and our mother often entertained nearby Alphas to discuss issues or concerns.”

Derek looked surprised at that tidbit. “Grandma Abigail?” he asks while his mind tries to catch up. By the time Derek was born, his mother had been Alpha for several years and his grandmother was a strong and imposing woman, but it was Talia Hale who was the undisputed Alpha of the Hale Pack.

“You know that your mother wasn’t born an Alpha right?” Peter asks sarcastically and Derek glares without answering. “Our mother was Alpha for nearly 50 years before she passed it on to Talia. She inherited the mantle during WWII. There was some incident that she never fully explained that killed our grandfather, her father, so Abigail had to take over at a fairly young age. If I remember correctly, she was only sixteen at the time. Created her first ally with a werewolf named Satomi, whose pack was a friend until the…” Peter trailed off and both Hale men avoided filling in that detail.

“So they were respected?” Derek asks in a quiet voice.

“Very much so. At least among the non-hunters. Hales have always been connected to the land and the people here. Our family has been here even before the Spanish arrived in California. According to family legend, the earliest wolves were from the Miwok tribe. There was no explanation as to how they became wolves, but they were here when the Spanish arrived. A small pack, who came to California with a Franciscan monk named Junipero Serra, moved into the area and as these things normally go, the daughter from the Galvez pack fell in love with a young wolf from the local pack and the two packs merged. The Galvez pack got the connection to the land and the local tribe became Spanish citizens who managed the land” Peter intoned thoroughly enjoying himself.

Derek would like to pop his ego but the truth was that he was enthralled and moved to sit on the couch. “So how did the land become Hale territory?” he asked.

“Ah, again we look to our family’s history of powerful women. Mereen Hale was the Alpha of a
Pack in the rougher parts of Scotland, though family rumor says the family originally came from Norway, and they had just fought a long and bloody battle. Mereen was left with only four surviving pack members and her Emissary so she decided to leave Scotland for the new world. After landing in the colonies, the Hales headed west and didn’t stop until they hit the Pacific and this was before Lewis and Clark so it was a rather impressive feat. Mereen had reported that she had a vision of a jet black wolf that led her west until they found the Galvez Pack. The Alpha from that pack was older and had lost his heir and son in a fight and was willing to offer the Hales asylum. A few years later, Mereen’s daughter married Galvez’s grandson and the packs were merged. Isabelle inherited her mother’s Alpha spark and Diego inherited his grandfather’s and the pack was led by an Alpha Pair for the first time.” Peter was surprised he remembered as much as he did from his time in the family library, he would have to be sure to write all this down now that it was fresh in his memory.

“But why are we Hales instead of Galvez?” Derek asks his uncle trying to restrain the eagerness in his voice.

“Ah. Well as I said, the family was fairly matriarchal at the time so when they wed, the new pack chose to become Hale. Apparently there was some mystical indications that appeared to Mereen about the need for a less Spanish name. Isabelle and Diego however were much more worldly than either of their parents or grandparents and invested heavily in a number of ventures that helped secure the family’s long term finances. In fact, it was a Hale who helped California obtain statehood, though he went by his father’s name who was human” Peter tossed the fact in absently. That reminded him he should probably reestablish contact with the various financial managers the family used.

Derek looked thoughtful as he considered Peter’s story. “What about magic? Magic beyond our innate magic I mean. I didn’t know about Deaton being our emissary but before things were messed up…did we have a different connection with them?”

Peter smiled, he was really enjoying this Derek. The one who asked Peter for help and information because he recognized the older man’s worth. “Well, before the incident with the witch Morgan, the Hale’s were fairly connected to magic. In fact I remember reading a number of stories where human born pack members developed significant magical abilities. Those that were druidic or witch in nature usually stayed with the pack since we had them as part of the family as far back as anyone remembered. There were a few enchanter and sorcerer as well, but they rarely stayed with the family but instead went to find others like them.” Peter wondered what happened to those lost Hales.

“You said druids were in the family before the Hales came? I thought Deaton said that the druids came over from Europe after helping the sons of Lycaon learn to control their shifts” Derek asks after thinking about what the vet had told them.

Peter smirked at that. “Well that is a matter of some debate. What we call druidic magic is most closely associated with the historical druids from the British Isles, but the truth is that druidic magic existed long before the Celts. They were simply the best known for using it, admittingly they were probably the most gifted in the world with it, but their view of history is a bit…slanted” Peter raised an eyebrow at his nephew’s snort. They had both had unsatisfactory dealings with the former emissary. “The tale of King Lycaon is only one tale about how werewolves happened. There is also the story that a magic user, not sure which kind, was the one who made it so that a man who drank water from the footprint of a wolf on a full moon would gain the power to shift.”

Derek looked less than impressed by that suggested origin. “What did mom believe?”
Peter looked thoughtful. “I am truly not sure. I know that she enjoyed the story that werewolves were actually created by the Goddess Artemis, the goddess of the hunt, to deliver her divine justice. The story goes on that she also created human hunters to balance the wolves, to prevent them from taking over. She apparently liked the idea of balance. There is also a story that the earth mother Gaia created all shifters to be guardians of nature” Peter rolled his eyes telling Derek what the man felt about that option.

“And you?” Derek asks with a penetrating stare. “I don’t believe that you haven’t thought about this and tried to figure it out.”

Peter chuckles. “True. I feel all of those options are possible, but I like to think that we are the descendants of Hati and Skoll.” Looking at Derek he sees the confusion on the Alpha’s face. “In Norse mythology, Hati and Skoll were the wolves that Odin bespelled to chase after the sun and the moon to keep them on time and moving in the sky. They were the sons of Fenris, the great wolf who was bound to a mountain in order to prevent him from eating the world. Fenris was the son of Loki, the god of mischief” Peter elaborated. “I always liked the idea of the mixed nature of duty, burden, and strength that story shows.”

“Not to mention power” Derek adds and shakes his head at the look of surprise on his uncle’s face. “You always felt we were more and the idea that we are descended from Norse gods would definitely appeal. And I remember Laura telling me about Fenris, the wolf who was destined to kill Odin and that he was restrained because of his lack of control. She always said that was why mom was so strict as we learned control” Derek sighed and stood up to pace. He paused for a moment before he looked at his uncle. “Do you think that Lizzy knows the truth?” he asks Peter.

The older man looks completely caught off guard. He had never considered asking, mainly because he never thought he would have the chance to meet the Morgain, let alone be in the position to question her. “I honestly don’t know” he finally admits.

“Okay” Derek says sitting back down. “Can you remember anything else about our family?”

Peter shrugs. He is sure there is but without something prompting his memory he isn’t sure. He has an idea “Actually…there may be some of the older, more valuable volumes in the Hale vaults.”

“Vaults? Plural?” Derek asks looking confused.

Peter nods. “The main family vault is here in Beacon Hills, but several members of the family created other vaults in other places over the years. I imagine Talia knew them all, but I know of at least four. There is one in Mexico that I am fairly sure hasn’t been touched in over a century. There is also one in Colorado and another in upstate New York” Peter looks amused but also thoughtful. “I was certain that there was one in Scotland, but I hadn’t narrowed its location down before the fire” he freezes for a moment before pushing on “but I might be able to recreate my work” he adds looking at Derek.

“If we can find out more of our history, I think that would be very valuable. If Lizzie is correct about how people are going to react to Stiles, then we need to be prepared for the attention as well. It wouldn’t surprise me if we have to deal with more wolves like Deucalion who feel that they would be better masters of this territory” Derek told his uncle.

Peter paused and looked at Derek in surprise. He hadn’t even thought of that! With the boy being so powerful, there would be Alphas who think that they could use him for their own purposes, especially as probably none of them truly understand the true fact of the boy’s strength. Peter has no doubt if he has made friends of both the Sorcerer Supreme as well as the Morgaine and the Merlin, the other masters of the domains will probably be coming by to size up the teen. That
doesn’t even count the impact of the Fae Queens. Peter can’t remember any mortal affair that drew all four of them to the same place in this world in the last thousand years! There were stupid and arrogant wolves that would think Stiles was a powerful druid or something and attempt to dominate him and while Peter doubted that any of them would be too much for the teen, the constant fighting would get old fast.

“You see the problem?” Derek asks his uncle casually and the older man nods gravely. They need to deal with this before it becomes an issue.

“So how do we stop the fools?” Peter demands as he stands up and he sees the slight uptick in Derek’s lips, not quite a smile.

“I want to send you to Satomi. She is the closest Alpha and probably is already feeling the effects of Stiles’ power. I want you to invite her, politely, back here to talk” Derek instructs.

Peter nods. It’s a good idea. “Satomi is a good choice. Her pack is small so she is not a threat, but she has been an Alpha for a long time and is respected, at least by the respectable packs.”

“We are not going to be able to reason with wolves like Deucalion and Kali” Derek replies firmly. “Instead we are going to surround our territory with allies. If Lizzie is right, I bet packs will want to enter Stiles’ territory to benefit from the magical side effects. If we have enough of them around us…” his voice trails off as he watches Peter smile wickedly.

“They will keep out the idiots in order to preserve their own benefits” Peter finishes and nods his approval. It seems that his nephew is learning quickly. This is a plan that both his sister and mother would have thoroughly approved of. “I will set up a meeting with Satomi as soon as I can. The Delgado and Anderson packs are probably also in his territory based on what we know so far. They were Hale allies once, I will reach out to them after sending Satomi to you.”

Derek nods and they discuss other packs they might reach out to before Peter leaves to start making contact with the other packs. Since returning to Beacon Hills Derek has felt that he has been lurching from crisis to crisis with no chance to breathe. He is changing that. Beacon Hills is going to be his home and he is going to secure it from anyone: human, hunter, magical, or shifter. Smiling he reaches for his phone, it’s time to get the pack involved.
“So is this it?” Kira asks her parents as the pull up in front of the two story house in Beacon Hills. She is still pretty annoyed at having to move again but the town seems nice if a bit small.

“Yes. The movers will be here tomorrow, but I thought you might want to see the house and select your room” Noshiko answers absently as they approach the door. She and Ken have talked and he has agreed to take Kira to the school to finalize her paperwork when he goes to meet with the school staff.

After a few minutes in the house, Kira has selected her bedroom and is happy with it as it has a great view of their backyard and she can even see the woods from her window. Coming down the stairs she sees her father grabbing his briefcase as her mother gathers her purse. “We are leaving already?” Kira asks in confusion. They just got here!

“We need to get your school registration finished and I need to get my paperwork done. No time like the present” Ken says happily.

“So where’s mom going?” Kira asks looking at the older woman.

“We need groceries, so I will pick up some to tide us over” Noshiko says with a smile. The family heads out and they drop off Kira’s mother at a nearby store after she assures them she can walk the short distance back.

Ken smiles and heads out for the school as he asks Kira about her class interests. A glance in the mirror shows Noshiko heading for the woods, not the store, but Kira is too excited about her answer to notice.

“Welcome to Beacon Hills Mr. Yukimura” Natalie Martin said with a smile as they shook hands. “And you must be Kira?” she smiles at the blushing teen.

“Thank you so much for meeting us” Ken tells her and she smiles as she walks them back to her temporary office.

“Well I am sorry to say that things have been a bit crazy around here. Our Principal for the last few years left suddenly without notice and a new principal was appointed only to have him leave also without notice. Left between one day and the next” she said as they sat down. “I was on the school board and since I had taught before, I was asked to step in until we find someone, so I hope you are not too disappointed. I know I was very happy that you applied, you are truly a godsend for us” she says happily.

“Thank you” Ken replies looking embarrassed.

“I must admit I am surprised that you were even interested in the job. Your credentials are incredible. I am surprised that you are not teaching at a college” Natalie tells him.

“Well, my wife’s family business requires us to travel extensively so I found it is better to teach at the high school level” he answers happily.

“Well, we are very lucky to have you. Now Kira” she says turning to the teen “let’s get you figured
Noshiko moved into the woods, moving easily and quickly as she headed for the old tree where she had imprisoned the Nogitsune. Ever since that night a few days ago when she was awoken from a fear drenched nightmare, she knew something was wrong. She had called in several favors and had the family moving in no time thanks to her husband’s cooperation, even if he didn’t totally understand. Her failure so many years ago had caused too much death and she would not let that evil back into the world again.

She was surprised how easily she moved through the woods but she remembered the power that the great oak tree held, the nexus of ley lines in the area and a source of supernatural power. Noshiko thought about that night, when in her rage and grief she had summoned and unleashed the nogitsune upon those men. She had regretted it almost immediately and ultimately, with the help of her friend, the werewolf Satomi, they expelled it from Rhys’ body and captured it. Rhys died in the effort and Noshiko had moved on, but the pain was still there.

Moving silently through the trees, Noshiko noticed how lush and green everything was in the Preserve. The trees were vibrant with new buds and she noticed that the grasses, ferns, and flowers looked almost impossibly healthy. She paused to listen and heard a litany of birds, insects, and small animals, thriving and happy. It was as if they entire woods had been supercharged and not threatening which meant that maybe the beast was still caged. Shaking her head, she continued towards the clearing, hoping to confirm the security of the prison and put her fears to rest.

Finally recognizing her location, she sped up. It was only a short distance now that she had found the creek and boulder that she remembered. Moments later she stepped into the clearing and froze in shock. First the tree was gone. There was nothing there, just a field of green grasses and an abundance of wildflowers. The most shocking thing however was the circle of stone monoliths in the clearing that looked ancient even though she knew they couldn’t be. Noshiko had been to England and seen the circles there and this place reeked of that ancient magic.

Moving around the circle she spotted the spot where she was certain the Nemeton once stood but there was nothing there. Just more flowers and grass and she felt her heartbeat accelerating. She could not sense any trace of the nogitsune. Taking a calming breath, the kitsune extended her senses around her. As a celestial kitsune, Noshiko could see the nature of magic and when she opened her eyes she was nearly overwhelmed.

First, the Nemeton was gone! The nexus that once met at the tree centered in the stone circle like she expected, but it was moving slightly, like trees in the wind. Shifting back and forth like a boat tied to the dock, wanting to move away but held in place by some magic she did not understand. Second, there were signs of a terrible battle in this place. She could feel the darkness and the blood and her senses showed her that there were at least two werewolves buried here. There were also traces of a very dark power that had been defeated. In fact she could sense a considerable power laying over the clearing, declaring this place protected. Her eyes widening in shock she looked around and saw the aura of peace on this place. Blood would not be spilled here again.

Looking deeper she saw traces of other powers, several very old, far older than herself and one that was newborn. Something incredible had happened here and changed everything. The problem was she didn’t know what had happened to the void fox that she had left here. It was a thousand years old, crafty and powerful and Noshiko could only figure that during the battle, it had escaped and
was now free. She needed help.

Shaking off her heavenly vision, Noshiko turned towards home. She would have to pick up some food to keep Kira from getting suspicious and then she needed to get help. She could summon the Oni, but before that, there was one other who could help her. Her old ally Satomi.

“Do you have to go?” Stiles asked with a guilty expression when he could hear the whine in his own voice.

Lizzie smiled. “I do have my own responsibilities that I need to get back to Stiles” she responded with a fond smile. “Besides, you have come far in the last few days and I am always just a call away.” Lizzie had given the teen both hers and Arthur’s cell numbers and email so that he could stay in contact.

Stiles frowned “But I can’t visit” he said with his best impression of Scott’s puppy dog eyes before he looked betrayed by the snort that came from his father at his efforts. “Traitor” he muttered looking at the highly amused man.

Lizzie laughed. “Stiles this isn’t goodbye. We still have things to show you, but you have enough to help you as you make some decisions” she reminded him and Stiles groaned. Lizzie had helped create a seemingly endless list of tasks that he needed to take care of, each apparently more important than the next.

The last few days had been hectic in their own way for Stiles and Lizzie. She had been serious about dominating his time and he hadn’t actually seen or talked to anyone except his dad since she had showed up at his door. He was up before dawn to trudge out to the circle with Lizzie to meditate and reflect until the dawn when she guided him in observing the forest awakening and the birth of a new day’s magic. Druidic magic was the green-gold magic of life itself and it was so much more than he ever suspected. Deaton, and even Morrell, had explained druidic magic as rituals and the properties of plants, herbs, rocks, and wood. The truth was that was just the beginning of true druidic magic.

Stiles learned of the natural energy that all life emitted, almost as a by-product of life itself. This magical energy flowed like water, collecting together and adding that energy until it became a river of power that flowed invisibly along the land. Originally he thought the ley lines were some structure, but in truth they were these power collections of the life energy of everything from the smallest plant and insect all the way up to animals and people. As this energy flowed across the land, it was available to those with the power to sense and direct it. It manifested in as many ways as practitioners could imagine.

Normal druids accepted the limits and inherent properties of the magic of nature without looking behind those assumptions. Mountain ash or Rowan had a magic of its own that users could easily call forth to create barriers against the supernatural but Lizzie showed him that he can expand on it so much more. By pulling the magic of the lines to draw on, Stiles was able to use mountain ash in ways he never imagined. Barriers using the energy of the lines could block anything almost like a magical force field. Lizzie had created a circle and it had repelled Stiles’ fireballs, wind gusts, even a blast of water. She had sit calmly inside while Stiles pounded at her barrier but he was not able to get through. Of course when he tried to sneak in a bit of sorcery she had magically “whacked” him upside the head and he looked guilty but not exactly chastised.

After a busy morning, they would return to Stiles’ house for a quick meal accompanied by
discussions over some of the books that Deaton and Morrell had loaned him before their afternoon nap. Then it was time to study his territory and push his senses. He was able to sense magical and supernatural presences but he still had a long way to go. He had kept getting distracted by the pack and had zoomed in on Derek usually several times a session, the Alpha’s energies naturally drawing his attention. Lizzie had despaired ever getting him past it but on their last day he had finally managed to recognize the pack bonds and was able to filter them out. He was surprised by the number of supernatural and magical beings in Beacon Hills, not to mention in his full territory.

After dinner with his dad, Lizzie dragged him back to the Preserve to spend time with the energies of the night and they would stay out until midnight before heading home for a few hours’ sleep to start all over again. Truthfully, as much as he will miss her, he isn’t going to miss her crazy schedule for training. “Well, I suppose getting a full night’s sleep will definitely be a relief” he says with a heavy sigh.

Lizzie laughs. “I will send you those books I mentioned and I will also reach out to the others to let them know about you, though I am sure they felt your ascension.” They both snicker at that remembering Arthur’s furious phone call the day after when he lit into both of them for not telling him what was going on. “Not to mention, I bet that at least one or two may actually know about you from their own magic” she smiles.

A few more goodbye hugs with both Stilinski men and a promise to visit again soon and Lizzie gathers up her small set of belongings. Stiles straightens up and using his sling ring, opens a portal to her house and she steps through with a jaunty wave. Stiles watches for a moment before closing the fiery portal with a sigh. “Well…I have to admit I am going to miss her” Noah Stilinski says with a sad sigh.

“You mean you are going to miss her keeping me so busy I couldn’t keep track of all your runs to Claire’s bakery and the diner” Stiles replied with a snort at his father’s innocent protest. “It’s not just the supernatural I can sense, if I know someone well enough, I can sense them. I spotted you at Claire’s, Rocco’s pizzeria, and the diner at least twice a day. Now that I know how to use mountain ash better, maybe I will circle their businesses with a barrier that will only keep you out” he said with a dangerous glint in his eyes.

Noah frowned at the threat but then smiled. He had Lizzie and Arthur’s numbers and he was sure they would help. He hoped.

Derek froze when he heard it. The distinctive rattle of the jeep’s engine as it approached. Moving towards the window he quickly spotted the familiar blue jeep approaching the building. For the last few days he had been able to stay distracted for two reasons: first, Stiles was wrapped up with Lizzie in a cram course in druidic magic but she was due to leave this morning so that was apparently done and second, he had been keeping the pack running and moving. So he hadn’t had time to think about what he was going to say or do the next time he saw the teen but that didn’t matter anymore because he was on the way and Derek knew that Stiles was going to want to talk…endlessly.

A small quirk came to his lips as he thought that. The teen was incapable of silence and babbled more than enough for the two of them but he was certain that he was going to have to participate this time. Luckily the others were out so it would be just them. Derek spent a brief moment wondering if they were here whether or not that would delay things but in all likelihood the pack would scatter the moment Stiles asked. He groaned. The text that Erica got an hour ago! She had come into the room demanding that Isaac and Boyd come with her to go shopping. He should have
known it was a ploy to leave Derek alone for Stiles.

Derek listened as the jeep came to a stop and as Stiles got out and headed for the loft. He heard the main door open and listened to his mate’s heartbeat as he walked the floor until reaching the elevator and he could still hear the nervous heartbeat over the sound of the elevator. He considered opening the door but decided against it, remaining by the large windows overlooking the town. A few moments later he heard Stiles pause outside the door and take several deep breaths before opening the door with a shove and stepping inside. He didn’t know what he was expecting. He guessed it was foolish to think the teen would look any different than he had a week ago or even the morning after, but he was simply Stiles. It was like nothing had changed. Derek could see the tension in his face and would have laughed if not for the sudden impact of his scent. It hit Derek like a palpable force as he inhaled the intoxicating scent: mate, home, mine! The Alpha staggered at the force of the sensation never knowing it would be like this. “Derek?” Stiles tentative voice helped him regain focus. He was staring at Derek worriedly.

“Sorry” Derek muttered shaking his head and taking a step towards the teen almost involuntarily. “Did Lizzie get home okay?” he asks after an awkward pause.

Stiles nodded. “She had breakfast with me and dad before I opened a portal for her to go home” he smiles ruefully and Derek is hit with a quick blast of resentment and loss. “She offered to visit again if I want.” Derek could tell what the young man was not saying...that he couldn’t visit her anymore.

“I’m sorry…I know you didn’t want to be trapped here…” Derek says softly and sees the quick look of appreciation in Stiles’ eyes before it’s gone.

“Hey, not dead and really powerful, guess that’s a fair trade for being stuck here for the rest of my life” Stiles says with a shrug.

Derek took a deep breath “Stiles, we don’t have to do anything you don’t want to. I know you said you were okay with what I did but that was when things were crazy…” he faltered as he looked at the narrowed eyes on Stiles’ face.

Stiles let him sweat for a second before he spoke. “Derek. Nothing has changed. I know what the mate bite means. You can’t go back and I am not sure I can either” he sighs and moves to sit down on the couch. Derek remains standing looking guarded. “Our bond is part of my power. Lizzie and I talked about it a lot and the fact that we are not really…together yet, well it’s making it hard for me.”

Derek frowns in confusion and moves closer almost unconsciously, wanting to comfort and protect. “Hard how?” he asks instead.

Stiles looks mutinous but finally gives up. “I keep getting distracted by you. I will be meditating, trying to ‘feel’ my territory, and all of a sudden I’m locked in on you. I finally learned to dampen it a bit, but Lizzie was pretty sure as long as things were unsettled between us, my senses would be messed up.”

Derek finally sits down and sighs. “So how do we fix it?” he asks with a mix of apprehension and concern.

Stiles smirks and raises his eyebrows in a terrible attempt at what he probably believes is somehow seductive. Despite the absolute failure of the attempt, Derek still blushes a bit when he gets the point. Stiles snickers. “Yeah. Not quite an easy fix…well, I suppose it could be, but knowing us, I
don’t think it would be that easy.”

“So…what do we do?” Derek finally asks after a minute. “We went from allies and friends to mates without having any chance to figure things out.”

Stiles’ head snaps up with a look of inspiration. “That’s it!” he crows and Derek looks wary at the glee in his eyes. “We just need to do the stuff you would normally do before you decided to mate someone!”

Derek raises a single eyebrow and stares for a moment as he watches Stiles process what he just said and manages to hold back the laugh at the sudden flush on his mate’s face. “I don’t mean that!” he exclaims flushing even more. “I meant dating. You know? Going out, spending time together, getting to know each other better. That kind of thing.”

Swallowing down his amusement Derek nods in agreement. “I think we can do that, but we have something else we have to do as well” he says in a somber voice. Stiles looks confused at the change in tone but before he can ask Derek continues “You dad invited me to dinner tomorrow at your house.”

Stiles pales and gulps nervously. Dinner with Derek and his dad? Oh…this was not going to go over well. Stiles had managed to avoid any conversations with his father about Derek over the last few days and it now appears it wasn’t Stiles’ ninja-like verbal skills, the old man was playing the waiting game and outmaneuvered him. Oh lord!

Noshiko steps out of her car and sees her old friend standing outside her pack house. Satomi has definitely aged since the last time she saw the alpha. Of course forty years will do that, even to a werewolf. She herself started showing age signs when she got pregnant with Kira, but she still looked young enough to be the werewolf’s daughter instead of being over 800 years older than she was. Walking up to Satomi she gave a terse smile and the woman turned and walked inside sure that the kitsune would follow.

Neither talked during the time that Satomi prepared tea for her visitor and herself. The ritual was both calming and familiar and Noshiko could see that the werewolf was also disconcerted, her normal serenity absent and instead a tight control that barely held in her emotions. Taking the first sip Noshiko smiled at the familiar taste. It had been too long.

“What has brought you to my home old friend” Satomi finally asks the other woman as she sets her cup down.

“I sensed a great disturbance in Beacon Hills several days ago and came back to investigate. I feared that our old adversary might have gotten free and I needed to know” she tells the woman. Satomi waits for her to continue, sure in the knowledge that the kitsune would tell all eventually. “We arrived yesterday and I went to the Nemeton, but…” she pauses as she seeks to put her words in order.

“But…?” Satomi asks with nervous tension in her voice. “I have felt something off these last few days and it feels as though it is coming from Beacon Hills, but I was uncertain of the cause.”

Noshiko looks surprised. She would not have expected the woman to sense anything about the nogitsune. Wolves, while powerful, were not in touch with the more subtle magics of nature and the universe. “The Nemeton was destroyed” she answers simply.
Satomi’s serene countenance breaks and the woman leans forward “What do you mean it was destroyed?” she demands, a hint of a growl in her voice and the barest flicker of crimson in her eyes.

“It was gone…entirely. There was no trace of the stump or the cellar beneath it. Instead there was a circle of stone monoliths in the clearing. I could not detect the nogitsune or find any trace of where it might have gone but what I did find…” she trails off.

“What? If the beast is free, we must understand what happened in that place to free it” Satomi says with certainty.

Noshiko pauses but then she starts. Satomi doesn’t interrupt her old friend as the kitsune describes finding the signs of a battle, the dead wolves, and the presence of ancient, powerful magics. She listens as Noshiko describes the aura of peace on the clearing and her certainty that blood would not be spilled there again. She suspects non-human magic.

“The only wolves in Beacon Hills that I know of were the Hale Pack” Satomi finally says. “I haven’t spoken to the boy or his new wolves, but I did hear that Peter Hale, once the Left Hand of the Hale Pack, was alive and had returned. They may be young, but the Hale name still has respect among many of our kind. Perhaps it was omegas who trespassed?” she suggests.

“The power that was there…no, it had to be an alpha” Noshiko reasons “or even more than one” she adds in a concerned tone.

Satomi pulls back with a touch of fear. If Alphas were killed, it could be that young Derek had been taken down. Laura’s death last year had touched Satomi who knew the woman as a child. She remembered Derek, but he was younger than Laura and not in line to be alpha the last time she had seen him. If he died, then perhaps the omega that killed him was defeated by his pack allowing another to rise. She knows it is possible that a foreign Alpha could have decided to attempt to wrestle the territory away from the young man, but she thinks she would have heard about it… unless it was Deucalion! That man was a menace and a danger to everyone. He had surrounded himself with defective, crazed alphas and if they set their targets on Beacon Hills then the once proud Hale Pack were most likely no more. Deucalion killed and destroyed wherever he went, a poison on the very land. She would need to find out immediately or else her small pack might be in danger from them.

“Will you help me?” Noshiko’s question caught her slightly off guard but Satomi nodded. She might not be as strong in a fight as she once was, but her wolves were young and eager to test themselves. They were up to a scouting mission and she could reach out to several contacts that she knew. There was an older witch, nearly her own age, who had retired in Beacon Hills that she could contact for more information. Besides, it will give her the chance to investigate her own feelings.

Noshiko had shared when she sensed the disruption and that aligned with the night she was woken abruptly. She had woken feeling disoriented and confused but it didn’t last for too long. She would have written it off except for the nagging feeling of wrongness that seemed to grow over the days since. She felt like she was in another’s wolf’s territory which made no sense. She had been here for decades but she couldn’t deny it. Something had changed and all signs pointed to Beacon Hills.
Chapter 4

IN THE PRESERVE

“Remind me again why we are out here?” Erica complained to Boyd again even though she knew the answer. Derek had ordered the pack to run the borders pretty much full time since the morning after all the craziness, but seven days of vigilance was tough to maintain, especially when nothing was even the slightest out of the ordinary. She was almost hoping for something to attack them just to end the boredom!

Boyd didn’t respond beyond a raised eyebrow that clearly replied ‘you know why’ and she huffed. He smirked as he turned them to head to the northern part of the preserve and added just enough speed that she had to react and her growl only increased his speed. She felt a rush as it suddenly shifted from running together to a chase and she had to admit that chasing after the silent beta was fun. She remembered the pack meeting the day after Stiles did his light show.

FLASHBACK TO THE LOFT

“Okay, we are going to need to be prepared for trespassers” Derek had said once they had all gathered for dinner. Stiles, the Sheriff, Melissa, and Chris were all absent, but the rest of the pack had gathered in the loft.

“Didn’t we just stop them?” Scott asked looking confused. “I mean we stopped the Alpha Pack and the Darach only yesterday!” there was a hint of a whine but Erica saw agreement on most of the pack’s faces except Derek and Peter.

“Yes we did, but that almost makes it worse” Derek had told the confused teens who all appeared lost except for Allison and Lydia.

“You think their defeat will have repercussions” Allison stated as she leaned forward, clearly understanding the situation. “By defeating two major foes, people will take notice.”

“Not to mention Stiles’ new power” Lydia added looking thoughtful. “Lizzie told us some things while we were creating the crime scene.”

“What did she tell you?” Isaac asked the red head looking very uncomfortable.

Lydia paused and glanced at Peter who only nodded for her to continue. “She told us that Stiles’… transformation…would be felt, well, everywhere. Magical beings would have felt something and the more powerful ones would have felt it more strongly. She warned us that the Nemeton had been acting as a Beacon for the supernatural world, but with Stiles becoming what he has, well she compared it to the difference between a campfire and a lighthouse.”

“So it’s an even bigger beacon and we are about to be invaded?” Erica demanded in surprise looking around and seeing the concern on Derek, Peter, Allison, and Lydia’s faces. “How bad is it going to get?”

“She couldn’t say for certain” Peter said into the shocked silence. “Not all who would be drawn will be harmful or a threat, in fact the more secure our dear Stiles becomes in his power, the less the threat will be. There might be some who seek to test themselves or challenge him for the glory,
but most magical creatures will recognize his power.”

“She said it would be like it is with her when she is fully the Morgaine” Lydia added. “Beings recognize her and only the truly foolish or desperate would challenge her power, but inevitably some will. Especially since very few will truly understand what Stiles is. Some more ancient powers will remember the last Arcanist and may come to evaluate him for themselves.”

“What kind of powers?” Jackson asked his girlfriend.

“She didn’t know for certain, just that we should be on guard and prepared” Lydia said with a frown. She had pressed the other woman but Lizzie still managed to put Lydia more than a little off balance though she hated to admit it. Her new status was still uncertain but the overwhelming nature of the Queens and the Morgaine was enough to make even the formidable Ms. Martin pause.

“The fact is that we have a warning from someone we can trust that others will come for one reason or another and we need to be prepared” Derek said cutting off the side conversations. “While not everything that comes will be a threat, we still need to know what we are dealing with.”

“Isn’t Stilinski supposed to be able to sense them?” Jackson asked and several of the pack looked at him in surprise. “Didn’t Lizzie say that he was sensing another pack this morning? I mean shouldn’t he know if something comes?” he asked again and Lydia looked at him proudly.

“He will, eventually, but things are too chaotic right now” Lydia clarified. “Until things settle down and he learns about his new abilities, he could easily miss things.”

“How long until then?” Isaac asked before anyone else.

“At least a year” Peter provided and smirked at the shocked looks of the rest of the pack. “I don’t think you truly grasp how much everything has changed” he said shaking his head in disappointment.

“But why so long?” Scott asked, his concern for Stiles clear in his voice.

“His territory is not settled. Lizzie said that he currently has reached over a hundred miles in every direction, but she would not be surprised if he didn’t expand several times that. The historical Merlin’s territory encompassed all of Britain and Wales. That is nearly half the size of California, so figure something close to that.”

Everyone looked stunned at that. “So if he keeps adding territory, then the people and things in those spaces…” Scott trails off looking nervously at Allison.

“They will feel it and have a sense of where it’s coming from. Some packs or creatures may not appreciate it either” Derek tells them.

Everyone looks determined after that. The rest of the meeting is spent coming up with a patrol plan rotating among the pack. Derek immediately rules that couples, while being allowed to patrol together, are not going to be exclusive. He wants everyone to get experience patrolling with other pack members. Erica was disappointed but after some maneuvering she was with Boyd every fourth or fifth patrol, so it wasn’t too bad.
“Okay fine” Erica finally admits as they stop at the top of a rise that looks over Beacon Hills. Boyd had managed to evade her while running patrol for the last couple of miles but he had stopped at the rise to admire the view. “I know why, but shouldn’t we have sensed something? I mean there has been no trace of anything” she complains.

Boyd is about to respond when the wind shifts and all of sudden he smells something. Something he doesn’t recognize but that makes the hairs on his body stand up. He is being watched! Glancing at Erica he can see that she is reacting the same and he catches her eyes and glances behind them. She turns around, inhaling deeply, but she shakes her head sharply. She didn’t recognize it either. “You asked for something” Boyd whispers and smiles at the sudden flash of golden eyes from the she-wolf as she fully shifts into her beta form, Boyd following suit immediately after.

“This way!” she growls and takes off in the direction of the scent. Boyd races after but he is struggling to keep up. He realizes that she must have let him win earlier. While he was stronger than she was, it seems that the blonde was faster, maybe as fast as Isaac or Jackson, both of whom usually won the various races they did for training.

Erica however was focused. She feels her fellow Beta behind her, protecting her from that direction, and allowing her to direct all of her energy and attention to attempt to find out where that scent was coming from. She knows that she is moving quietly, they both were, but there was definitely something making noise ahead of her so she narrows in on that sound and accelerates.

The smell increases for a moment before the rhythm of its movements increase as well and it starts pulling away from them. She snarls. What the hell was this? She tries to push harder but she is nearing her limits when she senses Boyd moving off to the right. Understanding his plan instantly she moves left as they attempt to flank their prey.

Boyd ran as fast as he could. He had chosen the slightly easier path knowing he needed it to keep up while Erica was able to dodge the trees and roots faster than he could. He had picked up the noise as well, but it made no sense. One moment it sounded like one person running, the next it was two, and then back again. And the sound varied as well. He could hear the solid impact with the ground, but there was nothing else. No broken twigs or leaves, no sound that something running should have made. Even Erica and he were making more noises than it was right now. They had sacrificed silence for speed.

As he makes another turn, he finds himself dropping down a sharp incline as the ground dropped around him. He slows to find his footing and growls in inspiration. Rearing back he lets out a howl. Loud and long, as he calls to his pack. He hears Erica’s howl in reply, but none of the rest. That’s okay, he knows that they heard him and are coming, Derek for sure. Taking off again he tries to move to intercept their prey.

Erica had responded to Boyd’s howl with a joyful one of her own before sprinting forward again. She caught a momentary glimpse of white before the sound she was tracking suddenly stopped. She frowns but realized that it probably was exhausted. Trying to outrun two wolves was not easily done. She hears Boyd moving as they both converge on the last location when she spots a flash of white in her peripheral vision. She slows to look again but doesn’t see anything when she hears that rhythm again… but it’s behind her!

Slamming to a stop she spins around and sure enough, the sound is now coming from where she just was and moving away, back towards the rise. Snarling she takes off just as Boyd bursts into view, confusion and frustration clear on his face. “How’d it get behind us?” he asks her but she just growls and takes off with him running after.

They run for several minutes before Boyd realizes that they are moving in a different direction.
“We are heading towards the Hale house” he gets out and hears Erica’s acknowledgement. He had seen a flash of white, almost like a light when they passed through a small clearing, but it was gone in an instant and Erica’s growls of frustration only increases.

Another few minutes and suddenly a much louder and deeper roar shakes the trees in the Preserve. Derek! Erica and Boyd both smile and increase their speed but once again the sound disappears. It is only a few seconds before they burst into the open directly behind the house where Derek, Jackson, and Isaac are wolfed out and running towards them.

“What’s wrong” the alpha demands as the two exhausted betas almost collapse to the ground. Peter comes up with Scott, Allison, and Lydia right behind him. Unlike the others, Peter was fully human though you could see the tension in his shoulders.

Erica gasps in air for a few seconds before she begins explaining what had happened. The two betas trade off on the explaining while the rest listen carefully.

“So you didn’t see it?” Allison asks looking deeply into the woods, the arrow in her hand already firmly in the bow though it wasn’t yet drawn.

“No. Only a couple flashes of light” Boyd tells her.

“I think it was white actually” Erica contradicts and the two of them began arguing but neither was 100% certain.

“What about tracks?” Isaac asks and Derek smiles. Ordering them into three teams, Derek sends Erica, Scott, Allison, and Peter one way while he took Boyd, Isaac, Jackson, and Lydia the other. They would look for tracks, scents, or anything else. Neither Derek nor Peter had ever heard of something that could go silent like that before.

They reconvened at the Hale House two hours later looking much worse for wear and thoroughly confused. There had been nothing. Not a single track or sign of anything moving in the woods. None of the wolves could detect any scents that shouldn’t have been there and neither Erica nor Boyd could describe it other than ‘sharp, crisp, and foresty’ which did not go over well with Peter.

Deciding that without any kind of evidence, they couldn’t make any assumptions, despite Jackson’s assertion that they were basically on a snipe hunt. Peter had snorted at that and both he and Derek had shared a meaningful look. Sending young wolves on similar hunts had been a tradition in the Hale pack and both Peter and Laura had done it to Derek when they were kids. Derek sent everyone home to sleep but advised them to keep an eye out. It might have been nothing, but in Beacon Hills, those odds were never good.

BEACON HILLS SHERIFF’S OFFICE

Tara turned off the engine of her patrol car and sighed. The last week had been rough with the Feds here and causing all sorts of issues for the Sheriff, and adding to that the sliminess of Agent Rafael McCall and his constant efforts to undermine the Sheriff had the entire department on edge. She really doesn’t get the man, how does he not see that rather than everyone respecting him, the entire department would cheerfully push him off a cliff and she is fairly certain that most of his fellow agents would do the same.

Shaking her head she grabs the box of pastries from Celeste’s along with the extra coffees she had
picked up for the station. One not so subtle sign that the deputies were done with the feds had been the rather passive aggressive coffee and food situation. Every day a different deputy had brought in something and after the first day, it was very clear that any food brought by the station was for Beacon Hills Sheriff’s Office staff only. Of course Tara had made sure that the agents had gotten a taste on that first day and somehow none of them had figured out where Celeste’s was so it was driving them crazy.

Of course, the fact that most of the agents realized that the tension between the two departments was due to McCall didn’t hurt either.

Tara had also managed to convince the others to cover for the Sheriff so that Stiles wouldn’t know he had been cheating. While she had gone along with the teen most of the time, she figured that Sheriff Stilinski deserved some exceptions during the week they have been having.

Walking in to the station she was caught off guard by the scene before her. The feds were packing up!! Looking around she spotted Parrish and Rodriguez standing off to the side. Moving over there she slid up next to them. “What’s going on?” she asks Jordan and he smiles professionally before it becomes a real smile when he spots the coffee and pastries.

“It seems that there has been a number of sightings of the suspects. Someone passed them leaving Beacon Hills about a week ago, and they had just gotten several tips that they were in Los Angeles before another came in from a trucker who had just come up from San Diego. Agent Jones is worried that they are headed for the border.”

“So they are moving their outpost?” she prompts and both of the men nod absently. “What about McCall?” she mutters and sees the smiles slip from their faces.

“It seems that Agent McCall is staying to help ‘coordinate’ things in case there is more information here about the case” Jordan says in a deadpan voice that makes Tara feels ill in her stomach. That man would continue to be a pain in their collective assess.

“Does the Sheriff know?” she asks quietly looking at the deputy. The last several days had been rough, especially after McCall had decided that some of the ‘unsolved’ cases might be related to their missing serial killers.

Jordan smiled with a wicked gleam in his eyes. “Yes. Apparently we got a rather reliable tip that both Blake and the blind guy were confirmed as being in Denver for several months before coming here. Appears to contradict Agent McCall’s ‘inspired’ investigation. The Sheriff spoke with the district office and expressed his concerns about the diverted resources and time of his deputies chasing after old animal attacks while trying to find two serial killers.

Deputy Graeme felt a burst of pride for her boss. He had been quiet and nothing but cooperative since they had arrived, and he had still participated fully, especially with Agent Jones. Her respect for her boss goes up when she gets that the man was giving McCall all the rope he needed to hang himself and the man had ran with it. Hopefully his continued failure would finally get someone in that office to pull him from here.

Nodding to the two men she headed to the break room to drop off her load when speak of the devil she heard Agent McCall’s voice.

“No sir” he said sounding significantly more professional than she had heard him. “I definitely think that using the hospital here would be the best decision. It’s close and the department has experience with him so they will be motivated. I can stay and oversee the entire procedure. It would only be for a few days before he would be sent back. The facility is definitely well equipped.
and staffed to handle all aspects of the treatment.”

Tara froze as she concentrated on the man’s voice. Though he was trying to appear fully professional, she could hear the glee in his tone. He was up to something, something that did not bode well for the department, but what could he be doing that would involve the hospital?

She moved closer but McCall was walking and he moved far enough away that she lost the conversation and without being obvious about it she couldn’t get close enough again. Instead she moved to let the Sheriff know what she heard. Maybe he would have some idea why the FBI would be involved in someone getting medical treatment.

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**IN STILES’ CLEARING IN THE PRESERVE**

Stiles scratched his nose trying to focus on his center but wasn’t having too much luck with it. He had come out to the circle to see if he could sense anything that fit Erica and Boyd’s encounter. Scott had informed him about it but he was skeptical that it actually was something. There was no trace, no scents, and no real sighting of whatever it was and there were not many things that could outrun a pair of wolves. Even Derek hadn’t been able to detect anything, but he wasn’t willing to write it off as a figment of their imagination. Derek’s paranoia had been set on high since returning to Beacon Hills and it seemed whenever he tried to lower it, he got smacked in the face so Stiles had to admit that he had cause.

Stiles snorted as he thought about that, especially in light of the dinner at casa Stilinski. Derek had come over for dinner as invited and it was about as awkward as he had dreaded. His dad had been perfectly polite, dangerously so.

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**FLASHBACK TO THE STILINSKI HOUSE**

“Hey” Stiles had said nervously when he opened the door and saw Derek standing there. He had been surprised by the Alpha’s appearance. Instead of his trademark leather jacket, tight jeans, and t-shirt, he had dressed like a regular person. He was wearing soft Henley with thumbholes in a rich plum, dark enough for Derek but with enough color to confirm it wasn’t black. A pair of dark jeans, respectably fitted and boots completed the outfit. He had lost the serial killer vibe but Stiles was certain that any number of Beacon Hills’ housewives would definitely give this Derek a second and third look.

Derek had paused and looked at Stiles who blushed at the scrutiny. He would never admit that he had changed outfits about a dozen times and he had made certain that his father was sufficiently threatened with a new vegan lifestyle if the man embarrassed his son. The threat of a wheatless, sugarless, vegan carob cake was enough to make the tough Sheriff pale in horror. He had ended up with red chinos, white vans, and a black button up shirt that showed he was serious about this night. “You look…good” Derek finally manages and Stiles blushes again.

“Thanks” the young man replies before inviting the Alpha inside. They move to the living room just as the Sheriff steps back inside from the patio.

“I hope steak is okay” he says happily looking at his son who is definitely not pouting. Stiles had agreed to let his father pick the menu and despite him taking completely unfair advantage, Stiles
had managed to get a salad and corn on the cob to go with the steaks and baked potatoes that the Sheriff had selected. “Rare?” he asked and ignored the eye roll from his son

“Medium Rare please” Derek said and handed a bag to the sheriff who looked a bit surprised but he took it and pulled out the bottle inside.

Noah’s eyes widened when he saw the writing on the bottle. “Glenfiddich! A 21 Year single malt?” Noah looked up in surprise at the young man standing there. “This is very generous” he tells him.

“It was my father’s favorite” Derek’s voice was soft and there was a vulnerableness in his bearing that made the older man remember that terrible night when he arrived to find Beacon Hills’ most prominent family dead and while the previous Sheriff had managed the scene, deputy Stilinski had spent some time trying to manage two distraught teens whose voices were already raw from grief.

“Thank you Derek” Noah said sincerely and he saw his son move closer to the Alpha, his hand tentatively reaching out to comfort the man so he turned to place the bottle in a safe place before heading back outside.

After the rather emotional beginning, the actual dinner wasn’t that bad. The sheriff had asked Derek about his time in New York and both Derek and Stiles were still filling the man in on all the specific incidents in the last year or so. Derek had also shared information from his patrols and Noah had asked if he would be willing to help the deputies in the know with some training. Derek had agreed and Stiles had suggested letting Ally and Scott go first and then when they were a bit more used to it, then bring in Derek. Noah had agreed but everyone agreed that they wouldn’t take any actions until the FBI was gone.

By the time dinner was over Stiles was about to snap from waiting for his father to say or do something that would embarrass him to no end, but that didn’t actually happen. He said goodnight and left them alone downstairs though Stiles was certain his door was wide open so that he would hear anything.

“Sorry about that” Stiles had offered but Derek had shrugged it off.

“Actually, he handed it pretty well considering” Derek said looking more relaxed than he had all evening. “He could be angry about everything” he reminds the teen.

“According to dad he told you to do it” Stiles challenges and sees the discomfort on the Alpha’s face.

“He didn’t really understand…” Derek stared but Stiles cut him off with a snort.

“He may not have understood everything that happened that night, but he knew what he was asking. The fact was that there was only two options for him: getting a son-in-law or losing me forever. You saved me and that is a big deal to our family” Stiles’ voice was strong and didn’t waiver. He looked Derek in the eye and from anyone else the challenge there would have caused his wolf to react but this wasn’t a member of the pack or some interloper, this was his mate and he had to accept the truth in his voice and steady heartbeat.

They stayed there for a few minutes before Derek stepped forward and leaned in slowly. Stiles got a smirk on his lips for only a moment before they encountered Derek’s own, a quick and soft touch before he stepped back. “Your dad is listening” he whispered and saw the blush on the younger man’s face.
Stiles smiled and his eyes glowed for a second as arcane symbols lit up around his hands. “Not anymore, he can’t hear anything” he smirked.

The second kiss was longer and left the young man breathless and he would have been willing to do more but Derek pulled back and left slowly, walking to his car while Stiles watched from the porch. He finally drove off and the teen stepped back inside to find his father standing there looking confused.

“What?” Stiles asked innocently.

Noah Stilinski’s eyes narrowed and he pointed to his ears and glared. Oops! The lecture he got on using his magic to sneak around with Derek was totally worth it though.
Chapter 5

BACK TO THE CLEARING

Stiles took another deep breath and attempted to shake off the distractions. Lizzie had warned him that he needed to connect with his territory every day in some way and though he struggled with getting quiet, she had helped him learn to focus on his breathing in order to make that connection.

He breathed in and held it, opening his mind like a flower (or trying to do that despite snickering when Lizzie had suggested that particular visualization). He held his breath for a count of ten before slowly releasing it, imagining himself spreading out on the lines. He felt the warm energy of the lines come into focus as his heart slowed and his breathing deepened. Stiles could feel the energy of the trees surrounding him, their roots sunk deep into the ground and the energy pouring off them to join the ley lines. He allowed himself to drift through his territory. He can feel the woods around him and the green, growing energy. Several areas seem a bit lacking and he shifts energy over to them almost without thinking and smiles as he sees the immediate improvement in those spots.

Pushing farther he finds more and more zones that are lacking, several that appear sickly, even poisoned, and Stiles recognizes that it is pollution he is sensing. Drawing on the lines, he sends energy to clean and restore the areas, moving deliberately from one to another, leaving only when he can tell that things are improving. He isn’t sure how long he is focused on the healing but suddenly he realizes that his mind is dozens of miles away from Beacon Hills and he pulls back to himself.

This time he tries to visualize the area like a spider web with everything being a point in the web, connected to each other through the barest touch. He senses the larger animals first; birds, moles, several deer, and a fox and her cubs before he notices the smaller, almost invisible insects and then the grass, flowers and trees. The whole area is alive and he is enthralled watching it until he is distracted by a bright form moving near the edge of the preserve. A moment’s concentration and he identifies the energy as a person jogging on one of the trails. He laughs and pushes out and starts encountering more and more people before finding one that blazes.

Focusing, he is startled by the sense of familiarity and connection before he recognizes the feel of Lydia. The red head is driving in her car, Stiles can even sense her dog Prada with her before she quickly passes outside his area of focus. Stiles can still almost taste/feel her aura, a green-black darkness that has hints of incense and moss. He realizes it is her Banshee nature he is sensing and smiles.

He starts to look for the others when a sudden flare, very close by, appears and if Lydia was a blazing spot, this was a supernova. It is bright white, ice cold, and is abrupt enough to startle his trance and he falls over before looking around the clearing for any sign of what that was. Could it be what Erica and Boyd were chasing?

“No my boy, I am not that entity” a voice that sounds like ice and wind and winter shocks him from behind. Spinning around he spots the woman standing there and is thoroughly confused.

The woman is watching him, obviously amused, dressed all in white and furs. Her hair is black and held back with a crown of silver and diamonds that puts all other crowns to shame. He stares until he remembers his father’s description of ‘The Night’.

“Queen Mab?” he asks carefully. Making sure to appear respectful, but not subservient. Lizzie had
told him that the Queens respected strength, but would also not tolerate impertinence or impoliteness. However if he didn’t stand up for himself, they would cause problems.

Mab smiles as she steps further into the clearing, glancing around but Stiles can tell she is appraising him in a very calculated method. “I felt your healing energies as you worked youngling. The restoring of this place, the cleaning of the foulness that humans seem so incapable of preventing. Your touch was very…particular” she says with a smile that suggests she is more than a bit amused by something.

“Thank you?” Stiles says uncertainly. Sure Lizzie had said that the Queens would be back, but Stiles didn’t expect them so soon. “Is there something I can help you with?” he asks politely.

Mab laughs boldly. “Oh very well done. It seems that the current Morgaine did not leave you completely untutored. Polite, but with just enough of a reminder that I am on your territory to maintain the balance without giving cause for offense.”

Stiles’ eyes widen at the fact that she saw what he was trying to do so easily, but she doesn’t appear upset…quite the opposite actually. “I think she was getting tired of trying to get through my thick head actually. I am sure she would be the most surprised that I managed to pull it off even if it wasn’t exactly successful.

“Oh, I would say it was well done” she assured him as she entered the circle to stand near him. “Unfortunately I do not have much time to spend entertaining myself with you right now, much as I might enjoy it.” Her eyes roved over him and he had the urge to try and cover himself from her gaze. It was 100 times worse than when Lydia was looking at someone who had caught her interest but she hadn’t decided whether that was a good thing or not.

“Okay” Stiles starts to say when he sees roots start to burst out of the ground, rising up and twisting around each other. A second batch starts a few feet apart and Stiles is about to ask why when the first set of roots starts shaping and he can see the chair forming. He watches in fascination as the roots move and grow until two large chairs are suddenly there, in the middle of the clearing, facing each other.

Mab moves and sits in one and looks at him with a single eyebrow twitch that says without saying anything ‘sit down’. Derek couldn’t hold a candle to her in eyebrow language he thinks as he moves to sit down in ‘his’ chair.

“The Morgaine has a…different view of what an Arcanist is and though she isn’t wrong, she isn’t right either” the Winter Queen begins enigmatically. “She can only see a single facet of their true nature and what it all means. Even I can only see a few more, my sisters as well. The truth is that the only one who truly knows and understands the full nature of the Arcanist…is the Arcanist.”

Stiles frowns. “But how can I learn everything? I mean I suppose I can try to work things out from the library and others” he trails off looking unhappy.

“No books or rumors or whispers of those that only know what they can conceive of in their small experiences shall help you. You will have to discover your truth for yourself. You will define your nature simply by the choices you make” she tells him with conviction.

Stiles leans back and sighs. He really wanted to be able to research all this. To find the answers so he was able to make a plan. It’s like when Deaton first gave him Mountain Ash and said ‘Believe’. Seriously? That’s it? Dang druid could have given him a bit more.

Mab laughs again. He looks up and sees the amusement in her eyes. “Expecting a druid to be clear
is like fighting a winter blizzard with a torch; foolish and pointless. They are limited by the structure of their magic. They teach as they learned and like many, are rigid and inflexible. You are not” she adds with a slight nod. “Do not blame them for their failings, pity them.”

Stiles nods but doesn’t reply. Sure he doesn’t really agree with all of Deaton’s methods but the guy is okay. Mab’s words make him uncomfortable and he is not exactly sure why.

“You are uncomfortable because you sense the truth of my words and more importantly what they represent” she tells him.

Suddenly angry Stiles looks at the Winter Queen and straightens his shoulders. “Are you reading my thoughts?” he demands, the respect slipping a bit.

Mab’s smile is less amused than cruel. “Yes. Do you expect me to not use every advantage I have in a situation such as this. You can no longer play the part of the boy running with wolves. You are the Arcanist and you have both responsibility and burden. The time to play the fool has passed” her voice is cold.

Stiles stares for a moment, angry at her words but he doesn’t give in to his desire to snap back. First, Lizzie definitely warned against that and second, his father always taught him that when people lost control, they revealed more than they intended. Stiles watched Mab and thought about everything he had seen so far.

First issue. Why give away what she was doing? If she could hear his thoughts, it would be smarter to not give that away and instead read him and know what he was thinking almost before he did. It made no sense, which means that she must have wanted him to know. Why? He looks at her as she watches him silently. What did she say? ‘use every advantage’? She was showing him that those he interacted with would use everything they had to get the better of him and he needed to be prepared for that. Looking up he saw the slight smile on those pale lips and knew he got her point.

Second, she was telling him that no one could explain his nature. Again, why? If she was an adversary, she would want him limited and carefully controlled. She could have said she knew the truth, or at least the Queens did as a group, even if Lizzie didn’t, but she didn’t. No, she said that no one but him knew that truth. Which means she is telling him that he is much more than others believe. He looks up and sees her staring and a twinkle in her eyes reminds him of her words ‘a single facet’. Gems had facets but they didn’t have one or two, they had dozens or hundreds. Was she saying that his true nature was that unknown? What if instead of anyone knowing the Arcanist, everyone only could see a facet, maybe several, but in the search to find all those different understandings, could he understand himself fully. This time Mab’s soft sigh affirmed his thoughts.

Lastly she talked about pitying druids, and others, for their limitations. But neither Lizzie nor Stephen seemed limited in their power. Sure they had rules and structures to their magic, but that was so that it would work like it was supposed to…or did it? Were the greatest workers of magic as limited as the weakest because they had to operate by their rules? And she said Stiles shouldn’t blame them, which must mean that he wasn’t limited and maybe he didn’t have to use their methods and ways. Could he use sorcery, but with witchcraft connections? Looking up he sees the slight incline of her head, the diamonds of her crown sparkling with the slight movement.

“Can anyone help me?” he whispers softly, but she hears him anyway. Whether his voice or his thoughts doesn’t really matter.

“Yes, but only so much. The Arcanist is a lonely burden to bear, especially for one so young and as unprepared as you are. The previous Arcanists all sought the power and mantle of responsibility, even if they didn’t truly understand it prior to their ascension. You rose unknowingly so you must
now come to terms with your power, and the burden you have chosen, informed or not, to carry” Mab’s voice carries no trace of sympathy for his situation, but he wasn’t really expecting any.

“My sisters would be gentle with you. Giving you bits and pieces of knowledge to guide you along a path that would best serve themselves” she says easily and laughs at his suspicious thoughts. “Of course I have an agenda” she says easily “all creatures do. It is just that my agenda in this matter is to see what you can become. Emrys chose to stand behind another, to be the power behind the power and in so doing he ultimately failed in his duty to his land. By vesting it the way he did, when his king faltered, so too did the land. When his king finally fell, Emrys had given so much that he lost hope and drive and instead pushed his magic into the land and died.”

Stiles looked at her and frowned. She looked both sad and angry at her memories. “You must decide the kind of Arcanist you will be. Your territory is ultimately your responsibility. You may sit back and let others act in your name, but they ultimately do not carry this burden” she added before staring at him.

It takes him a few minutes but then he understands. “The Darach. Deucalion. Kate. Gerard. All of it” he mutters looking at her. “Someone else dealt with them, made the final call on what to do about them. I can’t do that anymore can I?” he asks, the plea in his voice that she deny this is clear.

“You can be an island unto yourself. Not involving yourself in the affairs of others” she tells him. “Of course if that is your purpose, you should have chosen the path of the Draíochtan. But you did not, you chose to be the Arcanist, in your core, you know this.”

“So that means…” he pauses and looks at her but she doesn’t answer for him. He has to make that choice, to finally and firmly set his feet on this path. “I’m the Alpha now” he mutters and Mab laughs a genuine laugh.

“A wise Queen has others to advise and inform her, but the final decision is always hers and hers alone. I imagine the same is true for a King” she says.

Stiles blinks in confusion. “I’m not a king” he states with a laugh.

“Are you not? Is this land not yours? Do you not draw strength and power from it and give strength to it in return? Are those that dwell within it not subject to the power you possess?” she challenges.

“I don’t control people!” he argues.

“And if Kate Argent returned? Or her father? Would you allow them freedom to act as they will? Harm who they chose? If a feral wolf came, would you allow it to hunt the unknowing humans here?” her voice is soft, but there is definitely steel there.

“Of course I would stop them” he agrees before stopping at her expression. “That’s not the same thing!”

Mab leans back and watches him for a moment, studying him in a way that makes him feel stupid. “Any ruler, whether King, Queen, or Arcanist, is defined not by title or thrones. They are defined by the mantle they have accepted. You have accepted the mantle of responsibility for this territory, a territory of humans that will begin changing, becoming more magical with every day. Your ley lines…do they not feel stronger, richer, more pure?” she asks.

“I thought that was just that I was getting better at sensing them” Stiles mumbles as he watches the timeless queen.
“You are. But your presence is also shifting the flows both within and outside your borders. Magic all across this part of the world is reacting to your presence, drawn to it, and with it will come others” she tells him. “You will not simply allow others deal with these changes while you stand aside because it is not who you are. You chose to be the mate of an Alpha werewolf, you stand beside one who rose as a True Alpha, you rescued and restored a Kanima, witnessed a Wailing Woman come to power, and this is only the beginning. You may not have a throne or crown, but do you doubt that if you issued a call to war that none would answer?”

Stiles leaned back feeling very uncomfortable. He was the planner, the strategist and researcher, not the leader. But...he did kind of boss Scott around and he had done similar to Derek. Lydia, who rarely listened to anyone, listened to him. Even Allison, the hunter extraordinaire would listen to his ideas and use them. Is this any different? He bossed his dad, but that was only about eating healthy. Wouldn’t Derek be in charge? He glanced up at Mab at her sudden laugh.

“Your wolf was born to be a Beta. He was not to come to this role except through tragedy. Though he struggles to do right, he prefers to follow another. Now he can be both. Alpha to his pack, but Second to one he respects” she explains.

Stiles really wants to argue that one but he can’t. He knows how much Derek has struggled with the pack, but that was really because of all the outside stuff...crap. He closes his eyes and ignores the chuckles he hears. Derek never got a break to even catch his breath, of course he would be happier if Laura was here, but he was trying. His patrols showed that, but the truth was he wasn’t taking charge but rather he was preparing the pack to support Stiles in his new role. His careful discussion at dinner with Stiles and his dad showed that.

“So what do I do?” he finally asks looking at the Winter Queen.

She smiles that wicked smile of hers and leans forward “People will act in your name and on your behalf if you allow it. You must establish your rule clearly and firmly.”

“What? Declare myself King? Don’t think the pack will go for that” he snorts at the image of himself walking in with a crown seconds before he is buried in a pile of wolves.

Mab looks sad for a moment. “No. Others will do that. You must be ready for it when the time comes” she says with a heavy voice. “And I imagine it will come sooner than later. You will have to assert your responsibility when facing a decision. You are the Arcanist. Your judgement, for good or ill, will govern this territory and no others are truly able to make it. They can argue, debate, and reason, but you will have to make the decision alone.”

Stiles stares at her for a second before he gets it. “You mean killing someone or something” he says deliberately slowly so she can deny it.

“If necessary. Would you allow a ghoul to come to your lands and feed upon the people here?” she asks.

“No, of course not. But that’s a no brainer” he tells her and she nods.

“True, but what of Trolls? Goblins? Fairies? Dryads? Ifreet? Manticore?” she lists off and Stiles looks a lot less certain. “What of the Hunter Gerard and those like him? Will you allow him to hunt those within your territory because they fear and hate that which is different?”

Stiles shakes his head. He wants to argue with her but he knows she will see through him. The truth is that Stiles would happily open a hole in the ground under that old man and seal it up with him screaming if he had the chance and that bothers him. He knows its fear and anger, but there is also
a cold and calculating part of him that knows that the man is not redeemable or to be trusted, he would kill without hesitation. “So I become just like them?” he says angrily.

Mab takes a heavy breath. “To a point. You must be willing to look into the hearts of those who come before you and you must be willing to act on what you find. Mercy is generous, but failure to deal with evil…” Mab doesn’t finish but waits, looking at him carefully.

“…leads to more evil” Stiles finishes. He thinks back to his encounter with Ennis. He had beaten him thoroughly. Maimed and broken, it would have been so easy to end him and he wanted to, he really did. But his father’s voice pulled him back. Stiles had banished the alpha, much as he did with the twins, but he knows that he believed that those three would avoid him like the plague. Deucalion and Kali? They would never have given up and killing them would have been the only option. He freezes and looks up at Queen Mab who is smiling a more authentic smile.

“And so you see the difference. You do not have to kill to make your rules clear. You granted mercy to the brute, which was not weakness. If you had done so with the female, she would ever have sought your blood. It is knowing that you must consider and make the final decision that I cannot take from you” she says sadly.

Stiles nods and jumps to his feet as he sees the Winter Queen gracefully stand up. He watches in amazement as the roots that formed their chairs withdraw back to the ground and in seconds they are standing in the clearing with no sign that the chairs had ever been there. “We shall speak again youngling. I imagine my sisters will give you time before they come, but then again, we are capricious” she smiles wickedly. “Think well on my words, I fear that sooner than later you will need their wisdom.”

Stiles nods, not quite a bow, but a definite show of respect. He is shocked when she returns it before turning to walk away. He watches as she steps across the clearing, frost forming at her feet, until she begins to fade and in a few seconds is gone.

Collapsing down to the ground Stiles throws his arms out. He is surprised he survived that but strangely enough he thinks that she might actually like him!

DEREK’S LOFT

Derek had hoped to handle this differently. Peter had been gone two days when he called this morning letting his nephew know that Alpha Satomi would be arriving at the loft around noon. Derek had spoken with Stiles this morning and the teen was spending most of the day at the clearing so Derek didn’t want to disturb him even though he would have preferred to have him here. Actually, he had sent a text letting him know but the teen hadn’t replied. With the amount of time he was on his phone, it was irritating that he didn’t respond this time. Of course, to be fair he hadn’t been on his phone much since that night.

Derek had dispatched Scott and Isaac to the border to watch for the Alpha’s arrival. Scott seemed to do better with female authority figures so Derek figured that the teen’s manners would be on high. Isaac had calmed down enough and was not threatening even though he was tougher than before. The Alpha had seriously considered sending Allison but he had ultimately decided not for two reasons. One, Satomi was friends with his mother and he imagined there might be some potential for conflict over Kate’s actions and two, Allison was better used to send the message of Strength with a hint of Threat. They didn’t need that with Satomi.
Scott had protested her exclusion but Allison had seen Derek’s logic without him having to explain it and her agreement had appeared to upset Scott even more. She had promised to explain it to the beta and had taken him and Isaac out of the loft and promised to send them on.

After they left, Derek returned to the map of the area that they had set up to start tracking any issues. Stiles had come over last night and had helped identify their new boundaries and Derek had to get two more maps as Stiles’ power grew. The traditional Hale lands we colored in red on the maps and Stiles’ border was in blue but the majority was uncolored as they waited to fill in who would stay or come in. Derek had left Satomi’s territory off for now mostly because he wasn’t certain how much she was claiming quite yet.

Derek had already worked out, showered, and cleaned the loft this morning so being idle was causing him to pace. This would be his first time with another Alpha, at least one who wasn’t trying to kill him. From his and Peter’s memories, they figured that Satomi would at least be willing to talk. She wasn’t keen on fighting hunters or risking her pack, most of whom followed her mostly non-violent beliefs, but whether she would accept Stiles’ new authority or not was still in question.

His phone buzzed and he looked at the text; ‘Just met them. ETA 15 minutes.’ Scott had been told to be polite, but firm in bringing them to the loft. Hopefully there had been no problems. The phone buzzed again with another text, ‘Alpha and 1 Beta.’ Derek wasn’t surprised. Her connection with the Hales and Peter’s invitation was hopefully seen as non-threatening as he intended it to be.

The next 15 minutes crawled by but finally he heard the Camaro coming with another car approaching the building. He listened and heard Scott and Isaac making small talk until the four of them entered the building. A short elevator ride later and Derek was standing by the windows waiting. Scott opened the door and gestured to the older woman to enter.

Even those without supernatural senses would be able to discern that Satomi Ito was still a formidable woman, despite her apparent age.

“Alpha Ito” Derek said with a rush of emotion, the memory hitting him remembering her previous visits to speak with his mother.

“You have grown well Alpha Hale” she replied in a firm voice. Derek nodded and motioned her to the table where a pot of tea was sitting, still warm and steaming.

“Tea? I remember you giving my mother a special blend, but I am afraid I don’t know it. I hope this is acceptable” Derek says with a hint of sadness.

Alpha Ito paused and Derek could smell the hint of sadness before she nodded and he poured her a cup. Her Beta sat at the table in the kitchen area with Scott and Isaac, them offering him soda which the young man also seemed to prefer.

“Your uncle came to visit me, asking me to come speak with you about a situation that occurred recently. He said you would explain it” she told him politely but firmly.

“You are familiar with the Alpha Pack? Deucalion?” Derek asks her and he can see the way that the tension fills her that she does.

“I am aware. I have worked hard to avoid his attention turning to my pack. I am sorry but if you are asking us to fight him…” she trails off with a sad look. She had discovered rumors that the insane Alpha was in California after her meeting with Noshiko, but she had no idea he was so close. She had been confused when Peter arrived and confirmed that the Hale pack was intact so the dead wolves the kitsune had found were still unknown. But if they were that close, then she may need to
“No. That won’t be necessary. He came here for my pack and was followed by Kali Steele’s former Emissary who she did not manage to kill when she betrayed her pack. The woman actually became a Darach” Derek stated simply. Satomi had seen much but now she was certain she would have to flee. She couldn’t hide the fear about this. A Darach was an abomination as well as the Alpha Pack! “We defeated both” Derek said and her thoughts slammed to a stop and she looked at him in shock.

Setting down her tea very carefully she was aware of the relaxed atmosphere. None of the Hale Pack were worried or concerned. How? “I am not sure I understand. When you say you defeated both…” she carefully offers him to continue.

“What Ennis and the twins were sent far away after being defeated. The rest of them attacked my pack and paid the price” Derek says with a growl. “They are all dead.”

Satomi’s eyes widen. She had met Deucalion before his failed peace conference with the Argents, and had heard terrible tales of his behavior after. Ennis was an unthinking brute, strong but with no real brain. Kali Steele however was a twisted general, cunning and vicious. The others were just as bad but Deucalion, Ennis, and Kali were the true core and threat of the Alpha Pack. They were the dead wolves Noshiko had sensed? “And the Darach?” she whispered.

“Our Emissary destroyed her. Well, obliterated her to be exact. Called down lightning that blew up the Nemeton and everything around it, including her” Derek clarified.

Satomi leaned back in shock. The tattered remains of the Hale pack had defeated the Alpha Pack, a pack with seven alphas! And a dark druid. Suddenly she remembers the series of deaths in Beacon Hills recently. “The deaths that occurred…” she asks looking at the young man who suddenly reminds her very much of Talia.

“Sacrifices. She was attempting to gain power to kill Kali and Deucalion but we stopped her and removed the threat” Derek said simply.

The older Alpha looked at the young man with concern. Noshiko had worried about the destruction of the Nemeton, but with that much power, she was not sure even the spirit of the void fox would have survived. “The last days, in growing intensity, I have felt a…call. Something has been drawing me here, making me feel off. Like I am in another’s territory even in my own home.”

Derek nods in understanding. “That would be my mate” he says simply and smiles gently at her surprised expression. “The Emissary and I bonded that night, to save his life which is a very long story, but it connected him to the land and allowed him to claim it as his territory.”

“As your mate I assume you are willing to share” she says knowingly. Derek nods in agreement before she continues “but I do not see how that affects myself” she poses the question.

“Stiles…my mate” he clarifies “is a very unique magic user. His bonding with the Hale lands was his connection, but his power has claimed more than just what we had claimed.” Derek looks at her suddenly suspicious expression. “His territory stretches several hundred miles in every direction” he explains steadily.

Satomi startles. “No one has a territory so large” she contradicts him. “My pack is already here and has been for decades” she says, a flash of her crimson eyes emphasizing her claim.

“I know and I respect that” Derek says diplomatically. “But unlike other magic users, his power is
significantly different. When he claimed this land…all four of the Fae Queens came to recognize his assumption of the place.”

Satomi Ito is over 80 years old and she has seen and heard much. She has met spirits even older than Noshiko but in all her time on this earth, she has never heard of all of the Fae Queens coming together in the mortal world. “That’s impossible” she whispers hoping he is lying, but knowing he wasn’t. His heart was steady.

“Stiles has been tutored by both the Morgaine” Derek says and Satomi gasps “as well as the Sorcerer Supreme” he finishes and she looks overwhelmed. How could this have happened?

“What is he?” she finally manages to ask.

“He is called an Arcanist” Derek tells her but he can tell she doesn’t recognize the term. “He can use all six domains of magic” he explains and she pales. ‘No one can do that!’ she wants to yell but she doesn’t. “Lizzie, the Morgaine I mean” and the fact that he is on a first name basis with the High Druidess is worrisome “told us that any supernatural being in his territory would be subject to him. His power will be like nothing else and those who enter would be subject to him.”

Her eyes flashed crimson and she did not bother to control the growl that escaped her. “You expect me to submit to a human?!” she demands standing up.

Derek stands more slowly, noticing that the three betas across the loft definitely do not look happy with the way things are going. “Alpha Ito, both Peter and my mother spoke highly of you and I do not wish to harm our relationship, quite the opposite. The Morgaine told us, as did the Queens, that many would be drawn here due to Stiles’ presence. We want your pack to stay, and be safe, but if you do, you must acknowledge his authority” his voice doesn’t waver but his eyes flash red as well. “All the land that answers to him will not accept others who deny him. If you do not wish to stay, you may leave” he offers.

“Um, excuse me?” Scott says in a tentative voice and both Alphas look at the teen in surprise. “Ma’am, Alpha Ito, I think Derek is forgetting that Stiles isn’t a wolf.”

Satomi’s eyes narrow in suspicion. “What of it?” she demands. Ever since she met this boy she has sensed something different. He is strong in his wolf, much stronger than one his age should be, especially for a bitten wolf.

“He doesn’t want everyone to bow down or something, he just needs to be sure that everyone who lives here follows the rules” he explains. "With everything that happened here, he wants us all safe" he adds and flashes his own crimson eyes.

"You are an alpha?" she says startled now understanding her reaction. "He killed one of Deucalion's pack?" she demands turning to Derek.

Derek shakes his head. "No. Scott is a True Alpha" he admits and Satomi’s eyes widen further. What the devil is happening here? There hasn't been a True Alpha in at least a century as far as she knows. But staring at the boy…she finally sees it. The power is there, but not the taint of violence or fury. He didn't gain his power by anger or any dark act, she has met enough Alphas to know that mark and he didn't inherit it, the age and strength of the power of those alphas is also absent. No, it is a power of certainty and compassion she is sensing. This town is forever making her challenge her own mind and thoughts! "You follow Hale?" she asks Scott.

Scott nods. "Becoming an Alpha wasn't my plan Ma'am" he tells her. "But like Stiles, I have to learn how to handle it. Derek has been helping me some, I don't want to be like Peter was. Not
ever! But Derek and Stiles are in charge and I know that Stiles will be a good guy and I trust him."
He looks at Derek and stares at the man for a moment "and I am learning to trust Derek too."

Derek nods in understanding, they still have work to do to make things better, but they are getting
there. He smiles honestly when he realizes Satomi is watching both of them. She is still uncertain
he can tell, but she finally looks back to Scott. “You were telling me about this Stiles” she instructs
and Scott comes over to join the two alphas as they sit back down.

SAN FRANCISCO

Martinique shuffled her deck of tarot cards for the third time in the last hour. She had been trying to
determine what it was that she was sensing over the last several days. All the members of the coven
had experienced an ‘awareness’ that they were being watched, maybe even judged, but there was
no sign of the source.

She had reached out to a friend in LA but she hadn’t felt anything while Kiran had surprisingly
shared that he and several of the other monks at the temple were feeling the same thing she was.
Which meant that witches, enchanters, and alchemists in the city probably all felt something. A
druidess in Portland wasn’t sensing anything but she had shared that the ley lines in the area had
shifted slightly. Nothing to worry about, but unusual nonetheless.

Dealing the cards she was searching for any sign or hint of what was coming or causing her nerves
when she flipped the first card, the High Priestess. Surprising as a card she dealt the second and
paused at it, the Empress! The High Priestess and the Empress next to each other was beyond rare.
Turning over the third card she freezes, the Wheel of fortune! She stares at the fourth and fifth
cards in concern, this is not a good omen. The Moon holds the fourth position and with a rushed
gesture she turns over the World.

Leaning back in her chair she stares at the cards. All Major Arcana in a single draw? All indicating
great things happening, and powerful people being involved. But what does it mean? Martinique
stares at the cards before her for several minutes before her concentration is broken by the ringing
of her phone.

Without looking, she answers the call absently “Hello?” she says, her eyes still firmly focused on
the cards before her.

“Martinique?” the accented voice causes her to look at her phone but it is an unknown number. The
voice, female, appears European. “Child?”

“This is Martinique, who is this?” she asks carefully and not certain about being called a child.

“I am Dionne, the High Witch” the voice says simply and Martinique’s eyes widen as she stares
down at the first two cards. If any cards represented the High Witch, it would be those. “I need
your assistance” she says and Martinique reels.

“Me? Milady, are you sure you have the right person? I am a simple follower of the craft” she
argues respectfully.

“I know and I am sorry to place this upon you but you are the closest coven leader to the source of
the disturbance” Dionne explains.

“Disturbance?” Martinique asks in confusion before freezing. It can’t be that!
“A week ago the world was rocked by a magic shift. It felt like an earthquake” the older women said with a frustrated sigh. “I have had the covens looking for signs and it appears to be centered near you. Have you sensed nothing?”

“We have sensed a subtle ‘watching’ over the last few days, but nothing like you describe” she pauses for a moment before deciding to share everything “but it is not just us. All magic users are feeling it” she adds.

“Not surprising” Dionne assures her. “It appears that the more power you have, the greater the feel of it. But whatever the cause, we must understand if it poses a threat. I need you to begin searching for any answers you can. If necessary, I will come there myself, but I would rather avoid that as there are several things going on here at home. Magic is shifting and adjusting and we have yet to determine if it is connected. Will you investigate?” the High Witch asks.

Martinique is fearful but she agrees. She cannot deny the High Witch! They talk for several moments and Dionne promises to send her information to assist in her efforts. After hanging up Martinique calls her coven and several of their allies to come meet to explain and ask for help. She had never expected to see or speak to the High Witch in her lifetime, she led a small, modest coven, but something momentous must have happened and Martinique only prays it won’t cost them everything.

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**DEREK’S LOFT**

Derek hears the familiar heartbeat even over the tension in the room. He missed the arrival of the jeep but as Stiles enters the building, the awareness of his proximity increases. He notices when the others sense him several seconds later, the confusion on Satomi’s face clear. The door opens and Stiles steps in before freezing.

“Uh…is this a bad time?” he says looking around. Satomi was still tense, she and Derek had been talking but she didn’t sit still, instead she had prowled, unhappy with what he was saying. Scott had drifted back to Isaac and her Beta after they started talking politics but they now looked lost in their own conversation.

“Stiles, this is Alpha Satomi Ito, from Beacon Valley” Derek introduces her and he could hear the change in her heartbeat as she stares at the teen in disbelief.

“This is your mate? Your new Emissary?” she says in a disbelieving voice. She flashes her eyes at the boy but she pales when his own eyes flash in return. The white light filling his entire eyes and she has a sudden overwhelming awareness of power. Not even the Nogitsune had had this effect on the elder Alpha. “What is he?” she whispers.

The low growl startles her and she looks at Derek and saw his eyes burning crimson and the tension is rolling off him. She is surprised but she suddenly realizes that he heard her less than complimentary comment. “My apologies” she says sincerely “I was…unprepared.”

“Uh, Derek?” Stiles’ voice drew the Alpha’s attention back to the young man and he relaxes, which allows the other three wolves to finally relax their own stance. “Alpha Ito, I assume Peter spoke with you?” he asks her and she nods in confusion. Stiles sighs. “And you gave you no real explanation” he says with a groan.

Sending a glare to Derek, Stiles moves over to sit beside his Alpha and invites Satomi to sit back
down. “Perhaps we should talk and maybe clear things up.”

She nods but then his scent hits her and she jumps up. His own scent is like ozone, parchment, and vanilla, but mixed with that is something unearthly. Something ancient. Her nostrils flare just as Derek inhales and looks startled. “Have you seen Queen Mab?” he demands and both Isaac and Scott pale. Alpha Ito looks stunned.

“Oh yeah, sorry. She stopped by to talk this morning about some personal things” Stiles mutters and looks at the worried expression on his mate’s face. “I’ll tell you all the details later” he promises and turns back to the trembling Alpha. “I apologize Alpha Ito, it seems that I am a bit of a person of interest to quite a few others.”

“Do not dismiss lightly the interest of the Winter Queen” she says in a worried voice.

“I don’t” Stiles promises “but she is on my territory so she behaved.” Alpha Ito looks even more upset if that was possible. The boy sees himself as her peer? “She also said her sisters would probably wait a bit longer to come to talk. I think she was trying to be the first” he says with a shrug.

The next half hour has Stiles giving her an edited version of everything after Derek had shared what they had discussed. She was impressed she finally had to admit. The boy, though young, had accomplished much. The Hale Pack had rid the world of the abomination of the Alpha Pack, rescued a Kanima, defeated a Darach, gained the favor of the Fae Queens, and gained an Emissary who apparently was equal to the Merlin, Morgaine, and Sorcerer Supreme. She would not be surprised if the other greater powers felt the same.

But that left the issue of submission. “Scott was right Alpha Ito. In truth I would prefer Derek to handle the relationships with the other packs. He is an Alpha and understands all of you better than I do. Plus, being a Hale probably doesn’t hurt” he says, the question clearly directed at her.

Satomi considered his words carefully. “It is true that others have begun talking about the Hale pack and Beacon Hills. Once words gets out of your latest battles, I imagine it will generate much more attention let alone once more is known about yourself and that you have chosen to align with the Hale Pack. Talia was very respected in America and abroad, both for her own gifts, but also as heir to the legacy of the Hales. I would guess that many wolves, omegas and betas unhappy with their own alpha, will seek you out. But I am not sure that you are really prepared” she tells them not entirely happy with the thought.

Stiles smiles and his eyes glow again. The white light is somehow less cold and forbidding that before but then his eyes close and light dances over his body in small flashes of color. “You have two betas in a car eleven miles from here, on the road back to Beacon Valley. There are also three others approximately fifty miles from here that were not present a week ago besides the ones you left in Beacon Valley” he states before opening his eyes and looking at the Alpha. “I can sense every supernatural being in my territory. Your pack was the first I detected” he says proudly.

Sitting quietly she was forced to admit that she was impressed by his display. It was subtle and more reassuring. “What exactly would you want if we were to remain?” she finally asks.

Stiles glances at Derek for a few moments before he felt the other man’s support with whatever Stiles was going to say. “Your pack would submit to myself and Derek, but you would remain your own pack. You would have to just follow some rules. No killing people” he says but then pauses and adds “that don’t deserve it. No turning others unless they consent willingly” he pauses and scratches his neck. “That’s about all I have for the moment” he says and looks at Derek.
“We would also want you to help protect the territory and the people and creatures in it” Derek adds slowly. “I know you prefer to avoid violence, but we would hope that you would be willing to help defend those that want to live here peacefully.”

Alpha Ito frowns in confusion. “I know that the Nemeton drew magic here but with its destruction, will that still happen?”

Stiles shares Lizzie and Mab’s predictions and the impact of his presence and he can see the moment that the older Alpha truly understands what Stiles’ presence will do. A land where they would not have to hide or fear hunters? She looks at her Beta and sees Ken’s nod of agreement. He will follow her whatever she decides, but he likes this.

“In times long ago, the very legend that Deucalion sought to claim for himself, there was the title High Alpha” Satomi begins. “It was rarely used, but when it was, it was used when several packs came together for a great purpose or to go to war. It was a title of honor, a recognition of an Alpha that other Alphas chose to follow. Once it was even held by a pair who ruled a human kingdom that included over a dozen packs. Perhaps we could use it here to formalize who you both are.” She pauses and considers carefully before continuing “I believe that we can acknowledge you as High Alphas.”

They continued talking for several hours as Satomi and Derek hammered out all the details. It was very formal. Stiles had ordered pizza and called the rest of the pack. At Derek’s urging, Satomi called her other two betas and the brother and sister joined the pack for pizza. Stiles bounced between the Alphas and the rest but by the end of the day Satomi had agreed and they had their first ally.
Stiles flopped down on his bed and blew out a deep breath. The last few days had been crazy. After dealing with Satomi who had finally managed to calm down after a few hours, she decided to stay in town overnight to talk things over with Derek before heading back. Stiles had stayed at the loft after she left for a bit, and they talked about werewolf politics which was truly fascinating, but Stiles was noticing that his feelings for his territory and the ‘itch’ that came with it were still unclear. Apparently he wasn’t done ‘growing’ yet as his territory kept expanding and as it did, more and more ley lines were involved and he had finally figured out that even when he wasn’t consciously connecting to them, they still fed into him and were bringing information to him that he wasn’t entirely sure how to interpret.

A quick call to Lizzie had helped some, but she could only advise him about druidic magic and he was definitely getting more than just that. Two days ago he had gone to the grocery store to restock their kitchen when he saw Mrs. Wilhelm, the former librarian, walking through the store aimlessly. Now to be fair, it wasn’t the first time she did that, however it was the first time Stiles had seen her at the store since she died. Yep. Passed away peacefully a month ago and apparently she is still shopping for produce.

He hightailed it out of there fairly quickly but he had spotted at least two other ghosts wandering around Beacon Hills since that incident. Strangely enough he hadn’t seen any of the people killed recently by the supernatural, for which he was relieved…surprised, but relieved. He didn’t need to have to deal with that on top of everything else.

Then yesterday the Alpha of the Marshall pack arrived, sent by Peter who was still out on his trip. Luckily Peter had been a bit more informative with the Alpha after Derek had chewed him out after Satomi told them of his less than full explanation of why she needed to come. David Marshall had quite a bit more information, especially after he talked with Satomi, so when he arrived he was extremely curious about Stiles, while being extremely polite and respectful. It seems that David’s aunt Sara had been a Hale cousin, so he already considered Derek family. Word of the Hales destroying the Alpha Pack and a Darach also didn’t hurt. A few hours of talking and he had agreed to accept Derek as High Alpha and had asked if his new Emissary Felisha could come to visit with Stiles in a few weeks as she only had basic training. She was a young alchemist who didn’t use a magic that their previous Emissary had so she was struggling with some things. Stiles had readily agreed even though he warned that his own skills at alchemy were minimal.

So now they had two packs who accepted them without any trouble and David had offered to reach out to several of his allies who either were already in Stiles’ territory or likely to be soon. He had stayed overnight talking long into the evening with Derek before returning home while promising to visit again soon.

It wasn’t bad if Stiles was being honest, but there was still some weird tension between him and Derek and he wasn’t sure how to manage it. They had only managed one meal with his dad and two lunches at the loft, but both of those times other members of the pack had shown up so it was all business, nothing personal. They were mates for crying out loud! Surely he could get some alone time where Derek couldn’t slip away. It was worse than before, back then he could ignore it. Sure Derek’s looks were amazing, only a blind person would miss that, but he was a really good person too and Stiles had more than a little crush and while he didn’t profess anything like he did with Lydia, it may take a lot but he can learn from his mistakes, the Alpha’s avoidance still affected him and knowing that they are supposed to be together but were not…sucks!
Leaping back up Stiles decided he needed to do something. Something strenuous or else he was going to lose it. Remembering hearing that Derek wanted to have the Hale house demolished before they tried building anything, Stiles decided to work off some of his energy and headed downstairs and out the door.

Driving the jeep was slower than opening a portal, but it was therapeutic for him so he liked driving when there was no rush. He made the turn off the main road and drove down the long drive until he was before the ruin of the Hale House.

Getting out he looked around at everything and sighed remembering the last time he was here with the ghosts of the Hales, but he was also happy to know that the ghosts had peacefully moved on so what was left was just wreckage. His dad had mentioned that the town had begun talking about tearing the house down as a hazard so he had told the mayor that Derek was planning to demolish it and the city was satisfied that they didn’t have to go through all the cost and trouble of condemning the place. He looked around and caught his wolf tattoo on his forearm looking at the house and Stiles would swear the wolf was upset which was only confirmed when it gave a silent howl that Stiles could still feel before it ran back up his arm and out of sight. The wolf had been fairly quite since the big day but it still managed to remind Stiles that it was there a couple times a day.

Closing his eyes, Stiles reached out for the ley lines and felt the power come to him easily. This place was rich with magical history from the impact of the Hales living here so long. It was comfortable for Stiles standing here, this would be a good place to call home. Opening his eyes, he saw the energies surrounding the clearing and the house and smiled as he reached out. His magic flowed out and over the house, pouring into cracks and crevices, touching the walls, floors, and ceilings as it searched out for anything that could be saved. He found parts of several photographs, a silver spoon deep in a closet, and several small pieces of jewelry in both Laura and Cora’s rooms. Gently, he pulled out the items and deposited them at his feet to inspect later.

He was about to begin demo when something caught his eye, a flash or reaction to his touch that shouldn’t be there. Opening his eyes he tried to see what it was before realizing it was in the basement. Curious he walked in the house and headed downstairs carefully, less worried about getting hurt, but still cautious. Stepping into the basement he stared at the walls for a moment before he remembered that here was where the Hales died and he swallowed nervously. Turning away he looked with his magical senses and they led to one section of the wall on the corridor that led outside to the woods but he couldn’t sense anything out of the ordinary. Letting his eyes slip back to normal he stared at the wall. Something had caught his eye and he was going to figure it out. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary on the wall and the bottom was plain. Looking up he looked past it several times before he finally saw it. A wolf head! Staring, he looked at the carved relief of the wolf head and was surprised how hard it was to see. The carving was about 2 inches tall and it wasn’t very deep, you really needed to look for it to spot it, he had no doubt that people could walk by it for years and never see it.

Reaching out, he touched it with his finger and felt a tingle. Magic! How could there be magic he wasn’t seeing. Taking a focusing breath he shifted to his magical eyes and focused everything on the carving and he finally found it, a magical thread that was blended so expertly with the natural energies of the house he was surprised he managed to find it. The thread was tied to Hale blood so that simply smearing a drop of Hale blood would trigger it. Unfortunately he didn't have any so instead he grasped the thread and gave it a gentle yank and a six foot section of the wall began dropping into the floor and Stiles jumped back.

The wall moved silently, magically silent he was sure, and in seconds it was completely down and
Stiles stared into the room before him in shock. Stepping in carefully he stared at the collection of items stored here that he wasn’t suspecting to find. There were several shelves filled with old tomes, books thick with parchment and traces of magic. Other shelves held various objects he would have to study but what surprised him the most was the large chest in the center of the room that looked very out of place.

First, it wasn’t as old as everything else, and second, it didn’t have the same amount of dust and cobwebs that the rest of the room had, like it had been added later.

Moving forward, carefully looking for any magical residue, he was surprised when there was none so he finally reached out and flicked it open. When nothing happened, he slowly raised the lid but there was still nothing alarming.

Looking down he froze. On the top of the very full trunk was the framed wedding picture of Talia and Robert Hale, untouched and undamaged. Stiles didn’t want to touch it, it felt like a violation, but it was necessary so he very carefully and gently lifted the picture up and set it to the side. Underneath he saw several other photo albums, a baby blanket, and some small boxes. He was sure there was more, but he would have to touch things and he didn’t want to do that. Making a decision he slid the picture into his backpack before reverently lowering the lid before he stepped out of the room. A flick of his magic and the wall slid back up and everything looked like it did before.

Stiles stood there for some time, staring at the wall before he finally went up and back outside. Sitting on the ground he knew he was going to have to bring Derek here, but he would need to prepare the Alpha for this. He knew Derek would cherish the items there, even though it would hurt to see them.

Sighing he flung himself back on the ground with a rather intense groan but hey no one was around to see and hear him, and thought how he would do it. “That was rather dramatic” a voice from behind him said with obvious amusement.

Spinning around in shock, Stiles recognized that voice! Stepping out of a fiery portal was Stephen and Wong and they both walked up to the shocked teen. Two hearty hugs later and he finally managed to ask them why they were here.

“We can’t visit a friend?” Wong said with a snort and Stephen just smirked.

“I’m sorry I didn’t come sooner, we were occupied with a small issue of another dark sorcerer who was trying to help Mordu in destroying sorcerers though I am rather sure he was more interested in removing competition than Mordu’s fanaticism. But while it took some time and since you were here, I felt we could finish up before visiting” Stephen explained. “However we are here now, so what happened?” he asks looking at the teen who groans.

“This will take a while” he mutters and then conjures up three chairs and gestures to the sorcerers who just smile and sit down. Stiles then tells them everything that happened, in great detail, including what he learned happened while he was ‘out of it’.

By the time he finishes both men look surprised, but Stephen looks thoughtful as well. “I must admit that when we first met I could tell that you were more than a bit unusual, but I had no idea of how much. We don’t deal with the magic of the Queens so our paths rarely cross. I have read of the others, Merlin and Morgaine, but I have only met the Grand Enchanter” he admitted to the teen.

“We have been busy” Wong mutters and Stephen nods.

“True. However I am more interested in what this means for you specifically. You are physically
bound to this place?” he questioned.

“Yeah” Stiles replies with a sigh. “I mean it’s better than being dead or some kind of elemental but I really enjoyed being able to portal around you know?” he tells the two sorcerers who just smile.

“There are worse burdens to great power” Wong says sagely.

“Yeah” Stiles replies not managing to hide the disappointment he is feeling. “Seems I can never leave my territory. Great deal, huh?” he shrugs but both men can tell it is bothering him more than he will admit.

“You have taken on a great burden Stiles” Stephen says gently. “It comes with power, but that power also comes with consequences. You didn’t choose this, but you cannot deny who and what you are. Your power might have slept or it might have come out later, you have to live the life you are given. As do we all” he says with a gesture of his hands.

“Would you trust anyone else with this power to keep your home and family safe?” Wong asks carefully and Stiles wants to argue, but he can’t. He knows that he would do anything for his dad and the pack, even being bound here while everyone else can leave.

“It does provide us with a unique opportunity” Stephen says with a contemplative look that causes both Wong and Stiles to look at him with confusion. “You said that you were told to build a home, a power center if you will, to help stabilize your territory.”

“Yes” Stiles says slowly looking at the sorcerer. “I mean I did some stuff at my dad’s place. Created a warder and other defenses, but I got the feeling that it wasn’t really up to Lizzie’s expectations. Derek also talked about rebuilding the Hale house” he told them and all of them glanced over at the wreckage of the house.

“The loss of the London Sanctum was severe. It showed a weakness in the earth’s defenses by relying on only three bastions. I was considering establishing some ‘back-ups’ if you will. What if we built a sanctum here in Beacon Hills, a fourth one along with the primary three?” he asks the other two men who are stunned speechless. “Stiles has to create a home, so why not make it a combination home for him and your pack, as well as a sanctum? It could combine everything you would want as the Arcanist. We could create the window portals that you liked in New York so that even though you could not travel there, you could still view anyplace in the world and send others there. You would also be connected to the other sanctums so we could visit easily” Stephen was getting excited. “The existence of an Arcanist is a major event. I would guess that the Grand Enchanter, who’s predecessor helped build the current Sanctums, would be willing to assist in the construction and maybe even give you some lessons” he says looking at Stiles with a smile.

“That would awesome!” Stiles jumps up and dances around excitedly. His disappointment at being bound to the land forgotten. He stops and looks at Wong “Would there be any way to overlap the library so I could still read the books there?” he asks glancing between the two men.

Wong shakes his head and Stiles deflates. “The library is protected and cannot be accessed except from within the local Sanctum.”

“Then build your own” Stephen snorts and both of the men look at him in surprise. “They are just books. No reason we can’t get copies made. You would probably have to give them something that they would value in exchange for their time making copies, but there’s no reason you can’t create your own Majestic Library right here. Maybe even get resources from the other domains and make it truly unique” he says clapping his hands together. “I imagine that with a little work on your part, users from all over the world would be begging to visit you here.”
Stiles smiles, suddenly feeling excited and they all get to work. Stephen and Wong stay for several hours and help draw up plans and write down ideas. Wong even jumps to the library and pulls several tomes about the original creation of the Sanctums and Stephen offers to reach out to the Grand Enchanter who he met in Germany after helping out with an issue caused by the whole Sokovia crisis. It is dark by the time Stiles gets home and crawls into bed before he remembers the room and that he hasn’t told Derek about it yet.

“Thank you again Alpha Flores” Derek told the woman as he and Stiles showed her to the door. Anna Flores had arrived the day after Stephen and Wong had left. She was a few years older than Peter and Stiles got the definite vibe that she and the former Alpha were more than friends at one point. She had spent the first day with just Derek while her two betas had spent the day exploring the town with Erica and Boyd on what turned out to be a double date. The second day Derek had asked Stiles to join them and discovered that Anna had been well informed and was truly fascinated by him as her pack’s Emissary was a human who had no real magic ability although the man’s son did have druidic magic and he was currently training with a mentor in Montana and would be replacing his father in another year or two when the elder retired.

Alpha Flores had been more than interested in the idea of a new pair of High Alphas and the idea of Stiles’ power and influence had been exciting to her. Her pack had more than a few relationships with other supernaturals including the Fae, a gorgon, two pods of merfolk, a Selkie raft, and she was still in contact with a rather powerful, but easy going, Hag from their previous home near Boston. Their pack had come to California about ten years before the Hale fire in part because of the reputation of Talia Hale, but also because many of their allies were interested in the Nemeton. Alpha Flores had offered to help introduce and represent the pack to many of the beings she knew as well as work with Peter to update their bestiary.

Stiles had been a bit concerned but Derek confirmed she wasn’t lying and when he looked at her aura, she appeared to be genuine so they spent the rest of the day working on the official treaty between the packs as they would technically be submitting to Derek. Werewolf politics! But the visit had gone well and Derek had suggested a pack summit once the new house was constructed to which Alpha Flores had enthusiastically agreed.

Stiles slumped the moment the door closed behind the foreign Alpha but he was really happy. Derek was really doing well, he never held any information back from Stiles and whenever he met the other Alphas without him, Derek was very detailed when he went over what happened. “So what was the whole ‘werewolf only’ day?” Stiles asks as Derek brings over two bottles of water and hands the younger man one.

“It seems that Peter and her had a relationship back when he was in college” Derek said with a snort. “Her Alpha at the time, her father, didn’t approve especially since she was due to be the next Alpha. So she broke it off and married a guy her father approved of. They divorced a few years later and it appears that she is interested in being ‘friends’ with Peter” Derek added with a smirk.

Stiles laughed thinking about the Alpha with Peter. The man would definitely have his hands full with her. Not only was she smart and sarcastic, she was an alpha with nearly five years of experience and a very solid pack. Deucalion and his cronies had avoided them knowing that the Flores pack would bring all of their allies to any fight. “She might actually manage to keep Peter in line” Stiles smiles and Derek nods.

“Mostly she talked about what having two High Alphas would do to other magical beings. Apparently the Flores Pack had an ancient tome from when they served a pair of High Alphas
several centuries ago which she dug up after Peter’s visit” Derek explains. “It seems that when it happens, many others will come to take advantage of the safety provided by the packs. She has heard from several of their allies and contacts that Beacon Hills is now being talked about…a lot” he adds with a look.

Stiles nods before looking serious. “We can talk about that later, right now I really need to tell you something” he says carefully and Derek looks at him giving his full attention to the younger man. “I went out to your house, I know you mentioned arranging to demo the place, but I thought that maybe it would be easier if I used my magic to take care of it.”

Pausing he looks nervously at Derek who is staring back with a completely closed off expression. “You used your magic to destroy it?” he asks with a hint of a tremor in his voice.

“I didn’t!” Stiles says quickly and sees some of the tension ebb away from the Alpha’s shoulders. “I wanted to double check that there were no lingering ghosts or spirits there and there weren’t. All traces of them were gone” he said gently and saw the slight tremor in Derek’s hand. They hadn’t talked about that night and his time with the spirits of his family but Stiles knew that its effect had been profound. “I also wanted to see if there was anything that might still be salvageable in the house” he said slowly then stood up and grabbed his bag. He came back and pulled out the several items that he had managed to gather and placed them reverently on the coffee table in front of them.

Derek stared down at the fragments of his family and felt his stomach knot. That this was all that managed to survive hurt. He and Laura had saved a few things, and he had found a few more when he returned, but the total would have fit in a small box. He felt a tear run down his cheek before he looked over at the young man who was watching him, uncharacteristically silent. “Thank you” he whispered and Stiles looked even more nervous. Derek inhaled and smelled anxiety, guilt, and traces of fear and wasn’t sure why Stiles was reacting that way.

“I also found a hidden room in the basement” Stiles said in a rush and Derek stared at him in confusion.

“What?” the Alpha asked, honestly unsure what the teen was talking about.

“There was a room in the basement, magically hidden, with a lot of stuff in it. There was also a trunk that looked like it was put in there around the time of the fire” Stiles said with a heavy sigh before reaching back in his bag and pulling out a framed picture and handing it to Derek. Turning it over Derek froze. His parent’s wedding photo! His vision blurred from the tears welling up but he knew this picture. It had sat on his mother’s desk in her office for his entire life. She had once told him that seeing it every day made the work she did worth it. He had been sure it had been lost. He wiped his hand across his face, not quick enough to stop the tears from hitting the glass, but he didn’t care. He stared at the picture with his parents looking so happy and young and he swallowed before looking up into the warm amber eyes that were staring at him.

Stiles was quiet as Derek had stared at the picture but when he looked up he was so vulnerable, so open, so still that he didn’t hesitate to reach out. He didn’t get far before Derek pulled him into a tight embrace and he could hear the barely whispered ‘Thank You’ repeating over and over. They stayed like that for a while before pulling apart a bit to stare at the picture between them. Derek started talking, sharing bits and pieces about his mother and father while Stiles listened and held his mate.

After a bit Stiles caught Derek’s attention and smiled a bit more openly. “There was more in the trunk if you want to go see” he offered tentatively.
Derek couldn’t imagine what else would be there but he nodded and they slowly got up and left the loft to head to the house. He had never heard of a secret room, but it didn’t really surprise him to learn there was one. He did idly wonder whether Peter ever knew about it.
Chapter 7

Noah Stilinski is starting to think seriously about retirement. He wanted to be a sheriff, to help people, in a community where you knew the people you served. But the last few weeks were so beyond his pay grade! He was still adjusting to the whole ‘werewolves are real, magic is real, my son is Merlin’ thing but it seemed that it was never going to end.

The other day he came home to find his son and Derek sitting at the dining room table with two men he didn’t recognize and papers covering the table. Being introduced to them didn’t make it any easier. What are you supposed to say to the most powerful sorcerer in the world? Stephen Strange was actually what he would have expected from that title, he made Deaton seem open. Luckily the other man, Wong, was a lot easier to deal with, especially after he offered to take Noah with him to get pizza for dinner. Of course, going to New York was unexpected, but when he finally got to visit the place Stiles had been getting their pizza from he managed to get a slice of their meat lovers and it was even better than he had imagined was possible.

They had returned with food whereon Noah learned that apparently the four of them were working on plans for Derek and Stiles’ new house and that was a bit of a shock as well. Sure he had known that they were mates, and he had even gotten used to the idea of them dating, but hearing them talking about building a house together was a surprise even though it shouldn’t have been. And that was before they started talking about magical defenses and doorways and things that left Noah thoroughly lost. When he had finally left to go to bed they were talking about sigils and runic embellishments and it was all beyond him. But now he could focus on things he knew.

Sighing he stopped the car when he spotted Parrish’s cruiser and got out. At least this was something he could deal with without any craziness. About an hour ago they had gotten a call about possible illegal hunting going on and Noah was happy to deal with just regular normal hunters, nothing supernatural here! Parrish had been dispatched and called in that he had found the men’s car but no sign of them. Noah came out to join him.

“Any sign of them?” the Sheriff asks as he looks at Parrish who is staring at the trees. “Son?” he prompts.

Jordan shakes off his distraction and looks at the sheriff. “Sorry. It’s just…” he fades out as he looks at the woods again and Noah gets a chill down his spine. “Sorry. I stayed close to their car, but so far I haven’t seen any sign of them.”

Noah stares at the man closely but whatever was disturbing him seems to have passed. “Well, we ran the plates so we know who they are.”

Suddenly the sound of gunfire echoes in the still night and both officers draw their guns. “That way!” Jordan says and barely starts moving in the direction when another shot rings out. Both men speed up when they suddenly hear yelling.

Seconds later they break into a small clearing and see two men in camouflage lying on the ground yelling. Splitting up Noah approaches the man, gun drawn, as he scans the area. “What happened?” he yells and the man looks up in shock.

Noah sees the gunshot wound in the man’s shoulder, and the rifle lying next to him. “Who shot you?” he demands.

“I don’t know” the man wails. “I was shooting a deer and right after I fired I got hit. Arthur fired
on it but he was shot too.”

“You were hunting deer? Out of season?” Noah asks clearly and the man groans in pain but nods.

“It was beautiful. Biggest rack I had ever seen, must have been 40 pointer at least” he moans and Noah looks over at Jordan and goes over to the deputy.

“I called for ambulances” Parrish says as he approaches. “He says they were hunting deer and both took a shot but both were hit by someone else out here” he pauses for a moment before looking at the man and the weapon beside him. “It appears to be same caliber as his rifle if I had to guess.”

Noah frowns but looks back at the other man. Could they have shot each other? It appears that’s what Parrish is implying. Noah sends the deputy back to meet the EMTs and gathers both rifles. They can test them and the bullets to see if they did actually shoot each other. But the guy seemed genuinely concerned about his partner.

A few moments later and Jordan was returning with the teams and both men were loaded and transported away leaving the two officers alone. “I want to see that clearing again” Noah muttered and headed back, the deputy following quietly.

Staring at the ground Noah didn’t get it. If they fell where they were shot, it would be really difficult to shoot each other. “Sir, what are you thinking?” Jordan asks.

Noah shakes his head, he doesn’t know but a sudden rustle of leaves and the soft snap of a twig causes him to look up and he freezes. “Do you see that?” he whispers and hears Jordan’s whispered agreement.

Standing on the opposite side of the field is a deer like nothing he has ever seen in his life. The animal was huge, at least seven feet tall not counting the incredible antlers. His coat was dark, almost black but there was a deep red visible in the moonlight that suggested blood. And in the middle of that large rack of antlers was what appeared to be a very large bee’s nest!

The animal was standing there looking at the two men with wine dark eyes that made Noah shiver as he felt himself being judged…evaluated…measured by this being. He couldn’t explain it, but he knew it was intelligent. “Sir” Parrish whispered with a pained tone. “What the hell is that?”

Before Noah could answer the deer turned and leapt into the trees, disappearing instantly and moving without even the trace of a sound. “I have no idea but I am pretty sure that this case just got really complicated.” So much for normal.

Scott grabs the door to the coffee shop and smiles as Allison walks in, Isaac right behind her, before following after them. The last few days have been busy, but luckily no major crisis or problems. Allison has not only been patrolling with the pack, but she has been training with them and even Chris has helped out. The truth is that with the exception of Stiles, everyone has been meeting up and training. It has only been two weeks, and Scott misses his bro but understands how busy he has become with training, meeting the nearby Alphas and now planning on rebuilding the pack house though he isn’t quite sure why that would take all that long since Derek still had the plans to the original house.

“You know, things have gotten strange when I am looking forward to school starting” Isaac says
with a sigh as they approach the board. A young girl, about their age is ordering in front of them.

Scott smirks and is about to respond when he catches the scent of ozone, like right before a storm, something heavy and energetic. He inhales sharply and realizes that the scent is coming from the girl in front of them. A quick glance at Isaac and he sees that the beta has also caught the smell. Isaac glances at them just as the girl turns around and slams into the teen, spilling her tea on him.

“Oh my god! I’m so sorry!” she says looking mortified. She starts babbling and grabs a handful of napkins to try and dry Isaac off. “I am such a klutz!” she moans.

Isaac is stunned, trying to figure out what to do when he hears snickering and looks up to see Allison smiling and laughing at the scene before her. “Thanks” he says dryly before turning to the girl “Its okay, I’m fine.”

“This is not how I wanted today to go” the girl groans sadly. “Can I buy you something to say sorry?” she asks and Isaac just shakes his head.

“I haven’t see you around here before” Scott says tentatively and the girl looks up with a resigned huff.

“We just moved here” she tells them.

“Oh good” Allison says happily and the girl looks at her in surprise. “I was the new girl in town when my family moved here last year. Glad someone else gets to be that. I’m Allison” she says holding out her hand.

“Kira” the girl says. “Do you go to Beacon Hills High?” she asks nervously.

“Yes” Scott says with a smile. “Will you be there as well?” he asks and she nods. Isaac interrupts as the barista is staring at them and everyone puts in their order. Allison and Scott insisting that Kira get a new tea and sit with them.

They sit down and chat and are surprised to find out that not only she is in their grade, but her father is the new history teacher. Scott and Isaac both share a glance at that but despite her strange scent, Kira seems totally like a totally sweet, really nice girl.

“You know, there are some really nice little shops if you are looking to check things out. Lydia, Erica and I are going shopping this afternoon if you want to join us?” Allison offers and the girl’s smile lights up.

“That would be great” she replies eagerly and looks at the boys “are you coming too?” she asks them.

Both of them laugh. “No. We definitely avoid shopping with Erica and Lydia. Too dangerous for mere mortals” Isaac replies with a snort.

That causes Allison to tease them about their lack of stamina and the teens exchange numbers as Allison lets the other girls know that Kira will be joining them. They finally break up and Allison promises to text her after lunch with the details. Kira then leaves as the three walk to their cars.

“So…what was that back there? You two were acting like you smelled something” Allison says seriously looking at them.

Scott and Isaac both frown. “Not sure…but I don’t think she is entirely human” Isaac finally says.
Scott nods. “She’s not a wolf, I know that, but she smells like…something” he explains unhelpfully.

Allison nods. “Good. Then Lydia, Erica, and I will see what we can discover this afternoon.”

Scott watches her with admiration as she gets in the car. The Huntress is smart and Scott still has trouble believing that she picked him.

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Stiles looked down at the phone and smiled when he saw Martinique’s name on the screen. He hadn’t talked to her in weeks and he felt a stab of guilt about that. He had a brief thought about why she would be calling but he couldn’t think of a reason unless she had something new in so he answered with a hint of excitement. “Hey M!” he answered happily.

“Stiles” Martinique sounded concerned and he frowned. Something was wrong. “I was hoping you might be able to help me with something?” she asks him and he doesn’t like how uncertain she sounds.

“Of course” he replies quickly and forcefully. “You know that you can count on me to help out. Did something happen?” he queries.

“I am not completely sure to be honest. I was contacted by the High Witch a few days ago. Apparently something magical happened in the area but none of us know anything. I didn’t feel anything, but she said that she had felt it on the other side of the planet” Martinique’s voice showed her nerves. “Stiles…I have never spoken to the High Witch…no one I know has! No one in my coven or any others that I have spoken to know anything, but everyone who I called within a few hours of here have all felt some pressure on them…like we are being watched. Even Kiran has sensed something but he didn’t feel whatever it was either. I am not sure what to do. I don’t suppose you have felt it?” she finally asks, desperation clear.

Stiles freezes for a few moments before closing his eyes about this. He really isn’t ready to deal with this but Martinique sounds really upset and Stiles owes her for all of her help. “Oh, uh sorry about that. Lizzie mentioned that some people might notice what happened here and might reach out. I didn’t expect anyone to bother you though.”

“I don’t understand Stiles. Who is Lizzie and what happened up there?”

“It’s a long story, I mean really long. Lizzie is actually the Morgaine, have you heard of her?” he asks and gets his answer at the gasp of surprise he hears over the phone. “Okay, that’s a yes. I met her some time ago when she was helping us with a problem we were having with a Darach.”

“A Darach! You are dealing with a Dark druid?” her voice has gotten very shrill.

“Well, not anymore. It was part of the whole thing with the Alpha Pack and Deucalion” he starts but stops when he hears her squeak over the line. “I didn’t mention that before did I?” he says lamely.

“Stiles….” She trails off feeling completely out of her element. She had heard of Deucalion and she wanted absolutely nothing to do with that man.

“Okay, real quick…the issue has been dealt with, but there are some ramifications happening that is affecting the ley lines, nematon, etc. I am surprised you haven’t felt anything yet” Stiles adds at the end sounding surprised.
“Wait…do you mean that itchy feeling of being watched that has been affecting everyone nearby? Is that part of all of this?” she demands.

“Er…well yes” Stiles says after a moment trying to figure out how much he wants to say, especially over the phone. “Look, I want to explain, but maybe it would be better if you came here to Beacon Hills and we can talk in person. I would come there but I kinda can’t travel too far at the moment” he offers tentatively.

Martinique doesn’t like that idea. She is a minor witch, all of this is far beyond her skill or experience. “Stiles…if things are that bad there…” she starts but he quickly cuts her off.

“Oh no! No, sorry. Look both of those problems have been dealt with, honestly. There is no danger, but I can’t say too much on the phone. You will totally okay to come and visit, I promise” he assures her.

She pauses but he sounds sincere. She doesn’t think that he would put her in harm’s way and if the Morgaine had been there, she truly doubts that any Darach or wolfpack, alphas or not, would still be bothering them. It probably was safe for a short visit. “Can I bring some others?” she asks cautiously knowing that she would feel better with some backup, not to mention that others are feeling the effects.

“Sure. Like I said, it’s safe now so there is no problem. You can invite Kiran too…I would love to see him as well” Stiles offers. Stiles agrees to send her directions and she promises to call back with her plans once she talks to the others before they hang up.

Staring at the phone for a few minutes after hanging up with the teen Martinique finally starts making calls. There are three other covens that she knows in the area who she wants to invite along with two of her own members before calling Kiran. With the High Witch’s instruction to investigate, she is certain that the others will quickly agree and Stiles can finally tell her everything. She doesn’t know what, but she is certain that the youth definitely knows a whole lot more than he said over the phone.
yards. The last two years had seen a dozen calls to the station from the two of them complaining about the other. Apparently they had never gotten along but Mr. Clark had managed to keep the peace until he died and then everything went nuts. The Sheriff had declared that he wasn’t to be called unless one of them was dead and told his deputies to handle them.

Everyone managed to take their calls in rotation unless someone screwed up. The Sheriff’s idea for staff discipline was creating a new punishment, Clark/Toombs duty, which meant that if you were in the dog house, you took all of their calls and no one had been punished more than once. “What now?” she said while she thought about whose turn it was to deal with the two octogenarians.

“Mrs. Clark called to say that Mr. Toombs has been walking in his house without the curtains fully closed” he says trying not to smile. He takes pity on Deputy Graeme “after his shower” he adds and sees her groan.

Tara immediately decides to send Sanders to talk to the man and is about to do so when McCall and Jones walk in the station and she suddenly feels sick. Jones had been gone for several days tracking leads so her return was ominous and McCall looks way too happy.

“We need to speak with the Sheriff?” McCall says brusquely and Tara sees the flinch on Jones’ face that the agent can’t fully hide. It appears that she has developed the same distaste to the man that the rest of them had, but since he wasn’t directly under her command, she was limited in what she could do about him.

Before she could respond the Sheriff comes out of his office and frowns at the two agents. “What is it McCall?” he asks fully professional but still managing to display his desire for the man to be gone.

“The Bureau wanted to inform you that a prisoner was going to be brought to Beacon Hills Hospital for needed surgery. Your office will be responsible for security” he tells the man with a smirk.

Noah stares at him and can tell he isn’t going to like this. There is no prison nearby that would need to use Beacon Hills. The only facility that might would be…crap! “Who” he demands looking pissed off and Agent Jones looks surprised at the sudden shift in the sheriff’s demeanor.

“A patient at Eichen” McCall says airily like it doesn’t really matter.

“Who” Noah growls out and McCall just smiles.

“William Barrows” he finally says and both Stilinski and Graeme blanch.

“Are you insane? What the hell are you thinking?” Noah demands, obviously furious.

“Sheriff, I know this is unusual, but the man is a prisoner in need of medical care” Jones says trying to calm things down.

Noah turns to her and the Agent actually steps back in shock at the look of fury on his face. “I don’t want that bastard anywhere near this town. It’s bad enough he is in Eichen but as long as he is locked up there I haven’t complained, but you want to bring him here? Have you lost your damned mind?” he barks at McCall who seems to be happy with the sheriff’s reaction.

“I disappointed in you sheriff” McCall says oily. “I would have thought that you remembered your responsibility to all the people in town, even the criminals. Seems like you are not quite so honorable as you claim.”
Noah glares but it's Tara who actually snaps. “You mean the son of a bitch who attacked the high school, several students, before trying to blow it up and kill all the kids inside?” she yells and Jones’ eyes widen. That was not in McCall’s briefing.

“Apparently he forgot that Barrows wanted to wipe out all the teenagers that he claimed were demonic, was going to ‘purify’ the school...the school his own son attends by the way, not to mention sending him to the hospital where his ex-wife works” Noah adds and finally there is a flinch from McCall while Jones closes her eyes in disbelief. The man arranged to have an attempted mass murderer sent to his ex’s work place! Jones understands the locals’ fury and realizes that McCall may have just managed to finally turn the entire force against them with this crap.

McCall just reminds the sheriff of his responsibilities and informs him that the matter is settled before turning to leave. Noah and Tara watch the man leave before turning to Jones, glaring at the woman making her sigh.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t have all the facts and when he brought it up, I didn’t see any major issues. Unfortunately I have already been ordered down to San Diego to look for our killers, we have gotten word that she might be trying to cross the border” she says apologetically. “McCall pulled rank as my team are not stationed here. I will share this with my boss” she promises before leaving.

Both officers watch the senior agent leave, hopefully for the final time before Tara turns back to the sheriff. “So, what do we do?” she says after a moment.

“You and Parrish start working on a plan. I want no less than three officers on him from the moment Barrows leaves Eichen till his return. Every possible thing the two of you can think of...do it.” He frowned before looking at the deputy. “I will handle the hardest part” he adds.

Tara looks confused before Noah replies. “I get to tell Mel and the hospital staff” he informs her and she steps back. She did not envy the sheriff for that one little bit.

Stiles looks up from the tome he was reading and opens another browser. He had managed to find some time to actually do the research he loved and he was currently trying to identify the deer that his dad and Parrish had seen in the woods.

“Eat” Derek’s voice caused him to flail as the wolf put a sandwich down beside him. Derek rolled his eyes at the teen’s reaction. “You have been working for hours, you need a break” he prods the teen.

“I think I figured out what dad and Parrish saw in the woods” Stiles says happily as Derek raises an eyebrow before sitting down.

“What was it?” Derek asks.

“If I’m right, it was a Yumilekax” he says with a smile and Derek’s eyes widen.

“Right. What is that supposed to tell me” Derek says with a smirk.

“Ha ha” Stiles rolls his eyes. Two can play that game! “The Yumilekax, according to Mayan legend, are spirit guardians of the forest. They are also called the Renowned Deer. The herd stallion is called Nohock Ceh, and apparently they showed up whenever hunters were abusing or overhunting the local deer population. One of its tricks was turning weapons back on the owners so
that explains why the hunters were shot with their own rifles.”

“What is a Mayan deer doing in Beacon Hills” Derek asks after a few moments.

Stiles stops and looks confused by the question. Finally he shrugs “Makes as much sense as anything else that has happened here lately” he finally says.

“Do we need to worry about it?” Derek asks cautiously.

Stiles leans back for a moment before looking serious. “I don’t think so. As a spirit of the forest, the Yumilekax is pretty much about balance. It doesn’t have a problem with hunters, just ones that abuse the natural balance. Those guys were hunting out of season so they were breaking the rules I guess.”

“I have never even heard of these beasts Stiles. Why now?” he asks but then stops as the realization hits him. “You. Your territory is magically enhanced” he says at the teen’s look of surprise.

“So you think that it’s here for me?” Stiles asks looking concerned.

Derek sighs. “I think it’s like you said. It is a forest spirit and the forests here in Beacon Hills are suddenly more magical than ever, maybe even more than anywhere else. Maybe they sensed it and have come here to protect the woods.”

“Mab did say that many beings thought lost and forgotten might find their way here” Stiles pondered.

“Can you sense it?” Derek asks.

“Not so far. I mean I only tried once right after dad told me about it, but I couldn’t detect anything out of the ordinary” Stiles replies.

“Maybe it’s time that you figured out exactly who and what is in our territory” Derek suggests and Stiles’ eyes widen before nodding. Time to work!
Chapter Notes

Thought posting an extra chapter today would be a great way of saying Thank You to everyone who has commented, kudos, bookmarked, and subscribed to this story. Thank all of you for the support, encouragement, and positive energy you send my way to help me stay motivated and writing.

Stiles had lost his argument with Derek about his plan so he was currently sitting in the loft while Lydia and Jackson sat watching him. “I don’t see why Derek felt you had to be here, I mean I seriously don’t need anyone here” he grumbled not quite under his breath so both the Banshee and beta heard him.

“Probably because he knows that if left to yourself, you will probably go investigate on your own and get in trouble” Lydia said with an exasperated sigh.

“More trouble” Jackson snarks with his trademark sneer. Stiles glares at the beta who only snorts a laugh.

“Powerful Magic User remember?” Stiles complained looking at them both.

“Right, and remember how the 'Powerful Magic User' (and Stiles could hear him using quotes for that) walked into a door this morning and nearly knocked himself out” Jackson said with a happy smile that made the teen fume when he saw Lydia barely containing her own laugh.

“That was not my fault!” Stiles flailed throwing his arms out wide and almost knocking over the candle on the table. Luckily it wasn’t lit.

“Stiles just do your thing. If…when you find something, we will investigate intelligently. Or perhaps you would prefer Allison or Erica to be here?” she asked with a curious expression.

Stiles muttered something too low for even Jackson to hear but Lydia knew she had won the point. Derek had called her last night to ask them to babysit Stiles and while Jackson complained Lydia had wholeheartedly approved.

Jackson, despite his general attitude, wouldn’t overreact to anything they came upon but would wait till either she or Stiles gave him the word to attack. And once he got the word, he wouldn’t hesitate. And that left out Scott and Isaac who were both too kind and optimistic to realize that if either of them had called for a fight, there was a damn good reason.

Boyd wouldn’t be a bad choice either, but he was a bit too restrained in unexpected situations. Which was the direct opposite problem with Erica who was too unrestrained in almost every situation. The she-wolf was fierce in a fight, but not so valuable when diplomacy is the plan. Which was also why Allison was excluded. The simple fact was there were way too many supernatural beings who knew the name Argent and wouldn’t come anywhere near her. Until she managed to atone for Gerard and Kate’s actions, there are many who would not accept her, maybe not even then.
No, Derek had asked and agreed with her analysis and she knew that if Stiles would stop sulking, he would agree. But he was still carrying the chip on his shoulder about being the ‘token human’ despite the changes. “Why don’t you try identifying potential individuals that you should officially meet?” Lydia said pointedly.

Stiles gave a final grunt but he yielded to the inevitable. Sure he could portal both of them to New York or something, but even he wasn’t stupid enough to risk really pissing off Lydia. You would think with his powers he wouldn’t worry anymore but the indomitable Ms. Martin’s dangerousness didn’t come from her powers. Besides, a very quiet voice prompted, she was right. Stiles wasn’t stupid or as clueless as they sometimes thought, he had probably figured out the issues with the others as fast as Lydia had but it didn’t mean he had to like it.

Enough. Time to focus. Rolling his shoulders, the teen slipped easily into the web of energy of his territory. Each time he did it, it got easier, so by now he was able to connect without really trying. But this time, instead of just ‘going with the flow’, Stiles was going to look specifically for something. Stiles opened his senses and got blasted so hard he moaned.

“Stiles?” Lydia’s voice was worried. “What happened?” she demanded.

“I forgot about you two” he replied sheepishly. “Kinda got blinded by you two standing so close.”

“Dumbass” Jackson snorted and Stiles was really tempted to portal his ass to that large lake in the Preserve but he congratulated himself on his restraint.

“You need to filter us out” Lydia added unnecessarily. Stiles knew that! But it wasn’t so easy, especially with the pack bonds between them. Wait…that gave him an idea. Reaching out with the pack bonds, Stiles visualized a thread connecting him to the banshee and former kanima and allowed himself to get a true feel for each of them. He wouldn’t admit it out loud, but it was almost like tasting their essence, and god help him if he ever admitted that!

Once he had the two of them committed to memory Stiles found it easy to screen them out. So before going any further, he concentrated on the rest of the pack, quickly locating each of them and assigning them a ‘thread’ and place in his thoughts. The good news with all of this was that Stiles was pretty sure that he would be able to locate any of the pack with very little effort in the future.

But now that they were eliminated from his ‘radar’, Stiles opened up his senses to the ley lines and was surprised by the number of presences he detected, there were dozens! The closest was faint, barely anything at all but he reached out mentally and felt a surprised reaction. He was wrong. It wasn’t something barely supernatural, it was just really small. After a moment he realized it must be a pixie before the creature took off in a burst of speed. Stiles followed along for several moments before he spotted the nest in the Preserve. There must be dozens or even hundreds of the small creatures, most no larger than a hummingbird and fairly harmless. Stiles noted the location and left them alone.

Coming back he detected two very strong presences, one significantly greater than the other. Shifting his awareness he first noticed the smell of ozone and the taste of electricity. It was buried deep, but it was moving closer to the surface. Stiles was reminded eerily of Lydia and how she came to terms with her heritage. Maybe someone doing the same? The other presence, which seemed a bit familiar to Stiles, was significantly more. He had the impression of age and strength and a sharp tang of a scent. Close to wolf but definitely not one. So probably not a shifter or something he has encountered before. He gets the sense of concern, anxiety, and…guilt? Both presences are definitely female and Stiles notes the location of them before moving on.

His mind seeks out and suddenly he feels a strong pull towards the west edge of town. Not even
Stiles has spent much time there considering it is even worse shape than the industrial district. Lots of abandoned homes and buildings falling apart. Stiles feels three miserable presences below ground level, maybe in a basement? They feel sick to his senses and Stiles gets a quick wave of desperation that snaps him out of his trance.

“What?” Lydia says quickly but calmly.

“Problem. Somethings wrong” he tells them scrambling to his feet.

“Fine, but we aren’t taking the jeep” Jackson complains looking at the teen.

Stiles smiles. “No problem. That way if something happens we will lose your car not mine.”

Lydia winks at Stiles as they watch Jackson suddenly objecting to the plan and by the time they reach the parking lot they have agreed to take the jeep but Jackson insisted on driving much to Stiles’ dismay. “You need to guide us. Besides, this leaves you free to do your thing if we need it” Lydia declares easily and Stiles grudgingly agrees.

It takes them about fifteen minutes to close in on the area and both Jackson and Lydia are not happy to be here. Stiles directs Jackson to a house in an abandoned neighborhood and they stop at a house that is barely standing. Seriously, even the Hale house looks good by comparison. You know it’s bad when even criminals won’t stay here.

“What a dump” Jackson says looking like he would rather be anywhere else. “What could be living here?”

“Let’s find out” Stiles says with a smirk and heads toward the hole where a door once stood. Walking carefully, Lydia refuses to set foot in the place saying that he and Jackson should be fine without her. Stiles doesn’t blame her as he isn’t one hundred percent sure that the floor won’t collapse so he is walking carefully, but now that he is here, he can sense the presences much clearer and can tell they are diminished and hurting. “Basement” he says quietly and carefully moves down the rotted stairs ignoring Jackson’s complaints.

By the time they reach the concrete floor, it has gotten dark so Stiles conjures a ball of warm golden light that he sends around the room, showing the wretched condition of the basement. “Stilinski, there can’t be anything here. This place is empty” he says sniffing carefully but not sensing anything.

Stiles however does. He can tell that the beings he sensed are here, but they are using the last reserves of their strength to hide. Taking a deep breath, Stiles centers himself and connects to the ley lines. Normally he does this without any outward sign, but this time he wants to make an impression.

“Holy Shit!” Jackson yelps staring at the no longer ordinary looking teen. Stiles now is glowing with a strong, warm light that shoots out and drives every shadow in the place away. Opening his eyes, the golden glow contained with them sends an atavistic chill down the beta’s back as he feels the raw power pouring off of the teen.

Stiles moves his hands and mystical symbols, runes, and figures appear on the floor around him as if written in light before moving around the basement, sliding up the walls and ceiling, until the entire place is covered with them. “Show yourselves” Stiles voice makes Jackson almost whimper at the command vibrating in his voice and he probably would have, though he would have vehemently denied it, if it wasn’t for the fact that the voice was not scary or intimidating, but rather the voice of rightful authority and sureness.
Jackson stiffened as he sniffed and finally smelled something that wasn’t here before and he looked in the corner where three small shapes were huddled together. It took a moment before he could really see them and his eyes widened when he did. They looked like people but they could not have been more than two feet tall but it was hard to say for certain with how hunched over they were. They were wearing tattered rags and the sudden scent of sickness almost cost the beta his lunch.

Stiles however stepped forward, slowly as to not startle them, before his appearance faded to the normal Stiles. Crouching down to their level he stared for a moment before looking at the one in the middle who appeared male but Jackson wasn’t sure. “You are brownies. How are you so sick?” Stiles gently asks them.

The middle one replied rapidly in a language that Jackson has never heard but Stiles appears to understand the as he nods along. “Please wait just a moment” he says and stands up and his eyes light up again. Stiles holds out his hands and beams of light shoot out and hit the walls and Jackson hears a sound like breaking glass and he spins around but can’t see anything.

“You did it!” the brownie cries out in English and Jackson looks at the little guy. “You freed us!”

“What?” Jackson asks looking at Stiles.

“They were bound to this place by a warlock decades ago. But then he died, but his spell kept them prisoners here and they grew weaker and weaker. They couldn’t escape. I broke his spell” Stiles explained.

“So they can leave?” Jackson asks.

Stiles frowned and spoke in that sing song language with the brownies, two of them talking while the third seemed utterly exhausted and barely standing. After several minutes the teen stood up with an angry expression. “They are sick. The ground here is poisonous to them and they can barely move. If they leave, they will probably be killed by something in their weakened condition.”

“So what do we do? Take them to the loft?” Jackson asks uncertainly.

Stiles considers that for a moment but the loft area would be just as bad for the brownies. They need healthy land, a place to wait and heal until they are restored. “No. I have a better idea. Meet me at the Hale House” he says and Jackson looks confused until Stiles gestures and a ring of fire forms and Jackson can see the wrecked mansion on the other side. The teen speaks to the brownies and then steps through with the small figures quickly following after him.

“STILINSKI!” Jackson roars and leaps forward but the portal closes and he is left grasping empty air.

“Jackson!” he hears Lydia yelling. “What is going on down there?”

Derek snarled as he hung up the phone. Lydia had nearly deafened him yelling about Stiles doing that magic door thing with three creatures they found in an old house. She and Jackson were heading for the Hale House to try and catch up to the teen and Derek was fairly certain that Stiles would regret not talking to her first.

“What’s wrong?” Boyd asks when Derek put his phone away.
“Stiles” is all Derek says but both Boyd and Peter look at the Alpha knowingly. Peter had returned from his travels barely an hour ago and had enthusiastically agreed to join them after being stuck in a car for hours. “It seems he teleported unknown beings with him to the house” he says as he changes direction away from their patrol and heads at top speed for the family home, his betas right on his heels.

It’s a short run from to the house and Derek spends it mostly trying to figure out how to get his mate to stop doing this kind of shit. He hears Jackson’s Porsche as they get close and then he hears Scott’s bike and Allison’s Toyota. Apparently Lydia called in the full pack. He bites off a smile at the thought that Lydia will probably make Stiles regret his rashness more than he ever could.

When the wolves break into the clearing the rest of the pack is only just getting out of their cars and Derek angles to stop right before Lydia. He scents a trace of Stiles, but he doesn’t see the teen. “What happened?” he demands.

“Jackson said they found some small men and Stiles opened a portal and took them here and left us behind” her voice was trembling with barely concealed anger. Derek growled but then he heard Stiles’ heartbeat and then his steps and looked up to see the teen walk out of the house.

He looks shocked to see everyone standing there as if ready for battle. “What the hell?” Stiles mutters. “Why is everyone here?”

“You run off with some random creature without a word and you are surprised?” Erica snarls and Stiles looks at her in confusion before turning to Jackson.

“Didn’t you tell Lydia what we found?” he asks the beta.

“How the hell would I know?” Jackson snaps back. “You just did that light thing and then took off with them chasing after you!”

Stiles pinches his nose and takes a deep breath before opening his eyes and looking at Lydia first. “I told Jackson. They were brownies” he says carefully and Lydia pauses with a surprised look.

“The girls that sell cookies?” Scott asks with a confused look.

Honestly, the whole evening was worth it to Stiles, even all the complaints afterwards, just for the look on the banshee’s face at Scott’s question. Stiles swore he could actually see the vein in her head throbbing as she magnificently and gracefully managed not to humiliate the poor teen with her reply. “Brownies Scott, not girl scouts” Lydia enunciates very slowly. “They are benign house spirits” she adds looking at Jackson with a trace of exasperation.

“I didn’t know that” he protests looking around at the pack. “I thought he just meant they were brown.”

“I should have stayed dead” Peter mutters but Derek still hears him and sends a minor glare his way as Stiles walks over to join them.

“Can you please tell us what happened?” Derek says trying to be calm and patient.

Stiles sighs unhappily. “Apparently a couple of decades ago there was a warlock living in that house. He was mostly harmless, but he had some definitely not okay ideas about human superiority. Dolores Umbridge levels of mean you know? Usilis, he’s kind of their chief, told me that this guy lured them to his house and once they were there the guy put a binding spell on the house that trapped them inside it. They couldn’t escape and he drove off the rest of their clan who fled leaving behind the three he had captured. The warlock apparently used them as slaves until he
died but his bindings were still there so they were trapped. Added to that, as he got older, the guy’s morals got a whole lot darker so that by the time he died the house and everything was basically poisoned by his malice. The poor Brownies were basically abandoned in a prison and slowly getting sicker and sicker” he explains to the pack.

“How long ago did the guy die?” Isaac asks with a slight tremor and Derek can tell that the beta is definitely feeling akin to the treatment the Brownies received.

“About 20 years ago” Stiles said and everyone looks nauseous at the thought.

“So where are they?” Erica asks softly.

“They are in the basement…resting. I cast some healing magic on them but really just being here, in a place that is clean and pure, will do wonders. I offered to send them on their way whenever they wanted but I think they are really nervous that I am like him. I think that if they weren’t so sick and desperate to get away from that house, they would never have trusted me enough to come” he adds with a heavy sigh just as Derek’s arm pulls him to the Alpha’s side and Stiles just leans in to the comfort.

“They can stay as long as they need” Derek promises the teen.

“Stiles…do they know who, or what, you are?” Lydia asks with a calculating look.

“I’m not sure…probably not” he answers with a frown. “Why?”

“Brownies are spirits of the home and hearth. They are happiest taking care of good people and places. I imagine that if they knew you were an Arcanist and friend of the Fae Queens, they may want to stay” she says cautiously.

“Do we want them to stay?” Boyd asks and Peter snorts loud enough that the others all look at him.

“Brownies take care of the homes of the families they choose. We never had any, but where they feel safe and welcome, they protect the home from small dangers like fire while also keeping the place clean and neat. A bowl of milk each night, some honey on occasion, and they are very happy. I agree with Ms. Martin. If they wish to stay, they would be more than helpful” Peter tells them looking at his nephew with a surprisingly open expression.

Derek nods slowly. “Let’s give them some space to heal first. Stiles can introduce me and we can offer them a safe place to live or passage to their clan.”

Stiles smiles happily at that thought. He hated how scared the poor things were of him but when they stepped into the Hale house through the portal, he could see an almost instant improvement in their health. He was glad he was able to help them.

Everyone sat down on the couches in the loft after they returned from the house. Stiles had introduced Derek to the Brownies but they decided the rest of the pack would wait to meet them for a bit to let them recover first. Derek recounted that they had been very nice to him and had recognized him as both an Alpha and a Hale.

“So, apparently we need to update the ‘How to take care of Stiles’ plan” Derek said with a put upon look that caused said teen to let out a wail of complaint “but we will handle that later. Peter arrived back just before everything blew up so I thought it might be smart if everyone heard from
him how things went.” Derek nodded at his uncle to take over.

“Well, I understand you have already met Alphas Satomi, Flores, and Marshall?” he asks the group who all nod. “Well those three were the easy ones. All of them had alliances with the Hales at one time or another so getting them to at least listen was fairly easy. All of them had also experienced what they described like being in another wolf’s territory since our boy’s rather dramatic night.”

“So they knew something had happened?” Lydia asks the eldest wolf.

Peter paused as he considered her question. “Not really. They didn’t have anything that they could point at, rather just a growing sense of unease that took them some time to even recognize. Satomi felt it first, which considering she is closest is hardly a surprise. The other two didn’t even feel it for a few days and even then it was more like an ‘itch’ they said. Once I gave them a bit of information, they were cautious, but willing to go forward. The others…they are more complicated.”

“Complicated how?” Scott asks.

“Alpha Flores’ territory is outside Silicon Valley, they actually own a great deal of land in San Francisco and San Jose. Also, they are very invested in the tech industries and are apparently doing very well, made a lot of money. Alpha Marshall’s territory is up in Redding and they are more traditional in their businesses. Both packs are relatively close to us and well within our Arcanist’s reach. Alpha Delgado hadn’t felt anything yet” he adds.

“Where is he?” Erica asks.

“Los Angeles. Apparently a lot of his pack are in the film industry. Some of the more well-known make-up artists are members of the Delgado Pack” Peter snorts in amusement. “But Alpha Roberts in Sacramento was feeling the effects though it hadn’t been enough to cause her to worry yet.”

“Alpha Perkins in Fresno and Alpha Reynolds in Monterey were also both beginning to feel it as well. Alpha Bouvier over in Reno had too but Alpha Ferris in Medford had not. I didn’t go see the Williams Pack in Eugene, as even Talia had some issues with him, so I decided to return and check in” Peter finished.

Everyone was quiet for a bit before Lydia cleared her throat. “I wasn’t aware there were so many packs in the area…” she trailed off looking uncertain but quickly refocused. “Okay, so we definitely have most of the northern part of the state as well as part of Nevada, but Reno is on the border so it may only go a little bit there. And so far the effect doesn’t reach Los Angeles” she summarizes before she is interrupted.

“Yet” Peter says quickly and she looks at him in surprise. “I would not count it out yet. I can’t exactly explain it but it felt like I was on my pack’s territory everywhere I went. I think our Mr. Stilinski’s reach is still expanding but it appears to take some time after that expansion for those in that area to feel it” Peter explains.

Lydia looks thoughtful. “If we go by what Lizzie told us that Merlin’s area was all of England and Scotland, then that would be about the distance from LA to the Oregon border. However I think that we also need to consider that it may be connected to the land itself. That was an island and Stiles’ territory may be less constrained.” She looks at Stiles with a thoughtful expression. “Stiles, can you visualize your territory as if you were looking at a map?” she asks.

Stiles looks surprised by the question. “I don’t know, I haven’t tried. So far it has all been about lights and patterns, nothing that connects with the real world” he admits. He looks like he is
thinking about something serious before looking back up “I don’t think I will be able to until things are settled. I have the feeling that when I hit my real boundaries, there will be markers of some kind” he finishes.

“Why do you think that?” Peter asks curiously.

“Something Mab said” Stiles answers absently and the entire pack except for Derek startles.

“When did you speak with Mab?!” Lydia demands looking shocked.

Stiles looks caught out and glances over at the Alpha for help but Derek just smirks so Stiles winces and proceeds to tell everyone about the Winter Queen’s last visit. Lydia and Peter both lay into him about hiding things and Derek is enjoying the show when Stiles points out that the Alpha knew about it and Derek is suddenly dragged in to the banshee and beta’s complaints. The Alpha chooses to ignore the self-satisfied smirk on the teen’s face when that happens.

“Why again are we on Stiles duty?” Erica asks the Huntress as they sit opposite the teen under discussion. Stiles had decided to try again with looking for others and Derek had traded Lydia and Jackson out.

“Apparently Derek thinks that we will be able to keep him ‘safer’ than the others” Allison says with a chuckle remembering exactly how Derek phrased it.

Eric stares at the brunette for a few seconds before glancing over at the teen. “He thinks Stiles won’t risk pissing us off” she suggests.

Allison laughs. “That and he figures that anyone we find will be a bit more…respectful…with both of us there to back him up.”

Erica smiles wickedly. “More scared you mean” she giggles.

Allison just nods as she looks at the boy sitting on the floor. Ever since she had gone with him to meet Lizzie and Arthur, Allison knew that he was going to be something that was not so easily categorized. Her father had showed her the report before he sent it to Clarissant, he also let both Derek and Stiles look it over and neither of them had objected to what he wanted to send. She herself had made a few edits, but it was suitably accurate without being too overt. The general tone had walked a fine line between ‘everything’s under control’ and ‘for god’s sake don’t make him angry’. Chris had confessed that he was concerned that some Hunters would take Stiles’ existence as a challenge if not a personal affront.

“Is he allowed to go look for anyone he finds?” Erica asks and they both hear Stiles’ snort.

“He is right here and can decide things for himself” Stiles says without opening his eyes. His voice had a mix of irritation and affection. Allison thought that may have had something to do with how his father had happily supported Derek’s lecture after they found the Brownies. Apparently the Sheriff’s argument about ‘what’s good for the goose’ caught the teen off guard. Having his father compare Stiles’ efforts to control his diet to Derek’s safety rules was both a betrayal and a source of guilt. Allison didn’t imagine that Stiles was going to change that much but she thought he would at least think about the Alpha’s warnings and concerns.

“Okay I found the two females from before, a pair of something in town near the park, another two over in the industrial district, and one near Danny’s house” Stiles says opening his eyes.

“I thought there might be more” Allison mumbled but Stiles heard her.
“There are” he says with a smile “but I figured we should just take them in small groups” he explained and the three headed out to his Jeep.

“Well that was fun” Erica says sarcastically as they re-enter the loft. She diverts to the kitchen to grab them some drinks.

“It was definitely interesting” Allison says carefully. “I was surprised to find out that Mrs. Jacobs was a real witch.”

Stiles snorted. “I wasn’t. Melissa had always said that she was a one of a kind.” Knowing that the former nurse had been a witch was surprising but Melissa had always said that the older woman’s patients always did seem to do better around her. She was apparently pretty well known both for her herbal teas and natural flower arrangements that turned out to be more magical than anyone had realized.

“Well we should have known that Celeste’s Bakery was a front” Erica says with a snort “everyone said her stuff was magical.” Stiles had conspired with Celeste to restrict his dad’s access to the food there not long after the sisters had opened the place four years ago but he had no idea they were anything out of the ordinary. But when the three of them entered the shop, Celeste and her sister Arwen had immediately recognized the touch of the Queens on Stiles and had been shocked. When Stiles admitted he was an Arcanist Arwen actually fainted.

“I really felt bad about Arwen” Stiles muttered but both of the girls cut him off with laughs about how Celeste had teased her sister afterwards.

“They were very polite though” Allison says with a smile as she pulls out one of the mini cakes that the sisters had insisted they take when they left.

“Well since Stiles allowed them to stay…” Erica smiled taking a bite of her cake and moaned in delight.

“I wasn’t going to kick them out” Stiles says looking concern “but those dwarves? I’m not sure about them.” Two dwarven brothers had taken over a building in the industrial area in an abandoned factory and were turning it into a workshop. It seems that they are the advance scouts for a group of dwarves that were coming to look at mining some of the metals around the Nemeton because apparently the metals and ores soaked up the magic of the area and were critical to the creation of dwarven crafts.

“Well they were caught off guard by your appearance and when they realized that they would need your permission for the rest of the clan to come, let alone to do any mining, you can understand their reaction” Allison said diplomatically. The brothers hadn’t exactly been rude, but they were obvious unhappy about the change in circumstances. Stiles ultimately declared that they would have to officially speak with Derek about staying.

“Unfortunately we didn’t find the other two. I swear they were close to Allison’s when we left but by the time we finished with ‘Gimli’ and ‘Thorin’, they were gone. I couldn’t sense them anywhere” Stiles complained.

“Well it is right before school starts” Erica reminds him and both he and Allison looked at the blonde with confused expressions. “If it’s a parent and their kid, maybe they are back to school shopping” she says very slowly.

Stiles blushes in embarrassment at the she-wolf’s tone. He hadn’t even thought about that.
Speaking of, school was starting next week so the pack was going to have to get ready too!

Standing up and shaking off the water he looked around the beach with a sigh of resignation. The summer had been glorious but he was going to have to go back to Beacon Hills and all the craziness in a few days and he knew that he would miss his friends and family here in Hawaii. Setting down his surfboard, Danny dropped to the warm sands to stare out at the waves as he tried to soak it all up. The islands felt like another world from the Hills but he did miss some things. Jackson had been texting him, apparently he had buried his grudge with McCall and Stilinski, and that had been such a surprise that he had privately asked Lydia to confirm it.

That the redhead had done so was almost as big a shock as the news itself. Seems that she was bonding with not only Allison, but also Erica Reyes and Danny would have sworn those two would kill each other before ever becoming friends, especially after the blonde’s rather startling transformation this year. “Finished already?” a warm voice said from behind him and Danny smiled as he looked up into a pair of cool blue eyes.

Danny enjoyed the view of the other man’s chiseled body as he sat down beside him, chest muscles glistening in the sunlight. “Taking a break” Danny replies. “You know I could teach you how to surf. If you wanted to go out with me.”

The other man snorted. “I had enough time on the water thanks” he answers and Danny smirks thinking back to the first time he saw the blonde.

Danny had been visiting his cousin who was working a fishing boat when he spotted two familiar faces coming off a Japanese fishing boat. He hadn’t spoken to either of the twins when they arrived at Beacon Hills though he definitely appreciated the view. They had been fairly anti-social before suddenly disappearing before the year was even out. Ethan had given a vague ‘family emergency’ excuse for their departure and had avoided explaining how they had ended up on a fishing boat in the pacific but Danny had to admit he hadn’t really cared. Aiden had been grumpy and standoffish but Ethan had quickly succumbed to the Hawaiian’s charms and they had spent quite a bit of time together and Danny had thoroughly enjoyed that but Ethan had avoided the topic each time Danny had tried to raise it but he felt he had to try again. “So have you thought anymore about returning to Beacon Hills?” Danny asks trying to sound casual.

Ethan sighed and looked over at the other teen. “Look…it’s not that I don’t want to keep seeing you” the blonde says looking serious “but…it’s really complicated. We came to Beacon Hills with our guardians and I am pretty sure that they have left by now.”

Danny frowned at the other teen. “They just took off and left you both behind?” he asks, concern clear in his voice.

Ethan snorts. “Trust me it isn’t any great loss. Aiden and I were in a bad place with our p…family and they helped us get out but they weren’t very nice people.”

Danny stares for a few moments before responding. “So what are you going to do?”

Ethan stares out over the water with a lost expression. “I don’t know. For the first time it is up to us and we don’t know what to do.”

Danny can tell the teen feels lost and his heart goes out to him. Since he had found the twins on the pier, Danny had managed to see Ethan just about every day and the difference between the person before him and the one he saw at BHHS was so different that he could see something serious happening between them if given half a chance. Even Aiden seemed different than he was before,
both of the twins had had the arrogance knocked out of them, that easy swagger was gone and they
both were easily startled and on edge.

“So if you don’t know what to do next…can’t you figure that out in Beacon Hills. I mean you are
going to want to graduate no matter what you end up doing right?” Danny suggested.

Ethan nodded absently before he shook his head. “That would be a very bad idea. Of anywhere we
could go, I think Beacon Hills would be the worst possible idea.”

“Why? I mean I get it if you don’t want to see your guardians again, but you said they were
probably gone. Seems that Beacon Hills would be the best place to avoid them” Danny says.

Ethan remains quiet for quite some time before taking a deep breath and turning to face the teen.
“My brother and I, well we got mixed up in some bad stuff.” He sees Danny about to interrupt and
stops him. “No I won’t go into details and yes it was that bad. We did some stuff that we thought
we had to do even though we didn’t really like it. While we were there, the guy who was running
things, he sent us to hurt someone.”

Danny pulled back a bit and looked at the teen in shock. “But you didn’t did you?”

Ethan sighed again and Danny reeled at the look of guilt on his face. “We tried. We had done stuff
like that before, but this time…this time we screwed up royally.”

“Screwed up how?” Danny asks, desperate to understand how the guy he has spent all this time
with could be a completely different person.

“We went after the wrong guy. We threatened him and his friend but the guy…he kicked out
asses” he admits and sees a look of doubt on Danny’s face. “I’m serious. He threw me through a
window…or maybe it was a door. I don’t really remember as I was down in seconds. Aiden tried to
fight but the guy gave him a serious beat down. The only reason we are still alive is because he
didn’t want to bother with us…we weren’t worth the effort.” Ethan shakes his head. “Deucalion,
the leader of our…gang you could say, he thought the guy was weak and a liability to the guy he
really wanted. After seeing the guy…I’m not sure Duke is even still alive. I’ve seen Duke kill
people Danny and in a fight between him and the kid…he wouldn’t stand a chance.”

“The kid?” Danny asks not believing this.

“No, Duke. If he pissed off that kid…he’s probably dead. Deucalion didn’t mind innocent people
getting caught in the crossfire and I would bet that if he tried threatening anyone who that kid
likes…well, it would not be pretty” Ethan finishes.

Danny sits silently for several minutes as they both watch the waves and he considers everything
Ethan had said. Finding out the teen was in a gang, apparently a really bad one, was a surprise, but
he seemed to genuinely regret it. It appeared that he and Aiden had done what they did to survive
but still… “Wait…so you don’t want to go back because that guy may still be there?” he asks.

Ethan nods. “The guy terrified Aiden. And my brother doesn’t scare easily but he will not risk
making the guy angry again. He was sure that he would have killed us both and he isn’t exactly
sure why he didn’t” he explains. “There’s no way we could go back. I doubt we would last a day”
he admits with a weak smile.

Danny can’t believe it and just doesn’t see how this could happen. Who in Beacon Hills could be
that scary? Okay…maybe Derek Hale, or Miguel as Stiles called him, that guy could pull it off, but
why would their paths even cross. “You said kid…does the guy go to our school?” he asks and
sees Ethan’s eyes flicker in fear and realizes he is on to something. “Who is it?” he demands.

Ethan stares at him for a while before he drops his shoulders in resignation. “Do you know the Sheriff’s kid?”

Danny’s eyes bug out in shock. “STILES?!?” he yells.
Chapter 9

“So, have you forgotten about Cora?” Peter asks his nephew as he walks into the loft. Peter had been back for several days with no information and he was getting frustrated. Derek had been sending pack members out constantly but he was fed up with the lack of information.

Derek raised an eyebrow at his uncle and glared at the man. “Stiles has tried several times to locate her but hasn’t been successful” he tells him. “In fact he looked again this morning. The problem is that he is unable to see outside of his own borders so all he gets is a general direction and feel for distance.”

Peter frowns and growls in frustration. “It should be a priority!” he demands.

Derek’s eyes flash red at the challenge and the Alpha moves quickly to step into his uncle’s space. Peter’s instinctive reaction is to step back and bare his neck even though he hates it. “It is” Derek growls before taking a deep breath. “Stiles has been looking for both Cora and Boyd’s sister but he is still learning about his own powers and how to use them. If he could travel, he could probably find them much quicker, but all he has gotten about Cora is southeast.” Derek sighs. “I’m as frustrated as you are Peter, but railing at Stiles because he can’t find her isn’t going to help.”

Peter stares at his nephew for a while before he remembers Derek’s earlier comment. “You said he had an idea about distance. How far?”

Derek looks surprised at the question. “He isn’t sure, but he said that he can feel Los Angeles and it was many times further than that.”

Peter looks shocked before he starts pacing. “That far would be Central or more likely South America” Peter mumbles and Derek nods watching him pace. Peter looks up “Do you remember the Alvarez Pack?” he asks.

Derek frowns. “No” he answers but frowns “but it sounds familiar…why?”

“About two years before the fire, Angelica Alvarez came to visit Talia. She wanted some family information, I don’t remember exactly what, but her mother had been a Hale offshoot. She came for about a week and had her daughter Esmeralda with her who was about Cora’s age. Remember?”

Derek frowned. He vaguely remembered a woman and her daughter visiting, but he wasn’t really interested in the young girl or her mother as a young teenager. “Sort of. Why does that matter?”

“The Alvarez Pack is in Argentina. As I recall Cora and Esmeralda became pen pals after the visit and were still sending letters when” he pauses and looks sick “the fire happened.”

“Okay” Derek says slowly. “But how does that help us.”

“What if Cora escaped and ran trying to find help. She didn’t know anyone else but knew the Alvarez were family” Peter explained.

“You think Cora, at ten years old, managed to run all the way to Argentina by herself?” Derek challenges.
“Maybe not, but maybe she was able to get help. If she found a pack and asked for help to get to family, many packs might be willing. Especially as she was running from Hunters” Peter reasoned.

Derek looked thoughtful. Stiles had been fairly upset the last time he had tried to locate Cora and although Derek had assured him that he trusted that he was doing his best, he was just as frustrated as Peter at the lack of progress. If it hadn’t been for everything else, he would have already left. He looked up at Peter. “Do you know how to contact them?” he asks.

Peter frowns. He wasn’t the source of the contact and doesn’t even remember who the alpha was. He shook his head. “I don’t know” he says but before Derek can reply he adds “but I do know others who might be able to help me get closer. Let me reach out and try to find them” he says determined to do so regardless.

Derek nods knowing his uncle. He doubted even an Alpha order would stop him and Derek has no intention of doing that. “Whatever you need, do it. We can hold things here if you need to travel” he says and Peter actually smiles before he leaves.

Peter shuts the loft door behind him determined. He may have been forgiven by his family for Laura’s death but he hadn’t forgiven himself. Finding Cora wouldn’t bring anyone back, but it would help.

Phil steps out of the red convertible and looks up at the ornate window at the top of this building with trepidation. The last few years have been wild starting with Tony Stark and all the Iron Man business, meeting the Asgardian Thor for all of five minutes before he disappeared, and then discovering Steve Rogers had been more exciting than anything in all his years in Shield and he had met shape changing aliens! Phil had grown up hearing stories about Captain America from his great uncle, one of the famous fighting commandos that worked with the Captain to take down Hydra after he rescued them.

Being an agent had its rewards and difficulties and he would accept a dozen missions like the one with Thor in New Mexico all over again if that’s what it took to meet his hero. He knows you shouldn’t idolize people, they inevitably let you down, but he seriously doubts that Steve Rogers would be able to manage that even if he wanted to. The man radiated righteousness. He was as confident as Stark without the cocky ego. He was as effective as Romanoff or Barton without the cold armor of the killers they had to be. He wasn’t certain he was always right, but he was determined to try and be.

Phil Coulson was surprised when Fury integrated Rogers into the organization. The truth was that Shield sometimes had to take actions that wouldn’t sit well with someone like Captain America and when Fury tried to force him into something he felt was wrong…then Shield would not come out ahead. He had tried to explain that to Fury but he didn’t listen and instead pressed forward and now they had three destroyed carriers and Shield having been shattered by the exposure that Hydra had infiltrated the organization almost from the beginning. Phil was just one of the former agents, still loyal to the ideals of Shield, who were trying to put things back together again.

Shaking off such thoughts, Phil instead stared at the building at 177A Bleecker Street and braced himself. Shield had noted the building as something to be watched, but not interfered with. Both Howard Stark and Peggy Carter had both met with the previous occupants and came out of it shaken and determined that Shield should stay far away from the place. Fury had made arrangements and Phil had been read in shortly after the battle of New York during his recovery and that revelation was somehow more surprising than aliens or frozen super soldiers. But Carter
and Stark didn’t know what they knew now but that hadn’t prevented them keeping an eye on the place and he smiled as he glanced over at the small coffee shop across from the place that Shield owned and its agents worked at.

Stepping up to the door he pressed the button and heard the rather ornate chimes echoing in the large building. He waited only a few seconds before the door opened and Phil looked at the older Asian man that their people had identified as living here, a guy named Wong.

“Hello sir. I need to speak with Dr. Strange” Phil said with an easy smile for the man.

Wong stared for a moment, looking all around him with his eyes before nodding and opening the door to allow Phil to enter the large entryway with the huge stairway going up to the second floor. “Come with me” he motioned and led Phil to a small room lined with books and two chairs located in the center of the room. “Dr. Strange will be with you shortly Agent Coulson” Wong said as he backed out of the room with a smile.

Phil hated this. He never gave his name but not only did the man know it, he was certain that he knew exactly who Phil was and who he worked for. He seriously needs a raise if he is going to keep working with all of these people. Sighing he sits down in one of the chairs and he absently rubs his chest and still feels the ghost injury from Loki’s staff and tries to get comfortable. If their intel is correct, Strange may be able to help them figure out what is happening in Northern California.

“Sorry for the delay” the voice startles Phil as he looks at the other chair and sees a distinguished man sitting there. A man who he most definitely did not see enter the room and sit down. A man quite familiar from the photos in his Shield files. “You are from Shield” he states, not asks.

“You seem remarkably well informed” Coulson replies as he gathers his thoughts. “Well, you do have that team in the coffee shop watching my home all day” he says easily and Coulson can’t exactly hide the slight reaction to that.

“To be fair, we were watching the building since before you lived here” Coulson counters and sees the acknowledgement from the other man. “Dr. Strange, I am hoping that you might be able to assist us with some reports coming out that seem more in your area of…expertise?”

Stephen Strange smirks. “You need a neuro-surgeon?” he asks, challenge clear in his voice.

Phil sighs. The guy appears to share more in common with Stark than facial hair! He could give Stark a run in the ego department! “Actually, it’s more in the nature of the responsibilities of the ancient one. I assume you have taken over for her?”

Stephen leans back and tries not to show that he is a bit impressed. He honestly didn’t expect Shield to truly understand anything about them. He had found notes about the organization from the Ancient One but they were intentionally vague. Stephen had the impression that she had managed to convince the previous agents who came here that there were some things that didn’t really concern them and that the government should keep out of it. “I have” he admits reluctantly.

“Then you are the best we have” Phil replies. Seeing agreement, he continues “we have been tracking a number of strange incidents coming out of Northern California and…” he loses his train of thought seeing the other man react. “You know something?” he asks leaning forward.

Stephen leans back and steeples his hands, resting his fingertips on his lips. “I know of certain… movements going on and some are associated with that general area. I myself was dealing with a,
shall we say, difficult situation. Unfortunately I was not able to resolve that situation, but I will” he adds.

“Would this be something in the last few weeks?” Phil asks and sees the man frown.

“No. That happened earlier. More recent events…I am aware of those however I was not directly involved” Stephen admits cautiously.

“Then you understand that we need to determine if this is something that we need to…handle” Phil says delicately.

Stephen smirks. “I think that even Shield might find it difficult to ‘handle’ everything happening there right now.”

“Can you give us something more? We are getting strange reports from a number of sources not to mention that both satellite and other sensors are registering some rather unique readings that we have seen in several other situations that were extremely disturbing” Phil explains seriously. The readings from a number of their sensors showed energies similar to New York when Loki attacked, reports on the alien stone that is now a part of the Vision, a strange incident in Hong Kong that no one apparently witnessed or noticed despite the rather significant energy readings, and then there’s Thor’s battle with elves apparently over in England!

Stephen stood up and walked over to one of the bookshelves and seemed to be looking at the titles before turning back. “If I told you that particular situation was being handled?” he asks.

“I think we might need more information than just that” Phil says standing up. “I have read our files on this place and it is woefully incomplete for an organization like ours. The main direction we had was to avoid ‘this’ whatever ‘this’ was. And before all this?” he gestures to indicate outside the building “That may have worked but now? Now we have aliens invading, apparent gods walking around, armored men flying around, and doorways to other planets opening up. We can no longer afford to be ignorant of all of this” he says sincerely.

“You are not equipped to understand or act in these situations. What is happening in California” Stephen pauses to carefully consider his words “it is something significant that has happened before. It will change many things and to be honest, it is not for politicians or petty bureaucrats to try and involve themselves in.”

“We are trying to protect people” Phil counters.

Stephen looks almost amused. “Really? Just a few months ago Shield was getting ready to murder people by the millions” he says seriously.

“That was Hydra” Phil says defensively. “We have been dealing with them.”

“Them? Agent Coulson, Hydra infiltrated Shield for decades. They are not ‘them’, but ‘us’ in many ways. The fact is though that if your organization knew about this aspect of the world, have you considered how much more damage could have occurred? Magic is real agent and somehow the idea of a group of maniacal Nazi sympathizers with access to the arcane arts is not something that sits particularly well with me. Does it with you?” he challenges.

Phil doesn’t immediately respond but carefully considers the man’s words. “No it doesn’t. But there are good people who should know. People I trust” he says sincerely.

Stephen watches for a moment. “So no one that you trusted, that you felt was loyal to the ideals of Shield, was affiliated with Hydra?” he challenges.
Phil flinches and knows the man saw it. He looks down knowing he was fooled. Once he would have trusted his team with this...but now? Now he wasn’t as sure. “I did trust some people who betrayed us. That is true. But I also know that we can’t just continue to ignore things. Did you know that we have had nearly a dozen sightings of mermaids near San Francisco? Geologists are discovering that the magnetic lines in the earth are shifting all over the western half of the US. And I bet if I asked, you would tell me that the strange reports are only going to increase?” he says with a questioning look.

“They will” Stephen concedes. “But that does not mean that the government is in the best position to deal with what is happening there.”

“Then speak to the Avengers. If you don’t want to talk to Shield, talk to Iron Man and the others, they are definitely not part of the government” he offers.

Stephen considers thoughtfully and finally agrees. He promises to come to Stark Tower

“Oh these are cute” Erica says looking at the red boots in the store window. She, Allison, and Lydia had all met up with Kira and had been shopping at the mall for a bit before Lydia had demanded that they go check out the small boutiques in the old downtown part of Beacon Hills.

“Hmph” Lydia made an uncommitted noise as she glanced at the boots. “Not really your color” she advised the blonde who frowned.

“Why not?” she asked seeing Kira and Allison trailing behind them talking about archery. Kira had been very impressed by Allison’s stories about her learning archery.

“Red is your highlight color. Use it sparingly and it is significantly more powerful. You look better in strong colors anyway and that red is too faded...also...its more burgundy than red. If you are going to go for power, that is not the one to get. Red is the color of sex, and fear, and danger, and signs that say ‘do not enter’. Burgundy is the color of hot water bottles” Lydia says with a haughty sniff.

Erica stares at her for a moment. “You are quoting something” she declares and Lydia only smirks and continues walking. The blonde looks at the boots and grants that they really are burgundy, not fire engine red like she prefers.

“Oh look!” Kira says excitedly pointing to the small park where a small number of tents are set up with various vendors.

The girls drift over to the stalls and look at the first booth which appears to be various glass jewelry. It is all very colorful and creative and even Lydia appears interested in the unique pieces. They meander among the artists selling their creations when they spot an older Native American gentleman sitting on the ground with a blanket covered in small display boxes. Erica is the first there and gasps in pleasant surprise at the beautiful pieces. “Allison! Look at this” she says with excitement.

The Huntress comes over and looks at the small bracelet and smiles at the design. It is an arrow, designed to wrap around the wrist with the head and tail forming the clasp. As series of pearlescent stones runs down the center of the arrow. “Sir, can I ask what these stones are?” Allison politely asks the elderly man who smiles at her and Allison suddenly realizes that his eyes have a slight film over them.
“They are moonstones” he replies before she can clarify her question and she looks back down at the bracelet with surprise.

“Oh that is too funny” Erica mutters and the brunette just nods.

“That bracelet is part of a set of items” the man says with a gentle smile. “It is part of the tale of the Four Daughters and that bracelet represents the youngest.”

Lydia and Kira had caught up and were looking at the bracelet in Allison’s hands, Lydia knowingly and Kira Innocently. “The Four Daughters?” Lydia asks with an inquiring look.

“Would you like to sit? It is not a short tale” the man offers and Kira and Erica both drop down and get comfortable. Allison moves a bit slower but she does as well. Lydia sighs and rolls her eyes and manages to sit demurely on the slight grass slope next to the man.

“My name is Sedit, and among my people there is a tale of a great Chieftan named Enapay who lived in the time before the white man came and our people were proud and free. This Chief was powerful not just in battle, but he had a powerful magic that allowed him to fiercely protect his people. He had become Chief after his father had returned to the ancestors and after a time he married a maiden who he loved with all his heart. She bore him four daughters, each beautiful and graceful, but with her fifth child, his wife took ill and both she and his only son died shortly after the boy was born” the man recounted in a strong, firm voice that belied his appearance.

“Now chief Enapay was pressured by many in the tribe to take another wife to bear him a son, but he refused. His love for his wife was too great and he knew that he would not love another like he did her and he didn’t wish to betray her memory. The men of the tribe were nervous but they realized that if one of them married one of Enapay’s daughters, then they would have a claim to be the next Chief” he told his audience.

“Typical” Lydia snorted. “I guess no one thought that one of the daughters could be chief” she said with a huff.

Sedit smiled gently at the redhead and continued. “Years passed and the daughters all grew into the beauty promised as children. The eldest daughter Inola had hair like a raven and a quiet nature, but she was strong. Stronger than many of the warriors realized. She had known her mother most and had listened to the stories she told as she had come from another tribe. This maiden was also clever, as clever as any trickster and one night when she was searching the woods for healing herbs she came upon a pure white fox.” Sedit reaches out and pulls out a pendant with a silver fox charm. The fox had amber eyes that seemed to almost glow in the sunlight. “So the daughter recounted her mother’s stories to the fox and he was entranced. He laid down and listened to the maiden tales, eyes glowing in the night as she spoke and when the dawn arrived, she suddenly found herself alone.”

“What happened?” Kira squeaked but Erica hushed her.

Sedit chuckled. “Returning to her home, the daughter sought out her sisters and shared her story of her adventure and her sisters were surprised. Inola, the daughter, was flushed with excitement but her father was greatly worried. He feared for his daughter but she appeared fine until he noted the lock of pure white hair among the raven dark locks. By this he knew that his daughter had been touched by a powerful spirit, one he did not wish to antagonize.”

“Always good to avoid that” Allison said nudging Lydia who smirked and nodded.

“The next night Inola returned to the glade and once again found the white fox. She told more of
her stories until again it was dawn. Returning home her tribe was suddenly very respectful. Her single white streak was now two and all could sense a strangeness around the maiden. Though worried, Chief Enapay did not want to draw down the ire of the spirit so he waited. Each night, for a full turn of the moon, Inola would slip out and sit with the snowy fox and each morning her hair had more white until no black remained. Her eyes had also changed from warm brown to a deep amber that glowed in the sun” Sedit tells them and points at the charm that Kira is gently stroking. “On the night of the full moon, one full cycle since she first met the fox, she prepared to go to the woods but she knew things were different and asked her sisters and her father to walk with her. They five all walked silently until reaching ‘her’ clearing where the sisters and chief spotted the white fox and froze while Inola stepped forward and walked up to the luminescent fox, the white of its coat shining in the white light of the moon.”

“What’s going to happen?” Erica whispers fiercely grabbing onto Kira’s hand and both girls squeezed tightly.

“Inola stared into the fox’s eyes for a long time, the silence of the moment unbroken by any before she turned around to the gasps of her sisters. Inola’s eyes were golden and glowing. ‘I have to go’ she told them simply and she embraced each of her sisters before stepping into her father’s arms. ‘This is my path’ she tells him and he only nods. Inola walks back to the fox, removing her clothes until she stands skyclad, her body bathed in the moonlight until she glows. Her family watches as she shrinks down and in moments where once a maiden and fox stood, there are now two white foxes, both with white fur and glowing golden eyes. They look back at the Chief and his now three daughters for a moment before turning and disappearing into the trees” Sedit coughs softly.

“So what happened to them?” Kira demands looking stricken.

“No one knows for sure. They were never seen again by the tribe, but many whisper that Inola and her mate were now trickster spirits who used their gifts to deceive the enemies of the tribe for many generations to come” Sedit explains with a smile.

“So one daughter marries and leaves” Lydia says with a sigh as she looks at her three companions with amused acceptance.

“What about the other daughters?” Erica demands.

“Now Kiwidinok was agreed to be the most beautiful of all the daughters. She was strong and willful and when the warriors sought her favor, she dismissed them out of hand. The women of the tribe all knew of her sharp tongue, but they were also in awe of her. The Chief’s mother had taken Kiwidinok under her wing and taught her the ways of the wise woman, the medicine walker. And this maiden knew her own worth. Now it happened one season when a nearby tribe came to trade with the Chief and among them came their Chief and his four younger sons and they boasted greatly of their strength and skill at hunting, but not the youngest. He simply stood silent attending to his father while his brothers all sought to impress the women of the tribe and on the very first day they arrived they encountered they sharp tongue of Kiwidinok and the brothers appeared to instead impress the other women of the tribe. Though she was a great beauty, she appeared to be too difficult” Sedit pauses and picks up a box and hands it to Lydia.

Lydia frowns but opens the box and is happily surprised. Nestled in the cotton lining the box is a bracelet like Allison’s but instead of an arrow, it is a series of birds in flight. Each flowing over deep green stones, connecting each to the other by the soft silver wings of the birds in flight. The green stones are dark, almost black, and Lydia feels a chill run down her back before showing to the others who are suitably impressed. The redhead looks back up at the old man who has been patiently waiting. “So what happened?” Lydia asks curious despite herself.
Sedit chuckles softly. “Well two of the brothers were hunting and they came upon a spring where Kiwidinok was working her medicine ways and the brothers hid to watch the maiden. While they appreciated her beauty, they were unprepared when she began to sing. You see Kiwidinok had a voice like no other and the brothers were overwhelmed with desire upon hearing her song. So great was the effect that when she had left, the brothers had no idea when they finally came to their senses. From that point both brothers were determined to win the maiden for their own and began following her around to help and boast of their skills.”

Erica snorted at that but Kira and Allison both hushed her as they were enthralled by Sedit’s tale and his musical voice.

“Now the other two brothers were surprised by their sudden change and followed them the next day where they too heard Kiwidinok’s voice singing in the woods and both were equally affected. Now the older brother was much like his brothers and the three of them began contesting for the Chief Enapay’s daughter’s eye. They not only boasted of their skills, but began competing by bringing her gifts. Meat for her family, furs and pelts, arrowheads and blades and even some of the dyes and paints that their father had brought to trade, much to his dismay. However he also knew that if she accepted one of his sons then they would become a chief, something that only one of them could do among their own people. So for several days they vied for Kiwidinok’s favor though she ignored them, giving away their gifts.”

“What about the fourth brother?” Kira asks with a sharp breath.

“Ah, Chaytan. Chaytan was not like his brothers. He was not vain or boastful, but quiet and reserved. Though greatly impressed by her voice and beauty, he remembered his duty and served his father and while he was polite to Kiwidinok, he did not pursue her” Sedit says with a smile.

Lydia sighed exasperatedly “Let me guess, she fell for Chaytan?” she says with a weary look.

Sedit smiles at the redhead. “Not exactly. She started noticing him and watched how he would help the people of her own tribe without expectation or bragging. He would step in, help, and then step away. He was always polite, but rarely did he speak. She finally confronted him demanding to know why he did not bring her any gifts like his brothers.”

Kira, Allison, and Erica let out excited shrieks. “Oh she is so caught” Erica snickered and the others’ laughter rang in the small park. Lydia seemed mildly offended by the story.

“Well Chaytan told her that she rejected his brothers’ gifts so he did not wish to offer insult to her by adding to their efforts. Then he asked, most respectfully, what she would wish for a gift.”

“Eeeeee” Kira squealed happily.

“Well Kiwidinok was surprised but she told him that she needed certain plants that were deep in the woods for her medicines and Chaytan only nodded. He returned the next morning with a basket of the herbs, leaving it at her tent. He never asked again but every day or so Kiwidinok would ask him to gather stones, wood, flowers, or other items she needed and each time he would return, give them to her, and return to his father’s side with none of his brothers or father ever realizing what he was doing. After a full moon, Kiwidinok again confronted him and demanded to know why he did all those things and yet would ask nothing in return. So he did. He asked her to sing for him” Sedit said with a sly expression. “Kiwidinok was surprised but she agreed and that night she sang before the whole tribe. Her song the story of a young maiden and a warrior who met and sought to marry but their fathers forbade it. The two ran away together with the warriors of the tribe chasing them seeking to keep them apart. In their haste, both of the young lovers had fallen from a cliff and died tragically” he said with a sad look.
“Oh, why would she sing such a song?” Kira asks looking at the other girls.

“It was a very popular song” Sedit confessed. “Well the brothers were even more determined and each of them went to Kiwidinok’s father to ask for his daughter’s hand but the wise Chief declined and informed the brother that it was his daughter’s choice. Well the three brothers and their father confronted Kiwidinok and demanded she choose one of them. They even threatened war between their people.”

Lydia’s eyes had gone hard and flinty as she stared at the old man. “They threatened her family and friends to get her to marry one of them?” she asked in a dangerous voice.

“Oh yes” Sedit chuckled “but they were no match for Kiwidinok and her sisters. The next day she came and demanded that they agree to a peace if she agreed to marry one of the chief’s sons. He agreed, as did the three brothers, but Kiwidinok wasn’t through. She demanded all the issues that her father wanted for the other tribe and so determined to win the maiden they agreed. Then Kiwidinok agreed and said she would marry Chaytan surprising his brothers and father. The brothers protested loudly at her choice and declared it an insult. Kiwidinok reminded the chief that she had only promised to marry one of his sons, not one of the three braggarts and he laughed and agreed.”

“So she outmaneuvered them” Allison nodded approvingly.

“So for a week the village celebrated Chaytan and Kiwidinok and each night his three brothers grew more and more furious at her actions and jealous of their brother. Kiwidinok however was more than happy with her choice as she spent time with her husband to be and found him to be both strong and gentle. Chaytan had been as enthralled as his brothers but he knew that he had to win her respect before he could ask for her love and that made all the difference” Sedit said knowingly.

“Now, the night before the wedding, Chaytan and his brothers went to the spring to bathe before his wedding and in a fit of rage and jealousy the brothers struck and killed Chaytan, drowning him. Now then the brothers panicked fearing their father’s wrath so they desecrated their brother’s body so it would look like a wild animal and then they returned to the village and bemoaned their ‘beloved’ brother’s death” the old man told them.

The girls all sat stunned before Erica almost roared “They KILLED him?!” she says furiously and Allison grabs her hand to remind her they were in public. Kira looks as furious but Lydia? Lydia looks ready to murder someone.

“Now the brothers’ father was upset, but he had many sons and he was more concerned about the loss of the agreement between the tribes so he agreed that Kiwidinok must choose another. The next morning, they told the tribe of Chaytan’s loss and Kiwidinok was stunned and then the brothers demanded she honor her promise to marry one of them to secure their peace. Now like you young ladies, Kiwidinok was not fooled by the brothers’ claims of how Chaytan died and she demanded that the young warrior be given an honorable burial first” Sedit says seriously.

“So that night the tribe gathered together to honor the young man and the brothers all spoke of their love for their youngest brother and then it was time for Kiwidinok and instead of speaking, she began to sing. She sang of love and honor and kindness and the people of her tribe wept openly for their Chief’s daughter and her grief. But then Kiwidinok looked at the three brothers and her voice turned cold. She sang of vengeance and fury and the tribe suddenly felt a fear they had never known. The brothers and their father grabbed their weapons but it was too late. Kiwidinok knew powerful magic and her voice was her weapon which she turned on the faithless warriors. Her voice sang with power and suddenly Chaytan stood behind her, a spirit standing behind his beloved as Kiwidinok’s song tore the murderers and the honorless chief into shreds.”
“She killed them with her voice?” Erica stammers before glancing nervously at Lydia who also looks shocked.

“Kiwidinok’s fury was inescapable” Sedit confirms. “She called on the spirits and they gave her vengeance but it came at a terrible price.”

“She died too?” Allison asks with a heavy weight in her voice.

“No. If she died she would be reunited with Chaytan and her actions demanded justice. Instead the spirits decreed that since her voice was her nature, then that is what she would be. Kiwidinok was transformed into the voice of the wind. Whether you hear the wind roaring or whispering, it is Kiwidinok’s voice calling out to her beloved Chaytan. She was punished by having to sing the grief and rage of the People until all of our people finally come home when she can finally be united with her love.” Sedit looks sad but also firm.

“That’s not fair!” Erica exclaims and Kira nods. Allison and Lydia however look much more thoughtful.

“Kiwidinok killed in her rage and fury. Her voice, a gift from the spirits, was to serve her tribe, not her own desire for vengeance” he reminded them.

“But they killed their own brother!” Kira wails. “They were a threat!”

“Perhaps” Sedit acknowledges “but the spirits are capricious and her gifts were for life, not death. Her song was supposed to inspire bravery, loyalty, and peace. Instead it caused fear, pain, and death. Kiwidinok abused her gifts and had to pay the price.

The girls all grumble but finally Kira looks up and says “What about the other sisters?”

Sedit smiles. “Ah well. Tala and Soolewa were very different from their sisters. Soolewa had been the youngest and most indulged daughter of Chief Enapay. When very young, she had asked to learn to hunt and shoot like the men, and he had indulged her. He did not know however that she continued training and practicing beyond his first lessons. By the time she lost her sisters, Soolewa was better than any man with her bow and could hunt, track, and fight as well as any man. In fact, many felt she had Two-Spirits and in fact was the son of the Chief. Soolewa did not challenge this belief though she did not think it was true. She appreciated the men of the tribe, but she did not wish to be wife to any of them.”

“Now Tala, she was as independent as Soolewa was but she was not gifted in battle. She loved instead to run. She could run faster and farther than any man in the tribe and she loved most to run in the night” Sedit told them as he grabs another box and hands it to Erica. Opening the box she gasps as the silver wolf head on a leather thong. The wolf is howling against a white moonstone like the ones on Allison’s bracelet but larger.

“Now Tala was most affected by the loss of Inola and when they lost Kiwidinok she was even more despondent. She had seen what had happened to her sisters and knew that she would not be able to stand against her father’s will like they did and she wasn’t a warrior like Soolewa so she ran. She ran each night under the moon and prayed to the ancestors for an answer. Well word came that Chaytan’s brothers, the two who had stayed behind with their tribe, had declared war on Tala’s family and sought to punish Enapay’s tribe for the deaths of their father and brothers, even blaming her family for Chaytan’s death despite the confession that Kiwidinok’s song drew from them before they died.”

“So they blamed Tala’s family and wanted vengeance?” Allison murmured sadly. It seemed the
cycle never ended.

Sedit nodded in agreement with the brunette before continuing. “The two remaining brothers led a war party towards the tribe but Tala had been running and was far from her family when she spotted the warriors approaching stealthily in the night.”

“They were going to sneak attack?” Lydia demanded.

The old man only smiled sadly. “Tala saw their movements and prayed to the moon for help. She wanted to protect her family, but she also wanted to run. She called out for her sisters to grant her aid and the moon heard. Tala felt the light of the moon pounding in her blood as her body grew strong and sleek and fast. Where once a beautiful woman stood, now was a large silver-white wolf.”

“She turned into a wolf?” Erica whispers, her grip on the necklace tightening.

“Yes” Sedit nodded “and she raced for the invading war party. Her attack caught them off guard and they scrambled but she was fast and strong and she rushed among them before darting out again. She made them afraid of the glowing spirit wolf and the warriors of the tribe declared that Tala’s family were protected and fled despite the demands of the two brothers. They were furious and declared that they would burn down the forest to destroy Enapay and his family. They demanded vengeance for the deaths of their family, no matter that those who died had been the ones truly guilty.”

Lydia and Erica both glance at Allison who looks pale. “So what did Tala do?” she asks in a voice that does not quiver though Erica can smell her anxiety and Lydia can easily read it in her friend.

“Tala, unlike her sister, had been given strength, teeth, and claws and had warned the warriors. The others fled and she let them but when the brothers sought to advance she toyed with them no longer. In moments the final two brothers were dead and Tala stood victorious. She returned to her father and sister, both of whom were overwhelmed by their sister’s transformation. Tala flowed back into a maiden and told her father that she couldn’t live with the tribe but that she would watch over them. She needed to be free, not under the rule of any other. She said her goodbyes, transformed into the wolf again, and fled into the woods. It was said that for many generations, warriors and maidens of the tribe would see the silver-white wolf running in their lands, watching and protecting her people from harm.”

“Wow. So one sister became a wolf and another a fox while the third became the voice of the wind” Kira recounted in a dreamy voice. “So what happened to Soolewa?”

“Ah, well that is definitely a fine end to the story” Sedit says with a wide smile. “After each of her sisters left their tribe, the warriors had increased their attention to the remaining daughters. Now that Soolewa was the only daughter remaining, they all pressed for her hand. Now Chief Enapay had grown very wise over the years and he called all of the tribe together and he announced a trial for the right to decide who Soolewa would wed and who would be the next chief. He declared three trials: hunting, tracking, and fighting. The warriors rejoiced and each promised to win the contest. The next day Enapay told the warriors with the approach of winter, the tribe needed meat. The one who returned within three days with the largest kill would be declared the winner. Over the next two days most of the braves returned with their trophies. On the third day, one warrior named Kenet returned with an elk, the largest seen before and it appeared that it was enough to be the winner. In fact he called on Enapay to declare him the winner but the Chief refused. He told them that the contest was open for three days so until the time was up, he would not declare a winner.”
“Soolewa was out hunting wasn’t she?” Allison asks shrewdly and the old man just chuckles.

“Right before the sun set Soolewa came into the camp pulling a sled upon which was resting the 
buffalo she had hunted. Now her tribe did not normally hunt the buffalo but they knew of it and it 
was nearly three times the size of Kenet’s elk. Upon her arrival Enapay asked the women of the 
tribe who had brought them the most meat. All of them agreed it was Soolewa and so the Chief 
declared her the winner” Sedit recounted.

“Bet the guys didn’t like that one bit” Erica says knowingly.

“No they did not” Sedit replies with another chuckle “but their protests fell on deaf ears. Enapay 
had made no restrictions on who could be a part of the challenge and he had purposefully declared 
that the winner would decide, not that they would have Soolewa’s hand. Well the warriors were 
angry, but the women of the tribe had, to a one, sided with Soolewa and even the most foolish 
warrior would not fight their own mothers, sisters, and grandmothers so they yielded. Well the next 
trial was tracking. All of the warriors and Soolewa were taken to a clearing and Enapay gave them 
their task. To track an eagle that had killed a rabbit in the field. The warriors were dismayed but 
they tried. However they were not as gifted as Soolewa and by morning she had returned with a 
blood touched feather from the Eagle’s nest and was declared again the winner.”

“How did they know it was the right eagle?” Kira asks confused. “I mean could have just 
found the feather and brought it back.”

Sedit smiled knowingly. “This eagle was well known to the tribe as it was completely black with a 
stripe of white along the wings. When Soolewa returned with the black and white feather, they all 
 knew.”

“Now the men of the tribe were very nervous as she had won two rounds but each was determined 
to win the third. Enapay declared that the warriors would draw lots and fight until a victor was 
declared. Winners would meet the next day and draw again until only one remained” the old man 
told his rapt audience. “That first day, Soolewa was one of the last to fight but she easily bested her 
opponent to the shock of everyone but her father. Enapay had taught his daughter to fight and knew 
she was gifted. Over the days that followed Soolewa defeated each of her foes until it came down 
to her and the warrior Kenet. They fought fiercely as Kenet had watched Soolewa fight and knew 
she was a worthy opponent and nothing less than his best would do.”

“He still lost” Allison says with certainty and Sedit laughs aloud.

“He did indeed young lady. Though he fought well, Soolewa defeated him. Upon being declared 
the winner, Soolewa claimed the right to be Chief in her own name and that she would marry no 
man. She did have several children, Kenet fathering them, but Soolewa was chief after her father 
and until her death. She was known as a wise and strong chief who led her people well. And so 
ends the tale of the four sisters. Perhaps you enjoyed it?” the man says slyly.

All four of them assure him they did. “So perhaps you wish to purchase my little trinkets?” he 
suggests and each of the girls agree that the story alone was worth it not counting the beautiful 
items. They all pay up and as they start to move out Lydia hangs back with a thoughtful expression.

“That was a very interesting tale” she tells the man who only smiles and hands her a fifth box.

“For those who will listen, your song rings in this land dark lady” he says and Lydia’s eyes narrow 
before opening the box. Inside is a bracelet, much larger than the others, more like a man’s. 
Leather with a motif of running wolves. In the center is a circle of turquoise and a red stone with a 
geometric pattern that makes her think of math for some reason. “Perhaps you can deliver my gift
to the new guardian of these lands?”

Lydia’s head snaps up and sees that the man’s eyes are not covered with film anymore but are crystal clear, golden eyes shining not unlike the wolves, but with an age and wisdom burning there. He laughs and the wind blows strongly enough that she has to blink her eyes against it. Opening them the man and his tent are gone without a trace.

Running the borders is normally a pain Scott thinks. But ever since the girls came back from the park three days ago telling everyone about their encounter with the man and his story, they were a bit on edge. Stiles had checked out their items and all of them carried a minor magic charm, he described it as a blessing, but nothing dangerous or harmful. He seemed more concerned about the fact that he hadn’t felt anything about this guy in the area so he assumed that he might have just been a regular guy selling some pieces with traces of magic.

Lydia refused to believe it as she had gone over everything multiple times and was convinced that he not only knew exactly who they were, but that he was significantly more powerful than Stiles was willing to admit. Derek had stepped in to add another patrol for tonight after checking out the park yielded no results. And after nearly a day of arguing, Scott, Jackson, and Isaac had all volunteered to go.

So that is how the three of them found themselves running through the Preserve in the middle of the night looking for traces of some guy who’s scent they didn’t even have. “This is pointless” Jackson says with a snarl as he slows down in a break in the trees. Isaac and Scott both turn back to the beta.

“Why don’t you tell Lydia your opinion on the whole thing” Isaac suggests with a snicker which causes Jackson to growl and flash his eyes.

Scott sighs and moves between them.

“Isaac stop” Scott orders the beta before turning to Jackson. “Look the girls are a bit concerned. Lydia doesn’t like feeling outmaneuvered and for the first time Stiles isn’t all paranoid and suspicious which makes her even more pissed off than usual.”

Jackson shifts his anger to the brunette wolf “And you believe Allison?” he snarls out remembering the rather harsh words the huntress had for her boyfriend when he suggested they were over-reacting.

“It’s not about believing their story” Scott replies with a sigh. “They saw something, which I definitely believe. Stiles even confirmed the stuff they got had some minor, harmless magic on them. But he didn’t detect any danger before or after. We all went to the park and there were no strange scents. Even Erica admitted that she didn’t sense anything off from the guy while they were there. The girls are frustrated but there is literally nothing we can do about it.” Scott looks at the other two and sees some of the tension ease out of them.

“Stiles didn’t sense anything?” Isaac asks again.

Scott shakes his head. “Not when the girls asked him nor any of the other half dozen times he looked for any trace” Scott offers.

Jackson’s face suddenly looks confused. “I didn’t know he looked that much” he admits looking at Scott. “Why didn’t he tell the girls that?”

“You mean why didn’t he mention that he had tried repeatedly to find anything and didn’t and that
the most likely answer was that there wasn’t anything to find?” Scott asks.

Isaac and Jackson both wince at the thought of how the women of the pack would have reacted to that. Lydia would have been even more determined that something was wrong, Allison would have gone into full Hunter mode and Erica would have been even more wild. Luckily Kira was the only one unaffected by it all since she didn’t know anything about this. Stiles hadn’t checked out Kira’s pendant, in fact the teen hadn’t even met the girl yet. They had figured that she and her mother had been sensed by Stiles earlier but since they knew who she was, he hadn’t been particularly concerned about them. They really needed to introduce her to Derek and Stiles soon though if she kept hanging out with the pack.

“Okay, Stilinski was probably smart about that one, but then why are we out here?” Jackson grumbled looking around the empty woods.

“Because the only one more paranoid than Lydia or Stiles is Derek” Isaac answers with a snort. Both of the other boys look at the tall beta. “Derek doesn’t know what they saw and while he trusts Stiles, he isn’t willing to ignore a possible warning. He gets to make himself feel more certain while also showing the girls that he values their insights. Not to mention giving the three of us a night off from arguing about it.”

Both of the other betas nodded at the explanation. “So how much longer do we have to patrol?” Jackson asks.

Scott opens his mouth to respond when all three of the wolves turn at the sound of something large and heavy running nearby. “What is that?” Scott growls as he shifts into his beta form. The closest thing he can associate that sound with is the night he was bit and that herd of deer came thundering through the woods.

“Sounds like a horse?” Jackson says, his head tilted to the side as he listens. “A big one…running.”

Both Scott and Isaac listen and quickly hear the rhythmic sounds of the pounding and indeed it does sound vaguely like horses running. “But why would horses be out here?” Isaac asks the others.

“Not horses, just one” Jackson says his eyes flashing blue.

“But you can feel it” Isaac says with his hand on the ground, the slight tremors coming in a distinctive pattern.

“Then it’s not a horse” Scott declares with certainty. “Let’s go!” he roars and takes off towards the sound, Jackson and Isaac racing after him, all three running on all fours.

The pounding suddenly begins pulling away from them and the three teens are shocked but quickly increase their own speed. Scott gestures and Jackson and Isaac veer off to the sides hoping to cut off whatever is making that noise.

They are running hard but the sound gets quiet and then suddenly stops and Scott realizes they have been running for miles. He lets out a loud howl and hears Jackson and Isaac’s reply as both teens close in on Scott in a few moments. “What happened?” Jackson demands.

Before anyone can answer the sound returns but this time behind them. The three wolves turn and see a flash of white in the far distance and they take off. They continue running, chasing the sounds but when they follow through a clearing Isaac drops back and stops. Scott and Jackson both look back confused but Isaac waves them on. “Keep going!” he yells as he begins circling the clearing.
Scott and Jackson race after and quickly realize they are heading uphill. “It’s heading for the overlook!” Jackson roars anticipating victory.

Scott can’t stop his own roar at the thought that they have the thing actually cornered. Breaking the trees both betas slam to a stop and stare around the overlook, the highest part of Beacon Hills looking out over the city in stunned silence. “Where’d it go?” Jackson snarls in frustration. “I swear we were right behind it!”

Scott just shook his head and stared in confusion remembering Boyd and Erica’s eerily similar experience. “We did hear it though, right?” he asks and both of them search the area but there is no trace. No scents, no sign of anything big enough to make all that noise. Nothing. After searching for several minutes they finally head back to Isaac where they find the beta on his hands and knees moving around the field.

Isaac looks up and frowns at their expressions. “Got away?” he asks.

“Assuming it was ever there” Jackson replies obviously frustrated. “You know the girls will never let us forget this” he moans.

“It gets worse” Isaac says sympathetically.

“What do you mean?” Scott asks worriedly.

“It came through here right, we all heard it?” he asks and both of them agree easily. They were right behind whatever it was and they were following hard. If it had tried to avoid the clearing, they would have heard it. “Well, there is not a single track of anything but the three of us.”

Both wolves looked at Isaac with matching frowns before Jackson finally recovered his voice. “That’s impossible! We felt the damn thing running. We could feel its feet hitting the ground. There has to be tracks or something!”

“There’s not. What’s more? There are no broken branches or even bent grass that was not done by one of us. Whatever came through here didn’t leave a single trace. The only scent, besides us, is the scent of the Preserve itself. In fact, it smells more like it rained earlier but it hasn’t rained for several days” Isaac adds.

The three werewolves all stand around looking more and more confused. “What the hell are we dealing with?” Jackson finally mutters. Isaac and Scott nod in agreement but with nothing else they decide to cut their patrol short and report to Derek and Stiles. Maybe one of them can figure it out.

Chapter End Notes

sorry it was a bit late in posting, but hope the length makes up for it.
Chapter 10

Lydia was not happy. She was wet. She was cold. Her makeup was ruined and her clothes were soaked. For the second day in a row Beacon Hills had experienced a sudden thunderstorm in the middle of the day when everything indicated clear sun and not even a chance of rain. Stepping into the coffee shop she shook her umbrella angrily but still made sure not to spray any of her fellow soaked townspeople.

“Oh god this is ridiculous!” a woman’s voice in front of her caused Lydia to look up and she sighed when she spotted the woman. Andrea Wellington was one of her mother’s friends and she was the worst example of a trophy wife in Lydia’s reckoning. The woman had bleach blonde hair, an outrageously expensive manicure and entirely too much jewelry. Not to mention that she was rude, judgmental, and a pain to be around. Hanging back Lydia hoped she wouldn’t be spotted by the woman.

“Well it seems that it is probably only going to get worse” the other woman that she is talking to, who Lydia doesn’t recognize, replies. “Apparently there is a whole bunch of these sudden storms coming up from Arizona and San Diego if you can believe it. There have been sudden storms all up California over the last three days and the people on the news can’t seem to explain why no one is able to predict them. What’s more, they seem to all be heading this way.”

“I did not need this” Mrs. Wellington sighs heavily. “I suppose it isn’t all bad. I mean maybe now we won’t hear anymore about droughts and water restrictions. My lawn is not as green as I like it but the service keeps saying they can’t do anything” she sniffs obviously unhappy.

“True…but if it is a good rain, then the wines this year will be wonderful” her friend says slyly and suddenly Lydia remembers her, her husband owns a winery that her parents visited once when they were traveling a few years ago.

“Wine? Really?” a tired voice says and Lydia looks behind her in surprise and sees a very wet, green eyed boy with his hair plastered to his side. “Hi again” he says looking happy she is alone.

“Billy? Right?” Lydia asks and Billy smiles happily.

“Yeah. Lydia?” he asks and she nods. “You are kind of hard to forget. Where is J. Crew?” he asks looking around with an unhappy expression and Lydia smirks.

“You might want to at least call him Ralph Lauren, J. Crew is a serious insult” she advises but stops as the boy’s smile looks positively wicked.

“I know” he smirks and Lydia actually laughs. “This weather is crazy, but you know what’s really crazy? There was a big storm in Arizona and Nevada three days ago. Rained almost six inches in some places. Really crazy storms, lots of wind and lightning” he adds excited and then pauses as he spots Lydia’s expression at his energy. “Sorry, I just have been in a lot of storms and find them fascinating.”

“Want to be a weatherman or storm chaser?” she asks airily.

“Definitely not. I prefer to be indoors during a storm. But it’s always good to know when one is coming.”

Lydia just smiles and then it is her turn so she places her order for her and Jackson and then Billy is ordering his. They chat a bit more but then her coffees are ready, she says goodbye, and takes
advantage of a temporary break in the rain to make a dash for it. She got coffee, dried off a bit, and managed to avoid Mrs. Wellington. All in all, a good trip.

Satomi opened the door to the house and nodded respectfully to the Celestial Kitsune that she had known for so long. “Noshiko, thank you for coming” she said softly as she led the other woman into the sitting room. The alpha had ordered her betas out of the house in order to talk privately with her old friend but she had to admit that ever since her meeting with Hale and his mate, things had been changing.

Paying attention on the drive home, the alpha had started noticing things that she had not been paying attention to since the ‘itch’ had started, and since she had acknowledged Hale as High Alpha it had disappeared and in fact she felt better than she had in years. And it wasn’t just her.

All of her betas appeared to also be feeling the increased connection with their territory and it was showing up in different ways. Brett had gotten faster, quite a feat considering how quick he was before. Several of the others had gotten stronger and almost everyone had felt their senses increase. Three of her most recent betas who had been struggling with control had made significant strides in that area and had started to settle down.

The land as well had begun showing signs. Her most recent run through the woods had showed trees, flowers, and grasses all looking healthier and more robust than ever. She had thought she might even have spotted some pixies darting through the shadows. The air was richer and the nearby lake was noticeably cleaner. The presence of the Arcanist was having an impact she didn’t expect but she was thinking that things might actually beginning to be good for her pack. But for now, she needed to deal with her old friend and she was not sure how much Noshiko would accept.

There were things that wolves knew and the bonds of pack that foxes just didn’t share. However, she owed the woman some explanations.

“You said you have information” Noshiko said looking stressed. The last few days had not been easy on the kitsune and she had barely restrained herself from calling the Oni, even if the price would be high. The only hesitation she had was that she couldn’t find the slightest trace of the void. If he was free, there should have been some sign.

“I do. I spoke with Alpha Hale a few days ago and he was there when the Nemeton was destroyed” she replied as they sat down.

“Then the beast was freed?”

“It does not seem so. There was a battle between the Hale pack and Deucalion’s Alpha Pack as well as a dark druid, a Darach” she explained.

Noshiko looked confused. “I don’t understand” she finally said.

“The young Hale’s pack was able to defeat and kill Deucalion, Kali and most of the others. Three of the alpha pack had been banished by the pack’s magic user earlier. Then the Darach struck but they managed to fight until the young mage called down lightning and destroyed the Nemeton, the power the dark one wanted.”

Noshiko frowned. “If the Nemeton was destroyed then the power must have gone somewhere, that kind of power can’t be erased.”

“It wasn’t. The boy became the new Nemeton.”
The kitsune was stunned. She never heard of such a thing. How could any person become a nexus for a ley line, let alone the number that were flowing through that tree. “How?” she finally managed to get out.

“I am still a bit unsure about many of the facts, but apparently the Morgaine was present to assist the young mage. The magic overwhelmed him and would have consumed him but with the aid of all four of the Fae Queens who came to assist, they were able to aid the boy to become what they call an Arcanist” Satomi explained.

Noshiko frowned. This was too much information. “I know of the Queens, they are legendary, but the Morgaine?” The kitsune knew that there was more to magic than her own knowledge as she hadn’t been very connected to most magics in her own life. She knew of Sorcery fairly well, and to a lesser extent the other domains, but she acknowledged that her own knowledge of it was lacking.

“For Druids, there are two greater powers, the Morgaine and the Merlin who represent the balance of their magic. They are the boy’s mentors and friends, as well as the Sorcerer Supreme.”

“The Ancient One?!” Noshiko demands. “She was part of this?”

Satomi frowns. “I believe she is no longer living, at least the boy said the Sorcerer Supreme was named Dr. Strange. He helped teach the boy before he came into his true power, but now with his new connection to magic, it appears that young Mr. Stilinski is a peer of the masters of each domain of magic.”

Noshiko just shook her head and sat back. Alpha Ito related the full story as she had learned it to the Kitsune to try and ease the other woman’s mind that the threat of the void was eliminated. If it wasn’t destroyed, she didn’t think it would seek to return. Derek Hale had shared some of the details about that fight when his young mate had been out of the room and she was more certain than ever that the boy was something that no one, not even Noshiko or the Void, would be willing to face in a fight. Both Alpha Roberts and Alpha Flores had already reached out to her and shared their own experiences with the new High Alphas and both had been tentatively impressed. Hesitant a bit, but the Hale name, the endorsement by the Morgaine, and the destruction of the twisted ideology of Deucalion and his foul pack had made much more of an impact than she believed that either of the youths truly realized.

The destruction of a Darach as well? No, the Hale pack was not one to be trifled with and their offer of support, protection, and friendship for abiding by common sense rules that they all were doing anyway, not exactly difficult. Peter Hale? He would have been a cause for concern if he was the Alpha. That man was perfect as a pack’s Hand, but he would have been too dangerous as a leader as he needed to be controlled. Derek’s request for her advice also reassured the elder wolf that the boy would not abuse his position. He wasn’t quite the Alpha his mother was, in fact he was more like his father but that was all for the better. The human was more wolf in temperament than most actual wolves as it was and she felt that he would be the one to respect.

The black SUV pulls up in front of the Beacon County motor lodge quickly followed by four more. Randolph Davies steps out and looks around. This will do for tonight while his team gets their bearings and locates an appropriate place to set up and start their search. He has been chasing these beasts for over two years and has lost over a dozen hunters already but those he lost had friends and family who were more than happy to join up to take care of these animals.

“Boss, Grayson is getting us some rooms for the night. Are you sure this is going to be a good
location?” Trager asks. “Are we even sure that they came here?”

Randolph nods absently. He had sources, good sources, and they were fairly confident that Deucalion was headed this way. Apparently one of the Hale dogs that the Argents had failed to take care of had showed back up and was building a new pack right under the noses of those self-righteous snobs. He had met Chris Argent before and wasn’t impressed. No, the only Argent that impressed him was Kate and she had warned him that her brother didn’t really have the guts for the job.

Now she was dead and her memory tarnished. Davies had read the articles about her being killed and then linked to the deaths of the Hales, but since people didn’t know better, all they saw was that she killed a family, not that she eliminated a threat to real people. And apparently her brother had even made friends with the pack that killed her! He had even heard from his father that word had come that the Argent Grand Matriarch was trying to get the Hunter’s Council to lay an interdict on Beacon Hills for some reason!

It had been decades since anyone had even suggested something that extreme for a territory. Sure, Paris, Berlin, Los Angeles, Rio, Rome, Hong Kong, and Tokyo had all been cities where activity was seriously restricted and Hunters knew the risks. Taking any actions in those cities would be quickly and completely disavowed by the leadership. It was too public and there were other powers, more than wolves, that were around that were not forgiving of hunting. Ever since those damn Avengers showed up an honest hunter couldn’t kill monsters without worrying about being attacked by freaks in tights!

But to attempt an Interdiction was entirely different. There were only three Interdictions currently; New York, London, and some remote place in Nepal. An interdiction meant that not only would the Hunters Council disavow any hunters who violated the restriction, but they would actively impede you. That meant no access to HC lawyers, no funds, and they could even offer you up to appease whoever they were trying to avoid. It was also clear that violating an interdiction meant that there would be no consequences if the monsters killed you.

But Deucalion and his pack of mutts were killing indiscriminately and them running and hiding in a small town in California which the Argents were trying to get declared ‘off-limits’ for some reason was not going to stop him from wiping out that entire degenerate pack of killers. And if he had to go through the Argents and the Hale dogs, then he would do so without a twinge of remorse. Besides, he owed Katie a little blood payback and he was fairly sure finishing off the Hales and making her brother pay would be a perfect way to honor her memory, one that she would have approved of.

“All of this is a waste of time!” Erica complains as they walk through the woods, still damp from the most recent thunderstorm. She had been willing, eager even, to go out and look for the thing she and Boyd had chased when Allison had broached the idea of it. But two hours later, sweaty, tired, and having her boots so caked in mud that it would take forever to clean them and trudging around wet woods had lost all of the glamor and she was just annoyed.

Allison just grunts and adjusts her bow and moves forward. She knew that coming out here was...
probably not going to get them much. The rain would have washed away any useful scents but the wolves had all said they hadn’t smelled anything after both times. And while there were no tracks on those occasions, the huntress had hoped that maybe the muddy ground would show tracks a little more clearly than the dry ground.

But it hadn’t. “It was worth a shot” she finally agreed looking over at the she-wolf whose hair was definitely not enjoying the humidity. Allison had tied hers up in a ponytail when they headed out but she was sure she probably looked even rougher than the beta. “I hoped we might see something out here” she sighed.

Erica echoed that sigh. She had just about convinced herself that she was imagining things after finding no traces and Stiles not detecting anything when the boys had their own encounter. The same situation happened to the others and still no traces but now most of the pack had seen…something. She also knew that both Derek and Peter drifted between ignoring it as unimportant and thinking it was one thing or another but every wild goose they chased turned up nothing.

“Let’s swing by the lake and circle it and take one last look before heading out” Allison offers and Erica nods happy to have a plan that had an ending. They head out and in a few minutes were coming out of the woods in view of the water when she hears it, distant, but that same rhythm.

“Allie!” she hisses and her eyes flash as she tries to focus. Allison goes perfectly still. She hadn’t heard or seen whatever triggered the beta but she figures that there must be something to cause such a reaction. She watches as the blonde sniffs the air, tilts her head to listen until finally she locks in and takes off, Allison just a few steps behind. As much as Erica would like to run all out, Derek had been drilling that you don’t separate, especially when you don’t know what you are facing. Her taking off and leaving the huntress behind would expose Allison to extra danger if this was some kind of trap. So she held back but unlike last time, Erica had zeroed in on the sound and it was definitely more than one. She thought it might be two or three or maybe even more based on the pounding rhythm.

“Hsst!” Allison whispers but it was enough for Erica to slow and look back and see the brunette pulling out an arrow and loading her bow. She had heard it finally! “It’s slowing down” she says, barely a whisper and Erica is mildly impressed. She doubts another wolf, even ten feet away would have heard that. She nods and shifts to the right. If she remembers right, there is a clearing ahead with a small brook that runs through it before it empties into the lake. And if she is right, the sound is coming from that clearing.

Allison is moving quickly and quietly when she feels Erica slow almost to a crawl and realizes that they are just about at the clearing she had determined they were heading for. Erica looks back and nods and they move forward silently. A second later they left the trees and Erica freezes as Allison raises her bow aiming at the…horses? She frowns. Standing in the clearing were two large horses. The larger one was mostly brown with gray streaks in her mane. The second mare was more cream colored with a black mane and tail that was rather striking. There were also two foals with them, smaller than ponies, and besides the two…nothing else. Just horses.

Allison straightens up and stares at the horses and realizes that they were all staring at her and they seemed a bit overextended, their sides heaving and wet with sweat. There were no saddles or bridles however so she figured that they must have gotten loose somehow. “It was just horses?” she asks and turns to the blonde who still hasn’t spoken.

Allison is shocked by the stunned expression of the beta who is staring incredulously at the horses and is muttering something that she can’t pick up. “Erica?” she asks but her friend doesn’t seem to hear her. “Erica!” she yells and this time the beta jumps but she doesn’t pull her eyes away from
“Tell me you are seeing this” she pleads and Allison looks back at the horses, seeing the two foals drinking from the little brook. Her voice is strained and for a moment Allison wonders if Erica was one of the horse-crazy little girls, but she doesn’t think even she, at her most horse-crazy, would have reacted like this.

“Erica, they are just horses” she says and the blonde turns to look at her in shock.

“You don’t see them!?!” she whisper yells, tilting her head towards the small group.

Allison stares at Erica for a moment, seriously staring to worry when she glances over at the horses and catches the eyes of the larger one, still watching her. She pauses but doesn’t sense anything except she is surprised that they are that interesting to the animals. “Erica I see two horses and two foals. They must have gotten away from someone’s stable” she says softly and calmly, trying to avoid startling the other girl.

“Allison!” Erica whimpers and grabs her arm, luckily the one not holding the bow, and looks truly distraught. Allison decides she needs to call Derek and Boyd, now. Something is seriously wrong and she glances at the meadow and freezes. Everything slams to a stop and she feels the whole world pulled out from under her.

The four are still watching her and Erica, a fact made significantly easier now that they have faces. They also have arms, heads, chests, and the two mares have rather full breasts which normally wouldn’t be an issue except that they are not wearing any shirts. The two foals appear to be a boy and girl since the girl has her hair in braids and now that she thinks about it, the little foal had braids in her mane, which was no longer there.

Allison had seen a lot. She had read her family’s Beastiary and had been helping Stiles and Lydia with updating their records, but she wasn’t prepared for the sight of four centaurs standing in a field. She was staring at them when Erica pulled her hand away with a squeaking sound and suddenly she was staring at four horses again.

“Allison, grab my arm again!” she demands and the beta looks surprised but does so and the centaurs are back. “You are seeing centaurs?” she whispers and the blonde’s eyes widen and she nods her head. Okay, Allison has been studying things since she found out about Derek Hale and Scott and this past summer she learned a great deal from her cousins.

She doesn’t see the centaurs unless Erica touches her. Erica is supernatural, ergo they are using some kind of magic to hide their appearance. They are watching the girls, but they don’t seem to realize that they can see their true forms. “Erica…flash your eyes” she says quietly but with certainty.

Erica frowns but nods and looks back to the two female centaurs and her eyes flash gold and their reaction is immediate. The younger one, her human half looks only a few years older than them looks fearful and moves to block the two foals with her body. The older one, whose hair still has those grey streaks pulls out her own bow and has the arrow loaded in seconds just as Allison readies her own bow, now pointed back at the centaur. Stand off.

“All Erica, shift to beta form…slowly” she orders and the blonde, never taking her eyes of the elder centaur slowly shifts. Her teeth turn to fangs, her claws pop out, and her face morphs into the wolfen features. Her ears are hidden by her hair.

The centaur’s eyes widen in surprise at the sight of Erica but she doesn’t lower her bow, though she
does seem a bit less antagonistic.

“Identify yourself and your purpose in our territory” Allison calls out and the centaur’s eyes shift to her in surprise and stares at the huntress aiming straight at her.

“You are not a wolf human” she says. Allison is surprised by the cultured nature of the voice. There is an accent she can’t place exactly, but she is strongly reminded of her mother and the feeling that causes makes her swallow down the frog in her throat.

“No, but this is Hale pack land” she answers and the older woman’s eyes shift to Erica. She doesn’t reply but Erica growls just a bit though Allison knows that it was loud enough for the centaurs to hear based on the younger one’s reaction.

“For the moment perhaps” she replies and Allison pulls back a bit on the bow as Erica crouches and her growls are louder. Threatening us on our land?!

“We have dealt with bigger threats that you” Erica snarls and shifts her weight but she doesn’t move. The centaur’s bow is still tracking her as she has obviously been determined to be the bigger threat. Erica has seen Allison’s skill with the bow but she doesn’t doubt that the centaur is probably at least as good of a shot.

“It is not us you should fear” the centaur replies. “There is one greater than any wolf pack” she tells them, a slight tremor in her voice like she wasn’t entirely certain.

Allison pauses for a second. Centaurs were not in the Argent Bestiary nor were they in any of the ones she had viewed so far but she did remember her mythology and that they were often seen as teachers of heroes. Why would the two of them come to Hale land, which until recently had been left nearly abandoned thinking that someone else was…wait…why bring children to a fight? She relaxes her bow a bit and looks harder at the younger girl and the two kids whose body looks like they are both under 10 in human years. “Erica, shift back” she says while watching the older centaur.

“What?!” Erica yelps. “Are you kidding? They come here, threaten our pack and you want me to stand down?”

“I don’t think she was making a threat” Allison says watching the women and sees the woman’s eyes watching us. What she also has noticed is the shape of all four of them are in. Their hooves are rough, she sees cracks and chips in the hoof itself on all of them. Both of the kids and the younger woman’s tails are all tangled to some degree. There is also an air of desperation and stress on their faces that tells Allison that they are not a threat. “I think they are running from one.”

Erica looks uncertain but she can tell that Allison must have gotten it right based on the reaction of the younger she-centaur. “Running from something? Then why run here?” she asks looking at the quartet.

“They are looking for the Arcanist” Allison says with certainty and notes that the elder centaur’s eyes widen in shock as Erica makes a strangled noise. “Aren’t you? You are looking for the new power here and you know that it is the Arcanist.”

The woman seems to relax a bit as her bow shifts just a bit off target but definitely able to be pulled back in a blink. “You know of the Arcanist?” she sounds truly surprised. “I thought humans had forgotten that truth if they ever truly understood it.”

Allison nodded. “The Morgaine explained it to us. She is a friend of our pack.”
The woman lowers her bow and stares at them. “Claiming such a thing is dangerous if untrue. The Morgaine would not suffer such a claim made falsely.”

“Lucky for us it’s true” Erica replies with a snort. “She left a few days ago but I am sure she will visit again soon if you want to ask her.”

Finally the woman looks at the younger centaur and the two foals and seems to make a decision. She puts her arrow away but holds on to the bow. “I am Kreyna. This is my daughter Charyl and her foals Jaymin and Taleesa. We have come to seek sanctuary with the Arcanist” she states firmly.

Allison nods and puts her own weapon away. “Then you are in luck. The Arcanist is part of our pack.”

Kreyna looks disbelieving at that but she doesn’t challenge it. Erica pulled out her phone and sent off a text and gets a reply in a few seconds. “Derek is on his way” she tells them and smiles as she notices that both of the younger foals are staring at her from around their mother. She waves.

It only takes about fifteen minutes before they hear the sounds of movement and suddenly Derek, Peter, and Boyd all break through the bushes and slide to a stop. Derek stares for a moment before straightening up. “Next time” he growls softly at Erica “a bit more information than ‘we need you ASAP!’ would be appreciated.”

Peter is staring at the women looking concerned. “Where are the others?” he asks Allison who looks confused.

“It’s just the four” she replies.

Peter frowns and looks at his nephew who looks equally unhappy. He turns toward the she-centaurs. “Honored Mare. I am Peter Hale of the Hale Pack. Where is the rest of your herd?”

Charyl’s face falls and both kids suddenly look like they are about to cry. Kreyna straightens her back and looks at Peter with determination. “We are all that remains” she says simply.

Peter and Derek looked equally shocked and Allison thinks that there is something else there. “What happened?” Derek asks softly, kinder than she would have thought he would sound.

“All is this?” Kreyna says tensely with a glance towards Allison who looks stunned. Peter growls and Derek looks sick.

“I don’t get it” Erica complains.

“Centaur herds are like a wolf pack, but they are larger. In my studies of our records, the smallest heard I’ve read about was two dozen members. Not four” he adds with a growl.

Erica and Allison both swallow nervously. “But why would hunters target centaurs?” Allison asks. “There is no danger there.”

“All hunters rarely bother to justify their killing” Peter snarls but Derek cuts him off.

“I am Alpha Hale” he tells the women and then introduces the rest of present members of the pack. Kreyna introduces her family. “Why are you here?” he asks her in a respectful tone.

“We were fleeing the hunters when the lines shifted. While we do not use much magic, we knew that only something monumental could accomplish that. We were concerned but then heard that one of ancient power had been reborn. Others don’t remember the past, but we do. My husband
was a scholar of ancient magics and he knew. If correct, an Arcanist could mean true safety for our family.”

Derek nods. He is about to continue when sparks start appearing to the side and suddenly one of Stiles’ portals appear and Scott and Isaac jump through followed by the teen. “Holy shit! Is that a Centaur?!” Allison manages to control the growl she wants to let out at the other two boys reactions to the centaurs’….attributes.

Peter stifles a groan but Erica doesn’t quite manage to contain her snicker. Derek looks at the teen and is obviously counting internally to avoid saying something. “Stiles this is Kreyna and her family. Kreyna, this is Stiles…the Arcanist.”

Kreyna looks unconvinced. “The boy? But he is barely a child, even for humans. How can he be the Aracanist?” she asks even as the foals both maneuver for a better view along with their mother.

Stiles looks offended, especially when Boyd, Boyd of all people, snorts. Glaring at the beta he turns towards the centaurs and suddenly looks serious. His eyes go full white and the clearing suddenly goes deathly quiet. “I am Stiles Stilinski Kreyna. And this is my land.” His voice is deeper and Allison looks at the teen and is instantly reminded of Lizzie when she goes full out.

Apparently Kreyna feels the same as she lowers her torso in a kind of half bow as she bends her front leg, the others quickly following suit. “Arcanist.” Kreyna’s voice suddenly sounds significantly less proud and more desperate. “My herd…what is left us…beg your protection and sanctuary in your land.”

Stiles eyes return to normal and suddenly he looks less certain and turns to look at Derek who has obviously been moved by the woman’s plea. “Let’s talk” Derek says looking at Stiles as both of them walk over to the elder mare. Allison notices that Scott and Isaac are distracted from the older mares and are now totally enamored with the foals and she smiles. It seems their first refugees have arrived.
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

It's a short one but next one is longer to make up for it.

Phil Coulson is not looking forward to this meeting. Finding out that he had in fact survived Loki’s attack and had been alive for months did not go over particularly well with the group, especially Stark. But having to introduce a sorcerer to the guy...this was going to cause a headache of migraine proportions. Fury had happily dumped the whole thing in his lap and disappeared as effortlessly as he arrived. You would think that after 20 years the man would lay off the theatrics but he doesn’t. He really enjoys the air of mystery that he gives off when he does that stuff, even if he would never admit it. Add in the fact that the team is still reeling from the fight between Rogers and Stark, not to mention the breakout from the prison and even if Barton and Lang are being monitored now, the Captain, Barnes, Falcon, and Wanda are all still missing. Not to mention that Wakanda has become suddenly reluctant to discuss them anymore despite T’challa being so determined to catch him before. Then the sudden revelation that Wakanda wasn’t some poverty stricken closed off society but one that was so technologically advanced that it could literally make Stark jealous? Fury was still trying to figure out how they had managed to hide that from SHIELD and once the rest of the world realized that there was a new global superpower, and in fact that it had been one for longer than any other? He was glad that he was not having to deal with that.

“Phil!” looking up he spots Pepper Potts and smiles in relief. A friendly face. She wasn’t mad he was alive, just relieved.

“Ms. Potts” he replied politely as they walked towards the elevator.

“Tony said that there was something happening on the west coast?” she says slyly but then stops when he looks at her. “Of which I know nothing of course” she assures him.

Phil sighs. These people have no concept of compartmentalization. “Yes. I have an expert who agreed to brief the team coming. I hope we won’t need to get involved” he said with an expression that suggested the opposite.

Pepper nodded and they exchanged small talk before she got off on the floor below his. “You’ll do fine” she assures him before turning to the small crowd that was anxiously waiting for her with reports, notebooks, and other items demanding the attention of the CEO of Stark Industries.

When the doors open on his floor he steps out and quickly walks into the new conference room of the Avengers in their upstate headquarters. He liked the tower but there was something to be said about the security advantages of the new location. “Agent Coulson”

“Colonel Rhodes” Phil nods at the military man now assigned to work with Stark full time.

“So what’s up with this meeting Coulson?” Natasha asks as she takes her seat next to Stark and Vision.

It took a bit but finally everyone settled into place and gave Phil their attention. “So what is going on in California that has SHIELD so worked up?” Tony asks with his usual level of snark, tossing
up a piece of dried fruit and chewing. “My sensors haven’t detected any issues.” California was his home and the idea of something happening there without him even noticing was personally insulting. Of course it was northern California which made it easier to explain that he missed it.

“They probably wouldn’t” he begins as the door opens and Maria Hill steps in followed by the guest of honor.

“Agent Coulson. Dr. Strange is here” she says and despite her cool professional manner, she looks shaken and Phil guesses that the doctor probably arrived in style.

“Thank you. Dr. Strange, thank you again for coming. Everyone, I would like to introduce Dr. Stephen Strange” he says offering the man a seat.

Tony actually looks speechless and while he might wish it would last, the man quickly recovers.

“Exactly what kind of Doctor are you? Yoga? Acupuncture?” The man was wearing blue robes, yellow gloves and a red cape! He looked like some new age whack job!

“Neurosurgeon” Stephen says simply and stares at the other man.

“Friday?”

“Dr. Stephen Strange. Former chief neurosurgeon at Mt. Sinai Medical Center in New York. Graduated from Columbia University Medical School with top marks. Residency at New York University hospital. Suffered major trauma to hands in car accident which permanently injured him and made operating impossible. Considered one of top ten neurosurgeons in the world for the three years preceding his accident. Dr. Strange has received forty-six awards and recognitions from various medical associations including the Congress of Neurological Surgeons…”

“Okay, he’s legit” Tony mutters and ignores the looks of enjoyment at his reaction from the others.

“But what does a neurosurgeon have to do with this? Is it all some kind of mental condition?”

Phil admitted to himself he was a little smug at the reaction of the other man. “Dr. Strange is not here in his capacity as a doctor. He is here as the Earth’s Sorcerer Supreme.”

Leaning back Phil watches the reactions of the various members. Colonel Rhodes looks confused, but not particularly surprised as it seems like every day it is something or another. Natasha looks unimpressed, or disbelieving, but too professional to let on that she feels any particular way and Vision, unsurprisingly, looks totally unsurprised.

Stark however. “A wizard?” he finally manages.

“Actually most of those you call wizards are actually either Enchanters, skilled in the domain of Magecraft or Alchemists. I am a sorcerer. My domain of magic is sorcery…to be precise” Stephen responds in a tone that is eerily reminiscent of a disappointed teacher with an unprepared student.

Tony looks totally off kilter for a second before turning to Phil. “Seriously? So I’m guessing that Shield thinks this is some kind of magical mystery so you called in Harry Potter? Or are you a magical Sherlock Holmes?”

Stephen smiles ”Do I look like Sherlock Holmes?” he asks Tony.

“Actually” Phil interrupts ”Dr. Strange represents Earth’s mystical defenses.” Phil is very proud that he managed to say that with a completely straight face.

Tony stares before looking at the others. “No…just…no” he says shaking his head.
“Not that much of a surprise all things considered” Rhodes says with a shrug.

“You can’t believe this!” Tony complains looking at his old friend.

“It would seem that Shield believes it, so it is so difficult to accept?” Vision asks calmly.

Stephen nods in acknowledgement but he can see this isn’t going to be easy. “Perhaps this will help?” he offers and holds his hands up and creates a portal. The circle of fiery sparks forms on the side of the room and in a few seconds it opens to an endless field of blue white ice. The avengers all stand up to stare at the scene in front of them, the icy cold blasting into the room way more intense than the biggest freezer.

Tony moves over to the portal and holds out his hand but it doesn’t encounter anything. Reaching for his watch he touches a button and the face pops off and the mini drone hovers before him.

“Friday, send it over” he orders and the little robot flies through.

Stephen smiles and closes the portal and Tony jumps back. “Thanks…it was getting cold” Natasha says with a bland tone that causes several of her teammates to roll their eyes.

“Friday” Tony says looking at their guest. “Where is Tiny?”

“Tiny is currently six kilometers from the abandoned city of Etah in northern Greenland” the clipped voice of Tony’s AI replies.

“You can create a quantum tunnel?” Tony concludes.

“Magical portal” Stephen corrects and restrains his smile at the tic in the man’s face at his pronunciation.

“Tony, let’s allow the man to speak. You can worry about how he does it later” Natasha says finally and Tony looks like he wants to argue but he doesn’t have enough facts yet so he agrees with at least some dignity retained. Besides, now that he knows it can be done it shouldn’t take him long to figure out how to duplicate it.

“Thank you. The facts are that there was a major upheaval in Northern California in the magical structure of the planet. An ancient power site, a Nematon, which in this case was a large tree that sat on a cluster of the ley lines that cross our planet, was destroyed.”

“I am sorry, but what is a ley line?” Vision asks.

“Ley lines are geomagnetic lines that carry the energy of life on the planet, also called Telluric currents” Stephen replies easily. “They cross the earth filtering and purifying magic and life energy. Think of it as the blood system of the planet and Nematons are the liver.”

“So this is a problem because the magic energy will now be polluted?” Natasha guesses. Vision is looking less skeptical at the explanation.

“Normally it would be but a new Nematon was formed at the same time.”

“So everything is now normal again?” Rhodes asks.

“Not exactly. In this case a young man was learning about his own magic. In a fight with a…” he pauses and looks at Stark and sighs “dark druid, he managed to destroy her and the Nematon and ascended into a magical being known as an Arcanist.”
Tony felt his brain hurt. Druids?! That’s it, if he is going to have to sit through this he should go ahead and start drinking...maybe also investigate how this guy got a medical license.

“So is he a threat?” Natasha asks with a calculating expression.

“Depends. If someone or something threatens him or his? Then yes. Even I would find it difficult to challenge him in his territory. Otherwise? Probably not. He has other concerns to deal with that are happening as a result of his ascension.”

“Other concerns?” Rhodes asks looking interested.

“The last Arcanist had a significant impact on the lands he lived on. Magic changed the land making it more supportive of magical beings. We have already seen signs that creatures are heading there to make their home in his presence.

"That explains the mermaids" Phil mutters but based on the team's faces they heard him.

"Yes" Stephen nods at Phil with a smirk. "The ley lines all over this hemisphere are shifting as a result and his magic is naturally cleansing the land, air, and water removing many poisons that are present as a result of industrialization. I imagine that Northern California will become one of the most magical places on Earth in a very short time.”

“Disney isn’t going to like that” Tony mutters and Rhodey chuckles.

“You said the last Arcanist?” Natasha asks as everyone seems to be trying to figure out what to think about this new information.

“You probably heard of him. Lived in Great Britain. Name of Merlin” Strange loved the looks of absolute shock on their faces.

“Perhaps we can get some specific details?” Phil suggests and they all nod in agreement, even Tony who is starting to look interested.

Alan Deaton puts the covers back on the jars of herbs before returning them to his shelves. It is amazing how things are changing even in mundane ways. His herb garden at home, where he grows many of the herbs he uses in his work even if he is semi-retired as old habits die hard, has been blooming like never before and the herbs are at least twice as powerful as any he has grown since the fire. It appears that Mr. Stilinski’s presence is having a whole slew of unintended consequences.

He sighs. That reminds him of the letter he received this morning from his sister. She had left in order to report to the elder druids in North America, mostly so she could deliver the Morgaine’s instructions in person, and she had obviously enjoying sharing with him that they had been rather unhappy with the events here in Beacon Hills. They were even more unhappy about the rather terse instructions to ‘butt out’ of things that Marin had delivered to them. Apparently they had noticed the shifting magics and had determined that they need to intervene to restore the balance before she had arrived. They had argued but when his sister suggested they complain to the Morgaine and Merlin if they didn’t like it, they quickly found other projects. It seemed that his old teachers were not willing to challenge those two and Marin was enjoying a bit of notoriety from being one of the few druids to have had personal contact with the Morgaine in decades.

His sister had also informed him that she had already been approached by no less than a half dozen
fellow druids who wished to relocate to the territory and had asked her, and him as the former Hale Emissary, to forward their requests to Stiles and Derek. Alan had informed Derek of her reports to the council and the Alpha had agreed to discuss it with them both once she returned. The idea of more druids coming to the territory was one he hadn't mentioned yet but based on his last conversation with Derek and Stiles, there was certainly room in Stiles' territory even if not in Beacon Hills. These six were just the first and he was sure that practitioners of the other domains would be calling soon as well. Either way, it was up to Derek and Stiles and Alan would help how he could. While he had admittingly pulled back from the Hales after the fire, maybe more than he should, he was not about to ignore Elizabeth's instructions. Besides, his own magics were strengthening by being here and he rather appreciated that so he would be a bit more proactive if that's what was necessary.

The back door opened quickly and loudly and Alan looked up and watched as Scott walked in, shaking off the rain, and smiled as he looked at his boss before taking off his coat and moving over to the animal cages to begin his chores. “Good afternoon Mr. MCall. Anything new happening?” the vet asks easily.

“Not really. Still nothing from the other night. Jackson and Isaac are split on whether it was the same thing that Boyd and Erica encountered or not. We are all in agreement that it wasn’t the centaurs though. The scents were wrong and their tracks were actually really obvious so Stiles has been wondering if it was that Deer thing his dad saw. Oh, one thing though. We did find out that Charyl and Kreyna didn’t actually see all of their other herd members die. Three of the fighters were killed along with two other mares at the start of the attack, but then they were separated from the others when they fled but when no one showed up at their safe spot, Kreyna decided it was safer for them to run. Stiles wants to see if he can find a way to figure out if any of the others managed to escape.”

“A noble effort” Deaton agreed. He had already reached out to some of his own network to see if anyone had any word on the situation. The truth was that there were only a half dozen herds in all of North and South America so they are hard to find. He was about to share his news when a particularly loud thunderclap shook the entire building. Both men looked up in mild surprise before turning to the animals who were loudly protesting the noise. Scott rushed over to tend to the upset dogs and Deaton decided it could wait and he still had several weeks before Marin’s relocation efforts would need to be addressed so he would take so time to think about it and see if he could get any more information before calling on the Alphas.

“Would you calm down!” Lydia said exasperation clear in her voice as Stiles got up to pace for the third time in five minutes. He had been acting like this ever since he felt his friends getting closer to town.

“You don’t understand Lydia!” Stiles said looking entirely too uncertain.

“We get it Stiles” Allison assures him. “Your friends were there for you when you started all of this, but I don’t think you need to worry that they will now feel differently.”

Stiles looked at the two women for a second before plopping back down on the couch. He did realize they got it, but it was hard. Martinique had helped him so much when the rest of the pack had shut him out, not to mention getting him connected with Kelsey. Speaking of “Lydia did you still want to get that tattoo? The one that Allison and I got?”

Lydia only takes a second to remember their earlier discussion but she nods. “Definitely. After
Peter…yes I definitely want it. What about the others?” she asks.

Stiles blanches for a second. “I will have to ask Kelsey but Derek told me about his and I am not sure if any of the others will want to go through that.” He gets up and starts pacing again.

Lydia sighs and looks at Allison who is trying not to smile. Stiles had asked both of them to be here when his witch friends from San Francisco arrived so he could explain things. He and Derek had discussed it earlier, surprisingly it was all pretty civil, and decided to use the loft. Derek had the wolves out but were on standby if needed. Allison and Lydia were going to be there for moral support and because both of them knew Lizzie. Turns out Lydia had managed to exchange numbers with her during her visit and had been communicating via text and skype since the woman had returned home.

“What if they get mad?” Stiles asks biting his nail. Lydia frowned at the sight.

“Stiles, they are probably more concerned about their own issues. You said that Martinique was shook up from talking with the High Witch. She is probably star struck. Remember how Deaton was when he met Lizzie? I bet it is the same with her and the other witches she is bringing” Allison told him.

Lydia rolled her eyes. “Just explain it to them Stiles. They would have had to deal with you soon enough. You know that they are probably dealing with the itch Satomi and the other wolves described by now. Your territory easily covers that far” she says looking rather pleased.

“I am more interested in the Alchemist to be honest” Allison says looking curious. Both of the others look at her. “Come on, you don’t think that it’s funny that one of the chemistry professors at Stanford is actually an Alchemist? Besides, didn’t you say that the Marshall Pack’s Emissary was an alchemist? Maybe he could help her out?”

Stiles grunted. Not a bad idea actually. He wouldn’t mind learning a bit more himself and he wondered if the man would be willing to tutor him. He and Lydia had discussed pushing for more sharing among people in their territory but that had been a few days ago and they hadn’t really settled on a plan. But then M had called him that morning telling him that she was on her way. She was bringing two members of her coven, Kiran, witches from two other covens from UC-Santa Cruz and Berkley ironically enough, as well as the alchemist from Stanford. Apparently there were quite a few practitioners of the arts on and around colleges. Who knew?

“How far are they?” Lydia asks taking a sip of her tea. She had gotten Derek to ask Satomi for suggestions and the Alpha had sent the information of the blend she gets from a small shop in San Francisco. Jackson had taken her the next day and she had to admit that the trip had been worthwhile. She had gotten at least a dozen different blends and she was happily working her way through them.

Stiles looked off to nowhere for a second, that look that showed he was inside his magic, before he returned and looked even worse. “Less than a mile” he says and Allison stands up.

“I will go meet them and bring them up” she declares and heads for the door. Stiles manages to sit down for nearly a full ten seconds before he is up pacing again and Lydia takes another sip of tea. This will take some time she thinks.

Trager did not relish reporting this to Raldolph. He had joined the man in hunting the Alpha Pack
after his uncle had been killed by the crazy witch Kali when they ran into them up in Michigan two years ago. He had been enraged by the loss, his own family wasn’t hunting as long as Davies’ had been, let alone the Argents or any of the other major families, but they had three generations now so he wasn’t some noob hunter.

They had arrived easily enough and moved into a safehouse about forty minutes from Beacon Hills and things had been quiet, really quiet. Too quiet.

“Well?” Raldolph demanded as soon as he walked in. The man had been tense, but no more than usual during this hunt and Trager could tell that he was feeling like they had finally caught up.

He sighed. “There were some signs of the mutts, but they are all old. There has been no sign anywhere of them. There were animal mutilations, usually a sign they are targeting another pack, but that was days ago and since then there is nothing. We haven’t been able to access any sources as they all report to Argent and you didn’t want to alert him to our presence yet” he adds looking at the man.

“Argent is too close to the Hales. I don’t know how on earth he can stomach them, but I wouldn’t trust him for anything” he mutters.

He really didn’t want to share this last item. “I did get a message from my aunt back in Pennsylvania that she thought we should know about” he said slowly. Davies looked at him expectantly knowing he wouldn’t have mentioned it if it wasn’t important. “She said that Argent, the Grand Matriarch back in Europe, has issued a ‘kill on sight’ order on Gerard Argent.”

Randolf Davies is shocked. He knows that those old hunter families are crazy sometimes, but she put out a kill on one of her own? The man who ran the Argent clan in America for decades!? “What the hell?”

This was the hard part. “She also reported that the Hales had killed all but three members of the Alpha Pack and that Kali and Deucalion were both confirmed dead” he said as he watched his leader stare at him incredulously.

“What?” Davies roared. That was impossible! There is no way that beaten and worthless dog managed to kill or defeat seven alphas! Let alone Deucalion, Kali, and Ennis! Those three had killed more hunters than he could count. After the man turned on the hunters at the Argent Peace summit and betrayed them, Deucalion had been killing hunters without mercy or care. “Who reported this?” he demanded.

“Chris Argent reported it” Trager said carefully but he knew he had to continue. He had joined this hunt to avenge his uncle and if true, then things were over but he doubted that the others would feel quite the same way. “We have also heard from some less reliable sources that several other packs have confirmed it and are making overtures with Hale. We have fairly good info that the Marshall Pack is looking to formally ally with the Hales after they found out.”

Dammit! Davies did not have a plan for this. His men were hungry for revenge on the alphas and hearing that they were destroyed would not only risk him losing some men, but it was almost a guarantee to lose him the financial support he was getting from a number of the families. He might be able to get something out of this if he could finally end the Hales, but with Argent in the way, it would not be easy. He was going to have to actually talk with the man to know for certain what the hell was going on in Beacon Hills!
Chapter 12

Allison stepped out the door of the building just as two vehicles pulled in that looked fairly well packed with people. The first was a rather old minivan that had five people in it driven by a younger woman who looked only a few years older than herself. The man in the passenger front seat had a shaved head and at a guess he was Stiles’ monk friend. The other car was a Prius with two women in their thirties she would guess and a man in the back who looked about a decade or so older than her father. She watched as they parked and all got out looked around with that nervousness that she was beginning to associate with any supernatural who was in the territory and didn’t have Stiles’ ‘official’ permission.

Allison had spoken to Celeste and Arwen about two days after their visit and both of the fae women had looked significantly more relaxed than they were when they had first visited them after Stile’s change. Apparently being in his territory without ‘permission’ was irritating but manageable as it had built up so slowly that they hadn’t realized what was happening. After seeing Stiles and he making it clear they were welcome, both sisters had felt the sudden change and realized how much better it was once the feeling was gone. But this group all had that look of discomfort without really understanding why.

“Ms. Devereaux?” she politely asks the oldest woman.

“Martinique, please” she replies in a voice that carries just a hint of a French accent but enough to make Allison smile.

“Martinique, I am Allison. Stiles asked me to help you up to the loft” she told her and then looked at the others and smiled, her dimples on full display. “This way” she offered and started towards the door.

“How do you know Stiles?” one of the younger girls asks.

Allison glances at her with a questioning look. “How do you?”

“Oh!” she looks surprised. “Sorry, I am Sophie. I met Stiles a while back when he came to town to visit Martinique. He stayed over and we had a bit of a party.”

“Ah” Allison said with a smile. “You are part of the San Francisco Coven?”

Sophie looks surprised but nods. “You…aren’t a wolf?” she says more like a question.

Allison laughs at that and the reaction her father would have had to that question. “No, I’m human. But I am part of the pack” she says hitting the elevator button and the door immediately opens. Helps living in a building with only Derek’s loft occupied. “My boyfriend is a wolf though.”

The group all enter the elevator and Allison closes the doors. “If you are human…you are the Huntress” Kiran states easily.

Ali smiles at the man. “Yes. I am Allison Argent.”

One of the women doesn’t manage to control her gasp. “But the Argents are…” she suddenly trails off realizing that what she was about to say was probably not the best thing to say in a crowded elevator.

“The American branch of the family has lost its way, yes. But my father and I, with the support of
The elevator stopped and she opened the door with a smile and led the group down to the large metal doors currently standing open with Lydia standing there with a smile. “Welcome” she says with a near regal politeness “please come in.”

Allison hides her smile at her best friend’s performance. Lydia had warned her that she was going to be playing her royal persona to the hilt to drive home their standing but she had tempered with a politeness that made it so no one could really complain.

“M!” Stiles’ voice called out as they stepped in and the teen sped over and embraced the older woman in a hug.

“Blessed Goddess!” the woman with the coal black hair exclaimed in shock causing everyone to look at her in surprise, Stiles and Martinique both pulling out of their hug and staring at the woman in shock.

“Gwen?” Martinique looked at the woman with confusion.

“You said the boy had no mark you could see! His Witch mark is clear as day!” she says looking upset. At her words all of the women look at Stiles and stare for a moment before looking similarly shocked.

“Stiles? What happened” one of the women asks. “When did your mark appear? How did it…I mean I have never heard of that happening before.”

“It’s a long story Soph” the teen says with a tired smile.

“Perhaps before we start we can have some introductions” Lydia suggests archly moving over to the sitting area now set up to hold the seven guests and three Hale Pack members. “We have tea” she offers pointing to the nice set she purchased using Derek’s credit card several days ago after Satomi left and she recognized the benefits of having one of their own to have some formal hospitality.

Martinique nodded and everyone took their seats. “As you know, I am Martinique Devereaux, leader of the Coven of Mists. These are Jeannette Green and Sophia Mercer” she points to the two younger women. “both members of my coven who met Stiles when he stayed with us this summer.”

“This” she points to the woman who had exclaimed “is Gwen O’Brien, representative of the Coven of Nightingales in Berkley.” She points at the other woman “And this is Angela Brooks, representative of the Coven of…Slugs at Santa Cruz” she sighs as she says that.

“Go Sammy!” the woman says with a smirk and a sigh from the other witches. “What, we were founded by students at UC-Santa Cruz so why not?” she argues but no one challenges her. Stiles likes her immediately.

“I am Kiran” the monk says “from the Temple of Serene Awareness, enchanter.” He looks to the last man of their group “and this is…”

“Gabriel Chavez-Morales” the man says for himself. “Alchemist and Professor of Chemistry at
Lydia smiles at the man “and contender for the Nobel last year” she mentions and the man smiles in acknowledgement.

“And all of you?” Gwen asks politely.

“Stiles you know. As I said I am Allison Argent, of the Argent Hunter family, and this is Lydia Martin, Banshee” Ali introduces them and they look in surprise at Lydia.

“A wailing woman? Most unusual to be aligned with a wolf pack or hunters” Kiran says with a nod.

“Have to keep busy while I am working on my Fields Medal” she says with smirk and Gabriel laughs loudly.

“Oh I like you red” he says with a chuckle. “Quite a lofty goal.”

“Care for a wager?” Lydia says smiling sweetly.

Just as he opens his mouth to respond both Ali and Stiles say “It’s a trap” and then smile at each other.

“It’s a sucker’s bet Dr. Chavez-Morales” Stiles warns the man. “Lydia is a genius.”

The man looks at Stiles for a second and then at Lydia “What is Ergodic Theory?” he asks her.

Lydia smiles “I don’t know. I mean it couldn’t have anything to do with statistical properties of deterministic dynamic systems could it?” she says with her perfect empty headed expression while twirling a curl of her hair around a finger before the mask drops and she stares at the man knowingly.

“Hah!” the man laughs. “No bet!” He turns towards Stiles. “So boy, what is this craziness that the witches are all worked up about. I have to admit I have noticed some distractions in my own work but nothing truly worthy of note.”

“Right” Stiles says and then smiles. “What you do see when you look at me?” he asks the man who frowns but concentrates.

“Dios! You have the Alchemist Mark! But they said you had the Witch Mark” he looks at Martinique and the others.

“His Mark is gone!” Angela says shocked.

“Kiran?” Stiles asks and the monk focuses and then looks equally surprised.

“You have the Enchanter’s Mark.”

“Now it’s gone!” Gabriel yells in surprise. “Boy, what is going on here?”

Stiles sighs. “I met a sorcerer, named Stephen. He helped me discover that actually I had all six Marks, but that since my magic was split up between them, none of them were strong enough to be detected by normal practitioners. Once we figured it out, I learned how to shift my energy to any Mark and use that magic.”

“You possess all six magical natures?” Gwen asks astonished. “You can just shift between them?
“That’s unheard of!”

“Not really. Just really, really, rare. And when I started that was the way, but now…” he pauses for a second and everyone reacts.

“I see the Witch Mark” Jeannette says happily.

“But I am seeing the Alchemist Mark.” Gabriel says.

“And his Enchanter’s Mark is visible as well” Kiran adds looking at Stiles carefully.

“I can use all of them in any combination now” Stiles admits. “I also discovered that I am strongest in the border magics.” He explains how using overlapping magics works for him and all of the others are looking at him and taking it all in.

“This is amazing…but I don’t think this would be enough to warrant the attention of the High Witch” Martinique finally says.

“That. Okay, well it’s a story. First, Stephen, the Sorcerer who helped me?” he reminds them and they all nod “is actually the Sorcerer Supreme.”

The others are shocked. “You were tutored by the Ancient One?” Kiran asks looking fascinated.

“No. She has passed. Her successor, Dr. Strange, is the new Sorcerer Supreme. He helped me a bit and then connected me with Lizzie and Arthur, the Morgaine and the Merlin.”

“The High Druids?!” Angela blurts out and the others look at her. “My mother was a druid” she says before turning back to Stiles. “You know them?”

Stiles explains the Darach and how he and Allison went to see them and get help to free the pack from her spell. “So once we realized what we were dealing with, we knew we had to handle her.”

“Not to mention Deucalion and the Alpha Pack” Lydia reminds him. That leads into an explanation of the Alpha Pack and what it had done. Stiles skipped over his role and both Lydia and Allison realized he was drawing this out.

“Allow me” Lydia interrupted Stiles rather long and inarticulate storytelling and got them back on track. She told them about the fight and how they beat the Alphas and then fighting the Darach when Stiles called down the lightning and destroyed the Nematon.

“You destroyed a Nematon?” Gwen whispered in awe and more than a trace of fear.

“It had become corrupted by the Darach’s sacrifice” Stiles explained carefully. “Instead of cleansing the magic, it was polluting it. We couldn’t save it.”

“But the destruction of a Nematon, especially the one here with so many Ley Lines, should have unleashed chaos” Angela said in a small voice.

“It would have, but Stiles became the new Nematon. All of the ley lines are now anchored to him” Lydia adds just before everyone explodes.

“This is impossible!” Angela yells. All three of Martinique’s coven are looking over Stiles like he is about to fall apart any minute while Gwen goes absolutely pale.

“But that much power…it would incinerate you” Gwen whispers. “No one could handle that.”
“Obviously he did” Gabriel says sounding unconcerned and they all turn to him in shock. “Come on. The boy is right here and has been since all this happened. Obviously he didn’t burn up or get vaporized so logically something else happened. If we stop interrupting, we might get somewhere” he adds pointedly.

“Before that, we should probably mention that all four Fae Queens were here and involved” Lydia mentions and actually smirks when Sophia faints. The other witches look equally distraught. Both Kiran and Gabriel look intrigued.

“All four?” Kiran asks slowly while the Witches seem to be having trouble breathing. “Enchanters do not often cross path with the Fae, dwarves yes, but rarely the fae as they make their own magic. But even still I have not heard of even one Queen appearing this century.” He turns towards Gabriel

“Don’t ask me. I heard of them of course, but” he shrugs. “Not really my thing.”

“All four Queens” Martinique is breathing heavy. No wonder the High Witch called. The congruence of those four Ancient Powers would be enough to set the world’s magic buzzing and no doubt drew her attention.

“It gets…worse?” Stiles mutters and everyone looks at him and he looks at the girls with a pleading expression. Lydia takes sympathy on him.

Over the next few minutes she takes them on a full explanation of the ‘night’, through the battle, Stiles being overwhelmed, and the appearance of the Morgaine and the Queens and finally Stiles ascension to his new position as Arcanist. They don’t interrupt but all three of them can see the questions in their eyes.

“So this new role means that your magic is claiming the lands. It is what we are all feeling?” Kiran asks.

“Yes. As my power expands, those within my territory will feel my ‘presence’ you could call it. I am connecting pretty far and all of you are now in my territory” he says. Allison stands up and pulls over the board with the map with Stiles’ current territory marked on it. “This is it so far.”

Martinique looks at him carefully. “Stiles, what does this mean it is your territory.”

Taking a deep breath Stiles starts to explain how Lizzie and Stephen explained it to him. All of the particulars, even an abridged version of his conversation with Queen Mab, until he gets to the end.

“So you are, in essence, equal to the High Lords. Equal to the High Witch, the Morgaine, the others?” Kiran says slowly. “We feel this ‘pressure’ because we are in your lands without permission?”

Stiles nods and looks guilty. “Yeah…sorry about that.”

Lydia manages something like a snort, but ladylike. “Stiles, stop apologizing. The simple fact is things are changing and everyone will need to adjust.” She turns to their visitors. “The reality is that you are now living in the Arcanist’s territory. If you wish to remain, you must acknowledge his mastery and position. If not, you can leave” she tells them abruptly and sees them all start to bristle. “But some advice. The Morgaine told me very honestly that here, in this place, she was not sure that she could challenge Stiles successfully. The Fae Queens acknowledge his position and authority as do four wolf packs at the moment. Not to mention some Fae settlers, brownies, dwarves, and several centaurs.”
“And the Argent Grand Matriarch is petitioning the Hunter’s Council to put Stiles’ territory under Hunter’s Interdict” Allison adds.

All of them looked shocked at that. “So what is involved in getting permission” Gabriel asks abruptly.

Lydia smiles and leans forward. “Well…” the next half hour has Lydia laying it all out in fine detail. Stiles watches her in surprise, rarely having to even get involved other than confirming what she is saying. The banshee had been paying much closer attention to what Derek and Peter were doing than Stiles realized and he was once again in awe of her abilities.

“So basically we would be subject to you in the same way as to the High Witch?” Gwen asks Lydia after a discussion of mutual protection.

“Dual allegiance” Lydia clarifies. “As High Witch, we would of course respect her authority over the craft, but within this territory, Stiles’ authority is superior. Hopefully they would be able to work it out between them but ultimately if there was direct conflict, you would have to choose. If you didn’t choose Stiles, you would not be permitted to remain here.”

“And other duties?” Angela asks with a shrewd expression.

“Shared protection and defense. Willingness to teach and educate those capable, contributing to the Beacon Hills Sanctum” she starts to list.

“Wait, what?” Gabriel and Kiran both ask.

“We are building a sanctum here, like the ones in London, Hong Kong, and New York. It will contain a library so one requirement is copies of any and all manuscripts, scrolls, and books from all practitioners for the new Library. Stiles also reserves the right to ask you to teach others. Other than that, obey the law, don’t cause trouble, require informed consent for all magical participants, and a few other common sense rules.” Lydia smiles happily and the questioning continues.

They take a break when Allison suggests some food and they begin pulling out sandwich materials. Everyone is feeling better when Jeannette comes up to Stiles. “Stiles, earlier Lydia said several Centaurs. Didn’t she mean a herd?”

Stiles suddenly frowns. “No. We found two adults and two foals recently whose herd was attacked by hunters. Several were killed and they scattered. Kreyna said that when no others showed up at their rendezvous point, they ran and found their way here.”

Jeannette looked sick. She knew herd sizes. “They were all lost?” she pleaded with him to deny it.

“We think so, Peter told us they wouldn’t abandon each other but we don’t know for certain and there’s no way to figure out what really happened yet. Kreyna and them crossed the Rockies to get here so they were far from my territory even before it happened.”

“Did you do a blood affinity spell?” she asks after a moment.

“A what?” Stiles looks confused. He hadn’t heard about that spell.

“A blood affinity. It’s a finding spell using blood to find those of shared blood. You could use a drop of blood to locate anyone who shared it” she explained.

“WHAT!?!?” Stiles exclaims. The next few minutes are a bit of chaos as Jeannette explains the spell, a rather simple one but the other Witches all confirm it was rather basic. “Why didn’t I learn
about this?” he looks at Martinique in reproach.

She looks just as surprised. “It’s a coven spell Stiles. You would need the Witch Mark to cast it and it requires three Witches to actually use the spell. I never considered telling you because I thought you couldn’t use it.”

“But we have three witches now” Allison points out.

Stiles starts dancing around. “Yes! You’ve got to help us. We could see if any of Kreyna’s herd survived!” he was bouncing around.

“But even if they did, we couldn’t help them” Gwen reminds him.

Stiles stops for a second before he gets a huge smile on his face. “Wanna bet?” He slips on his ring and suddenly starts his hand moving and a portal opens up to a grassy, sun filled field. “Everyone through!” he says happily and tilts his head.

The visitors are startled but both Lydia and Allison both laugh and walk through the portal stepping into the field. Gabriel and Kiran quickly follow, both of them amazed as they transition through. Martinique, Jeannette, and Sophia all slowly follow leaving only Gwen and Angela holding back. “If you want to wait here you can” Stiles tells them. “We are just outside of town.” Both women look at each other and then, straightening their backs, they step through with Stiles right behind.

“Oh my” Angela whispers as Stiles looks around her and sees Kreyna, Charyl, and the foals all being introduced to the others.

Stiles rushes past and happily greets the mares as the final two witches are introduced. “Kreyna, we know of a spell that may help us find out what happened to your herd” Stiles announces and the centaurs all looks stunned.

Lydia sighs. “Stiles, tact please.” Lydia turns to the two elder mares and explains the witches spell with significantly more grace and care.

“And if they help me, I can put all my magical energy into the spell so we should be able to reach pretty far” Stiles suggests.

Both mares are willing and Jeannette draws her Athame, the ceremonial knife, out and draws blood from all four of the Centaurs. Mixing it up with some herbs that Stiles had gathered from their stocks that they needed they had a bowl of almost black liquid and Stiles sat down with the three witches from San Francisco. “We could use you both” Martinique said gently to the other witches who had held back but they finally nodded in agreement and the six were all together surrounding Stiles in a circle.

Martinique took the lead casting the spell with everyone else supporting her. “I sense others. But they are far away” she says and Stiles hears Charyl gasp in shock. “There is a strong presence… there!” she says and Stiles can feel it along with the others. Far away, outside his territory for sure, but he can almost see it. Inspiration hits and Stiles, still focused on his link with the other witches, shifts his focus to sorcery and opens a portal.

The others are surprised to see the portal open but not as much as the Centaur on the other side who jumps back. “Daython!” Charyl screams and the male centaur looks at the mare in stunned shock.

“Charyl!” he yells and both of the foals peek out at the voice.
“Papa!” they yell.

“Come through the portal!” Allison yells and then realizing that the stallion is shocked steps through and is suddenly next to him. Glad that Stiles gave her a charm to see the supernatural so she didn’t need to touch a wolf anymore, Allison is about to yell at the man when she spots the others. Nearly a half dozen Centaurs are all coming up to them and the portal. “Kreyna and Charyl are safe, come with us and we can reunite your herd!” she yells.

She looks up but Daython is already through the portal and has reunited with his wife and children all hugging and embracing happily.

“Borton!” Kreyna’s voice calls out across the portal and one of the males looks shocked. “All of you! Come through!” she demands and after a moment’s hesitation they all race across the mystical boundary and Allison steps back through and it closes.

Allison is watching the reunion when Stiles yells out. “Ali, get ready!” and he starts moving his hands. She steps back as a new portal opens and nodding she steps across and sees a female centaur staring at her in shock with her bow drawn and pointed at the Huntress.

“Uh, hi” Alison starts but suddenly Kreyna calls out.

“Misanthra! Bring the others across. We have safe haven!” she yells out and the mare looks at the portal and sees the elder centaur and her weapons lower.

“Kreyna?” she says in disbelief but nods quickly and pulls out horn and blows it. In seconds there is the sound of hooves and Allison sees nearly a dozen centaurs, half of which are foals, racing towards them.

“This way!” she yells and steps back inside. Kreyna calls and the others cross over.

Stiles opens four more portals, each time getting fewer and fewer numbers, until finally he breaks the spell and starts to look around. In the clearing there are currently twenty-six centaurs all total and happily rejoicing at their reunion.

“We should probably have asked Derek before we did this huh?” Stiles says happily as he looks at the surrounding reunions going on. Kreyna had told them that their herd was thirty five strong when they were attacked so they lost nine, but now they were all back together. Each group had thought the others had been lost so the emotions were running high.

“Well, you can call Derek while I get busy” Lydia says with a sniff and starts forward toward Kreyna who is talking with two obvious elders. Stiles smiles and pulls out his phone to call. Despite not asking he knows Derek will…he freezes. Oh my god!! DEREK!
“Thank you again for inviting me, it was fun” Kira said happily looking at Erica as they drove back from their shopping trip.

“Well we don’t have everything in Beacon Hills so a trip to Sacramento for new school clothes for next week was worth the drive” Erica replies.

“Why didn’t Lydia and Allison want to come along?” Kira asks.

“They are helping Stiles out. He has some friends coming up from San Francisco and they are giving him some moral support for the visit.”

Kira looks confused. “If they are friends, why would he need support?”

Erica frowns. To be honest, she didn’t really get it either. “Honestly? I’m not totally sure. I mean they like Stiles, but he is worried that they will be upset about some things that have been happening lately.” She sighs dramatically “I really think he is being overly sensitive about it all.”

“You all talk about him so much I almost feel that I know him already” Kira says with a smile. She had spent time with Allison, Lydia, and Erica since she moved to town. She had also met Isaac, Boyd, and Jackson a few times but she had only heard about Stiles and their other friend Derek. She wasn’t sure why but apparently the two men were dating and it was pretty serious as she had overheard the others talking about how they were building a new house together which she was pretty surprised about for someone still in high school but the others all acted like it was no big deal.

The two of them had had a good time in Sacramento and Kira was definitely feeling better about moving here despite how weird her mother was still being about the move. Ever since they had been here, her mother had been going out alone and coming back looking more and more worried. She wouldn’t talk about it to Kira and her father was acting like nothing was wrong and doing a bad job at pretending. So while her family life was strained, at least she was making friends.

“So…Stiles and Derek??” Kira asks slyly.

Erica laughs. “I shouldn’t laugh, but as you know Derek is older and Stiles’ dad is the Sheriff so it has been fun to watch him squirm and try to avoid getting in trouble.”

“But his dad is okay with them dating?” Kira says sounding doubtful. She can’t imagine her parents letting her date anyone let alone someone several years older.

“Yeah. Derek is a good guy and wouldn’t do anything bad and the Sheriff knows that and trusts him, but we still are required to give them a hard time” she laughs and smiles.

They drive for a few minutes before Kira looks over at Erica for a second before she finally decides to ask. “Erica…what was the deal with that day at the art fair. I mean we all got those pieces of jewelry, even my mom said mine was beautiful, but Lydia seemed really upset when we left and then she wanted to borrow my piece for a day to show Stiles? It just seems really strange.”

Erica takes a few minutes to think about it before she responds. “It’s kind of hard to explain. Beacon Hills is…well a little strange sometimes” she explains slowly. “The Preserve, the woods around town, can be weird…it’s best not to go there alone or at night. Stiles and Scott once went out looking for a dead body in the woods and it was not the smartest move.”
“Oh my god! What happened?”

“Well…” Erica drawled out slowly “Stiles was busted by his dad for listening in on his official police calls as well as for being stupid. Scott avoided getting caught but was bitten by an animal when he got lost and accidentally found the body.”

Kira looks stunned. “But he’s okay though” she says sounding concerned.

“Oh yes, he’s fine now. But it wasn’t the best of times. Especially as the body was Derek’s sister” she says sadly.

Kira looks completely stunned. “His sister?” she whispers.

“To be fair, they didn’t know Derek yet, nor did they know she was his sister. And they have moved past it and are all good now so despite it being probably one of the worst ways to start things, it has worked out. But going into the woods…not a smart thing if you don’t know what you are doing.”

Kira nods and looks up and spots the ‘Welcome to Beacon Hills’ sign. They are driving through the woods so Kira is staring around them trying to spot anything strange but figures that in the daylight and close to the road it’s probably not too bad. They drive around a curve and all of a sudden the car slams to a halt, throwing Kira forward almost hitting the dashboard.

“Erica!” she yelled out, rubbing her chest where the seatbelt had cut into her. “What happened?” she looks over and sees the blonde, hands clenched on the steering wheel, pale-faced and trembling, looking terrified. “Erica?” she says a lot more timidly not sure what could cause this reaction. She glances out the windshield, thinking that maybe it’s a deer or something, but there is no deer and she starts to look back at the other girl when she freezes. Turning very slowly she looks back out to the road in front of them.

The screams of both girls ring out over the Preserve.

Chris Argent is not happy about this. Shutting the door to his car he looks around and spots at least four probable hunters from Davies’ crew. He glances at Jamison and nods and the other hunter takes a covering position behind Chris as they walk into the coffee shop.

Walking into the place Chris immediately spots Davies and who he is fairly sure is his number two, Trager. He also spots a woman several tables away who screams hunter but is desperately trying to look inconspicuous. He barely refrains from sighing at the rather pitiful display but then again Davies and his crew are half-assed in just about every way. Their obsession with Deucalion has raised many concerns in some hunter circles as being too reckless and risky.

“Argent” Randolph Davies says with obvious disdain, not bothering to stand up, as he looks at the other hunter and doesn’t see how he could have fallen so low from his family’s reputation.

“Davies” Chris replies, equally dismissive and he notes how the other man isn’t able to hide his reaction to that dismissal as well as he thinks he does. “Trager” he adds looking at the other man who appears surprised to be recognized. “I admit to being surprised you contacted me” he says as he sits down. Jamison moves over and sits with the female hunter surprising her and making the other two men look even more uncomfortable. Chris imagines that they would be even more upset if they knew about the other six hunters he has targeting their men and one watching their base. Davies is a bull who doesn’t appreciate finesse. He has been reporting his moves to his contacts on
the council and Chris has his own sources and knows significantly more than they realize.

Randolph almost snarls but he pushes it down and looks at the other hunter, recognizing the almost aristocratic air that Argents have among other hunters. Katie wore her name like a badge, and it seemed her brother, for all his weakness about the Hales, was perhaps a bit more than she had implied. “We heard that you reported that Hale had a run in with Deucalion’s pack of Alphas” he says, his tone clearly implying disbelief.

“No, I reported that the Hale Pack killed Deucalion, Kali, and most of their entire group. The twins and Ennis were alive when last seen but they were long gone before the fight.”

Randolph snarled but Chris could tell that Trager was affected. From his files the man’s brother and sister, both hunters, had been killed when they tried to target the alphas over a year ago. “You expect us to believe that Hale, that worthless dog, managed to kill them? And what, you just believed him when he told you that? God you truly are worthless…a disgrace to the name of Argent.”

Chris smiled. He recognized this as classic Gerard. Provoking and pushing thinking he knew Chris’ weak spot. “Actually, I was invited to the fight. Got to see both Kali and Deucalion killed with my own eyes. And that’s after my family killed off one of the alphas and several of their newest muscle betas just before. My cousins were very happy to do so and reported that to the Council as well.” He paused and smiled a smile that had made weaker men and wolves very nervous, “I think the best part was the look on Deucalion’s face when he realized how utterly he had been beaten.”

Trager’s face told a story as the man seemed to finally believe that the Demon Wolf was dead. but Randolph Davies was the exact opposite. Chris could see his mind spinning, trying to gain some traction for his obsession now forever out of reach. “You’re lying” he snarls and Chris snorts at the venom in the man’s voice.

“No, I’m not. And you know it. The Hunter’s Council is convinced and will be laying an Interdiction on Beacon Hills any day now and I think that is why you are desperate to find something. But you won’t. The Hale Pack is strong, stronger than any pack you have faced, and they have allies that you are not prepared for. My Grand Matriarch has even declared a death bounty on my father’s head for his actions in Beacon Hills. Trust me, you do not want to be the next person on her list” he warns them quietly.

“You think I am scared of some old woman on the other side of the world?” Davies snorts at the pretentiousness of these old hunters.

Chris laughs. “No, I don’t. Clarissant will only kill you and she will do it quickly. You want her to be the one to end you. Beacon Hills is under two High Alphas. You break their laws in their territory, and the Council won’t lift a finger to save you and you can only pray that they will kill you quickly. No one will come for you, no one will avenge you, and there will be no repercussions for anything they do to you. You are under their laws and they do not like Hunters like you Davies. This is free advice, a warning if you will, Hunters who come here better follow the rules or they will face judgement and I’ve read about you and you do not want to face them. Leave. Take your team and get the hell out of here and don’t stop or come back.” Chris leans back and sees the barely constrained fury on the man’s face as he spoke his words.

“You are a traitor and a fool” Davies growls and he glances out the window, his hand starting to move when Chris cuts him off.

“Don’t be stupid” Chris says sharply but quietly. “You don’t want to cause a scene do you?” he
asks with a smile and glances out the window to the roof the building across the street. Davies looks over and sees the man standing there, his man…no, not his man, it’s someone else! The man nods and leaves. He looks at Argent and snarls.

Chris stands up. “You are out of your league Davies and you should be glad that Hale and I took care of Deucalion. He would have wiped you out without breaking a sweat. Go home and let your team finally celebrate that the Alpha Pack is finished. The only thing here for you is failure and death.” He walks out, his back to the men in a sign of outright contempt even if he knows Jamison is guarding him as the men follow and they get back in the SUV.

“Do you think he believed you?” Jamison asks as they leave the parking lot as Chris signals the others to roll out.

“No” Argent sighs. “I think he’s an idiot who is too enamored with my sister and father. He is convinced he is right and everyone else is weak and stupid.”

“It is a bit strange working with the wolves” Jamison admits and Chris laughs. “Yeah it is. But I believe in our Code, that we are supposed to be protecting people. Hale and Stilinski will protect more people than we ever could.”

Jamison looks confused. “But Hale’s a wolf, will he protect regular people? And what about the truly dangerous ones?”

Chris shakes his head. “Derek may not be a bastard, but Peter Hale is there and if anyone crosses the Hale Alpha then Peter will cheerfully kill them. And while he is magical now, trust me, no omega or crazy wolf that shows up in Beacon Hills intending to cause trouble is going to live to see the next morning once Stilinski finds out. Hale might be able to be handled or soft on wolves, but Stilinski? No, he won’t forgive anyone that pulls something.”

Jamison nods uncertainly. He had only seen the kid a few times, but he had heard both Chris and Allison talk about him. They were very respectful of his power and he heard from the French Argents that the Grand Matriarch was even more cautious about him. He shrugged and let it go. He became a hunter because his family had worked with the Argents for four generations. He had been trained by Chris and respected him. He wasn’t willing to compromise on monsters, he had simply refined the definition. Besides, the Hales had helped set-up the Alphas so he guessed that Chris was right. You crossed the Hale Pack…you died. Guess it didn’t matter if you were human, wolf, or other. Besides, with the kid’s dad a cop…well he would be determined to keep the town safe so that his dad was safe too so that was good enough for him.

Derek is running. Stiles had texted and told him to get to the Centaur clearing with Peter, code 10-78. After the situation with the Brownies, Stiles had decided to create codes for the pack like the police used. A 10-78 was a simple ‘need assistance’ versus a 10-39 which was ‘urgent-guns blazing’. So he knew that while Stiles wanted him to hurry, it wasn’t something dangerous. Peter was with him so that was easy and he had called in Boyd, Isaac, and Jackson to join them.

It wasn’t long before they broke through the trees and arrived at the clearing and Derek was stunned. The clearing was full of Centaurs! “What?!” he gasped out just as three of the more fit Centaurs turned towards him with their bows raised. He flashed his eyes at the three but then he heard Stiles.
“Derek! We found the rest of the herd and brought them here!” the teen yelled while waving at his mate. Derek saw the teen talking with Kreyna, Lydia, two women he guesses are some of Stiles’ friends, and two older Centaurs.

“Obviously” Peter says with an honest smile as they walk towards the group. The three guards looking less worried as they put away their bows.

“Alpha Hale” Kreyna says looking happier and less burdened than the last time he had seen her “the Arcanist and his friends found our herd and brought them here.” She turns to the other two “This is Vorgin” she introduces the male Centaur who nods respectfully which Derek returns “and this is Beverly” she indicates the mare.

“Beverly?” Peter looks mildly offended.

The elder mare just laughs. “My father had a human friend he was rather fond of and I am named for her.” She looks back to the Alpha “My apologies Alpha Hale, for coming into your territory without prior permission” she says formally.

Derek spots Stiles looking like he is about to object. “Elder Beverly, my mate is High Alpha and more than entitled to offer sanctuary to any. And that is before his duties as Arcanist. If he has invited you here, then you are most welcome” Derek says easily and confidently and notices the slight easing of reaction in all three of the Centaurs.

“How did you find them?” Peter asks curiously.

“That’s the best part” Stiles says and looks at the woman next to him. “Martinique, oh…guys this is Martinique from San Francisco, the witch I met there and my friend who came up today. She and some of her coven told us about a spell that allowed us to use the blood of Kreyna and the others to find her herdmates. Once we cast the spell I was able to open a portal and call them across. We found 22 of them!” Stiles says sounding proud.

Derek and Peter both look impressed. “Stiles, that is amazing. I didn’t know you knew a spell like that.”

“Well he didn’t” Martinique admits looking sheepish. “We never mentioned it because it takes three witches to cast, so since we didn’t think he was a witch, it never came up.”

Both men nod in agreement. Everything had been happening so fast. “But that’s not the best part. Derek, Peter…we can use the spell on you!” Stiles exclaims.

Both men pause but it is Peter who recovers first. “Cora!” Derek looks shocked but looks over at Stiles for confirmation and the teen is happily nodding.

“Yes. We can use your blood to find her with the spell, and then open a portal to get her!” Stiles exclaims.

Derek agrees quickly and Martinique calls the others over. After some preparation they are ready and everyone is gathered around to watch them. The Centaurs pull a bit away from the spell and the rest of the pack are between the herd and the witches as they all watch.

“Alpha Hale, my respects as well” Gabriel says as he introduces himself. “I understand things are hectic but I wanted to introduce myself. I knew your grandfather.”

Derek looks at the man in surprise but nods just as Stiles and the others cast their spell but nothing seems to happen. After a few moments Stiles opens his eyes and looks at Derek and Peter. “I can
sense her but she is much farther away than the herd was.”

“You can’t reach her?” Peter asks sounding defeated.

“Not like with the others. I think I can get a portal within a mile or so, but something is blocking me getting any closer” he admits.

“The Alvarez Pack may have wards on their land” Peter says thoughtfully. “But you can open a portal close?” he asks.

Stiles nods as Peter turns to Derek. “Let me go. I can go through and find Cora and once I do Stiles can open the portal to bring me back. I can also reestablish contact with the Alvarez Alpha.”

Derek pauses for a second before nodding and turning to Stiles. “Can you do that? Find him later?”

Stiles looks unsure. “I’m not sure. If they have wards up I may not be able to sense him to know when to open the portal.”

Peter rolls his eyes and slowly pulls out his phone. “Or I could just call you” he says very slowly.

Stiles actually blushes as Lydia chuckles but then he opens the portal and Peter is jumping through. “I’ll call within three hours” he yells out as he hits the other side and takes off.

Stiles closes the portal. “So, you ready to meet everyone” he asks Derek happily and the Alpha just nods. Cora will be home soon but now he has to meet the herd, get them figured out, and meet all of Stiles’ friends and then he plans to sit down with Professor Chavez-Morales to talk about his grandfather. Stiles never does things halfway but the look of pride and happiness on his mate’s face is worth it.
Stopping the car, she looks around at the downtown area of the town with a careful eye. The place doesn’t seem to be much of anything, but she has read the reports and she knows that appearances can be deceiving. Just because it doesn’t look like anyplace special or worthy of attention, things are happening here and people want to know what’s going on. She doesn’t have too much time to spare, but then she rarely needs that much time to find what she needs, especially when no one is expecting or concerned that she is around.

Looking around she spots the building she was looking for and confidently walks up to the main doors. She walks in easily enough, a town like this, even with everything going on here, doesn’t have security like in big cities, even in the seat of the county’s government. She pauses at the directory to locate her target and heads for the stairs to the third floor. A few minutes later and she is walking in the doors to the Mayor’s Office.

“Hello” she says with a smile at the woman at the reception desk, her name plate saying ’Mary’ clearly displayed. “I was hoping that I could speak with Mayor Roberts if he had a moment?”

The older woman looks at her, easily assessing her attire and more specifically the high quality and cost of her outfit and quickly becomes much more welcoming.

“I am sure the Mayor would be able to spare a moment if you can wait a second?” she asks.

Nodding she sits down in one the chairs obviously designed for waiting guests and sets her portfolio in her lap and opens the screen which lights up with the newest tech. She pretends not to notice Mary’s eyes widen at the sight or the way she starts typing something on her computer. Seeing the tech, plus the clothes, sends the exact message she wants, and she is certain that Mayor Roberts will be coming out rather quickly.

“We have this section of the hospital closed off. Operating room 4 is set up and we have established a recovery room immediately next door. After that we can move him to examination room 8 which has been converted to a patient room. This way we never have to remove him from this hallway and we will have no other patients or guests in the area. Your deputies can secure this area right?” Melissa asks looking at Noah.

“Yes. I have gotten four deputies from Beacon Valley on loan to add to our numbers and we will always have two deputies stationed here. I also have gotten permission from the mayor to temporarily enlist several of Chris’ guys to provide some additional coverage in a less conspicuous way. During the transport in and out and during any major moves I will have at least four deputies here” Noah sighed unhappily. Melissa had handled it professionally when he told her at the hospital about McCall’s actions but that night she stopped by and had let it all out over several drinks. He had offered wine but she went straight to Noah’s good Scotch and he couldn’t blame her. It also took about 12 hours before the entire hospital had found out about her ex’s actions and Noah was fairly certain that Raphel McCall should definitely avoid any injury because if he set foot in the place, Noah doubted that he would enjoy the experience.

“Are we still on schedule?” Melissa asks again looking determined not to let things rattle her.

“Yes. He will be transferred tomorrow at 9:30am from Eichen under police escort. Once here, there will a full crew during surgery and recovery. According to the doctors, it should take about 1-2
hours for the procedure depending on circumstances. Then 2 hours for recovery and two days before he is transferred back” Noah recites what they both already knew.

“Will he be here?” Melissa asks the question she had been holding back every since this all started. She can handle her ex, but she definitely wants some time to prepare.

“Apparently not” Noah replies and sees the look of surprise on her face “it seems that he has some important work in San Francisco to attend to and he feels that we can manage it here without him.” He watches her face as Melissa processes this.

“So after all his maneuvering the FBI won’t even be here to help?” she finally asks looking pissed.

“Nope” Noah replies feeling about as annoyed as she looks. Agent Jones had even called to apologize again but it seemed that McCall had some powerful friends up the chain of command. She had pretty much been shut down when she tried to get him transferred out. Seems that someone in DC was in his corner and supporting his actions though she couldn’t figure out who. Noah had been surprised by her candor, but she had made it clear she didn’t like the situation at all and felt that something was rotten.

Melissa finally sighed but nodded. She would be sure that they were ready. Her team was great and after everything else they had been dealing with, she felt they could handle it. She resolved that maybe it was time to talk to Noah, Stiles, and Derek about bringing in some others on the hospital staff about what is really going on like they did at the Sheriff’s station. She could definitely use some back up with all the crazy.

Derek and Stiles had pretty much finished up speaking with Beverly and Vorgin in their official role as herd Elders. Derek had easily agreed with Stiles’ decision to bring them here and after learning of Stiles’ ascension and role as Arcanist, they were very hopeful to be permitted to stay in Beacon Hills and establish a permanent range. Stiles had asked about what they would do and how they would live, and it turned out that the Centaurs were historically teachers, trainers, artists, and builders. In fact, Daython, Charyl’s mate, was an architect and offered to assist with the new sanctum house. It seems that Centaurs were highly sought-after craftsmen.

“My hope is to establish a formal school” Stiles explains to Beverly as they talk on their own as Daython and Vorgin have both taken Derek aside to discuss working on the new house. “I can’t leave my territory and Lizzie suggested I stay inside Beacon Hills for at least a year to avoid causing issues.”

Beverly laughs. “The ley lines have been shifting slightly around you, difficult for any to truly tell, but there if you look at it. Once you settle down, they will as well and they you can travel more freely. Not to mention you could probably astral travel without complications.”

Stiles looks gobsmacked. He hadn’t thought about that! But he met Stephen when the sorcerer was in his astral form. If he could learn how, then he could do some traveling as well. It wouldn’t be the same as actually going there, but it would be something. “We would be happy to assist with teaching any you wish” Beverly continued. “You are correct that many will seek to come here. Having a formal system in place would make things easier.”

Stiles smiled and was about to ask about training when he heard the sound of tires squealing. He frowned. They were nowhere near the main road and while there was a small track that the rangers used sometimes, he didn’t expect anyone to be around, especially now. A quick check and he
relaxed. It was Erica and the girl they had all met...the one he had sensed around town with her mother. He glanced over and saw Boyd and Isaac moving towards the trail head looking worried. He stood up “pardon me Matron...one of our pack is coming” he said and she just nodded at the scene.

Suddenly Erica came bursting through the woods, fully wolfed out and looking terrified. She was making a beeline for Boyd and in seconds had wrapped herself around him and was grasping him tightly. Stiles immediately went on alert and with a glance he saw Derek moving towards the betas. Just then Kira came out of the woods looking scared, nervous, and totally lost and then she froze as she spotted the herd. Stiles could see her lips move but even though his hearing wasn’t as good he was fairly certain that she wasn’t actually speaking. He headed over but Lydia and Allison got there first.

“Kira...are you okay?” Allison asks very gently, speaking carefully as if she was afraid of scaring the other girl.

Kira finally managed to look away from the centaurs and actually see Allison and was suddenly looking relieved. “Allie?” she whispered. Allison stepped forward and Kira jumped into her arms holding on tight like Erica had and Stiles could see she was shaking.

“Erica!” Lydia called out looking very unhappy. She had wanted to ease the girl into things but obviously seeing the beta transformed had trashed that plan.

Erica pulled herself away and stared at Lydia for a second before she looked over as Stiles approached and suddenly she looked angry as well as frightened. “This is all your fault!” she yells at Stiles causing him to falter and look shocked.

“Me? What did I do?”

“We saw a spider!” she wailed and buried her face in Boyd’s chest. The other beta suddenly looked like he understood. Lydia didn’t.

“A spider?” Lydia’s voice was eerily calm.

“She really doesn’t like spiders. I mean seriously doesn’t like them” Boyd explained slowly.

“All this over a bug!” Lydia growls.

Erica turns toward the redhead looking furious. “It was bigger than my car!” she screams and everyone freezes.

“What?” Derek asks into the silence.

“It was also glowing...and green” Kira adds in a small voice and everyone stares at her before all of them turn and look at Stiles expectantly.

Stiles looks flustered. “What!?? How the hell should I know about that?” he defends. “I haven’t found anything about...oh, wait...” he trailed off.

Lydia, Allison, and Derek all groan at once. Kira and Erica whimper and Stiles is certain that he hears someone snicker and he would be willing to bet it is Jackass. “Stiles,” Lydia’s voice is deathly quiet “is there something you want to share with the group?”

“Not...exactly” he says slowly. “I have been reading up on things that might show up, but the only spider tales are ones where it is a major monster or...” he goes quiet.
“Or what?” Allison asks seeing the uncertainty on Stiles’ face.

“or a Goddess” he finally says.

Everyone looks skeptical at that but Lydia, who looks like she is actually considering it. “You have to be kidding” Scott says looking around at everyone. “A Goddess?”

“Well” Lydia says with a thoughtful expression. “Native American myths tell of Spider Woman and there are some Asian myths as well and I think there are some African ones too that all speak of Spider deities. It could be that those old myths are based on a magical being. We were warned that things thought lost might return.”

“But it’s probably a monster” Scott asks looking actually hopeful for that outcome.

“There were also other beings as well” Beverly says into the silence causing everyone to look at her. “In the times of the Greeks there was both Arachne who was turned into a spider by Athena and of course the Moirai, or the fates, who were often depicted as spiders spinning the threads of life.” She pauses for a moment “But the Moirai would probably fall under the Goddess category” she admits.

Everyone is quiet for a moment before Stiles looks confused and turns to Erica and Kira. “Wait a second. You saw this spider? What happened?” he asks an both girls look at each other for a minute before something unseen passes between them and Kira sighs.

“Okay, but afterwards, someone needs to seriously explain all of this because I am seriously thinking we were in a car crash and this is all a dream.”

“Erica!” Kira yells out, rubbing her chest where the seatbelt had cut into her. “What happened?” she looks over and sees the blonde, hands clenched on the steering wheel, pale faced and trembling looking terrified.

“Erica?” she says a lot more timidly not sure what could cause this reaction. She glances out the windshield, thinking that maybe it’s a deer or something, but there is no deer and she starts to look back at the other girl when she freezes. Turning very slowly she looks back out to the road in front of them.

At the edge of the road, just leaving the trees is the largest spider she has ever seen. It was at least eight feet tall and twelve feet long, it’s legs taller than their car as it casually walks out of the woods and starts to cross the road in front of them. Looking at it, Kira is certain that the spider is large enough to take up both lanes of the road. It is a milky white in color, but there is a phosphorescent green glow, hard to see in the daytime, that reminds her of those glowsticks on Halloween. The spider’s body is covered in white hairs and the eyes on its head have a blue-black color.

The spider pauses in the center of the road, half of its body still on the grassy strip and the head slowly swivels around until it is staring at them and their car. A sudden whimper is the only warning Kira has before Erica’s hands on the steering well, currently gripping with a white-knuckle grip, sprout wickedly looking sharp claws. Gasping in surprise, Kira looks at the blond whose eyes are now glowing gold, her face is animal-like, and she has suddenly gained some very sharp looking fangs. She lets out a peep of surprise when Erica takes a sharp breath, her eyes focused on the spider, when Kira looks back and sees the giant turn towards them and she can’t hold it back.
anymore.

She lets out a scream, immediately joined by Erica who’s scream is as loud as hers. The spider’s pincers shimmer a bit and then it turns and walks, not scurries, it is definitely walking as if it hasn't a care in the world, across the road and into the deeper part of the preserve and in seconds it is gone from their sight.

Both girls are breathing heavily and Kira looks back at Erica, who looks like something from a monster movie and screams again.

“What? Did it come back?” she snarls looking around frantically.

“You! You are a…What are you?!” Kira yells and Erica actually looks embarrassed and suddenly looks completely normal, no fangs or claws anywhere.

“Sorry” she says looking embarrassed. “Werewolf.”

Kira just stares for a few seconds at the girl she thought she was becoming friends with. “You are a…werewolf?” she finally manages.

“Yeah…sorry about this, Lydia wanted to ease you into it” she apologizes.

“Lydia is a werewolf too?”

Erica snorts. “She wishes. No, she is not a werewolf.”

“Oh” Kira says looking a bit relieved.

“She’s a banshee.”


“Human…well sort of. She is human and all, but she is hunter.”

“A hunter? What does she hunt?” Kira asks.

“Werewolves.”

Kira stares at her in disbelief. “Oh, come on. You are telling me she hunts werewolves, but she hasn’t found you?”

Erica frowns. “Let’s not go there. Look, Allison is from a family of werewolf hunters, but they only hunt those wolves who have lost it and hurt people. My pack doesn’t hurt people, so we all get along.”

Kira doesn’t know what to say to that. Then she remembers “Banshee? And you said your pack?”

Erica suddenly starts and looks out the window. Suddenly she looks a lot more dangerous. “We need to get to the others. Here, take my phone and text Boyd, ask where he is”, she says as she tosses Kira her phone and starts moving the car. “So, Lydia is a Banshee, Allison is a Hunter, the boys are all wolves, well, except for Stiles.”

“The boys?”

“Scott, Isaac, Boyd, Jackson, and Derek. Oh, Peter too, he’s Derek’s uncle but you probably haven’t heard about him.”
“So is Stiles a hunter too?” Kira asks, head spinning.

“Stiles?” she snorts. “No. He’s magic. Like serious magic. I mean Merlin like magic” she says and looks over at the girl who is looking a bit shell shocked. “That’s how we knew you weren’t human either.”

Kira sputters at that. “What do you mean I’m not human. I am totally human!” she declares.

Erica sighs. “Lydia would really be better at this. Okay, sorry, but you aren’t. Stiles discovered that you and your mom weren’t human not long after you arrived, but we didn’t know it was you. Then when Allie and them met you at the coffee shop, the boys smelled that you weren’t human. Stiles has been meaning to talk to you mom about it and we were gonna keep an eye on you until we realized that you had no clue about it. So we didn’t worry and by then Allie, Lyds and I all liked you so…” she shrugs.

“But ever since Stiles did his magic thingy in the woods, crazy things have been showing up and making everyone weirded out.” She shudders “I really hate spiders and I just know that Stiles is somehow to blame for this.

Kira opens her mouth to respond when Erica’s phone vibrates in her hand. She looks down. “We are with the herd. Stiles found more.” She reads aloud sounding confused and Erica let out a bit of a yelp.

“Hold on. We are going to have to go off-road” she warned and sped up. It took another 10 minutes before Erica suddenly turns on a dirt road and they have to go a lot slower. During the ride Erica started telling Kira the whole story and she just listened in shock. Her mom wasn’t human but apparently her dad was. This was so weird, but it also made a strange kind of sense. She always felt her mother was different from other girls’ moms, but she always just thought it was because she was Japanese. As they get closer, she notices that Erica is starting to wolf out a bit more and by the time they stop she is fully transformed and takes off the second the car is stopped. Kira gets out and races after only to break through the trees and stop at the sight of everyone in the clearing surrounded by a herd of Centaurs?! Oh god, it’s all really true!

Stiles walks back into the house and heads for the kitchen to start making dinner. The last few hours had been good ones, emotional, but definitely good. The herd was getting settled in and working with Derek on identifying a place to set up their homes. Lydia, Allison, Scott, and Jackson had taken Kira under their wing and was giving her the full story about things and planning on inviting Kira to attend Derek’s next training session. Allison and Scott were also going to stop by and visit Kira’s parents and invite them to meet with Derek and Stiles in a few days.

Isaac and Boyd were staying with Erica who was still freaking out about the Spider. Which Stiles still can’t figure out what exactly it was. He had tried locating it on his mental map but he wasn’t able to spot anything. He had noticed that there were some ‘cloudy’ areas that were making it hard to identify what was there. He also realized that with all the new folks arriving it was getting harder to narrow down individuals as they tended to all blend together. At least his connections with the pack were getting stronger so that was good.

Martinique and the others had headed back home but both Kiran and Gabriel had made plans to visit again and were very excited about the sanctum. The witches were returning to report to their covens and Martinique to confer with the High Witch and to extend Stiles invitation to visit. And based on the way Kiran was behaving, Stiles had the feeling that the monk might be looking to
move to Beacon Hills and establish a new temple here.

Then, Peter still hadn’t called in yet but Derek wasn’t too worried as he had gotten a text from the man saying that he was pretty sure that he was in the Alvarez pack’s territory and that he would take a day or so to make his approach. Stiles had also had a really good conversation with the Centaurs about the plans for the Sanctum and they had contacts with several gnomes, elementals, and wood nymphs who all specialized in magical dwellings. Daython had looked over the initial plans with Derek and was going to make some suggestions and improvements.

“Stiles?” the sheriff’s voice called out? Stiles looked up from the stove and saw his father walk in looking tired.

“Hey dad. Everything okay?”

Noah just sighs and sits down at the table heavily, not bothering to take off his belt or jacket which tells Stiles that he isn’t planning on staying long. “The Barrows thing is tomorrow and I wanted to let you and Derek know so you could be prepared.”

“Are you expecting trouble? I mean the guy is crazy but he’s still human…isn’t he?

Noah nods. “As far as we can tell and nothing about him really seemed right but there was nothing unusual except his claims about his targets. Besides, I am sure you all could handle it if he was but I just wanted you to know because the department will be focused on the hospital tomorrow.”

Stiles nodded and set down a plate. He knew he would be heading out again to finish preparations. “Anything I can do to help tonight? I could come back to the station with you” he offered.

“No Stiles. You are not getting involved. Besides, the only thing I am doing tonight is meeting some corporate bigwig who met with the Mayor today. Apparently, she wants to meet me to discuss the crime rates and Roberts is drooling over the woman. Wouldn’t say who she was but he did say that her company was looking to build a facility here that would bring in some serious money to the area. Also warned me that it was ultra-top secret…whatever that means” he says with a shrug and spears a roasted potato.

Stiles frowned. He knew that they would see magical impacts, but he wasn’t expecting any economic ones. But…Lizzie did say that the land would become energized. Was it possible that the work he was doing was going to affect regular people too?

“What do you have planned tonight?” Noah asks as he finishes up his plate feeling guilty that he has to leave again so soon.

“Well, Lydia is coming by in a bit and we are having a conversation about Pack business” he admits. “Oh also, we now have a herd of 26 Centaurs living in the Preserve.”

Noah slowly lowers his glass and stares at his son who is looking almost angelically innocent. Nope. No. Not going to go there and fate is on his side for once as the doorbell rings before he can respond. “And that is my cue to leave” he says happily and heads out greeting Lydia as she walks in the house with a smile and is walking to his car. Centaurs?
Jackson slams his car door as he looks at the house. Smiling at finally getting to see him, he moves quickly to the front door before ringing the bell. It only takes a few seconds before the door opens and he is pulled into an overpowering embrace that accompanies the wonderful scent of Hibiscus that always hovers around Mrs. Mahealani. “Jackson!” she exclaims happily. “So good to see you keiki! We missed you this summer.”

Jackson smiles back at the short woman. Despite him being half a foot taller than Danny’s mom, she always seems so much larger than he remembers. She has such an amazingly warm heart and that is probably why he has always loved spending time at their house and how easy it was to spend time with Danny. His parents had at first been hesitant about Jackson staying friends with Danny when the other boy had come out but Jackson, in a rather unusual display of rebellion and defiance, absolutely refused their passive aggressive suggestions. If anything, he upped his support of the teen and their friendship flourished, even through all the times that Jackson, looking back on it, was rather embarrassed by the shit he had pulled that Danny had either ignored or let go.

Danny had put up with a lot from Jackson and the last year with the whole wolf thing had put a strain on their friendship but Jackson had realized how important it was so he had been working hard at being a better friend to…well, everyone.

“I missed you too, especially your Kalua pork” he says smiling at the thought. Even his parents would drop plans when the Mahealani’s invited them over to a party when Danny’s family had made that amazingly wonderful dish. Simple…but so good! “Did you have a good time seeing everyone? Danny said that he got to spend a lot of time with family.”

Kailani Mahealani laughs at that. “Well he did spend some time with the family, but he also spent a whole lot of time at the beach with his new Ku'uipo.” She snickered and saw the confusion on Jackson’s face and laughed again. “Summer romance” she explained and Jackson snorted. In their calls Danny hadn’t mentioned dating anyone but that was hardly unusual for the teen. He rarely talked about the guys he saw unless it was serious, and he hadn’t been serious about anyone in a while. Of course, Jackson had to admit there wasn’t a lot of options here in Beacon Hills. No surprise he found someone back in the islands.

“Is he in his room?” Jackson asks and Mama Mahealani nods and shoves him towards the stairs after confirming that he was staying for dinner with the family which Jackson had enthusiastically accepted. Taking the stairs in a rush he is at Danny’s room in seconds and sees the teen through the open door. “Danny!” he calls out and rushes over to wrap him up in a bear hug.

“Jackson!?” Danny is surprised, but he quickly returns the hug. He had noticed that the other boy was getting more physically affectionate before he left but this was a pretty big change. He smirked thinking about his conversation on the beach.

“So glad you are back. We need to get to practicing so we can take state this year” he says with a trace of the Whittemore arrogance.

“Well, with you, Scott, and Isaac all on the team we should definitely be good. Think we can get Boyd to try out again? He seems like he would be a good one after that game” Danny says making sure to keep his tone casual and easy.

Jackson looks rattled but he quickly recovers. “Uh, I guess so. I mean yes, we can definitely get him to try out. Coach certainly liked him…well as much as he likes anyone you know.”
“Cool…cool. And Stiles too. I mean you and he have been hanging out and all so that won’t be a problem with him and McCall right?”

Jackson looked caught off guard again, Danny really shouldn’t be enjoying this so much, but he just shrugged. “I guess so. I mean he’s been pretty busy lately so not sure if he is going to try out again.”

Danny frowned. “Busy with what?”

“Oh, lots of things. He and Lydia are having dinner tonight and going over some stuff that he is working on tonight otherwise she would have come with me.”

Danny looked completely confused. Sure, Jackson had said that things were different but this? “You are okay with Stilinski and Lydia hanging out?” he asks, the doubt clear in his voice.

Jackson smirked. His arrogant expression was so classically Jackson that Danny almost laughed. “Doesn’t bother me at all.”

Danny just stared knowing he was missing something. “Stilinski? The guy with the ten-year plan to woo Lydia, your Lydia? You don’t have a problem with him going on what is essentially a date with your girlfriend?”

Jackson snorted and moved to sit down. “Well, the spaz is not really interested in her anymore.”

Danny looked at his friend and wondered if he had been drinking…can he get drunk? “You don’t say. Well, okay. Guess you know best.” He said with a smile and moved to finish his unpacking. He knows Jackson and the guy won’t be able to last even minute. Danny can wait him out.

Thirty seconds later. “You ass!” Jackson snarls and snorts when the teen looks at him with a completely innocent expression. “He has a boyfriend!”

Danny snorts and rolls his eyes. “Right” he replies. “I told you Jackson, he and McCall are not a couple.”

Jackson looks uncertain about that. “Stiles introduced the guy to the Sheriff?” he clarifies.

Jackson sniggers. “Grow up asshole” Danny shoves Jackson who just snorts again. “So who is he dating?”

Danny frowns and thinks. Who would he never…he goes pale at the thought “Oh god, tell me it’s not Greenberg?”

Jackson falls off the bed laughing, and Danny is totally caught off guard at the sight. Jackson, the perfect boy, laughing his ass off on his floor. The guy can barely breathe he is laughing so hard. Trying to fight it he does smile a bit. Danny is not sure that he has ever seen his friend look so…at
Catching his breath, he sits up and looks at Danny. “Dude! Oh god I can’t wait to share that. That was the best.” Jackson smirks and looks at his friend. “Actually, I think you met him once at Stilinski’s.”

Danny frowns. Met at Stilinski’s? He was only there one time and that was when he saw…”His cousin Miguel?!” he yells.

Jackson roars with laughter and falls back over. “Oh god….Miguel” he gasps.

Danny flounders. Jesus talk about bursting out the closet like a superstar. “Stilinski is dating Derek Hale?” he says in shock.

Jackson freezes and looks at his friend in shock. “What?” he whispers.

Danny rolls his eyes at that. “Jax. Despite what the rest of you all seem to think, everyone else in town are not idiots. I may not have recognized ‘cousin Miguel’ (he actually used air quotes to say that) but I certainly recognized all the wanted posters around town afterwards. I mean seriously the Hales were the most important family in town hands down.”

Jackson looks offended at that and Danny just stares him down. “Dude, Lydia’s family has been here for maybe three generations and your dad moved here after college. The Hales founded the damn place. And the missing prodigal son returns and is on the run from the law? Everyone was paying attention.” He snorts and then looks like he swallowed a bug. “You said he met the Sheriff?” he exclaims in shock.

Jackson has been slowly recovering but he finally manages to find his tongue. “Uh…yeah. He’s okay with it” he manages to say.

Danny looks impressed. Seriously impressed. “Huh. Well kudos to Stilinski. If I had a stud like Derek Hale waiting for me I doubt Lacrosse would be at the top of my list of things to do.”

Jackson snorts. “Be careful. Don’t think Stilinski will appreciate that. He is kind of possessive.”

Danny nods. “I definitely don’t want to piss him off. I mean anyone that can kick two Alpha werewolves’ ass is definitely someone I don’t want to piss off.”

Looking back on it, Danny Mahealani can truly say that in the list of the best moments of his life, this will always be in the top five. The look and subsequent reaction of one Jackson Whittemore to that particular bombshell will go down in his own personal history as one of the best. Of course, seeing his oldest friend’s eyes glowing an arctic blue and all hairy was freaky weird but not unexpected and the fact that he didn’t startle or freak out only made Jackson’s reaction even better. Payback’s a bitch old friend he thought. He loved the guy, but Danny was not so stand up that he didn’t thoroughly enjoy Jackson’s complete meltdown.

Noah Stilinski walks into the station and isn’t particularly happy to be back. They are pretty much set for tomorrow, but he plans to spend at least some time going over the work up that Tara and Parrish figured out for everyone for the next few days. Not that he didn’t already approve it, but it would be good to give it one more look.

But first, he had to deal with the Mayor’s ‘special request’. Roberts was a fairly decent Mayor, she
had even apologized for the whole incident with Whittemore and the town suspending him, had actually pulled Noah aside to let him know that the whole thing was basically Whittemore making threats and pulling in favors to the others who were quick to knuckle under, a description she regretfully admitted she shared. For a politician, she wasn’t too bad.

But the Sheriff might have to reconsider that after this stunt. Apparently some business muckety-muck had dangled some economic carrot and Roberts had pretty much gone all in on it. She wouldn’t give Noah any details, but the gist was that if we made their rep happy, then she might open a business in town. Which was all well and good, they could certainly do with filling one of the empty shops or warehouses, but the way Roberts was going on it almost seemed like it was way bigger, like a factory or something.

Ever since Stiles had his magical makeover, Noah had noticed the changes to their town. He wouldn’t have said that Beacon Hills was dying, but there were definitely more people moving out than in and more businesses had closed than opened since, well, since the Hale fire if he really considered it. Lizzie had advised him that Stiles’ magic was going to be felt in a lot of ways that even regular people could feel. The biggest being that once the old tree had been dealt with, the town would start healing. Add to that Stiles’ own actions to speed things along, and she had predicted that they would see things reverse with magical people coming to live here, not to mention all the benign creatures. They would also bring prosperity, hope, and luck that would ripple out to the humans and make Beacon Hills much more desirable and seem like a great place to be. Apparently it had already begun.

“Sheriff” Sandy Rogers, their dispatch, said happily from the front desk “your guest is here. I went ahead and let her in to your office.” Noah frowned a bit at that but then he noticed that Rogers was glancing over at the pen where several of his deputies seemed to be trying covertly stare into his office and failing at it pretty badly. He raised his eyes at that and looked back at Sandy. “She’s… nice” she responds with a trace of disapproval that makes Noah sigh. So the woman is attractive.

Nodding he walks around the desk and his deputies all try and look like they haven’t been staring and he just walks in as the woman in his office stands up and looks at him.

Noah immediately understands Sandy’s reaction, not to mention his deputies. The woman is striking in every way and looks more like a model than some business flunky. Noah feels a sudden recollection of Lydia Martin and the Allison Argent in how she stands but it almost as quickly fades when she smiled at him. Damn, that smile should be on a magazine cover.

“Ma’am. Sorry I am late but I grabbed dinner with my son.”

“No problem Sheriff. I am just glad you were able to speak with me so late.”

“Well, we have an exciting day tomorrow so I was going to be here for a bit no matter what. Now what can I do that the Mayor couldn’t help you with? I understand you are looking to open a business here.” In a way the Sheriff is glad that Stiles and Derek are now together. He has a feeling that Stiles would have been following this woman around like a puppy if he saw her. Maybe she was planning on opening a restaurant, she had the bearing of someone who could handle a team of cooks.

“Exciting? Nothing serious I hope” she asks looking interested.

“Just tedious. A prisoner from a nearby facility is coming to get medical attention from the hospital. We are providing security for him while he is in town. Now, how can I help?” he says again.
She smiles and Noah can admit that he does feel something at that. She knows she looks good and isn’t afraid to use it. Must be something more than a restaurant.

“My employer is looking to open a facility here in town. I am not in the position to give many details, but in doing our research of potential locations, Beacon Hills came up but there were some concerns when we started investigating” she tells him.

“Concerns?” Noah gently prods as they both sit down and she takes out a portfolio.

Opening up the black book, he is expecting to see a notepad or some printouts but the tablet is a bit of a surprise. It’s significantly more surprising when it lights up and projects a display in the air above it like a hologram. His eyes widen, this woman is definitely not a cook. “Yes. We have noticed that there are some criminal issues in the county that are…” she looks almost apologetic for even mentioning it “worrisome. Specifically, the number of murders and animal attacks over the last several months. They are wildly disproportionate for a town your size and relative stability.”

Noah leans back in his chair. Okay, this is not going to be easy. “We did have some issues with mountain lions recently, and one rather disturbing situation with a mass murderer, but both were dealt with.”

The woman’s green eyes are laser focused on him. They are not the green of trees or emeralds, but closer to a green that is judging you and it’s not looking good. “Katherine Argent” she states and he sees the woman’s picture pop up in the images above her notebook. He nods without saying anything else.

“It says that she killed a family in January, 2005. But it was initially declared an accident. You were a deputy then.”

Noah frowned. That detail showed she had done her research. “That’s correct.”

“But then Laura Hale, one of the survivors returned and was killed along with several others. Argent was responsible for those as well” she asks.

Noah shrugs. “We couldn’t prove it, but it makes sense. After Laura Hale was killed, Meyers, the insurance adjuster who ruled it an accident was killed in an attack. Three known arsonists were also killed and after the first one, the killer stopped trying to make it look like animal attacks.”

“So you think it was one killer?”

“It lines up. Laura was back investigating and had found out about Myers and the others. It seemed that someone was killing everyone involved in the Hale fire and she was the best suspect. Her brother told us that she was a skilled hunter. Making attacks looks like an animal attack would have been easy for her.”

“But she was killed, in an animal attack” she says looking doubtful.

“Irony, I guess. He learned that she was responsible and was apparently killing off her accomplices to erase any connection to her. Or at least that is our best guess. She was killed by a mountain lion or other animal, which is karmic payback to me” Noah says looking unhappy.

“You didn’t like that?” she asks shrewdly.

“No. I didn’t. She escaped justice and answering for her crimes. I mean I am glad she is dead, no question there, but she should have gone to jail. I would wager the Hales weren’t her only victims”
he sighs. “But people are safer with her gone, so I won’t be losing any sleep.” Noah frowns, he really didn’t intend to talk this much. He has been spending too much time with the pack, he needs more adults to talk to.

She smiles. “Sounds reasonable actually. If I may, can I ask you about some of the other crime statistics we found?”

Noah starts to nod when he pauses. “You know, I don’t think I caught your name or who it is you are working for that has got the Mayor so worked up.”

She smiles again and damn the woman has some serious dimples. “My apologies Sheriff. I am an internal investigator for Stark Industries. I work for the CEO, Pepper Potts.”

Noah’s eyes widen and he sits up. Stark?!? Stark Industries is looking to come here? No wonder Roberts is falling all over herself to suck up to the woman. They aren’t opening a restaurant, coffee shop, or factory. If Stark Industries comes here, it will bring dozens to hundreds of jobs, really good jobs. “And your name?”

Smiling she extends her hand and Noah reaches out to shake it. “Natalie. Natalie Rushman.”

“Stiles?” Lydia calls out as she walks into the Stilinski house. Stiles had made it clear that they were all welcome here, both socially and magically and with the missing cruiser, she was fairly certain that the Sheriff wasn’t home which wasn’t really a surprise. They had all heard, both from Stiles and Scott, about the situation at the hospital with the prisoner that Scott’s father had dumped on them but she was comfortable that Sheriff Stilinski and Mrs. McCall were both capable of handling whatever happened. And that wasn’t even counting that she was fairly certain that both Derek and Stiles had several back up plans ready to go if needed.

“In the kitchen” Stiles voice calls out and she moves around the room and glances at the wall with a slight shiver. She can feel echoes of the fight with Ennis in this place, how close death came for both the Sheriff and the Alpha. She had witnessed Stiles in a way that none of the others really had, not counting his father. Seeing Stiles truly using his powers, his magic not the awe-inspiring thing it was during his ascension, but the magic of a gifted user who had used his brain to direct the power he had to the best effect. He wasn’t anywhere near as powerful back then, but in some ways, he was more impressive.

Lydia had talked with Lizzie, Deaton, Morrel, and even Peter Hale to better understand the truth of what was going on with the teen and she probably had the best idea of what was coming, and she knew that Stiles would not have an easy time ahead. Lydia Martin was the undisputed queen of Beacon Hills High School, but the kind of machinations, manipulations, and treachery that he would be facing from everyone who would try and use Stiles and his power made her concerned.

She had spoken with Derek more than once about it but the Alpha didn’t truly understand. Despite what he dealt with due to Kate Argent, he had a very black and white view of things. Peter and Lizzie on the other hand, both of them had agreed that things were never that simple. Even the Centaurs and the coven members that Stiles knew, they wanted something from him and while they may, in time, be friends, the fact was that they all had to be suspicious of everyone until they knew for certain.

“What are you doing?” Lydia said looking completely dumbfounded by the sight before her. Stiles was in the kitchen but he wasn’t making dinner or at least she desperately hoped he wasn’t. He had
a large pot on the stove, just under a boil, that was filled with a rather shocking blue liquid in it that he was adding in ingredients that had no business in a kitchen. “Are you making a potion?” she asks in disbelief.

Stiles looks up and smiles happily and nods. “Martinique brought me a book of potions so I thought I would try a few out. Want to help?” he asks, indicating the open book.

Looking down at the yellowed pages with rather beautiful illustrations she begins to read over the instructions. “A Dream Potion” she reads aloud but quickly becomes absorbed in her reading. The potion, once complete, will give the user dreams to help resolve problems, find solutions, and help the dreamer with obstacles by looking at the world in a different way. It also appears to give the dreamer refreshing and happy dreams that help overcome trauma. She looks back up at Stiles who is tossing in the spider webs. “What is this for?”

“Well, I thought that maybe Erica and Kira could use it. After the whole spider thing” he says looking embarrassed.

Lydia nods and looking down she reaches for the bottle of milky white liquid and looks at the label. “Stiles? Is this Lethe water?” she looks at him in shock. “How did you get this?”

He looks embarrassed but smiles. “Wong hooked me up. He has a friend who knows a guy.”

Lydia frowned. “He knows a guy? Stiles this is water from the River Lethe…in Hell! Is it supposed to erase memories.”

“No. I mean yes, but not for this. I only use a single drop and that is not enough in this potion to do that but it does makes the dreams better. See?” he points at the notes in the book and Lydia seems the notation clarifying the substitution for the listed water from a spring in Greece. Apparently using Lethe water was significantly better for the potion. Reading through the spell a second full time she definitely could see the value. Both Kira and Erica had been rattled by the encounter and when Stiles couldn’t find it, both girls were even more unhappy. To be honest, she is a bit surprised that the blonde isn’t camping out here since the Stilinski house has more protections than anywhere. Then again, she may feel that if it shows up again it will be looking for Stiles.

“I don’t think this is why you called me.”

Stiles sighs heavily and Lydia leans against the counter to wait. Stiles is not as subtle as he thinks he is. She knows that the whole potion thing was a performance for her. The guy knows her weakness for chemistry and this book of potions is fascinating and she will be borrowing it at some point to read it cover to cover, but this isn’t it.

“No, it’s not.” Stiles turns off the stove to allow the potion to rest before he turns back to the redhead and takes a deep breath. “Derek and I have been talking about you.”

Lydia raised a perfectly manicured eyebrow at that and gave him a point for not flinching. Lesser men, and he was one once at least as far as she had thought, would have run, but he didn’t. In fact he seemed to find it funny. “You and Derek are way too alike” he compliments as he moves into the living room with her following as they take a seat on the couch.

Lydia just waits, looking at him without speaking, determined not to be the first to break in this contest or whatever he was doing. “You handled Martinique, Kiran, and the others really well. Sophie was especially impressed and she said that Professor Chavez-Morales was really taken by you. He was trying to figure a way to get you to come to Stanford and study with him.”
Lydia smirked a bit at that. The professor was especially kind, but she hadn’t been interested in his rather generous offer. Chemistry, while interesting, wasn’t where she wanted to go. “I know. He made an offer and it was very kind.”

Stiles smiled. “Charyl was also really complimentary. She said that the herd elders all were impressed by you. They hadn’t had a lot of interactions with a banshee before and you were not what they expected.”

Lydia nodded. She had talked with Beverly for some time and found the mare fascinating. She was an astronomer and her grasp of physics and math were incredible. She had invited Lydia to visit once they were more settled to talk more. “And of course, Celeste and Arwen love you” Stiles added happily.

“All very nice to hear Stiles. Out with it” she decided to end this meandering line of conversation.

Taking a deep breath, Stiles looks at her “Derek and I want to make you the official Emissary for the Hale Pack” he says in a rush.

Lydia leans back in surprise. She was definitely not expecting this. “But Deaton…” she starts.

Stiles shakes his head rather quickly at that. “Deaton was Talia’s Emissary, but Derek…he just doesn’t have the same trust in him that she did. Too much other stuff for that. Not to mention…Derek feels that if Scott ever decides to form his own pack that Deaton would prefer to be his Emissary.”

Lydia nods. That makes sense. “Morell?”

Stiles snorts. “Uh, no. We may have forgiven her for her role with Deucalion, but not gonna happen.” Stiles was definitely sure about that.

Lydia agrees with that rather strongly, but she felt it needed to be said. If they had wanted the woman then she would have argued loudly against it but still. “Isn’t the Emissary usually a magic user…I mean you are much more than I can ever be.” It didn’t bother her to say that as it once would have.

Stiles smiles like he can tell what she is thinking, and he probably can. “Maybe, but not in this case. One” he holds up a finger “I am High Alpha with Derek. I can’t be leader and speak for leader at the same time. Two, ultimately we will need our Emissary to travel outside the territory and I can’t do that” he says, and Lydia looks at him with sympathy but he just shakes his head. “I am getting use to that fact Lydia but Derek and I, we need someone who we can fully trust to be our representative. To speak on our behalf, to gather intelligence, and to be suspicious as hell.”

She smiles at that. Ever since Peter Hale’s little trick, Lydia was significantly more suspicious of everyone. “But the magic?”

He shrugs. “It’s nice for a pack’s Emissary, but like you said, it’s not like we will be lacking that” he says with a snort. “Besides, I think that your powers will be pretty impressive as it is. Not to mention, you have a pretty good bodyguard” he adds.

She looks at him with a smirk. “You mean Jackson?”

“Can you think of anyone who is going to be more suspicious about anyone messing with you?” he challenges.

She concedes the point though she admits that Peter definitely fits the description as well and
surprisingly she would actually trust the older beta in a crunch. Mainly because she is certain that if he ever truly tries anything against them again, he won’t survive Stiles and Derek’s response. Though to be honest, she doubts he worries about that anymore. Peter Hale loves power. That much has always been the case and she understands that. He wanted power, to be the alpha, to control. But no matter what, he would never be able to be what Derek is now even with the power. And he has no chance of taking over for Stiles. No, Peter might like the idea of being an Alpha, but being a trusted elder of the strongest and most powerful pack in the world? He could never be that on his own and he wouldn’t trade what he has, not for anything less.

“So, I’m the last option?” she says with a huff.

Stiles snorts. “Really? Lydia you know you were the first. Even without being a Banshee you would have been. We considered everyone, sure, but it was always in comparison to you. Sure, Deaton and Morell know more about being Druids, but how long will that last? We are going to ask them both to help train you so I figure you will outstrip them in short order. Besides, I need help gathering resources for our Library and who else would take it as seriously as you would? Deaton would ignore anything that he doesn’t fully trust, and he doesn’t know a whole lot. You and I? We need to know everything.”

Lydia has to agree with that and to be honest ever since Stiles began taking about a mystical library here in Beacon Hills, Lydia has almost felt her fingers itching to get her hands on it. And she did understand what was needed with all of these negotiations…she turns to Stiles in shock. “You have been planning this! You and Derek! That’s why he has been talking to me about the packs and the herd and everything!”

Stiles smiles a massive smile and nods. “Yep. Derek suggested you two days after the whole light show thingy. He’s been trying to see if you would be a good fit.”

“I would have thought it was your idea” she admitted feeling more than a little surprised to hear it was Derek’s idea.

“Well to be fair, I had thought it as well, he just said it first. So, yes?” he prompts.

Lydia smiles. Emissary to the most powerful pack on Earth? She can handle that.
Hey everyone. Hope you are all doing okay and taking care of yourselves. I wanted to share a couple of things from the comments. Several of you have made guesses at characters and plot points and I haven't been ignoring them but I am not going to respond. The reason? Well I don't want to give anything away by confirming guesses and if I only respond to wrong ones, then I am doing that anyway, but I do love it when people figure things out, or even if they come up with ideas I wished I had planned, but as to which is which?? I'll never tell

I hope everyone likes this chapter as it was fun to write from a different character's perspective that I hadn't really done before. There is definitely some action coming, so get ready!

-G

Peter sat in the café and frowned. He had arrived on the edge of the small town through Stiles’ portal and had quickly confirmed that he was, in fact, in Argentina. His Spanish was rusty but still passable enough to figure a few things out. Of course, his phone updating helped significantly with that as well. The small town of El Fuerte sat out in the hills in the north, close to the borders of Bolivia and Paraguay, and you wouldn’t expect it to be all that exciting, but Peter had sniffed out traces of both werewolf and magic. If this was the home base of the Alvarez Pack, then he would be very happy as they were, after all, distant family, but he wasn’t entirely sure of that, so he was playing it carefully.

Upon arriving, he had scouted around a bit but there had been no real traces near the portal, and he had only caught those fleeting hints of scent heading away from the scents of town. So instead he decided to head to the small town to scout for clues and possibly see what he could figure out. They were only three hours or so from Salta, so this was definitely a possible location for the horses that the Alvarez’s had raised, but for the life of him, Peter couldn’t remember all of the specific details from that family. He hadn’t been very interested in their visit as he was rather preoccupied with Hannah at the time. He sighed. He hated feeling as grateful towards Stiles as he did, but the boy’s gift, his family’s forgiveness, and getting to say his final goodbyes had snuffed out a rather significant amount of his rage and grief that even killing Kate had failed to accomplish.

Peter had prided himself on his control and ability to turn any situation to his advantage. Talia had recognized this aspect of his personality and had guided it as much as she could, using him to handle things she couldn’t, but the truth was she didn’t have the ruthlessness that their mother Abigail had. That woman! Peter shook his head smiling at the memory. His mother was strong, vicious, and loving all at once. She could cut your throat or offer you cookies depending on the situation and it wouldn’t cause her to pause for even a second to dole out either option. Talia was strong, but she was also an idealist. She relied too much on their history and reputation to protect them and thought that they could manage the world alone. He had argued against that disastrous peace conference with Argent and Deucalion and he had originally thought he had managed to convince her, but the truth was she didn’t want to be part of it for reasons other than his suspicions.
No, Talia was too ‘honorable’ to enter negotiations where she might have to fight her purported allies if things went bad. She stepped back to allow Deucalion his ‘moment’ because if they were wrong, she thought their pack would be safe since they were not involved. If he was right, then they still benefited from what he would accomplish. She didn’t need or want personal glory. Peter supposes that her perspective wasn’t wrong, but it wasn’t very proactive. And if he is being fair, which he really hates, even he didn’t suspect the depths of Argent’s depravity and corruption.

But now, he needed to find his niece and bring her home. Assuming that she wasn’t fully a member of their pack now. He and Derek had spoken of the possibility that she had joined this pack, especially if she believed herself the last Hale. Derek had accepted the possibility, but like Peter, he wanted to hold on to the hope that they could offer her a place among them. The beta had to admit that the possibility that his young niece had refused to truly submit to another alpha was fairly likely. The girl had been born stubborn like no other…except maybe his mother now that he thinks about it. Cora had reminded him a bit of Abigail. If so…she was probably still a Hale simply out of spite.

He inhaled and a scent came to him over the pungent coffee wafting up from his table. He looked around casually, giving nothing away, when he spotted the pair. Nothing stood out. They were dressed like every other local, save their clothes were dustier and their skin a bit darker tanned. Their truck was nothing special, completely normal. In every way they looked like a pair of workers from a ranch on a run into town.

But Peter Hale was not a fool, nor was he blind. He saw the silky-smooth gait and shift of muscles, the slightly exaggerated flaring of nostrils, the surreptitious glances scanning for danger. These were wolves, born ones, of that he was certain. He watched as they walked into the small store across the plaza from where he sat and he smiled. He was downwind at the moment so he was certain that they couldn’t scent him so he just had to wait for a few seconds and then when he sniffed, he was now certain. Definitely wolves.

Now he had to determine his approach. From the looks and interactions from the locals, they were well known and though a male and female, he could easily tell two things about them. First, they were not lovers, nor were they related, at least not very close enough relatives to grow up together if they were. They moved independently, though coordinated. They trained together, but it was a more recent thing, a few years at best. Peter had watched his brother Ian train the other pack members and he had listened well when the man had spoke. He knew growing up that he would never be the fighter Ian was, but he still wanted to learn. Ian had shown them the difference of moving alongside one you knew intimately. Ian’s wife had died several years before the fire, but Peter remembered watching them train together. They moved like graceful dancers, each knowing where the other one was without thinking about it. Talia and Robert had been like that. But Talia and Ian also moved with a grace that couldn’t be hidden simply from growing up together. Peter was younger than both of them by enough time that he didn’t share that easy connection, but the way he fought with them was still impressive enough simply because Ian and Talia had helped train him. No, wolves that trained from that early of an age or who shared the mate bond, you saw it if you knew what to look for.

Those two? No. They didn’t naturally cover each other and in fact, the man had gone in the store as the woman was still getting bags from the truck. They were not a fighting pair.

“Le gustaría algo de comer señor?” the waitress asked with a smile as she topped off his coffee. He shook his head. He didn’t have time to eat anything now that his prey was here.

She nodded and walked off and he caught the scent of her arousal and he smirked behind his sunglasses. She had been flirting with him since he arrived, and another time he might have
responded, but he was focused. And…the wind had shifted so now they would be downwind of him. Good.

It was another ten minutes before the two came out of the store with several bags of groceries from the small store and began to load their truck up. Peter watched carefully and noticed the exact moment they caught his scent. She was quicker and definitely smoother. The man startled and looked around, visibly rattled. She was much more cautious as she slowly looked around before her eyes stopped on him and narrowed at the unfamiliar man in the town’s little café. He smirked over his coffee cup and watched them, completely relaxed as the man finally figured out where he was. Thank god he wasn’t a hunter. Those two were sloppy!

Peter watched the woman as she spoke to her companion. He couldn’t hear her of course, she was too smart to do more than whisper and even he couldn’t hear her this far away, but by the look on the man’s face, he wasn’t happy. Clearly. Peter couldn’t help but chuckle as he watched the man get back in his truck, his phone, invisible inside the truck was obviously out and he was definitely calling someone as she walked over towards Peter. At least they were smart. She was checking out the intruder while he called it in. Maybe they weren’t as big of fools as he initially thought.

“Señor?” the woman said as she entered the café’s border. Her jeans were dirty, but they were good quality. Her boots functional but not without decoration. She was young, between him and Derek in age if he were to guess. He liked that she managed to convey so much with a single word.

“Loba” he replies and sees her slight reaction to that but something more.

“American?” she says in nearly flawless English.

“I’m impressed” Peter admits. “You got all that from a single word?”

She snorts. “Hardly. You reek of American…and horse?” she frowns because she knows that’s close but not quite right. “What are you doing in our territory?”

Peter indicates her chair with a formal smile and gesture. “That depends on whose territory it is.”

She sits but doesn’t look like she particularly enjoys it. “How do you not know when you enter another’s territory?”

Peter waves off her question with a casual indifference and that gets a reaction. He’s enjoying this. She is nowhere near trained for this. “I came by…unconventional means and I am looking for someone. I believe they might be with a particular pack, but I admit that I am not sure if it is yours or not.” He smiles in what others would assume is sincerity. Peter knows she is listening to his heart, but he wouldn’t have been the Hand if hadn’t mastered that. Besides, he isn’t lying.

The woman frowns. He watches as she tries to figure out whether or not she should say anything, but he can tell she can’t figure out a reason to refuse. Peter hasn’t violated any rules. He isn’t even in pack territory, not officially. Towns are typically neutral for most packs, even ones this small. “This is Alvarez territory” she finally admits.

Peter smiles. “That is very good then as I am looking for the Alvarez pack. Specifically, I am looking for Angelica Alvarez.”

The girl startles at that. “Why are you looking for her?”

Peter shrugs. “Why should I tell you, someone I don’t even know?”

She glares. “I don’t know you.”
“No. You don’t.” He takes a deliberately slow sip of his coffee and watches.

The girl growls at his answer but Peter smirks without much concern. This puppy is not in his league. She has given away so much that her Alpha should definitely retrain her, especially if she is going to have any interactions with others in the future. He is forcibly reminded of how naive his own pack was and what it cost them. “I formally request an audience with your Alpha.” The words are ritual and have carried over languages and centuries. To refuse would be an insult of the highest degree. They will either bring the Alpha here or take him there, but outside of a war, a request, formally given, is honored.

“Of course,” she says barely refraining from biting her teeth. “And who may I say is asking?”

Peter’s face shifts from casual indifference to barely constrained fury causing the girl to shrink back involuntarily, and the beta hears her heart spike with the scent of fear. “One who speaks from the darkness” he growls, and his eyes flash their cold blue causing the woman’s eyes to widen.

“A Hand” she whispers and swallows audibly. This is no ordinary wolf, but one who speaks for a pack in matters you don't speak of openly. It is rare that outsiders know who is the pack’s Hand so to introduce himself that way suggests both danger and risk. And those eyes tell a story that Lucia Fernandez is fairly certain she does not want to hear. She looks over at the truck and sees the shocked look on Matias’ face. He heard. She looks back at the now placid face of the Hand, “I will speak to my Alpha.”

Peter doesn’t have long to wait. The woman, Lucia she finally admitted, had gone back with her companion and had obviously made a call to the pack. It was less than five minutes and she was coming back to café. “Our Alpha grants you passage to speak, Hand.”

Nodding, Peter tosses some money on the table, more than generous than a simple coffee would merit and gestures gallantly for her to take the lead. She does, but Peter can read the tenseness in her back at having a potential enemy out of her sight. He smiles as he notes the man waiting at the car. Lucia is walking so she doesn’t block his view of Peter, providing a level of support. With a smile, Peter takes the spot in the front passenger seat of the truck. Allowing Lucia to sit behind him while the man, Matias he is introduced as, drives.

“So, we have not had another Hand visit before” Lucia says trying to appear calm and confident.

“No?” Peter asks casually. “How long have you been with the Alvarez pack then?”

The puppies both snarl at that a bit. “What do you mean?” she asks defiantly.

Peter sighs heavily, exaggerating a bit for effect. “While both of you are born wolves, you are not of the Alvarez bloodline. You are not a mated pair obviously and you haven’t fought or trained long together. You are new. You also react too much to your environment. The fact I was downwind wouldn’t have stopped a member of the blood pack from knowing a foreign wolf was so close. You are either refugees from other packs, though that is also unlikely. More likely you are friends, mates to a blood member, or looking for a new pack.”

Both of them are quiet and Peter can sense their discomfort, not to mention their reaction to his comment about looking for a new pack. That was it.

“I heard that Hands often had special gifts to see threats” Matias muttered.
Peter laughed. “Some do. But in truth, you both are blindly easy to read. I would bet neither of you have ever faced a hunter before.”

Lucia frowned. “Why would we? We have violated no codes or harmed anyone.”

Peter snorts. “You think all hunters are honorable? Only fools believe that.” Both of them bristle but they don’t challenge him and remain silent for the rest of the drive to the ranch. Pulling up to the large house, Peter can’t help but be a bit impressed. In addition to the main house, he spots the horse barn, an indoor training ring, at least one bunkhouse, and several other buildings he is not sure of their use. There are also about a dozen people shuffling around the door to the house but none of them scream Alpha to his casual evaluation.

They stop and get out and Peter walks around the front of the car and spots the largest of the pack, a man close to his own age but nearly twice his size. A brute to be sure, but not the Alpha. The enforcer he would guess though usually that role is a bit more strategic. More like…the woman beside him. She was assessing Peter critically and her stance, her bearing, all of that spoke of power, control, and skill. She was the Enforcer with the wall of muscle to back her up.

He didn’t bother looking for the Hand. They would either be introduced or not, depending on the pack, but it would never be obvious. “Hand” the Enforcer says politely. “Lucia didn’t mention your pack or your purpose in being here to her.”

“You said you wish an audience with our alpha. Why?” she demands a bit more forcefully.

“Blood” he says without elaboration and watches as she processes his answer. There are a lot of possibilities there.

Just then the door opens and Lucia exits follows by an older woman, he guesses she would be Talia’s age if his sister had lived and a man at least sixty if he was a day, but who radiated power. That was the Alpha! “That’s him” Lucia said pointing towards Peter but she was talking to the woman, not her Alpha.

“You have been granted an audience Hand. Deliver your message” the woman says and Peter sees it. She has aged but she is that distant relative who visited so long ago.

“I’m hurt Angelica. No greetings for me?” he asks with a smirk.

She stares at Peter for several moments, the struggle to match the man’s face with her memories but Peter can see when she finally makes the connection as her face pales. “That’s impossible” she whispers, sounding truly scared and both Lucia and the Alpha turn to her in shock. “you’re dead!” she whispers.

“No and yes, and then no again.” Peter is particularly proud of that line as he smiles at the woman.

“There were no survivors!” she hisses. “The fire…”

“There were” he cuts her off with a hint of anger. “Three, well four if my source is correct about who is here.”

The Alpha’s eyes widen alongside Angelica’s, Stiles was right! Peter can sense it. “She’s here” he whispers and sees both of the them look uncertain.
“Name yourself!” the alpha roars, his eyes flashing crimson.

Peter can’t stop his own blue eyes responding, but he doesn’t yield otherwise. He serves a far greater Alpha than this man no matter his power and he delays just long enough to show it and sees the alpha’s surprise, but not enough to disrespect him. “I am Peter Hale, Hand of the Hale Pack.”

The whispers from the others are fast and furious. They know that name though Lucia and Matias both don’t react like the others. They haven’t heard the story it seems. “Uncle Peter?” a voice, barely a whisper, comes from off to the side but Peter hears it and turns his back to the Alpha and locks in on it. He sees her and his throat catches. Cora is there! She is standing there, looking more like Laura and Talia than he would have believed possible, but his mother is there in her face too. Damn she is a Hale true and true. “Cora” he whispers but it’s enough for her. Seconds later he is wrapped up in that scent, that scent he has missed for so long. Family. He has Derek, but Derek is Alpha. It is different. That night in the woods, the night Stiles called them back, had been intoxicating for both Peter and Derek because their family's scent returned so strong that it still burned in his nose. Now he was wrapped up again in the young girl hugging him tight enough to break a human’s bones.

“I thought you were dead!” she finally yells when she steps back.

“I nearly was. I was caught in the fire and burned. It took me six years to come out of the coma and the hospital.”

Cora pales and he hears her heart plummet. “I left you?” she whispers but he pulls her back in quickly.

“You were a child and didn’t know. You obeyed your Alpha’s last orders and ran for safety. We didn’t know you survived until recently. Once we knew, we have been trying to locate you and with some help from some friendly witches, we finally did.” Peter sighed as he looked around the Alvarez Pack who were all listening intently.

“We?” Cora had latched onto that word.

“Derek and I. Laura survived the fire as well, but she died last year” he admits and sees the joy and loss cross her face in an instant before locking down.

“Derek…is he the Alpha?” she asks softly.

“He is. He has formed a new pack to protect Beacon Hills and he sent me to bring you home… assuming you wish to come” he added gently.

“Will you stay for dinner?” the Alpha said interrupting them, but respectfully. “We would hear more of your story Peter Hale. I had sent searchers when Cora first came to us but it seemed that hunters were thick up there.”

Peter nodded. “The Argents. Two of their number broke the code and burned our house with our pack inside it” he said and felt a bit of pleasure at the shock that the other wolves displayed. No, they hadn’t had to deal with the likes of Kate and Gerard.

He nodded. “I am Santino Alvarez, Alpha of our pack. You already know Angelica my mate and you met Lucia and Matias, two of our newest. But let me introduce the rest of our pack.”

Santino introduced the dozen or so wolves that were there and he was right about the enforcer. Mia Alvarez was the Alpha’s sister and his enforcer. As expected, they didn’t introduce the Hand. Quickly they went into the house and sat down, Cora next to him, while Angelica and Lucia got
refreshments. Peter could also smell meat grilling as they prepared dinner. “Cora, how did you get here?” Peter asked his niece and she looked a bit embarrassed, but she shouldn’t have been.

Cora told them about her escape and Peter could tell that more than a few had not heard this story though the Alpha and his mate definitely had. Cora had run until she reached one of the cabins on the property and stayed there for a full day before creeping back and finding the house destroyed and the smell of death everywhere. Believing her family dead, she ran south, heading for her pen pal until she ran into a pack just east of LA. Luckily they were a good pack and with a bit of help, they got Cora on a bus to Argentina and she finally made it, after some harrowing adventures, to the Alvarez pack where she has been ever since.

Santino and Angelica took over and shared their efforts, but they truly believed the Hales were gone and Cora the only living member and then there was whispers that someone was looking for any survivors. Peter guessed that the rumors were about Laura and Derek, not Cora, but the Alvarez wouldn’t have any way to know that. Then it was Peter’s turn.

He hesitated how much to share, but he knew they needed something.

Peter started with the fire. He didn’t give details about what Kate did to Derek, but he shared that she had targeted them without cause and her methods. The watching wolves were stunned though Alpha Alvarez wasn’t. He shared that Derek and Laura fled to NY and he remained in the hospital, suffering inside his damaged body.

The next part he didn’t dwell on. Laura returned, was killed, Derek returned, Peter had woken and sought revenge, and ultimately Derek, as Alpha, had created new betas. He could tell which wolves had recognized that a lot of details were missing. He finished up part one glossing over the rescue of Jackson, and the subsequent tension between McCall’s group and the Hale Pack.

“It was then that things went from bad to worse. Apparently, Deucalion and his Alpha Pack decided that Derek would be an excellent member and came to recruit him.”

“I have heard of Deucalion and his abominations. The man killed his own pack?” Santino asks hoping the rumor was wrong.

“Yes. He found it gave him a twisted power. He convinced Ennis and Kali to do the same, kill their entire pack and emissary to become super alphas you might say. Then they went after other packs. To either kill and take their power or add to their numbers. By the time they came to Beacon Hills, there were seven alphas in that twisted pack.”

“Seven perverted alphas against an unprepared boy with a handful of bitten wolves. Is that why you are here? You need help?” Angelica asks looking worried.

Peter laughed without humor. “No. We destroyed Deucalion and his corrupt pack along with the Darach they created. It seemed that Kali failed to kill her emissary in her climb to power and though horribly wounded, her lover survived and then wanted revenge.” He leaned back to watch with a bit of glee the pandemonium that bit of news caused.

It took a few moments before Santino roared his pack to silence and he turned to Peter. “Deucalion and his pack are dead?” Peter nodded. “How?”

“Our emissary. He is special, beyond special. He has mated with my nephew and they have established a new territory under their domain and have even been accepted as High Alphas by five packs of wolves, a herd of centaurs, and by now who knows how many other fae, spirits, and whatnots that are now coming to Beacon Hills. I expect more in the coming months” Peter said
“You left out quite a bit” a woman off to one side said. Peter looked at the dark haired, pale woman without showing the surprise he felt. He was positive she wasn’t there earlier and he did not sense her arrival. He also caught a scent that he didn’t recognize but that triggered a sense of fear that he hadn’t felt in some time.

“What do you mean?” Angelica asks the woman.

“He passed the veil, not once, but twice. You tricked the dark angel, Hand of the Pack. Escaping death is no easy feat” she says with a voice that would be melodic if it wasn’t carrying with it power he had never felt except that night…

“You are a necromancer” he says with certainty. Her eyebrow raise is the only response. “That power is memorable when you encounter it.”

“You have encountered another necromancer?” she seems surprised. “And you are still here?”

Peter smiles. “Well, he is pretty untrained. However he did manage to summon seven spirits to return to earth to speak and that kind of magic stays with you.”

The woman looks unsettled. “Yvette?” Angelica asks cautiously.

Yvette looks at the alpha’s mate for a moment before looking back at Peter. “You say he was untrained? But to summon seven spirits, all together? That is not the work of a novice. That magic requires much more power and skill.” She narrows her eyes as if she is searching for something but then gasps. “You have created a Ângixe to thánato! You use a Banshee to reverse death itself!” she yells.

Peter nods proudly. “I did. And she is incredible. A member of our pack and soon to be our new Emissary if I am reading my nephew’s intentions right.”

Yvette looks both furious and worried. “You said your Emissary was the Alpha’s mate? Why would you need a new one?” Santino asks hoping to give his visitor some time to recover. His mate was whispering to her though he didn’t truly understand what was going on between her and Hale.

“Well, as High Alpha, he really isn’t in a position to be Emissary as well. So, my dear Ms. Martin was whispering to her though he didn’t truly understand what was going on between her and Hale.

“You used a Banshee to return. How did you die?” Yvette demands.

Peter sighs and glances at his niece. “Family argument.” Seeing her about to protest he gave up. “Derek killed me.”

Cora gasped in shock and shook her head. Why would her brother do such a thing?

“Why?” Angelica whispers looking lost.

Peter sighed heavily. He really didn’t want to talk about this, but he knew Cora would need to hear this eventually. Luckily by now most of the other wolves had left, they didn’t like hearing about the death of the Hale Pack. Now it was just the Alpha and his mate, Cora and her friend, the Necromancer, the Enforcer, and a human male. “When I was in the hospital, taking six years to heal, cell by cell, I was trapped in a broken body, but my mind was there, drifting in darkness, pain,
and fury. To put it mildly? I was insane by the time I was healed enough to move. I was driven by one singular objective, vengeance. Vengeance on those who had killed my family and left me to spend six hears listening to the sounds of their screams in my ears, the smell of them burning in our house in my nose and mouth, and the absolute defenselessness of lying in a broken body, abandoned by my alpha. I was used and abused by a nurse who hunters had placed to watch me and make sure I never recovered but stayed alive. I guess that torture was fun for them.”

He paused to sip the water in front of him and saw the shock, tears, and utter despair on so many faces, including his niece’s. “I was feral but driven by purpose. Another wolf entered my territory, so I attacked and killed it and by doing so gained the power of an alpha. It sped my healing and allowed me to finally be free of my prison. I killed my nurse and focused on killing Kate Argent, the woman behind it all.”

“You killed an Alpha while feral?” Santino demanded in shock. That shouldn’t be possible. “How did you do that?” he demanded.

He looked at Cora but saw she had already figured it out. She wasn’t speaking but he could see her lips move as she said her name over and over again. He sighed and looked at the Alpha. “It was my niece Laura, she had returned at the machinations of the nurse and when she saw me moving was shocked. She didn’t defend herself, so I struck and killed her and took her power for my own.”

“NO!” Cora screamed and nearly collapsed if not from the young girl who caught her. He clinically thought this must be the pen pal. “Why?” she wailed.

“Grief? Rage? Fury? Insanity? All or none. Laura, my alpha, had abandoned me and I felt nothing for her. I only wanted vengeance and she was a way to get it. It was only later, when the alpha spark had healed me enough to see through the pain and rage that I truly realized what I had done and by then it was too late. She was gone and I was the alpha and I would have my revenge.”

“And did you get it?” Santino asks coldly.

Peter smiled but it was one without any real joy. “Oh yes. I still feel Kate’s blood on my claws when I ripped out her throat in my family’s home, the one she burned. She died where she murdered my family. But my thirst for revenge wasn’t satisfied. It wasn’t enough. Her brother, his wife and daughter, and her father Gerard were all still alive and if the Hales were gone, I wanted every drop of Argent blood to follow them into death. And luckily Chris and Allison were right there and I could start with ending them. Unfortunately, they were actually guiltless in Kate’s crimes, but I didn’t care. My nephew, my beta, and their human sidekicks did care and they were all violently opposed to my plans and fought me. I would have won but our future Emissary slash High Alpha arrived and threw Molotov cocktails at me, setting me on fire. Again.” his voice trembled at that description. “Once down, Derek tore my throat out and took the alpha power for himself.”

“And the banshee?” Yvette demanded.

Peter smiled happily. “A happy accident. I bit our boy’s crush and it was obvious she had fae blood when I did. She wouldn’t turn, I knew that. It forged a connection and once dead, I was able to manipulate her into bringing me back.”

Yvette nods, that made sense.

“When was the fight with the Alpha Pack?” Santino was looking thoroughly confused now. The timeline was not easy to follow.
“Ah, that. Well after I was back, I helped my nephew with our Kanima problem, and once we rescued him and he became a real wolf.”

“You saved a Kanima! The host still lives?!” The older human, a man in his fifties, demanded. He reminded Peter of Deaton. The emissary! Of course.

“We did. He is an arrogant little prig, but he’s had the vanity kicked out of him a few times. And his mate, the Banshee, helps. Peter smirks at the look of total confusion from the man when he realizes that the pair is a wolf/former kanima and banshee/emissary/death magnet (he truly loves how Stiles’ mind works sometime). He can see the man trying to figure out how to deal with that pair. Good luck.

Peter turns back to the alpha. “After rescuing Jackson, we dealt with Deucalion, the Darach, and our little Emissary becoming a power like no other.”

“You still serve your nephew. The one who killed you for killing his sister?” Santino clarifies.

Peter nods, serious for once. “Our Emissary summoned my, our, family’s spirits to speak with us one last time. To begin to heal our pack. To say goodbye to his mother, my sister, my mate, brother, and all of them.” He looks over at the whimper from Cora as he desribes, in very sparse detail as he will share with her more when they are alone, before continuing. “We made our peace and I accept him as my Alpha and as high Alpha. I am his Hand, though to be honest, I am more his mate’s Hand as Stiles is significantly more ruthless than Derek.”

“Stiles?!” Cora barks. “Stilinski?! That kid? He is Derek’s mate? And High Alpha?! He is my age!!”

Peter nods with a smirk. “It is an adjustment having a teenager as High Alpha, but as he personally defeated Ennis, the twins, and the Darach, we find it best not to be too offended. Besides, he has some friends that you really don’t want to piss off.”

Yvette snorts. “Necromancers rarely have friends” she says with a slight sadness to her voice.

“He isn’t a Necromancer” Peter says smugly.

Yvette frowns. Peter watches as she tries to process his words. “Then how did he summon spirits.”

Peter smiles. “He is the Arcanist.”

It’s disappointing. No one evens looks impressed. They all look more confused. Even the necromancer and emissary. He sighs in disappointment. “He can use all six domains of magic” he clarifies and that gets the reaction he wants. Both the emissary and Yvette look gob smacked at that statement. After a moment of silence, there is a burst of yelling as he sits back and watches. He looks at Cora and sees the tears still present in her eyes but there is also sympathy for him there. She is confused and he is certain that it will take her time, but Peter is also certain that she will return with him, at least for a bit.

“Peter?” Cora’s voice is quiet but determined. Peter looks up and sees his niece standing in the doorway of the guest room he was given by Alpha Alvarez. The rest of the evening had been rather complicated. The necromancer, Yvette, had badgered Santino into promising that the Hales would stay overnight. Apparently, she was going to do some magic that night and wanted to talk again afterwards.
The Emissary, Joaquin Garcia, had more questions throughout dinner, but Peter was unsure that the man believed him when he spoke of the presence of the Morgaine in Beacon Hills and her approval of Stiles. Peter had not shared anything about the Queens because, one, it was better to keep some things to themselves, and two, he doubted the mostly sheltered Alvarez Pack could take much more.

Santino and Angelica had been tentatively accepting though he could tell that although they believed his story, they were worried about the impact on the girl now standing in front of him.

“You have questions?” he asks her looking open and relaxed.

“Why?” she whispers and he shakes his head.

“Cora, there is no answer that would satisfy you or me. Feral or insane, it is hard sometimes to even remember everything that happened. Dying and returning…it changes you. I lost the emotions, the feelings, all of the drives during that time and was left with cold facts and results. Do I wish to change it? Yes, every day. Laura” he pauses at the name that still hurts a bit to say “didn’t deserve that. Logically I know she was barely more than a child in an impossible situation. But instinctually? On the level below reason? She abandoned me and left me at the mercy of our enemies. She deserved nothing, not loyalty, not love, and not mercy.” He sighs as he watches his niece’s emotions race across her face. “I gave up everything for vengeance and it wasn’t worth it, not at all. But” he pauses and starts to pace around the room “I can’t say that I would do it differently.”

“What!” Cora whispers in disbelief.

“I don’t mean that I don’t wish that I had done it differently. I simply mean, based on the state I was in at the time? I think I would have reacted the same.” He looks at her. “Do you remember the scent? The smell of our family on fire?” he asks her and she pales.

Cora looks stricken but she nods. “Yes. It has faded, but it’s never gone.”

“You were lucky.” He sees fury come to her face but he stops her before she can speak. “For six years, that scent, the scent of my mate, my Hannah, dying was in every breath I took. Every day. Every minute. I was forced to relive my whole family dying in agony.” He sees the fury drain from Cora’s face as she listens to him. “And when I didn’t smell it, I was hearing their screams. And all this, while lying alone, abandoned by my pack, my Alpha, my family. Left defenseless with no pack to help me heal. Can you truly say you would have reacted differently?” his voice is vulnerable but not weak.

“I…I” Cora stammers but nothing comes out.

“I acted. I paid for those acts. Now, I am trying to make things better. To make a pack, a family, to honor those I lost. Derek has found his anchor and guide. He was never meant to be an Alpha, not like Laura or Talia, but he is getting better, especially with Stiles at his side. And I think if you were there, he would be even better. But living in Beacon Hills is so very different now” he warns her.

“Tell me” she says looking determined. He nods and they both sit down.

“So, you want to know all about our Mr. Stilinski? Well, it all started with two idiots looking to cause problems by going into the woods” Peter begins. This will take a while, but Cora deserves to hear it, good and bad. Besides, he needs to say it too.
Peter leaves his room the next morning feeling rested and a bit more certain. He and Cora spoke for some time before she finally left, but not before using his phone to call Derek and speak to him. He wasn’t even upset when she tested his honesty by asking her brother to confirm some elements of his story. The conversation quickly turned emotional, so Peter had given them some space and privacy. When he returned Cora didn’t say much, but he could tell that it had been rough. He was also sure that she would return with him, at least for a bit. He hadn’t been able to sense her pack bonds, but he didn’t think she was connected to the Alvarez Pack either.

“You slept well?” Angelica asks politely as he enters the living room. Peter sees the alpha’s mate is alone, sewing something or embroidering perhaps. He can hear at least a half dozen others moving around the kitchen, but he is a bit messed up on the time change so he is not sure if it is breakfast or lunch time here.

“Passably. It is not home” he admits and takes a seat.

Angelica nods. No wolf ever feels totally at ease in another pack’s territory. Even her visit to the Hales so many years ago was not without struggle, and she had Hale blood. Putting aside her work she looks closely at Peter Hale. She and Santino had spoken long into the night and more this morning with their Emissary. Joaquin had been very disturbed by Peter’s tale, but he was most concerned about the apparent High Alpha who was both friend and ally with the Morgaine and Merlin.

“You have questions?” Peter guesses.

She nods. “Many, but most can wait. You said you came for blood. For Cora. What is it you wish?”

Peter smiles. “Derek and I thought we were the last of the Hales. Finding out Cora was alive was a major surprise and we want our family together again. We want her to return to Beacon Hills.”

“And if she doesn’t want to?”

Peter leans back. “You knew my sister?” he asks the woman who, though confused, nods in agreement. “Then you know the utter futility of trying to force a Hale woman to do anything she doesn’t want to do” he snorts as he sees her surprised reaction. “Cora is my niece. My Alpha’s sister. Would your alpha not want his sister beside him if she had been lost and believed dead only to be found again?”

“Of course, family is above all else to pack” she acknowledges. “But there is also danger there that is not here.”

Peter scoffs at that. “Then you and your alpha are both fools.”

Angelica bristles at his casual insult. “Bold words for one so far from home.”

Peter leans forward and Angelica tenses at the intensity in the man’s face. “My sister believed we would never be harmed because we followed the ‘rules’. That since we did not harm humans, that no hunters would bother with us, that our reputation would protect us. The blood and bones of my family, my mate, attest to the failure of her beliefs. There are those that will kill any who are different simply because they like killing and it gives them an excuse. If you believe that you will never have to face that kind of evil” he pauses and shakes his head in disbelief “then I pray you never have to watch your pack die because you are too arrogant to protect yourselves.”
Angelica swallows her words and leans back as if slapped. “The loss of the Hales shook us all” Santino says softly as he enters the room causing both of the others to look at him. “But we have not failed to heed that warning. We patrol our lands carefully and have taken the precautions that we can even if they are less than obvious. I heard of the stranger in town and sent Matias and Lucia to see if they detected anything, even if they were unaware of why they went. Our Emissary has even placed wards on our land to protect us.” He says and he comes and sits beside his mate looking undisturbed by Peter’s words.

The beta nods in acknowledgment of both the man and his statements. “But you haven’t answered her question. Will Cora be safe there? Your niece has not joined our pack, not formally, but she is our blood as well and a good friend.”

Peter’s relieved. Cora is not bound there. “She will be safer there than anywhere else I would say. She is part of our pack, our family. She is Derek’s sister and I truly believe that our High Alphas would cause untold damage to any that would harm her.”

“I can protect myself” Cora says walking in and looking defiant. Yvette and the girl Esmeralda, Cora’s pen pal and now best friend, following along behind her.

“No doubt. But you will still have to train and learn what we have learned. Besides, Stiles is a bit of special young man and I have no doubt that you two will get along swimmingly” he snickers.

Cora frowns but doesn’t reply but turns to Santino. “Alpha, I need to see my brother. To go home, I don’t know if I will stay, but I need answers, more of them” she clarifies as she looks at Peter.

Santino nods. “You are free to go of course” the man assures her despite the reactions of dismay from his wife and daughter. “You are certain?”

“I am.”

Peter is about to jump up but Yvette, looking directly at him, smiles. “And I will come as well.”

Peter frowns and looks at the others who appear equally surprised. “I don’t recall extending an invitation” he tells her.

“Perhaps not. But my master wishes it and while your High Alpha may be impressive, I truly believe you do not want to risk his ire by denying a formal visit by his representative” Yvette responds.

“Who is your master?” he asks seeing equally confused looks on the other wolves faces.

“The Night Lord” Yvette says and smiles slightly at Peter’s shock. “He wishes to establish communication with the current Arcanist, so I am to be his envoy.”

There are a few more details to work out, not to mention lunch (it is lunch as apparently, he overslept) before everything is set. A phone call and a quick ride to the edge of the pack’s territory and Stiles is opening a portal back to Beacon Hills. Cora tenses at the fiery ring for only a moment but then she spots Derek standing near the wreckage of the Hale house and she is across in seconds.

Stepping back home, Peter releases some of the tension he had been feeling. Back in his own territory, it just felt better.

“Did we miss anything?” Peter asks and notices that Derek, Stiles, and Erica all look rather rough.
Chapter 17

Noah Stilinski is halfway down the stairs when he smells the coffee and...is that bacon? Today is the day he has to deal with McCall’s maneuvering, and he was planning to sneak by the diner to grab something greasy but he should have known better than to think he was going to get by his son. When he stepped into the kitchen area he smiled, actually relieved. Stiles was cooking breakfast at it seemed to be real food, not that horrible experiment with oatmeal he tried two weeks ago. Noah spotted eggs, bacon, coffee, juice, and...dear lord were those waffles? Jars of fruit and cream and syrup topped it all off.

“Stiles?” he asks suddenly suspicious. That was real bacon, not the turkey stuff. His son has killed someone for sure. Stiles smiles and sets down what looks like a cinnamon roll. Okay, his son’s a serial killer, he can deal with that.

“Morning pop. Thought with your day today you deserved something special” Stiles says smiling easily. Guilty has hell, but he was hiding it pretty well.

“So...where are the bodies?”

Stiles looks confused for a second before scowling. “Oh, ha ha. If you don’t want this, I can make you some oatmeal. I might even have a grapefruit” he says looking around and reaching to take back the roll.

Noah jumps in the chair before his son can move anything and starts to fill his plate. “I was just curious. Wasn’t upset or anything” he muttered and added a fourth piece of bacon and when there was no complaint, he figured his son must have blown up half of California if he was doing all this.

“Well I just wanted you to have a good day. You know, if you like, maybe I could...”

“NO” Noah cut him off before that could go anywhere. They had already argued about this more than once. “Stiles this is not one of your things. This is a plain old ordinary sociopath-murderer getting medical treatment. No elves, dwarves, or centaurs involved. And definitely no werewolves” he says seeing Stiles about to argue. “Besides, how exactly did you plan to explain to the department and the hospital why my teenage son is hanging around?”

“Take your kid to work day?” Stiles offers sheepishly.

That did not deserve a response. Instead he took a bite of the roll. Oh god! He almost agreed to let his son come with him for this. It was one of Celeste’s! She had cut him off for weeks now. Stiffening his spine at the barely concealed look of victory on his son’s face he shook his head. “How’s Peter?”

Stiles pouted. He recognized the evasion for what it was. “He found Cora but needs some time according to Derek.”

“And the car sized spider?”
Stiles slunk into his chair. “Can’t find it” he mutters.

“And isn't there the matter of the missing Hale?”

Stiles flailed around looking miserable and slinking deeper into the chair. “I can’t find her dad! Each time I get even a hint of her, she slips away. I know she is close, much closer than Cora is, but it is like a fricking ‘Where’s Waldo’ puzzle. I know she is in the preserve, never the city or town proper which makes no sense, but whenever I look, I can’t find a trace of anyone.” He was completely frustrated by his total failure to locate Peter’s daughter. He had spoken with Derek and the Alpha had agreed not to tell Peter until they could actually give him something real. He had struggled enough with all of the trouble finding Cora as it was. Knowing that one, he had a daughter, and two, that his daughter was within the territory but couldn’t be found would drive the man crazy…well, crazier. He had finally told his dad to try and get some ideas but even he was stumped.

Noah felt a little guilty, but he smiled inside while his son ranted, and he got to eat in somewhat peace. By now Stiles was almost distracted.

“I’m not distracted by the way” Stiles suddenly says glaring at his father. “I could be a help.”

Noah sighed. “I know you could son” he says as he puts down his fork. “But you are not going. There is no reason to go and many reasons not to. This is a pain in the ass, but it is my kind of problem, not yours. I will deal with our good Agent McCall my way.”

“I could drop him into a volcano….or near some lions. Cover him with BBQ sauce to make him appetizing.”

Noah smiled at that visual. “While I appreciate the rather bloodthirsty gesture, I am not sure Scott would appreciate that, even with how mad he is. Might even make him cry.”

Stiles looked at his father in absolute disbelief. That was a totally low blow! Using Scott that way. Even if it was true. No matter how mad he was at his dad, Scott didn’t want to see him hurt. “Fine. No teleporting. I could make his hair fall out” he offers.

Noah really tried to look disapproving but the minute he visualized Raphel McCall without his rather pompous hair he lost it. Laughing he shook his head. “No” he finally got out. “Not unless you get Mel’s permission” he added as an afterthought.

Stiles agreed but he was more than halfway certain that Mama McCall would be all in on that particular punishment. Standing up he walked his father to the door and hugged him goodbye as his dad left the day. Looking back to the kitchen he sighed. Hopefully his dad won’t be too mad at him.

“Good morning Sheriff” Deputy Graeme said with a smile as Noah walked into the station. She looked at him slightly confused “No take-out?” she asks looking at his empty hands.

Noah narrows his eyes at the smug look on his deputy’s face. He is absolutely sure that Stiles had gotten to the woman and that she is one of his son's eyes at the station. “I ate breakfast with Stiles this morning.”
Tara frowns. “He was up at 6:30am?”

Noah nods and agrees with her rather doubtful look. Teenagers do not like getting up early and normally his son would require dynamite or a werewolf to get out of bed before he needed to. He also gave up just a little too easily for the Sheriff’s comfort. “Your visitor is back” Tara says just as he is approaching his office.

The sheriff looks at his deputy, but she is already moving away fast. They will be heading out in about twenty minutes to the hospital, along with Parrish, to meet up with the four deputies already there and the two at Eichen House as escorts. Dreading what he is going to see, he steps in and spots his visitor from last night sitting in his guest chair looking entirely too put together for this early after their late night visit.

“Ms. Rushman. I am sorry if I wasn’t clear yesterday, but I don’t have time to talk this morning, I am rather busy” he told the woman who only smiled easily.

The brunette’s expression reminded him of his son this morning and his attempt to manipulate him into coming along. “I remember Sheriff, but I think that this might be exactly what my employer is looking for. Our concerns were not just with the incidents themselves. Obviously, things can happen anywhere and it is hardly the fault of the location. But how the local authorities respond, how they handle things, these are things that tell us what could happen in the future.”

Noah nods not liking where this sounded like it was going. “I can see how that would be of concern for a new business.” His tone is reasonable but the woman smirks, seeing his displeasure and acknowledging it.

“Sheriff, to be blunt, Stark Industries is a target.”

“Especially when your boss gives terrorists his home address.”

Rushman concedes the point with a nod. “Technically, Tony Stark is not my boss” she adds.

“Close enough though. Especially with all that Avengers stuff he does as well.”

“You are familiar with all of that?” she asks with a curious expression.

He sighs. “I have a teen aged son” he says as if that should explain it. From the look on her face, it does.

“Regardless, locating any Stark facility requires careful thought not only in light of potential targeting, but also not overly disrupting the community and the people that live there.”

Noah frowns for a moment. “I wouldn’t have expected such a company to be too concerned about that.”

“Well that may have been true once, but not anymore. Both Mr. Stark and Ms. Potts have set new priorities for the company. However, we have gotten a bit off topic. I have some training in security, a natural part of my job” she admits and Noah nods as it makes sense. “And I feel that seeing how you and your people manage the, shall we say slightly unusual, nothing too extreme of course, will say a great deal about how you might manage the unexpected if it were to come up. I mean this is nothing extreme, correct? Simply a prisoner from a facility, Eichen House I believe, receiving surgery and then being returned?”

Noah leaned back. “You know a great deal more than I told you last night.”
Rushman smiled. “Sheriff, may I be blunt?” He nods. “I have access to one of the world’s best computer systems designed by one of the most brilliant minds who has a less than absolute moral codes. Finding information is second nature to us and it isn’t really that difficult to find out anything that affects us.” She looks at him for a moment seeing the wheels turning as he tries to figure out what she did. “Also…your deputy Ryan? He pretty much talked all about it last night in the coffee shop to the waitress while I was there.”

The sheriff manages to contain his groan, but the woman definitely sees it and holds back her laughter. Dammit! “So, you want to what? Do a ride along?”

“Essentially. I promise to stay out of the way Sheriff. I just want to observe how you and your deputies handle things. Simple as that and like you said, it is fairly a routine matter, right?”

Noah sighs. He really would like to say no. He technically could and nobody would be able to really argue with him, but Roberts would literally have an aneurysm if he did. The possibility of Stark Industries coming to Beacon Hills would shake things up across the whole county, if not this whole part of the state. It literally could transform the economy around town. ‘Huh’, he wonders, ‘how will Argent react to that idea?’ “Fine. You can come, but the moment you become a distraction or don’t follow orders, you are out the door without argument or I will have you tossed in a cell until it is over with no matter how much the Mayor screams about it.”

Natasha smiles and holds up her hands with a completely innocent expression. “Absolutely Sheriff. I promise to be on my best behavior.”

Sheriff Noah Stilinski looks at that face, the expression of complete agreement without a trace of argument or hesitation. Maybe he was wrong and just prejudiced by his son this morning. She can’t be that devious. Dealing with all the supernatural crap was really getting to him when some corporate stooge was making him doubt his own judgment. “Okay. Let’s go then” he says, and they head out and to the hospital.

Noah walks in the hospital doors and looks up to see Parrish already speaking to one of the other deputies. He also spotted the team from Eichen so that meant that Barrows was already here. He didn’t see Mel though. Parrish saw him and broke off to come over. “Sir, they got here with no issues, and he is already being prepped. Nurse McCall said to tell you that all was going according to the plan.”

Noah nodded and sent the man off. He spotted two of his deputies right outside the door where Barrows was being prepped. There were no other people per the plans. “So, all is good?” he asks Tara who nods.

“We have a few civilians in the waiting room next door, but they are here for other business and know not to come over here.”

Noah frowns. “I thought we cleared this whole section?”

“Just our part, this side. The hospital still has regular patients but right now it is pretty slow. An elderly couple with a regular appointment, a mom with a sick kid, and two teenagers.”

Noah nods and starts to walk away but stops. “Teenagers? No parents?”

Tara shrugs. “Yessir. She is here for a checkup and her boyfriend drove her. Said her parents were working this morning. Supposed to be pretty routine. Her doctor got delayed so they are hanging
out here rather than going back to the high school.”

Noah stared at his deputy for a second before regretting that breakfast. “Describe them.”

Tara frowned but noticed that while the sheriff wasn’t angry, he did seem concerned. “Girl’s white, blonde hair, red lipstick, way too much leather. He’s black, bald, and looks like a football player.” She sees the sheriff react. “You know them?”

“Unfortunately” he mutters and then heads in the direction of the waiting room wondering if he can still ground his magical son. Stepping through the doors he spots the couple and the mom with the kid before he spots the two of them sitting out of the way looking entirely too innocent.

“Sheriff!” Erica says smiling happily. “Good morning. What brings you here?” Boyd, as usual, doesn’t say anything but nods in greeting.

“I think I could ask you the same question Ms. Reyes.”

“Oh, my parents wanted me to get a check up with Dr. Barnett but he’s running late or something. He should be here in an hour or so, but with doctors you never know” she winks saucily at him. “Boyd brought me, and we figured we would hang out here till he’s ready for us.”

On the surface it is all innocent and if he didn’t have that Stark woman standing off to the side, he would definitely have words with the two of them but instead he just smiles and nods. “Deputy, could you walk Ms. Rushman through the plan for this morning?” he asks, and Tara quickly agrees, and he smiles easily at the woman who nods but is definitely giving him a searching look before they walk back to the secured section.

Turning back to the two he sees that neither one of them look contrite. “You are both grounded.”

Erica looks stunned. “What?” Boyd asks looking surprised

“You can’t do that!” Erica whispers but then looks at Boyd with real concern. “Can he do that?”

They both look at the Sheriff who isn’t smiling but is enjoying that he is managing to intimidate two werewolves. “You can also tell Stiles that he is grounded as well as I am sure that this was his plan all along. You two are going to stay out of this!”

Erica and Boyd both nod in agreement. “You weren’t actually supposed to know we were here sir” Boyd tells him, and Noah looks at the teen with a frown. “Stiles just wanted you to have backup, just in case.”

Noah sighs. “This is a prisoner, a human prisoner, not one of ‘your’ problems.”

“We won’t be a bother, we promise” Erica says looking devastated which Noah wasn’t buying for a second. He’d seen her fight, and this was all artifice.

Noah stares long enough that she squirms a bit, long enough to know she wasn’t fooling anyone. “Stay out of it” he repeats and walks back to the secure area.

“Everything okay?” Ms. Rushman asks him as he walks back in.

Noah shakes his head. “Just two of my son’s friends playing hooky from school by coming early for their appointment instead of staying in school till the right time.” She nods and looks back at Tara and Jordan.
“I have to say that things appear to be well in hand. Your deputies are good at their jobs from what I can see” she says approvingly.

“It’s going to be a boring few hours” he warns her.

She turns and smiles and Noah admits to feeling a bit outmatched, the woman was stunning. “In that case, I have some questions about an attack on the station recently. I don’t mean to be insensitive but an assault on the sheriff’s station is rather unusual.” Noah refrains from groaning and smiles instead as he gestures to some seats. He has told the cover story for the attack by Matt and the Argents enough he has it down, but this woman is relentless. Roberts seriously owes him a steak dinner for this.

The conversation moves easily with Noah talking more than normal but Ms. Rushman, ‘Natalie, please Sheriff’, is easy to talk to and does seem to understand the basics of protocol though the gaps in her knowledge clearly show she has never done police work even if she has security experience. “He actually stole a police van for a prank?” she asks looking impressed.

“Borrowed was his exact word.”

Natalie smiled. “I take it the kid’s father didn’t see it that way? Is that why they suspended you? Sorry if that’s insensitive but seeing as the kid’s dad is a lawyer and now all is good…”

Noah sighed. “Whittemore’s a…” he pauses and stops himself “…good attorney.” He sees her smile at the changed word but gives it to him. “Once his son admitted to escalating things against Stiles then it suddenly became less about the Sheriff’s kid being ‘out of hand’ and more about ‘boys will be boys’ and Jason Whittemore does not like bad press. He’s a solid lawyer, a bit of an ass, but then aren’t they all. Once Jackson admitted his part, he even apologized…reluctantly. Now that the boys have apparently buried the hatchet and it all seems to be going well. And to be honest, I am sure the idea of working with either Stark Industries or the people that come to work with your place will be more than worth it for him to play nice with everyone.”

Natalie smiles and nods. “Knowing some of the lawyers I’ve worked with, that doesn’t surprise me. The idea of billable hours seems to make them beyond willing to help.”

Noah laughed. He glanced at his watch and was surprised at the time. They should be starting the surgery any minute if they are still on schedule. He was surprised how much he had been talking but she was really easy to talk with. He is about to tell her about one incident with a rather unhappy neighbor story that Parrish had recently dealt with when there is a sudden crash followed by a scream. Jumping up he runs around the corner and spots his two deputies, guns drawn, and looking at the doors to the operating room. Vaguely aware that he had a shadow he moved forward just as a body went flying through the doors and slammed into the wall opposite the door. Gun drawn he yelled “Get back” to Rushman and he moved forward as his deputies both ran in the room.

He didn’t get three steps before Deputy Adams came flying to slam into the wall next to the doctor who was still down on the floor. Another scream came out but then a man’s yell of fury that sounded more like a furious bull than any human. Three shots rang out before a sound of flesh striking flesh and Deputy Martin is flying through the doors, ripping both of them off the hinges, and slamming into the floor. Noah has a moment before William Barrows steps out, blood sliding down his chest from a surgical incision, and a look of unholy mania on his face. “Freeze Barrows!” Noah yells pointing his gun.
Barrows face is full of rage as he stares at the sheriff and Noah sees something dark, menacing, that was not there the last time he saw the man. Opening his mouth Noah has only a second to comprehend before a swarm of flies comes pouring out of his mouth like a fire hose. He manages to get off one shot that slams into the man’s shoulder, but he doesn’t even flinch. Noah is about to try and turn and knock down the civilian when he feels a rush of heat and a flash of light appears. Suddenly in front of him a glowing, golden star, the exact shape of his badge, appears and when the flies strike it they explode in puffs of smoke and flashes of light. Staring at the star in front of him he is stunned but still manages to notice that his own badge is glowing in sync with the star shielding him.

When the last fly is gone, the star disappears and Barrows screams before something shiny flies by Noah’s vision and lands on the ground. Suddenly two arcs of electricity shoot up from the disc, latching on to the man, and his screams shift from rage to pain. Glancing over he sees Natalie’s arm still out from flinging the thing. The snub gun in her other hand looks rather impressive. “What was that?” he barks but the scream from Barrows shifts again.

Shrugging off the mini taser thing, Barrows tries to move back in the operating room but suddenly flies backward into the wall though he doesn’t fall down. Melissa is standing in the door, a blue white shield glowing in front of her. “You stay the hell away from us” she yells and Noah spots the rest of the medical team behind her on the floor as she blocks the man from coming in before she turns back to Noah and screams “CALL STILES!”

Barrows grabs ahold of Martin, who was trying to stand, by the neck and slams him into the wall. “You will all pay. I will not go back into the darkness. I have suffered too much, you all will play my game.” BANG

Noah looks shocked at the bullet hole in the man’s forehead. Glancing at Rushman, smoke rising from the barrel of her gun, a gun that is not trembling in the slightest. She catches his eye and gives him a raised eyebrow in question. “Nice shot” he says and she nods but they both look back and realize that the man is still standing.

“Is he?” Natalie starts to ask when Barrows roars in fury and flings Martin at them. "You can't kill me!” Barrows screams at them and seconds later they both go down in a tangle of bodies. At least Noah thought they did. Rushman actually managed to dodge Martin’s body and is moving towards Barrows at a run. Noah watches the woman leap and bounce off the wall, her legs grabbing onto Barrows and flinging him with some kind of flip but the man twists in the air and lands on his feet and roars as he rushes her. She dances away and shoots him in the kneecap but it doesn’t do anything to slow him down and he swings his arm and clips her, sending her spinning into the wall, but she doesn’t go down. Noah is about to move when he hears the roars behind him and ducks just as two bodies leap over him and he watches Barrow turn towards them and screams in fury right before Boyd slams into him knocking him back. Erica snarls, her claws slicing into him but while the man screams, he doesn’t stop and Boyd gets punched hard enough to fly back a dozen feet. Noah can’t get a clear shot with Erica dancing in and out but Barrows is screaming.

“MONSTERS!! I’ll kill all of you!”

“Hah, don’t like the competition” Erica taunts taking a swing but Barrows catches her and slams her into the wall, pulling back to slam his fist into her face when Boyd barrels in and knocks him back, freeing Erica.

Boyd snarls but Barrows is back and hits him so hard Noah can hear the teen’s jaw breaking as Boyd hits the far wall and goes down. Erica screams but it is almost drowned out by the roar that shakes the hospital. He sees Natalie’s eyes widen looking behind him and he turns and sees a fiery
circle glowing there as Derek, in full Alpha form flies out followed by Jackson and Isaac, both wolfed out as well, and the three launch themselves at Barrows in a flurry of claws, teeth, and kicks.

Noah stares for a second but Barrows, while he seemed invincible before, apparently isn’t. Not when facing four werewolves, all of them out for blood. The man looks enraged but then he just stops and collapses, like a marionette with its strings cut. “Is that it?” Jackson snarls around his fangs. “He just died?”

The three of them look confused by the sudden lose of heartbeat.

Derek suddenly snarls furiously and Noah spots something tiny fly out of the man, a bug of some kind, a left-over fly perhaps, moving away quickly.

“I don’t fucking think so” his son’s voice calls out and a ball of light surrounds the fly and seals it in. Noah sees the thing furiously batting against the ball but it can't get out. He can feel waves of fury and desperation coming off the thing. Its enough to almost make him lose his breakfast.

Noah turns and stares at his son, eye’s glowing white, and watches as Stiles squeezes his fist and the little ball shrinks to the size of a golf ball. “You are not getting away again.”

“Stiles?” Noah asks, concern clear in his voice.

“Sorry dad, Noshiko finally told Derek and I about why she was here and what it was that got her so worked up and ever since we have been looking for this bastard. Seems he escaped when the Nemeton was destroyed, but he was badly injured and lost most of his power. This thing isn’t going to hurt anyone” Stiles voice is cold, hard, and determined.

Looking over at the teens, all back to normal, who are helping Boyd up as well as giving a hand to Mel who was apparently standing guard over several doctors who were injured by the man before she could stop him.

“Well, it appears that your department has some interesting back up when things get more than a little unusual” Natalie said looking around the ER before staring at the sheriff and his son.

Noah was looking at her, trying to figure out why she didn’t sound more surprised, while also trying to figure a way explain all this when his son yelled out in excitement. “Oh my god! You’re the Black Widow!”
Lydia parks her car with a huff of annoyance. She did not appreciate the text calling her back from her first real work as the Hale Pack Emissary. Though she had just begun her training, Deaton and Derek apparently felt that the best way to learn was by doing so she had been sent to meet with Sakura and Felisha, the emissaries of the Ito and Marshall Packs. To be honest, it wasn’t exactly rocket science. Sakura was a druid who must have been close to 70 years old and was the actual definition of serenity. She had been friends with Satomi for decades and was happily training her grandson to take her place though neither of them appeared to be in a hurry as he was more interested in computers than trees.

Felisha was an alchemist and as it turns out, a colleague of Professor Chavez-Morales at Stanford. However, she was not a chemist like him, or at least not a legitimate one. She was actually an herbal medicine practitioner and had a rather successful homeopathy business in Redding in addition to her work with the Marshall Pack.

They had met at Sakura’s house to discuss general emissary things, mostly she was certain it was the opportunity to feel her out as the newest member of the club, but there was also what appeared to be a ‘sisters in the supernatural’ element to it as well. It seems that even in the supernatural world, chauvinism was still around and some of the male Emissaries could still be a pain. Fortunately, those that felt and acted that way rarely lasted too long before they had their eyes opened. Female Emissaries had power and they rarely put up with shit from anyone, let alone a misogynist jerk. No, mostly they had to deal with condescending superiority which they managed rather effectively. Listening to some of their stories had made Lydia rather happy to know that she had some serious support.

Currently the split was close to 50/50 in terms of the number of male to female Emissaries in the area, but where the men kept each other at arm’s length, and Deaton was a rather good example of that, the women were much more collaborative. Sakura and Felisha had also met just about every Emissary in about a five-state radius, so most of the meeting was spent getting an evaluation and their opinions about them. Though she reserved judgement for herself, both of the older woman surprised her in confirming that decision by telling her that she would need to make up her own mind. Overall it had been a good trip till she got the text to come back.

This morning Stiles had been planning something around his father and the hospital with Erica and Boyd but he had insisted it wasn’t pack related so she wasn’t too concerned. Now however, it seemed that it was pack related and she was needed back at home. The other texts Stiles had sent made absolutely no sense.

“Lyds” Jackson says with a warmth that still makes her smile as she steps out of the car and pulls her into a hug. “Sorry for messing up your meeting.”

Lydia just shrugs a bit. “It wasn’t messed up. We were pretty much finished when I got your text calling me back. Something a bit more than ‘Pack alert, come home’ would have been nice, especially as you didn’t answer your phone when I called.”

Jackson looks a bit embarrassed “Uh…I broke it…again. There was a fight at the hospital.”

Walking to the elevator in Derek’s building she just sighed. They couldn’t go one day? “I thought it was not supposed to be pack related?”

Jackson shrugged as he hit the button and the door closed. “It wasn’t supposed to be but then the
guy apparently had superpowers and tore up the hospital. Stiles portaled us there and we took him out. Apparently, he was possessed by a fly or something.”

Lydia sighed looking at him. She loved the guy, but he did not take the time or energy to actually find out things that she needed to know and she did not understand how on earth he could be so blasé about things. She knew she would have to wait for the full story as they walked into the loft and she looked around.

“Hey Lydia!” Allison says from the couch where she was sitting with Kira. Isaac and Scott were playing a video game and Derek was pacing by the window. She didn’t see Stiles.

“Well this looks like an emergency” she says unhappily and enjoys the guilty looks on most of their faces. Surprisingly, Derek’s isn’t one of them. “So can someone please explain Stiles’ garbled text?”

“What did he say?” Derek looks at the redhead mildly curious.

Pulling out her phone she opens the text chat. “OMG Lydia!” she looks at the alpha with an eye roll. “You won’t believe” she pauses again “ITS HER” she looks up again “AVENGERS IN BH” she pauses one last time “FOSA!@#$DSAHD” she spells it out. “At that point I began to think it was a stroke. Where is he?” she looks around but doesn’t see him, Boyd, or Erica.

Derek mutters “he is currently ‘meditating’ or something.”

“He’s looking for Thor” Isaac snorts and Derek growls in annoyance.

Lydia taps her foot looking very unhappy. Somebody better explain.

“It seems that the Black Widow is in town” Allison says happily, ignoring Derek’s muttering and Isaac’s giggling.

Lydia stares at the brunette for a second, hoping for some sign that she is kidding but doesn’t see it. “You mean that there really is an Avenger here?”

“Yep” Allison smiles.

Lydia looks at Derek who is pacing again and the rest of the pack who are all looking way too happy. “Where are Erica and Boyd?”

“Still at the hospital” Derek tells her.

Lydia nods at that. She had heard of Stiles plan for them so at least that was still on track. “It is pretty cool, you gotta admit” Scott says looking up from his game, smiling happily.

“That one of the world’s most effect assassin spies, connected to the world’s most powerful intelligence agency, one who works directly with Tony Stark, a brilliant scientist with barely a passing grasp of the concept of subtlety, is currently sneaking around Beacon Hills and has apparently gotten involved with our pack, and by extension, Stiles?”

Derek looks actually pleased at her comment. The rest? They suddenly look a lot less sure. “Uh… but she’s a good guy, girl, hero” Scott tries weakly. “She wouldn’t hurt Stiles…” he looks around at the others.

Lydia sighs and sits down. “Probably not, but do you want Stiles to have to deal with Shield and the Avengers? And why is she here in the first place? Beacon Hills is not Avengers territory. If the
worlds most competent intelligence agent is here, she is looking for Stiles.”

“We know” Derek says quietly. “And she knows about us.”

Lydia wishes she could say she was surprised, but she already figured that part out. Just as she was about to ask another question Stiles walked back in looking disappointed. “No Thor?” Isaac asks and Derek growls again.

Stiles looks offended. “I wasn’t looking for him” he yells but from the snickers from all of the wolves Lydia is betting that his heart beeped. “Okay fine, I was curious if any of the other avengers were around and he was the only likely one I would be able to sense, but I got nothing. I also was looking around and detected something coming this way, a couple of hundred miles out.”

Everyone looked surprised at that. “Do you know what?” Derek asks distracted from the previous conversation.

“No. Not really, I mean I felt something. Excitement maybe? I could smell rain, and ozone, like in a thunderstorm. It didn’t feel malevolent or bad or anything, more…anxious?” he tests out the right words but none seem to really fit.

“Rain? Like all the weird weather that’s been around the state the last few days?” Kira asks.

“Yeah…I think so. It felt like it was a bubble, maybe two, or like a cloud or something.”

“Well that’s an issue for later. What about the hospital and this avenger?” Lydia asks.

Stiles suddenly looks like a kid at Disneyland. “It was AWESOME! I had arranged for Erica and Boyd to be at the hospital for backup, you know in case dad needed help.”

Lydia smirked knowing that the Sheriff probably did not appreciate that.

“So, Satomi and Noshiko had come to the loft that morning to tell us about why they were so upset.”

(Flashback to Derek’s Loft that morning)

“Alpha Hale” Satomi says respectfully as she and Noshiko enter the loft as Derek holds the door open. “Arcanist” she says to Stiles with a bit less certainty. Apparently, there are some missing protocols for how to deal with him.

“Stiles please” the teen replies quickly. Technically he supposes he could be that, or Alpha Stilinski, or is he also Alpha Hale? No, that sounds like he is married to Derek. Well…technically he is, sorta. Nope, not gonna go down that road this morning.

“You wanted to speak with us?” Derek says as their guests sit down and he pours some tea for the two women.

“It is about the Nemeton” Noshiko says looking unhappy to be talking about this.

Stiles and Derek share a look. Ever since they met the Kitsune, she has been overly focused on the Nemeton but neither she nor Satomi has truly explained why, just a vague worry about some danger.
“It began during World War II” Noshiko started looking very unhappy. Over the next hour they got the full story. The internment camp at Oak Creek, the black market sale of medicine, the deaths, and finally Noshiko calling out the Nogitsune and everything that it caused.

“We finally managed to defeat him and buried him in the only prison that we could find, a magical well that would prevent his escape” she tells them, emotionally drained by this point.

“The Nemeton” Stiles whispers. “That was the dark shadow that was there. It was faint, but dense. A darkness that was different than Blake.” He looks at an equally concerned Derek. “But I don’t remember it afterwards. I mean I don’t remember much of the finale, but I haven’t sensed anything like it since I woke up, and I have been looking.”

“Would you be able to sense it if it was hiding within someone?” Noshiko asks.

Stiles frowned and thought about it. “I can’t say for sure. I mean it was pretty hard to sense even back then, and it has gotten harder to spot things now because the numbers are growing in the territory. It seems that something new shows up every day.”

“You didn’t mention that” Derek says looking worried.

Stiles sighs. “Its not that” he struggles to explain. “Some things, yes I feel and let everyone know immediately. But others…its like the difference between a breeze and a wind. Do you want to know that a dozen pixies have shown up 80 miles from here in the woods?”

Derek frowns. He hadn’t considered that Stiles’ senses were being so bombarded. “It’s happening every day?”

Stiles shrugs. “Just about. I kind of tune things out if it isn’t making me nervous or something. Its like I can tell if something is harmless or neutral vs dangerous. If it isn’t making me anxious, I figured it was probably okay.”

Satomi seems to agree but Derek looks concerned. “What about the spider?” he asks.

Stiles groans. “Not the spider!”

“Spider?” Satomi asks confused.

Derek explains the spider Erica and Kira saw, which causes Noshiko to have a minor freak out since her daughter apparently didn’t share the news, but Satomi seems less concerned. “But Stiles has been having trouble finding it” he adds looking at the teen who is glaring back.

“I might be able to provide some insight” Satomi offers and both of them look at her in surprise. “It was about thirty years ago when I met a witch who was the daughter of the High Witch. She had been searching for a creature that many had believed extinct. A Ghost Spider.”

Stiles leaned forward. “Did she describe it?”

“Apparently it could change its appearance at will. She said that it was ghostly in appearance and could be a small as a normal spider or as large as an elephant. It glowed with a otherworldly light and could appear and disappear at will.”

Stiles and Derek both looked at each other. This sounded good. “What else? Was it dangerous?”

Satomi frowned. “Not that I recall. She wanted to get some of its venom for a spell, but the spider was crafty and had been avoiding her. She didn’t wish to cause it harm, so I think she didn’t believe
it was malevolent or evil, rather it was simply there. When I asked, she said that the ghost spiders were living manifestations of unfulfilled purpose. They were the remains of dreams and ideas that had never been seen to life. Art never painted, songs never sung, dreams left undone. They were what could have been.”

Stiles looked unhappy. “That’s terrible.”

Satomi shook her head. “No. It simply is. There is much that could be that never is. It is the way of life. But apparently the ghost spiders exist to keep those potentials alive until it is time to be rediscovered. They can interact with people and when they find the right person, they are a source of inspiration and creativity and once expressed, the spider has done its duty and fades away.”

“Wait!” Stiles looks shocked “These spiders carry the ideas around and then give them to someone else and if they sing the song or whatever, the spider dies?”

“Essentially. The ghost spiders are inspiration unfulfilled. Once they find expression, they are not needed.”

“I don’t think my powers can find an idea” Stiles mutters.

Derek looks at his mate with sympathy. Stiles had been beating himself up over not being able to find the spider but if what Satomi is saying is true, it shouldn’t be possible. He’s not even sure why Erica and Kira even saw it in the first place, unless it somehow involved them.

“This is truly fascinating, but not exactly a priority” Noshiko reminds them.

“Right” Stiles shakes it off. “So, tell us everything you know about this Nogitsune.”

When Boyd calls its both a surprise and not. Stiles was certain that something would go wrong with his dad’s thing at the hospital no matter how many times he had swore it was going to be routine. He had convinced Derek to station the two betas there as backup without telling his dad, hoping that he might not even notice, but he did. They had reported in that they had been busted and Erica was apparently rattled by his dad enough to report that he had grounded them. Stiles had laughed but he loved that his dad was so awesome that he could pull that off. He would avoid it of course, pizza from Wong would get him out of trouble easily enough, but at least they were there.

Boyd had called back and left his phone on when they heard screaming and shots fired. Boyd had managed a brief update before the sounds of fighting drowned out everything in sounds of chaos. In that second, Stiles was certain, it had to be. Reaching out to his dad, Boyd, Erica, and Melissa he felt the darkness near them, it was rage, fury, and pain. Joy at the chaos. It was that damn thing! Derek wanted to run but Stiles had already screamed for Jackson and Isaac and both of them had come running as he opened a portal. Derek, seeing the chaos roared and shifted as he leapt past the Sheriff and a woman with a gun staring at them before he is past and attacking Barrow, Jackson and Isaac right on his tail, claws and fangs out.

It is over almost at once with three more werewolves on the scene and Barrows goes down without a sound. Derek stares and sees the fly come out of his mouth and he roars at it. It is just like Noshiko described. Before he can move a ball of light surrounds it and it is trapped.

“I don’t fucking think so” Stiles voice sounds furious as the ball of light traps the fly. Derek stares
at the thing, the fury and rage scents are thick in the air, but there is also a stink of fear.

“You are not getting away again.” Derek’s pride at his mate, standing tall and righteous, dealing with a threat that hurt his pack, his family. The uncertainty that often defines Stiles is long gone. This is the Arcanist and High Alpha.

“Stiles?” the sheriff sounds uncertain, worried.

“Sorry dad, Noshiko finally told Derek and I about why she was here and what it was that got her so worked up and we were going to start looking for this bastard when Boyd called. Seems he escaped when the Nemeton was destroyed, but he was badly injured and lost most of his power. This thing isn’t going to hurt anyone” Stiles voice is cold, hard, and determined.

Derek looks over and sees Melissa tending to the staff in the operating room. Derek can hear heartbeats, so he knows they are alive, but they all appear to be unconscious. Jackson and Isaac are helping Boyd and Erica and the deputies who were hurt in the fight.

“Well, it appears that your department has some interesting back up when things get more than a little unusual” the woman with the gun says and Derek frowns at her. She isn’t a deputy, so why is she armed?

“Oh my god! You’re the Black Widow!” Stiles screams in joy and Derek looks at the woman again. He thought she was supposed to be a redhead? At least that was the comments that the pack had always said when talking about them. Last movie night there was an argument about who would get to be which Avenger and there was a three-way fight among Erica, Allison, and Lydia over who would get to be her.

“You are what?” Sheriff Stilinski asks looking at the woman.

She smiles. “Sorry about that Sheriff but I was undercover.” Oh lord the Mayor is not going to like this Noah thinks.

Stiles is literally bouncing in excitement, but they don’t have time for this. “Sheriff, what do we need to do about all this?” Derek asks

Noah looks around and know this is going to be a nightmare once McCall gets wind of it. “Derek, take the pack home. I, we” he looked over at his ‘guest’ for a moment who actually managed to look completely innocent. Damn, no wonder she was a good spy! “We will clean up here and meet you there.”

Derek frowned for a moment but nodded.

“Wait! Are you kidding?! I have so many questions!” he yells and looks at Ms. Rushman. “Why are you here? Are the other Avengers here? Have you made up with Captain America yet? Where was Thor in the fight in Berlin? What’s the real story there? Who was the cat guy and is he an Avenger? Is Spider-Man to the Avengers? Why are there so few female Avengers? Is there a gender bias for superheroes?”

It is only the pause for breath that allows Derek to interrupt. “Stiles, we need to go. I’m sure the Sheriff will bring her to the loft.”

Stiles looks like he is about to argue when he pauses to look around and sees the damage and gets serious. “Dad are you sure we can’t help?”

“I don’t want you here or involved. Actually,” he looks around “I don’t think anyone here isn’t
already in the know” he says surprised. The only deputies that appear awake are actually the ones that know about everything and the med team appears to be unconscious.”

“I might be able to assist as well” Natasha says pulling out her phone. “Wouldn’t be the first time we needed to cover something up.” She steps away for a moment before they hear her say “Tony, I need you to fix something for me. Replace all video footage at Beacon Hills Hospital in California for the last hour with fuzz, make it look like a fault.” Pause. “I’ll explain later. No, something else.” Pause. “Be nice and I will.” She hangs up and turns around. “That should take care of the evidence, let’s check on the people.” With that she heads towards Melissa.

“That was so cool! You know that was Tony Stark! Iron Man was just here. Well, on the phone, but close enough” Stiles gushes.

Noah rolls his eyes as Boyd and Erica come up followed by the other boys. “We will stay here as witnesses or whatever you need sir. We actually do have an appointment” Boyd tells him and the Sheriff nods. It takes a minute but Derek finally manages to corral Stiles long enough to portal them all back to the loft.

Stepping through, Satomi and Noshiko stand up and are about to ask something when the Kitsune suddenly sees the small ball of light hovering behind Stiles with the fly inside furiously battering against it, desperate to escape. “You found him!” she says breathlessly, relief clear in her voice.

Satomi looks at the fly with disgust clear in her eyes. “What will you do?” she asks Stiles.

Stiles looks at the ball before a memory comes to him. “The Nogitsune is void, darkness and shadow, right?” he asks them. The both nod. “I have an idea” he says and opens another portal, stepping through without waiting but the rest of them, startled by his action, quickly follow before it closes. Stepping through the door they find themselves in the Preserve, in the stone circle, back where the Nemeton once stood.

“Stiles, why are we here? Are you going to imprison it again?” Derek asks looking uncomfortable with that idea.

“Nope” Stiles says and without another word he closes his eyes and starts glowing. A subtle humming coming from the teen causes the winds to pick up and shake the trees and then the ground begins to move with a slight tremble before everything goes completely quiet, no sounds of animals at all, no birds or even insects.

“What did you do?” Noshiko demands with a tremor in her voice.

Stiles doesn’t answer, just waits but he doesn’t have long before the temperature drops around them rapidly and the sun dims to a gray overcast. Derek growls and both Jackson and Isaac start looking around them feeling the hairs on the back of their necks rise.

“You presume much little mortal to summon me so” the voice is cold and sharp and everyone spins around to see the Winter Queen, Mab, standing at the edge of the forest looking less than pleased.

“My apologies Majesty. It was not my intent to summon, but to invite. It was my first time, I wished only to invite” Stiles says. Derek looks at his mate with a raised eyebrow. Though politely said, there was a hint of ‘rightness’ in his tone suggesting that even if he didn’t intend to summon the Winter Queen, he was in his right to do so.

Mab smirks at the reply and tilts her head in acknowledgment of the non-apology defense.
“Perhaps so. You are young and not fully prepared for your role. Mayhaps your call, though a bit forceful, was more enthusiastic?”

“I bow to your wisdom and grace your Majesty. I hope my exuberance did not inconvenience you too much but I hope that I may offer a boon in compensation for disturbing you.”

Derek silenced the betas with a look. Stiles was playing a game, and this didn’t involve them. Luckily Satomi and Noshiko were both old enough and smart enough to stay out of it.

Mab nodded in permission and Stiles gestured sending the ball of light towards the Fae Queen who suddenly laughed in delight. “What is this?” she almost sang as the ball approached close enough for her to grab ahold. “A tiny shadow?”

“A Nogitsune, milady” Stiles says with a slight bow. “I wondered if it would entertain you. I know that the winters are cold and long in your realm and entertainment is cherished.”

Mab laughs and it freezes the blood of the wolves and the kitsune. “Oh my boy, you are going to be so much fun” she says looking at Stiles before turning to the fly that is terrified as it tries to escape. “A new toy” she looks up at the teen. “This is way too great a gift for a mere apology for a confused message.”

“Then a boon of you. It is an irritant in my lands, and I wish it gone. As long as it doesn’t return here, you can do as you wish with it, and I will be satisfied that we are balanced.” Mab, who hadn’t looked as happy with the word boon, suddenly smiled.

“I see. A rather simple request, not truly a boon at all. A kindness for a misunderstanding.”

Stiles bows a bit more this time “Your wisdom and grace is not exaggerated.”

Mab laughs at Stiles, nods to Derek and pretty much ignores the rest. In a blink she is gone, and the temperature returns along with the sun and sounds.

“What the hell was that?” Jackson asks looking more than a bit worried.

Stiles shrugs. “Mab is not one to be trifled with, and winter is cruel. I figured that the void would be a gift that she would appreciate, and she was more than capable of containing it. Winter is the season of endings and it is long past the time that bug ended.” He smiled and looked at the two women standing there looking confused. “Queen Mab is cold and dark, and the void is not strength but chaos and the absence of light.” He suddenly snickered. “She’s gonna eat him alive.”

(Back to the present at the loft)

Lydia looked around the room at the pack and shook her head. Once again, she missed seeing Queen Mab. Stiles was going to pay for that. “So, to sum it all up: You captured and disposed of the Nogitsune which had been imprisoned in the Nemeton and was the reason Kira’s mom came here, you eliminated a serial killer in a hospital that Scott’s dad had set up as a pain for your dad who now has to explain why the guy is dead, and either the Avengers or Shield or both now know about werewolves, magic, and us. Have I missed anything?”

“The spider” Derek adds helpfully when Stiles flounders.

Lydia sighs. “Right, the ghost spider. At least that isn’t something that’s going to be a problem.”
“What were we supposed to do Lyds?” Stiles asks looking offended. “We had a possessed serial killer trying to destroy the hospital and everyone there!”

Lydia shakes her head but concedes the point. “I know that Stiles, but this might be worse than the original situation. I am not sure we can trust them. And where are Satomi and Noshiko?”

Stiles frowns at that but doesn’t argue. “They left after we got back. I think Kira’s mom was a bit overwhelmed by everything and Satomi was trying to get her to relax. Kira showed up not long after with Scott and Allison.”

“Erica and Boyd are here.” Derek announces.

The pack all strain till the other wolves can hear the two betas but the humans have to wait. Stiles smirks as he can sense them too, magic rocks! Finally, the betas enter the loft smiling.

“Your dad is so cool” Erica gushes as she pulls Stiles into a hug. Boyd nods in greeting but he is smiling as well. “I so want to be him when I grow up. Maybe more than Black Widow even.”

Everyone looks shocked at that. “We stayed and gave our ‘statement’ to Deputy Graeme. We will go back to sign it tomorrow. Curious to see what we said.”

That gets a laugh from several of them. “So team BHPD will write up something acceptable?” Stiles guesses and both Betas nod.

“Apparently when they were doing the surgery, a cloud of flies burst out of Barrows and actually knocked the entire med team out. Mama McCall was the only one unaffected thanks to Stiles’ magic amulet.”

“Dude!” Scott beamed at Stiles happily.

“I wasn’t about to leave your mom or my dad unprotected” he said with a shrug.

“Well I think she would have liked a heads up as she was totally surprised. Then Barrows knocked out two of the deputies and by the time we all arrived, the only conscious people were the Sheriff, Widow, our favorite deputies and Mama M. So when we left the Sheriff and Black Widow were explaining that apparently Barrows had drugged himself up with something and went crazy nearly killing everyone. Luckily the quick actions of the Sheriff’s department stopped him. In fact, there is some great footage of Sheriff Stilinski taking him down after he almost killed Mrs. Mcall.”

Everyone looked confused. “That didn’t happen” Derek said confused.

“Well it did on the video that is now in evidence. Seems our friend from the Avengers has a friend of her own who ‘fixed’ the tape” Erica tells them.

Everyone looked around. “So you are saying that no one except the Black Widow realizes what happened?” Lydia presses.

“Yes” Boyd says succinctly.

“Huh” Lydia mumbles. This is going to be interesting.

“Dad’s on his way” Stiles says looking up from his phone. “Says he’s bringing his friend.” He didn’t squeal, no matter what the rest of the pack says!
Jordan sighed happily as he bit into the Danish from Celeste’s. Ever since moving to Beacon Hills he had enjoyed discovering the little shops, stores, and restaurants, but the discovery of the bakery was his favorite. Once he had been alerted to the shop via the prohibition for the Sheriff by Stiles, Deputy Jordan Parrish had managed to stop by at least twice a week, sometimes more, to pick up one of their new delicious desserts. He had at one time joked that they were magical with Tara and her look had made him laugh until that night in the station when he learned the truth about werewolves. Then he wondered if they were. Then he decided he didn't care.

At least he had not seen anything that suggested that the sisters were anything out of the ordinary, but he had to admit that he was more than a little suspicious. Ever since that night, Jordan had begun to notice little things around town that made him wonder if Beacon Hills was a lot more than even he had originally thought. Since then, the sheriff had updated them about new changes even if they didn’t really see anything on their own. One definite benefit was that crime was actually down in town in general.

Taking a sip of the hazelnut toffee coffee that Arwen had recommended he smiled again. Okay, they had to be something more than human! Nobody made food this good. Stepping up to his cruiser he looked at the storefronts and noticed that one of the vacant buildings didn’t look quite so vacant anymore. In fact, it looked like the store was actually open. Strange, they hadn’t been notified of any new stores, but it was worth a look and an introduction to the owners or operators.

Stepping into the store he looked around the shelves of antique knick-knacks and other items, surprised at the rather full shelves and displays. He was almost certain that the place had been empty when he was last here just three days ago.

“Welcome deputy” a refined voice called out with a trace of a British accent “can I help you find anything?”

Jordan looked over at the man sitting happily behind the counter reading from a large book. He appeared to be the only one here.

“Hello sir” Jordan replied politely. “I just wanted to stop in and introduce myself. I am Deputy Parrish. You got set up fast. I hadn’t heard that we were getting a new store.”

The man smiled easily. “Today is our opening day. In fact, you are my first visitor.”

Jordan nodded not at all surprised. No advertising or notice out, no wonder nobody knew about the place. He looked at the counter and noticed a number of really old coins that looked Greek or Roman. “You have some interesting items” he tells the man trying to be polite. “I bet once word gets out you will see a lot more traffic in here.”

The man shrugs. “I’m not too worried. People seem to have a habit of finding me and if I am being honest, I mostly just enjoy meeting and talking to people.”


The man laughs heartily. “I like you Deputy Parrish. I don’t really need the money; I have all I need. Running my store is my destiny you could say. Meeting fascinating individuals like you is my reward.”

Jordan looks skeptical. “Well that’s a great philosophy I guess. But I do have to worry about
money so I should get back to my job.”

“One moment Deputy. I would like to give you something” the man says and pulls down a small box from a rather unstable looking shelf above him. How has the guy managed to make his brand-new store already look like it’s been here forever and stuffed with junk? But he smiles politely guessing it is probably a business card or something.

“Ah! I knew that I would find a good home for this” he says opening the box and Jordan looks down in surprise. Sitting in the black wood box is a cord of leather holding a piece of black metal. Reaching down, Jordan picks up the unusual necklace and sees that the metal is in the shape of a dog or wolf, standing guard, with red eyes.

“What is this? I can’t take this” he tells the man looking up at him, but the man is smiling happily.

“I was just waiting to pass it on Deputy and I think you are definitely who it was waiting for.”

Jordan is thoroughly confused but looks back down. He really likes the plain thing for some reason. He would probably buy it if he had seen it, but he can’t just take it though. “Sir...” he starts but the man cuts him off.

“Deputy Parrish, to refuse a gift is quite rude. Besides, I didn’t pay for it myself. It was given to me to give one when I so choose, and I choose you.”

“Sir... Mr... I don’t know your name.”

“It’s Edmund Deputy Parrish and consider it my thanks for being my very first customer here in Beacon Hills.”

Jordan struggles with this. The more he holds this, the more he wants the old necklace. And if he didn’t pay for it, then it can’t be a bad thing, can it? “What is it?” he asks stalling.

Edmund smiles. “It’s just a token, one of the Cŵn Annwn.”

Jordan frowns but the words are musical and pleasing somehow. He looks up. “What is that?”

“In Celtic mythology, they were the spectral hounds that ran with the Wild Hunt. You might have also heard them called Hell Hounds.”

Lydia has managed to get the full story from everyone and she has to admit that she would have been pissed if they hadn’t called her. But despite that, she is still a bit annoyed. Luckily, right then the wolves all look up and at the door in what she calls the ‘who’s at the door’ pose. She may not make the same jokes that Stiles does, but that doesn’t mean that she doesn’t see the humor on occasion. “Well?” she asks when no one says anything.

“The Sheriff is coming” Derek says and Stiles looks excited.

“You didn’t know?” she asks the teen.

“It’s harder to spot the non-human pack members. They tend to blend into the background. I can focus and find them, but its not like it is with the wolves” he explains, and she nods. Makes sense, especially after he admitted that all the magic and supernaturals were creating a ‘fog’ in Beacon Hills that was making it harder for him to spot people.
Lydia moves to take possession of a comfortable spot before everyone figures out that this will probably take awhile just as the door opens and the Sheriff enters in followed closely behind by a woman who carries herself like Allison does when they are fighting someone. “I don’t have much time” Noah says to Derek quickly. “We were able to set some things in motion, but I will need to go back and handle cleaning up this mess, especially once the FBI finds out.”

“I don’t think that will be a problem Sheriff” Natasha says easily. “I made some calls.”

Noah looks at the woman for a moment before nodding and looking back at Derek. “Derek, Stiles, everyone. May I introduce Ms. Romanoff, also known as the Black Widow.”

Lydia smirks as she spots both Stiles and Isaac bouncing in happiness trying to control their geekiness. She has to admit to feeling it as well, but damned if she is going to gush over anyone. Someone needs to show some dignity in this group. “I thought you were a redhead?” she asks.

Natasha looks over and sees Lydia sitting in her chair as regally as any queen and does a quick evaluation. Surface level: spoiled princess, popular girl, mean girl, used to getting her way with men and lacking relationships with other women. Second glance: smart, very smart. She is being evaluated as well and sitting like that in a room with the werewolves and sorcerer she saw earlier? She is nothing like what she projects for others to see. It is all a mask. “I’m in disguise” she says with a wink.

“Why are you here?” Derek barely refrains from snarling and Natasha looks back and sees the distrust and suspicion on his face. The young man who created the portal like Dr. Strange, standing beside him, looks mortified at the man’s reaction.

“Derek!”

“She told the mayor that Stark Industries was looking to build a facility here and was investigating the town. A cover story I assume” Noah says as he takes his own seat. The others move around to find spots leaving Derek, Stiles, and Natasha all standing.

‘Yes and no” Natasha admits and takes her own seat and looks serenely at the Alpha who glares and snarls when Stiles pokes him. But he does dial back the glare and sits down followed immediately after by Stiles. “Shield has been receiving some ‘unusual’ reports from this area for the last few weeks. Unusual enough to make a note, not enough to really warrant much else until a rather reliable source reported a pod of mermaids off the coast of San Francisco.”

Stiles snorted. “Aerwyn’s pod” he tells Derek who just nods. Looked back at the Avenger who has a curious look on her face so he explains. “Aerwyn is the Maetreal of the Coreoleas Pod. They live a couple miles off shore but come in on occasion.” Natasha looks more than a little surprised, but the teens all seem unfazed.

Stiles looks at the women. “Yeah, I was checking things out about a week ago and Aerwyn reached out. Seems they are telepathic and we talked.” He looks at the stunned faces of his father, “I told you about them, didn’t I?”

“No son, you didn’t. Giant spiders and Centaurs, but no mermaids. Anything else?” Noah asks with a sigh.

Stiles opens his mouth to answer but looks at Natasha and shrugs. “Nothing I can think of” he lies. Badly.

“So stories about mermaids equals Shield coming here?” Lydia asks quietly.
Natasha shakes her head. “No. That wouldn’t do it, no matter how good the source, not right now with everything else happening. No, we had a visit from a man who could do what you did Stiles, with that circle door thing” she tells them. “Name of Strange?”

Stiles smiles happily. “You know Doc Strange?”

She smiles. “Yes. He told us some stuff was happening here. To stay out of it. And not to get involved.”

“So you did anyway” Derek says flatly.

“Actually no” Natasha says with a smirk. “Shield has had eyes on Dr. Strange and his group for years and the rule was pretty much to leave them alone. His ‘suggestions’ were pretty well accepted and, to be honest, it wasn’t important enough for us to get involved even if true.”

“Then why are you here?” Allison asks.

“Shield is good at knowing when to act and when to step back. Not everyone is quite so restrained in their curiosity.”

“Stark” Lydia says with certainty.

Natasha nods. “Stark was more than curious. He started investigating and found all kinds of issues, so he asked me to nose around. Called Pepper and came up with this Stark facility idea in about an hour” she looks at the Sheriff “so that part is actually real. SI will be coming here, if for no other reason than for Tony to check things out.”

“He’s the one that fixed everything with the surveillance at the hospital?” Noah asks.

Natasha smiles at the man. “Yes. He’s been taping into every online system in the county ever since we met Strange looks for signs of others who can do things like that.”

“Is he the one that’s going to help out with the FBI?” Stiles asks.

“No, I called in another favor for that. Stark doesn’t really get along with authority figures” she tells him. “But, it seems that you are the person I was actually looking for.”

“Me?” Stiles looks surprised. “Why me?”

Natasha looks around the room. “Because of them” she says indicating the group. “Look how everyone is situated.”

Stiles looks around, as do most of the others, but no one seems to get it. The only two who aren’t gawking are Derek and Lydia. Derek looks less angry, but he is tense, ready to act. Lydia looks smug. “You are better than they say” the redhead admits.

She tips her head at the compliment. “I have no idea what’s going on” Isaac says looking around but no one else seems any less confused.

“It is how you are arranged” she tells him. “Derek is sitting with the clearest line to me and you Stiles. He can step between us with the least effort. Lydia and the Sheriff are both out the direct line of us, but on the periphery with clear sight on me, not you. The boys” she indicates Scott and Isaac “are both on my flanks and the other young lady, who is armed with knives, at least three of them, is at my back. All of them are positioned to eliminate me if I am a threat and more importantly?” she smiles at the teen “you were the one giving orders at the hospital, directing the
fight and arrival.”

“But Derek was leading that fight!”

“No, he was the best fighter. But the best leader, like Captain America? They put their people in the right place to act. No. You are the leader.”

“I thought you were team Iron Man?” Lydia asks sweetly.

Natasha looks at the redhead, sitting happily in her spot. “I am an Avenger, first and always. I do what I think is right, no matter the personal cost. Rogers is right as is Stark. I respect both of them and what they stand for. Neither of them were actually wrong in what they were doing, just how. Unfortunately, both of them let their egos get in the way of finding a solution. But no matter what, they both were trying to do what was best. Unfortunately, life isn’t neat and clean. But somehow I am certain you already know that.”

Lydia didn’t reply but Derek seemed to relax a bit. “So now what? You tell Stark and Shield about all of this?”

Natasha sits back for a moment. “Shield? Shield is not right for this, not yet, maybe not ever. We are still dealing with Hydra and other issues with the government and right now I am not interested in passing this along. Stark? Well, he is going to get involved somehow and honestly? It’s better to keep him out of things as he doesn’t do subtle. Iron Man coming here is probably the last thing you want and the only way to keep that from happening? If I get some answers.” She looks around the group. “So? What can you tell me about…everything?”

The rest of the talk went well Stiles thought happily. He was actually surprised by how cool it was to actually meet and talk with an Avenger. Derek had been hesitant to talk but surprisingly the Black Widow, or rather Natasha as she told them to call her, had been rather forthcoming about what they had heard. She told them about how Dr. Strange had come to talk to the team about what was going on in California, though it hadn’t been much. The bulk of it had been mostly ‘it’s none of your business’ or ‘stay away’ but while that had worked somewhat with the former Shield people. Tony Stark however? He was never going to be satisfied with that. She had also answered questions from all of them about the battles in New York and Sokovia as well as about the various Avengers before she started telling them about what Stark had been doing about them.

First, he had Friday, Jarvis’ computer AI successor, pull anything and everything about the area and he quickly had closed in on Beacon Hills. Both the media as well as police records indicated something out of the ordinary, enough to draw attention. From there, Stark had narrowed in and started digging and with the full resources he had, it took him nearly 12 hours to determine that Beacon Hills was in fact the center of everything. Changed weather patterns, strange sightings, unknown energy readings, and according to his satellites, the air, water, and ground in the area was experiencing significant reductions in pollution, even reversing effects. It was as if people had stopped polluting for years, not days.

Stiles had sheepishly admitted responsibility for that, much to Romanoff’s amusement and the surprise of the rest of the pack who had not heard about that aspect of Stiles’ powers. After that she had explained Stark’s request for her to investigate and suggested the idea of adding a new facility as the cover story. Surprisingly, less than two hours before she had left to investigate, Pepper Potts had intercepted the Avenger and started giving her detailed notes on what to look for and ideas. Apparently in the time it took them to start looking and Natasha’s departure, they had decided to
actually establish a green technology center in the area, so her cover story became real.

Lydia had taken the lead on sharing their story, which surprised Stiles who really wanted to do so, but he had yielded when Derek reminded him that it was the job of their Emissary. She was honest, but not exactly expansive in her explanations and Stiles was sure that the spy knew that there were gaps, but she didn’t call the Banshee out on it.

“So how long has your family been werewolves?” she had asked Derek at the beginning of the story when Lydia had been explaining the Hale fire and the loss of the local pack.

“We are not entirely sure, but several centuries. My grandmother believed our families roots went back to pre-Roman era” Derek had replied.

That had set off a lot of excitement in the pack who had not known that. Allison had shared the story of her family and how they entered Hunting but had shared that other hunters existed, but they hadn’t been really organized until then.

After that, the story went to Peter waking up, Scott getting bitten, the Argent’s arrival, the big fight with Peter and Kate, both dying, and Derek’s rise to Alpha. Then the new pack members growth, Jackson and the Kanima, Peter coming back to life, and finally beating Gerard.

Natasha had carefully looked at the former Kanima and there was definitely sympathy and understanding in her eyes. She knew what it was to be turned into a weapon. Despite being a superhero, she didn’t seem to blame him.

They ended with the fight with the Alpha Pack, the Darach, and Stiles becoming a new type of mage, though Lydia left a whole lot out of that part of the story. She basically described him as a very adept magic user who had been trained in Sorcery and Druidic magic.

“So what about all these sightings of creatures and magical effects?” Natasha asks at the end of Lydia’s story.

Lydia pauses, not sure where to take this but Stiles does and he speaks up. “It’s my magic.” She looks at him and watches as he and Derek have an unspoken conversation but the older man finally nods and relaxes. “During the battle, I was bound to the land, to this territory. My powers are very strong here, and they affect things. Not only is nature healing, it becomes more welcoming to special people. Life is better, healthier, luckier. Magical beings sense this and know this place is becoming a refuge, someplace that they can come to and be safe.”

“In Russian fairy tales, there are a number of not so nice stories” Natasha says cautiously.

Stiles snorts. “Well some are true, but some are the result of simple prejudice. Stories say werewolves are bad, but that isn’t really the whole story. Can they be violent and dangerous? Sure. But so can regular people, you know that.”

Natasha concedes that point easily enough. God knows she has seen it more than she wishes. “But some of those stories have some truth don’t they?”

Stiles nods. “There are bad things out there. Some because they can’t live with people without hunting or killing them. But those won’t come here, at least not anymore.”

“Why not?”

He sighs. “Because I’m here. I’m not going to tolerate that kind of stuff, so bad things, truly bad things, aren’t welcome. Derek and I are what’s called High Alphas. That means that everyone that
wants to live here has to acknowledge our authority and we don’t let people get hurt. And by people, we mean both ordinary and magical people.”

“There are some powerful people who may not like that” Natasha warns them. “They may not like the idea of all of this.”

Stiles looks serious but he nods. “We know. But we are ready to fight if we need to. Things are changing here, we don’t want pollution or strip mining or any of that crap and with my magic and others here, all sorts of things can happen. There are at least three new colonies of gremlins within 50 miles of here. You would not believe how much havoc they could do at a construction site. And there are a whole lot more that no security system can keep out are here. We don’t want any problems, and Mr. Stark is welcome to work on green tech, in fact we would love that, but this place is becoming more magical every day.”

“Will people notice?” she asks, impressed by his passion and drive.

“Sort of. When people are here, they will feel it. Dreams are better, imagination and innovation are increased, and connection to nature is heightened. But once you leave, you will tend to forget unless you really truly know. And even if you know, it will be hazy and dreamlike. People who don’t respond to magic will be ‘pushed’ to move on, to find somewhere else to be. Those sensitive to it will be drawn here, including those who already believe or almost do. Derek has had dozens of requests from druids and witches to come here already and that’s just because only the druids and witches know about us.”

“And the sorcerers” Lydia reminds him.

“Oh right, them too. But they call me usually.”

“Have some called?” Derek asks surprised.

Stiles flushes. “Uh yeah. Master Lyra at Kamar-Taj has a few apprentices that indicated that they would like to come once the house is finished. No rush so I kind of forgot.”

After that the group mostly broke up. The Sheriff returned to work to deal with paperwork. Lydia pulled Derek aside to brief him on her meeting that morning, and Stiles and Allison both walked out with Natasha to drive her back to her hotel as she was leaving to head back to New York. Jackson, Isaac, and Scott decided to play video games until Lydia finished and left with Jackson and Derek sent the two wolves to relieve Erica and Boyd.

Stiles sat down in the center of the stone circle, his place, to try and focus and relax and make sense of the last few days. Dealing with the mess at the hospital, not to mention meeting the Black Widow, who he now had in his phone(!), and then Peter’s return and Derek’s reunion with Cora. They had called for pick up right after Stiles had gotten back from dropping off Natasha at her hotel and that led to the rather emotional reunion with the siblings. Derek, Peter, and Cora had all left to spend some time alone and Stiles was pretty sure they were spending time at the Hale House or going through the items in the trunk he had found.

Cora and Peter had also brought a necromancer, Yvette, with them, but she had been pretty elusive about why she was there. She had formally asked Stiles’ permission to remain for a bit, but other than that, she had pretty much disappeared. Peter and Derek had set her up to use one of the newly refurbished apartments in the loft building, which Stiles figured was to keep an eye on her, but she
hadn’t done much beyond going out to eat and walking around town.

To be honest, he was really expecting his first Necromancer to be more, well, more goth. Something like Morticia or Wednesday Addams maybe. At least some emo traits. He was rather disappointed that she was pretty normal. One thing he did notice was that she avoided colors. Blacks, whites, and greys made up 90% of her wardrobe with an occasion deep, deep red. She seemed nice, but Peter had said she was a messenger for the head Necromancer but she didn’t seem in a hurry to deliver any message.

Then he had to deal with Lydia and her annoyance with being ‘left out’ of things. Honestly, a lot had happened and he sometimes forget to mention everything, so sue him. But that wasn’t good enough and he had to not only go over everything, he also had to agree to regular meetings to keep her informed. Peter had asked to be included as well so he probably was in the wrong, but he really hated to admit that. It’s not like he tried for these things to happen.

Just then he heard the sound of branches rustling and he opened his eyes to locate the sound but didn’t see anything. A quick magical scan didn’t show anything so maybe it was just a deer or something? The deer really liked coming to this place. Just as he said that, Erica’s spider stepped out from behind a tree and Stiles thinks she might have underestimated the size. The spider was at least seven feet tall! Green and glowing. Stiles was about to move when the spider paused and looked at him. “Honored Greetings Arcanist” an extremely polite voice sounded in his head as the spider did a little bow.

“Uh hi” Stiles stammered.

The spider just bowed again and then started off and was gone in seconds. Okay, he was just going to let that one go for now and why he couldn't detect it with his magic. He sat there staring for a few more minutes but it didn’t come back so he figured it was just being polite and apparently stopping by and saying hi. God this was his life now.

And yesterday he had went by to grab some sweets from Celeste’s when he saw a rather familiar looking shop. Going in he was stunned to not only see Edmund, but Edmund's store. It was the exact same store as the one in San Francisco! The items, the layout, even the rather ratty floors were the same.

“Edmund? What’s going on? How did you move your store here?” he had asked the man who had happily greeted him.

“Ah my friend, it good to see you again. Are you interested in anything in particular?” Edmund had asked and then proceeded to show him around and pointed out some new items. He definitely found some good things though Stiles only bought two books.

Turns out that Edmund’s store was in reality a nexal point which meant that it was its own pocket dimension that could touch ours wherever he wanted it to. So instead of being in San Francisco, it was now here in Beacon Hills. “But why would you move here?” Stiles had asked.

Edmund had looked at Stiles with an expression that made the teen squirm until the man started laughing. “You create one of the most magical places on Earth, that has access to good coffee and good weather, not to mention the pastries those lovely fae produce, and in what will surely be the new commercial center of magic for decades and you wonder why I am here?”

Stiles had blushed and tried to deny it, but Edmund had explained that more than just a few beings were shifting and moving. He had wanted to get a good spot to tie his shop to before he was left with setting up somewhere terrifying like the mall, the horror! Edmund had officially asked for
permission, well more like forgiveness as he was already here, but he also indicated that he knew of at least a dozen practitioners who were planning to come to the territory, if not directly Beacon Hills once they had permission. In fact, the man had letters from four enchanters and three alchemists who all were requesting to establish homes and shops in the town. He also said that Sophia, from Martinique's coven, and Gwen, from the Berkeley Coven, were interested in establishing a Beacon Hills Coven after they graduated from college next year if he permitted it.

“But aren’t they already in covens?” Stiles had asked.

Apparently, it was fairly common for younger witches to form Scion Covens when they got restless or moved on due to mortal concerns. Martinique had sent a letter letting Stiles know it was okay by her and that she was willing to discuss it if he was willing.

Stiles had rather enjoyed dropping all of that on Lydia’s lap and whistling while he raced off. She had not been happy, but she wanted to be in on all of it so, hah!

“May I interrupt?” a soft voice interrupted his thoughts and he opened his eyes to see Yvette standing there, a respectful distance but closer than he expected. He really need to work on his magical alert system!

“Going to deliver your message?” he asks standing up and smiling. The woman nodded with a small smirk and stepped forward. Stiles gestured and the two chairs he had shared with Mab regrew and he offered one to the young necromancer who thanked him and sat down.

“My master wishes to convey his greetings and congratulations on your ascension. He also wishes to share his admiration for helping the Hale pack’s spirits to find peace.”

Stiles was shocked at that last part. “How did you know about that?”

“I heard Peter and Cora speaking and when we came here, I visited the house. Death was there, but a peace had also been present. The aura of Necromancy was clear to see.”

Stiles leaned back. “That’s not all is it?”

Yvette smiled. “No. Though I will be honest, I do not truly understand you. I know that you can use all six magics, which I thought impossible, but the word Arcanist means nothing to me. It does, however, mean much to the Night Lord. When I told him of you, and used Peter Hale’s word, he was extremely interested and intrigued. I am to tell you that he knows of the three former Arcanists and can help you to speak to their spirits if you wish. He also offered to provide teachers if you wish to learn more about our art, myself if you wish.”

Stiles was shocked by the idea of speaking to the other Arcanists, he hadn’t even thought that was possible, but he liked the idea of teachers even more. “I haven’t been able to figure much about necromancy” he admitted. “I found the spell in a book and it worked, but I think that might have been more luck than skill.”

Yvette shook her head. “Not luck. You opened a door, and perhaps it was clumsily done, but you were reaching out to spirits that wanted to be heard, needed to be heard. That makes a difference. Sometimes we call the spirits, but other times, we simply heed their cries.”

Stiles looked thoughtful. “That sounds like what I read about Banshees.”

Yvette smiled. “Banshees used necromantic magic as well, but they are vessels for that magic rather than users. They are gifted beings who align with the magic of spirit, but they are not necromancers. They cannot call death or summon it; they are its herald. They hear the calls of the
coming of death as warnings, not as lost whispers of missed words and chances. People do not understand necromancy, they see only ghouls, zombies, and the undead. They see us summoning spirits to answer questions and perform tasks.”

“But that is necromancy from what I read.”

Yvette nods in agreement. “Is a tree leaves? It is branches? Roots? All of that is part of our magic, but it is not the magic itself. Magic, whether alchemy, sorcery, necromancy, or any of the others have elements of darkness and light, order and chaos, destruction and creation. But ultimately it is not what the magic is, but how it is used that determines whether something is harmful or beneficial. Consider wolfsbane” she says with a smirk “it is deadly to werewolves, but it is also one of the most powerful medicines for them.”

“The book I found talks about releasing spirits.”

“Yes. We do that as well. Find those who’s lives were tragic, brutal, or cut short wrongfully and we give peace and allow them to move on. Many of our order provide funeral rites for many species of beings as well as those that use the arts. It is all different facets of a single whole. I can show you?” she offers.

“Don’t we have to wait for nightfall or midnight?” Stiles asks looking at the bright morning sunshine.

She laughs. “There are some magics that prefer darkness, but there is much that we can do and discuss right now, if you wish it.”

Stiles nodded eagerly. He had a lot of questions from his books and in a flash he remembered something Stephen had told him and opened a small portal to his room, right over his desk. Reaching in he pulled out his book on Necromancy. “I have so many questions” he said excitedly and laughed at the surprised look on Yvette’s face at his magical display. “So many.”
Stiles pulls his finger back and quickly sticks it in his mouth trying to dispel the heat from the pan. “Told you it was too hot” Derek says with a smug tone that causes the teen to glare at his boyfriend. They had decided on a date night after everything at the hospital and Cora and Peter’s return and Stiles had convinced the Alpha that they should try cooking together.

“You do know that I can control fire” Stiles mutters unhappily around his finger.

Derek sighs and pulls Stiles’ hand out his mouth and puts it under a stream of cold water. “Yes, but you didn’t so you got burned. Now, you will heal soon enough so stop whining.”

“I’m not whining!” Stiles whined unhappily. He had grabbed the pan with the garlic bread after Derek had grabbed the Lasagna without pads, the show-off. He forgot that Derek was able to use his claws to actually not touch the pan with his skin, something Stiles had forgotten. He had started the simple cantrip to protect his hands but then Derek had reached up to the cabinets and his shirt had ridden up exposing a tempting strip of skin and Stiles lost his concentration. He wasn’t going to admit that but based on the smug expression he was pretty sure that the alpha already knew.

“Grab the salad” Derek says with a smirk as he grabs the bread and lasagna and heads to the small table with the final pieces of their dinner.

Grumbling behind him Stiles follows, enjoying the view as he watches his mate set the food down. Mate?!! He still can’t get over that.

“Stiles” Derek’s voice is all judgey.

“What?” he asks innocently.

Derek just gives him a look before tapping his nose and Stiles blushes remembering that the wolf can smell all sorts of things. He flails “How is that my fault?” he argues pointing at Derek who only shakes his head and sits down.

Sitting down they fill their plates and enjoy a few bites in silence before it becomes too much for him. “So…how’s Cora doing?” he asks. Derek’s sister had returned with Peter and Yvette and in the two days since, he hadn’t really seen her much beyond that first meeting.

“She’s…okay” Derek says hesitantly. He sighs. “She is having a hard time. She thought that we all died in the fire and that she was alone. Finding out we lived but were lost, and then Peter told her about Laura” he pauses and sees the surprised look on the teen’s face. “Yes. He told her everything.”

Stiles blinks. “Is Peter still alive?”

Derek frowns. “What? It’s a fair question with you Hales, especially with how you described Cora.”

“Yes, he is. Though she is not sure if he should be. We put her in the apartment with Yvette, which she requested, and she has been looking at the stuff from the trunk.”

“I like Yvette. She’s cool.”

Derek nods absently. “I asked if she is going to stay but she is not sure. She had sort of created a
life there, but it wasn’t what she really wanted. But being here has been hard too. We went out to the house and then took off for hours afterwards.”

“What does Peter say?” Stiles asks curiously.

“He wants to demolish the house immediately. He thinks that cleaning the slate, so to speak, might help.”

“Have you told her about the plans?”

“Yes. She didn’t say much so I didn’t press.”

Stiles looks thoughtful. “I think you need to give details.” He stops when Derek looks at him with a frown. “I mean it. Show her everything we are thinking about doing and ask her opinion. Get her thoughts and ask what she wants.”

“What do you mean?”

Stiles rolls his eyes at the guy. “Derek, she’s been left behind over and over again. Everyone is making decisions without her. But she is pack, more importantly, she is your family, our family. Ask her what she wants for herself in the new pack house. Ask her to design her own suite of rooms and get her thoughts on the stuff the pack needs. She has been with the Alvarez Pack; are there things they do that we should copy? Maybe she’s trying to find her place in the pack, and she isn’t sure she is actually welcome or wanted.”

Derek looks horrified. “Stiles, she’s my sister. Of course she is wanted!”

“Derek” Stiles’ voice is gently as he reaches over and grabs the alpha’s hand careful with the claws now visible from the stress “I know that. But dude, you are not good with the emotional stuff. I doubt she is either. Maybe she needs to hear you say it.”

“Don’t call me dude” Derek says automatically but his face shows he is thinking about what Stiles’ said.

Stiles snorts. “I’m serious. You need to talk to each other. You told Peter he was the Left Hand and Lydia is our Emissary. The others are your betas, even Scott who is an Alpha acknowledges your position, but what is hers?”

“She’s my sister” Derek says like that answers everything.

“Yes she is Derek, but that is what she is to you. What is she to herself though? Where is her identity?” Stiles’ voice is gentle, but insistent and Derek admits he has a point but what can he do?

“My grandmother” he says slowly “she was the family Chronicler. She kept the records of our family, kind of like the Emissary, but not for connecting with others, but for connecting with ourselves. She reminded us of who we were as Hales. She told the stories, honored our traditions, she loved our history. I remember Cora always liked listening to her talk” his voice is quiet and vulnerable and Stiles scoots closer as he talks.

“That sounds very important to a pack.”

Derek nods. “It is. Especially for packs like ours. A lot of packs don’t have enough history to matter or even bother but we have always had one. At least until the fire.”

“Do you think she could reconstruct your histories?” Stiles asks carefully.
Derek frowns for a second but then shrugs. “I don’t know. Grandma Abigail was always writing things in her books. She had family trees, photos, stories, all kinds of things that she worked on, but they weren’t in the chest. I assume they must have burned up.”

“Then figuring all that out is really important to the Hale legacy?”

Derek nodded absently but then he looked more certain. “Peter can help, and there may be some records in the vault too.”

Stiles frowns for a second. “I really want to check out that vault someday.”

Derek actually smiles. “I can take you there, but not tonight. I will talk with Cora and Peter tomorrow about it, but tonight? Tonight is supposed to be about just us.”

Stiles jumps as Derek, moving faster than human, stands up and lifts Stiles out of his chair. Startled, he wraps his legs around Derek’s waist as the alpha effortlessly carries him over to the sofa and sits down, the teen happily in his lap. Stiles smiles happily. “So, are we gonna make out now?”

Derek rolls his eyes. “You are really making this... difficult”

Stiles smirks. “You were going to say hard, weren’t you?”

Derek growls but doesn’t deny it. He leans in and in a surprisingly gentle move, kisses his mate silent. Stiles is surprised but happy to go along. He gasps as Derek slides along his jaw, biting tenderly and sending little shocks through Stiles with each nip. Derek’s beard rough on his own skin as the alpha marks along that most sensitive line. “Derek!” Stiles moans, fingers curled in the dark hair as his other hand grabs onto his chest and starts moving down. Suddenly Derek catches his hand and stops him. “What?”

“Just kissing” Derek says in a low voice, barely pushing out the words.

“What?” Stiles stammers and his protest is cut off when Derek bites down on his ear lobe. “Oh god!” But the distraction doesn’t last, “wait” Derek pulls back instantly “why just kissing?” he says thoroughly confused.

“Stiles” Derek voice is patient and controlled but his eyes are blown wide and he sees flecks of red “you are still young, and this is all still new. I just want to go slow.”

Stiles gapes for a second but then his eyes soften. He remembers. “Slow. Okay, I can do that. No pressure.”

Derek smiles that devastatingly wicked smile he has. “Besides, your father said no sex before 18.”

It may have broken the mood, but Derek thought his mate’s reaction was totally worth it. The flailing, sputtering, and indignation of that statement made the alpha smile. He was watching the teen invent new swear words, most of which involved creative punishments involving vegetables when he caught the sound. Jackson’s Porsche. It was probably nothing, but he listened as the car neared and pulled in and parked. Close enough he heard the second heartbeat but it wasn’t Lydia’s. “Stiles” his voice was serious.

Stiles’ rant cut off midstream as he looked at Derek, shocked at the tone and expression before his eyes glazed a bit. “Jackson?” he asks looking back at Derek.

“And someone else” Derek says as they both stand up. He can hear them in the elevator, but they
aren’t speaking.

“It’s not Lydia. Not someone in the pack even” Stiles looks confused.

Derek waits as the elevator door opens and moves slightly to stand between Stiles and the door, ignoring the sound of annoyance at the move. This isn’t normal, why didn’t Jackson call?

There is a rather timid knock on the door, but it isn’t Jackson’s normal knock. “Come” Derek says in a normal tone of voice knowing his beta will hear. The door opens and Jackson is standing there looking extremely guilty or uncomfortable. “Miguel!” the man behind him calls out.

“Danny?” Stiles blurts out.

“Stilinski” Danny says in acknowledgment as he and Jackson walk in. “Were you making out with your cousin?” he asks, and Jackson starts coughing in shock as Derek growls and Stiles turns beat red.

“What? No. I mean no, I mean, what are you doing here?” he finally manages to get out.

Danny smirks. “It’s okay Stilinski. I know that Derek Hale isn’t your cousin.”

Derek glares at Jackson who looks miserable and somehow even more guilty. “Really.” Not a question from Derek, a little nicer than a bark, but Stiles stammers at it.


Danny looks entirely too amused. “Dude. The guy’s picture was all over town. I didn’t recognize him at first, but he makes an impression.”

Derek’s glare increases though it doesn’t seem to be affecting Danny.

“Seriously dude” Danny says looking at Derek “the glare is really intimidating. You definitely got that whole murder-wolf thing down.”

Derek looks at Jackson so quickly the beta almost jumps and Stiles looked stunned. “What?” he squeaks.

“You know? Alpha werewolf and all that” Danny says as if that explains everything.

“Jackson” Derek growls, his posture one of fury.

“Jackson didn’t tell me dude” Danny scoffs at the man. “You do know that anyone who has lived here for more than one or two generations know about all that stuff and the Hales? My grandmother said your mom was pretty much royalty. The mayor may have been elected, but no one did anything without making sure she was okay with it. Not only that” he points at Stiles “but this one and McCall? They can’t keep a secret for anything. Talked about Scott being bit all the time after it happened. Not to mention when McCall went all smelling the whole team during practice.”

Stiles groaned and fell back on the couch. “I told him that was a stupid idea!”

Derek, looking slightly less murderous, looks over at Jackson. “You didn’t tell?” he demands, and Jackson denies it, his heartbeat steady the whole time. He relaxes a bit before turning to the teen. “So why are you here?” he asks slightly more polite.

“Actually, I need to speak with Stiles but since it is werewolf related, Jackson said I needed to
speak to the Alpha first.”

“Me? Why do you want to speak to me?” Stiles asks looking up.

“Well, I met someone when I was back home visiting family and was excited that they might come back to Beacon Hills for school since they had lived here once. But he really didn’t want to come back and finally confessed that he was afraid.”

“Afraid?” Stiles is shocked. “Of what?”

“Of being killed. Apparently, he ran with a bad crowd and got into some serious trouble.”

“How is this werewolf related? Sounds like he needs to talk to my dad.”

Danny shakes his head. “Definitely not your dad. He was very clear he wouldn’t get within a mile of your dad for anything. Too scared.”

“Scared of my dad? What did he do?”

“Not your dad.” Danny was enjoying this but he could tell Jackson was about to lose it so he decided to wrap it up. “You.”

“He’s scared of me? Why would he be scared of me?”

“Probably because you nearly killed him and his brother.”

Stiles looked stunned. What the hell was Danny talking about. He hadn’t killed anyone, let alone someone and their brother… Stiles suddenly looked at the teen remembering some things and his eyes narrowed. “The twins” his voice was dangerous and all three other men noticed it and reacted in surprise.

“What?” Jackson asks looking confused. Danny had said that he had a werewolf issue he needed to talk to Stiles about and knew about beating the alpha pack, but he didn’t say this was about the twins!

“The twins?” Derek raises and eyebrow at Stiles before turning back to Danny. “The alpha twins?”

Danny nods and gulps. Damn when did Stilinski get so badass? He had heard the story of the fight from Ethan and Aiden but seeing Stiles like this makes him realize that they weren’t kidding. “Met them in Hawaii.”

Derek nods and moves to sit beside the angry teen staring at Danny but not really seeing him. “Maybe you need to tell us the whole story.”

“Why exactly are we out running around?” Isaac asks looking over at Scott. “Isn’t Stiles supposed to be able to tell if anyone comes in.”

Scott shook his head. “He said its been getting harder to pick out small things. He can tell if an Alpha is near, but he has to really focus for a beta, let alone an omega. Not to mention all the other stuff that’s showing up. Remember the two gnomes?” he offers.

Isaac groans. The two gnomes had showed up last week and had taken up in one of the old warehouses in the industrial part of town, which luckily was still mostly abandoned. Unfortunately,
the two of them were more trouble than a dozen omegas. The brothers were tinkerers apparently and that meant that they liked to invent things and most of the things they invented tended to, well, explode. The Sheriff’s Office had gotten nearly a dozen calls over three nights of mysterious explosions but no sign of anything. Tara had finally reached out and Derek had sent Jackson and Boyd to investigate.

“Remember Jackson’s hair?” Isaac says with an evil grin before both boys starting giggling. Jackson had found a strange scent and traced it to a building and just as he approached there was an explosion of purple, orange, and pink smoke that blasted the beta. He wasn’t hurt, but he was thoroughly covered in goo, rendering him furious. The best part however was that his hair was dyed the three colors in the most amazing patchwork, all of his hair...everywhere.

The rather vain teen had been murderous, especially with all of the pictures that everyone in the pack, including Lydia, had been taking until Stiles, generous and probably due to rather intense pleading, was able to help. The bad news? They had to shave Jackson completely. Which led to another round of photos of the bald beta before the hair growth potion restored him to his former glory. The pack was still enjoying that one even after Derek had located the Gnomes and set down some serious rules and, after being allowed to stay if they behaved, the Gnomes had happily settled in. They even officially the process to buy the building.

But otherwise it wasn’t too bad. There was usually someone or something new every few days, but an informal system was starting to develop. Those that were human passing typically showed up either at someone’s place, like Celeste’s, or the dwarven mine. Then word was sent to Derek and Stiles, and now apparently Lydia, to explain the situation. They had even gotten word from both the Marshall and Flores’ packs that new immigrants had showed up in their territories requesting permission to remain. Stiles’ witch friends had also been forwarding requests from around San Francisco and several other places to the point that Lydia had decided that they needed an official system.

“Would you rather be working for Lydia?” Scott asks the beta with a smirk at the panic in his eyes. Jackson hadn’t managed to escape that fate and they both were much more satisfied doing this.

They ran for a few minutes before something seemed off to Scott. He stopped to try and listen, but he wasn’t hearing anything. He sniffed but the air was still so no breeze brought anything to him. “Scott?” Isaac asks in a whisper picking up on the young alpha’s tension.

“Something’s off” Scott mumbles but he can’t place it. He slowly looks around before he feels it. Something is wrong...there! He opens his eyes, flashing crimson, as he launches forward toward that feeling of violation. Something is here that shouldn’t be! He runs, aware of Isaac beside him but he doesn’t howl. Not yet. He doesn’t know why but he is certain that stealth is better at the moment. He shifts his run and the sounds of their movement drops noticeably with Isaac noticing and slipping into a quieter run seconds later.

They run for nearly a minute before he hears it. A flash-bang! He knows that sound, that harsh ping that hurts wolf ears, causing disorientation and confusion, and that means Hunters. But two questions – who is hunting and what? “Hunters?” Isaac whispers a moment later, finally connecting the sound with their quarry.

“Running” Scott snarls and looks off slightly adjusting their direction as he hears the sound of running, twigs breaking, and heaving breathing. Someone’s defining fleeing and close behind are one, no two, ATVs, their engines roaring as the smell of diesel reaches his nose.

Both wolves are suddenly alert at the sound of gunfire and the noise of a bullet’s impact on flesh and the crash of a body ahead of them. It takes less than a dozen heartbeats when they finally see
the form on the ground, crawling as the two ATVs arrive, the men on them with guns out, their laughing clear to the wolves.

“Got the dog!” the first man laughs.

“You got lucky” the other grumbles dismounting and pulling out his own rifle.

“Nowhere left to run mutt” the first man laughs. He was so focused on the body in front of him he never saw Isaac until the beta had tackled him to the ground, the sound loud in the wood.

“What the f-?” the other starts to yell, turning and pointing his gun but he doesn’t make it before Scott is there and the man’s eyes widen in fear at the sight of those crimson orbs. He goes down, his gun flying into the bushes.

“Who are you?” Scott yells at the man who scrambles backward, trying to get away, and drawing a knife.

“Jim!” the man yells but his friend isn’t in much better shape. He risks a glance and sees his partner unconscious, Isaac’s golden eyes glowing in the night. “You bastards!” he yells and lunges at Scott.

Scott, extremely disappointed at the rather pathetic display, grabs the man’s arm with the knife and with a twist that echoes across the woods, snaps the man’s wrist causing him to scream and drop the knife. The man spits at the alpha and Scott, done with this, punches him in the face, knocking him out. “Isaac?” he asks looking over, but the beta is already moving towards the body on the ground, the smell of blood and wolfsbane souring the air.

“It’s a kid” Isaac’s voice is shaken. Scott comes over and his eyes widen in surprise. The kid in front of him was 13, maybe 14, and bleeding from the bullet in his leg.

“We need a bullet!” Scott says and Isaac points to the shooters gun lying in the bushes. Scott dashes over and grabs it and pulling out a bullet he sniffs and rears back at the smell of aconite. “Got it!” he says running back over and dropping beside the kid who looks like he is barely stopping himself from crying but trying so hard not to. His eyes flickering between werewolf gold and human brown. “Do you have a lighter?” he asks Isaac hands over his disposable. Derek had been driving home being prepared and now they almost all carried one of the things.

Scott manages to pry the bullet apart easily and dumps the gunpowder and flowers onto a rather flat rock and lights it, the flash of light and purple smoke rising up. He looks at the kid who is starting to try to fight them, fear overwhelming him. “STOP!” Scott roars, his eyes flashing red, the woods going deathly silent, but it works. The boy freezes, eyes widened at the alpha over him, but Scott doesn’t wait and, silently apologizing, shoves the ash into the bullet hole.

He screams. Isaac and Scott hold him as he thrashes, his back arching up in agony as he screams before collapsing unconscious. He goes limp and the two teens look at him, and as they watch, the wound smokes and the black lines on his leg retreat and in a few moments the wound closes and begins the healing process. “I really hate that” Isaac says looking miserable but also a bit relieved. Scott nods in agreement. He’s just a kid, younger than even Scott when he was bit. He looks back at the two unconscious hunters.

“What do we do about them? Call Derek?” Isaac asks uncertainly.

“We call Mr. Argent. Let him deal with them, they are hunters, right?”

“Are we sure they don’t work for the Argents?” Isaac asks carefully.
Scott looks stunned at the suggestion. “You can’t think that!”

“Scott, I don’t think Mr. Argent would do it, but can you really say all of the hunters that work for him are as trustworthy? You know this kid hasn’t done anything. What about the code?”

Scott looks uncertain but then his face settles. “If they are his, then he will deal with them” he says with determination, certain he is right. Allison and Mr. Argent have changed, he knows it!

Isaac looks down, unsure if Scott even realizes he flashed his eyes or how his voice rang with alpha strength. It wasn’t an order that Isaac was going to argue with, not that he really disagreed. He knew Allison was trustworthy, she was on Stiles’ side. He wasn’t as sure about Mr. Argent, but he thought the man was better than most of the rest of the hunters and he had been helping Stiles with some stuff so he just nods.

Scott stands up and searches both men but they have no ID or anything on them, so he calls Allison. Seconds later he hangs up. “Allison and her dad are coming. I can wait with them. Can you take the kid to Deaton, just to make sure he is okay?”

Isaac nods. Scott’s request was just that, a request and one he preferred. Scooping up the boy Isaac was surprised by how light the kid was. He was rail thin and malnourished and he felt a pang of remembrance in his gut. The kid was starved! One nod at Scott and he was off running to the vets hearing Scott calling the former emissary as he ran.

Erica knows she doesn’t need to be nervous, but she is. She tugs her shirt down again, unnecessary as she is dressed rather conservatively for a change, but she isn’t about to go to this party without the armor of respectability. Lydia and Allison had gone shopping with her to find the right outfit and Lydia, as usual, had selected the perfect ensemble. Ringing the bell, she stepped back but Boyd was opening the door before it had even finished ringing.

Smiling gently, he nodded and opened the door to let her in and she braced herself and stepped forward into a very loud gathering. Stiles and Derek had found Boyd’s sister Alicia and it turned out that it had been her estranged father who had abducted her from the skating rink that day. In a way it was lucky, the man, though negligent afterwards, hadn’t planned on hurting her, he actually wanted his ex to suffer after their messy break up.

Boyd’s parents had not been good together. They had married way too young and struggled with issues neither could handle. His mother had finally had enough and left him, taking Boyd, Alicia, Kaley, and Teresa to come live with her grandmother in Beacon Hills. Their father did not take it well, but his habitual unemployment and regular alcohol and drug abuse had made their mother determined to find a better life. He had made threats, but Boyd’s great grandmother Esther was not a woman to be trifled with, not even at her age. She had run Vernon Boyd II off and had actually terrified the man into near sobriety. He seemed gone for good when Alicia had disappeared and he never crossed anyone’s mind as a suspect as last they heard he was living on the East Coast. Vernon’s mother hadn’t managed her daughter’s loss well and less than a year later was killed tragically in a car accident leaving Esther Boyd nearly overwhelmed with four grieving kids. Which is probably why she ended up ignoring the one that gave her the least problems, her great-grandson, to focus on his sisters.

But Stiles’ magic had found Alicia living in Chicago with her father, who had gotten worse with every year. The man had apparently planned to use his daughter’s disappearance to claim his wife was unfit and take the other kids but like most of his plans they fell apart and he lost interest. His daughter Alicia, neglected and believing that her family had been killed in a car accident, had been
left to care for him while trying to raise herself.

Stiles, Derek, and the Sheriff had managed to figure it out and with a call to local police, the truth came out. Vernon Boyd II was arrested, and Alicia was reunited with her brother, sisters, and great grandmother and had returned to Beacon Hills. This was the official welcome party for her.

Erica entered the room nervously, her grip on the dessert her own mom had made for her to bring as she saw Boyd’s great grandmother watching her with a knowing eye. “Welcome dear” she said, her voice strong despite her age. “Thank you for coming.”

Erica smiles as Boyd takes the dish. “Thank you for inviting me. The Sheriff and Stiles asked me to apologize that they couldn’t be here.”

Esther smiled as she shook her head. “I still don’t know how that boy did it. How he found my girl” she says looking over at Alicia surrounded by her sisters and several of her childhood friends. Alicia had been popular in school in the time she had been back in Beacon Hills and her return had been the talk of the school ever since it got out. Her friends and their parents were here now, and it seemed that everyone was so excited she was back.

“Well, Stiles is... Stiles. Never underestimate him” Erica replies shyly and Esther nods.

“I always did like the Sheriff. Good man. Shame what happened with his wife. It seems that the town attracts tragedy like no other. But maybe” she looks over at her great granddaughter whose smile was something to behold as she was surrounded by laughing people “things are getting better.”

Erica nods absently when she realizes that the old woman is staring at her. “I hope so” Erica says hoping that was what she wanted to hear.

Esther nods wisely and smiles as Boyd rejoins them. “It’s good to have a Hale in Beacon Hills again. Things haven’t been right since that fire. Bad thing that fire. Killed that whole family. Good people. I remember Abigail Hale, the boy’s grandmother. She was a mighty powerful woman.”

Erica side glances at Boyd and sees his shocked expression. “Really?” Erica squeaks out feeling her pulse racing.

“Yes indeed. All the Hales have been good for this town for a long time. You know that back when I was a girl there was some trouble with some visitors in town, didn’t like seeing black folk walking around like they had a right to be proud of who they were. My father owned his own mill and bakery and my mother was a teacher, she had even gone to college” she told them to the surprise of both teens.

“You never told us that” Boyd says to his great grandmother.

She waves him off. “No matter. You were already thinking of joining the army.”

“Air force” he corrects but apologizes quickly for interrupting.

“Anyways, these men started threatening my father and his business. Trying to put him in his place but that got stopped fast.”

“Stopped how?” Erica asks totally wrapped up in the story.

“Raphael Hale happened. He would have been the Hale boy’s great-great-grandfather I reckon. He was also the Mayor of Beacon Hills. He was Mayor for over twenty years and after him his brother
was for another twenty. There was a long time when the town’s mayors were all Hales. Anyway, the third or fourth time they came into my father’s bakery, five of them, and they were not being nice anymore. They brought cudgels and started breaking things. Even hit my daddy. But it wasn’t even a minute before Mr. Hale came busting in with his brother and son and oh lord. They laid out those men like it was nothing. Missus Hale, the Mayor’s wife, she was there too, and she took care of my daddy and me, I was there that day you know, and she bandaged him up like she was a real doctor. By the time the Hales finished, I don’t think those men had three arms between them that weren’t broken. Mr. Hale said the only reason that they didn’t break their legs was so they could get the hell out. Those men left town so fast you wouldn’t have believed it.”

“Then what happened?” Boyd asks when she pauses. He had never heard this story!

“Oh, it wasn’t exciting after that. The Hales, the whole family, made my father’s bakery their preferred bakery. Made sure that he got plenty of business. In fact, he was even voted on the city council one year, but he didn’t like it none. Said it was too much talking. But we never had problems like that again. The Hales, they were good people. They didn’t put up with that nonsense no-ho. We even had Chinese people living here when they weren’t welcome in most of California. I think the worse was when they built that terrible camp back during the war. Ugly thing that camp. We knew ugly, but that was more than the Hales could do. Miss Abigail, she wasn’t mayor, nor her husband, but it wouldn’t have mattered. It was the Washington people who did that. But when they left, oh you should have seen how angry she was.”

“Angry?” Erica asks at the edge of her seat. They had moved to the couch and most of the party had all surrounded them, everyone listening to the story.

“Oh, my yes. She came into town after the war, and she was righteous. Told off the current Mayor and his whole council. Called them cowards of the worst sort. That they had failed in their jobs. She really let them have it. At the elections that year, not a one of those men got re-elected no sir. The men she supported won every seat. Good men too. They all served for years after that. The Hales were the heart and conscious of this town for too long. I think that family dying was the worse thing for Beacon Hills. It’s like we lost something precious.”

“I heard that they founded the library” one woman who was a parent of one of Alicia’s friends says into the crowd. “That they not only built it, but they set up a fund that still helps pay for it.”

Several others in the crowd all nod and bits and pieces of stories start being whispered. “They did” Esther confirms. “And more. The schools in town were all built on their land, given to the town. So was the courthouse and city hall. I reckon half the buildings in Beacon Hills historic section were probably built by that family.” She shook her head. But then smiled. “But I hear that there is another Hale now too.”

That triggers a lot of surprised looks and whispers but Erica nods. “Cora Hale, Derek’s sister. She survived the fire.”

Esther nods happily. “Good. That boy is okay. His uncle was a wild child growing up, always in trouble. But the Hales were always good when their ladies were there.” She smiles as she looks at her grandson and Erica. “And who knows, maybe now that that woman is dead and paying for her crimes, things will get better. We just need to get that boy married.”

Erica and Boyd both share a look but Esther is way too canny to miss it. “Oh ho, he has someone already?” she crows at this tidbit. Several of the wives and mothers look very interested. Derek’s reputation as bad boy, dangerous man, prodigal son, and local royalty was not as forgotten as the alpha presumed. Way more people knew who he was than he realized. “And do you know the lucky girl?”
Erica snickered and looked away as Boyd rolled his eyes. “Well, not a girl, but…”

Esther paused for a second before exploding in laughter. “Oh, my lord! It’s the Stilinski boy isn’t it?!” she demanded and when both teens’ expressions gave it away, Esther’s laugh filled the room. “That one is going to be a hard one to handle for sure!”

“You don’t care that they are both men?” Erica asks surprised by how easily Boyd’s grandmother is reacting.

“Oh child. You all think that your generation invented sex. There has always been one or two Hales who preferred their own kind. Boys who liked boys and girls who liked girls. The family never seemed to care and no one in this town was going to say anything about it and that was long before the rest of the state caught up.” She laughs.

“Miss Esther?” one of Alicia’s friends shyly peeps up. “Is it true that Ms. Hale once ran a banker out of Sacramento out of town?”

Esther nodded happily. “Oh yes. Seems that this man from Sacramento was trying to scam people out of their land, trying to sell it out from under them and doing all sorts of things and Miss Mirabelle, Mr. Raphael’s wife, she wasn’t having it. That man left town nearly naked and running like the very hounds of hell were after him. You see…” The whole crowd had settled in to listen, fascinated as the old woman spun the story.

Derek slid the door to the loft shut after Danny and Jackson left. The teen had shared a lot of information and it was taking some time to process all of it. Turning back he sees Stiles standing by the large windows, looking out over Beacon Hills.

Danny had shared a lot of information, both about his own knowledge of everything, but also a bit about the twins. Derek had heard of their former pack, and it was nothing good. His mother had spoken of their father and unkind would be about the nicest description of how their former alpha was. And it appeared to only get worse when their uncle took over.

“Stiles? Are you okay?”

He didn’t reply but Derek wasn’t surprised at that and moved to start cleaning up. Danny had been nice about it, but Derek was sure that Stiles had picked up on the fact that Danny was a bit on guard around Stiles, worried, maybe even a hint of fear. It wasn’t unreasonable, but Derek could tell that it had affected the teen significantly.

“Am I a bad person?” Stiles’ voice was barely above a whisper, but Derek still heard him. He stopped and turned back to his mate. Derek waited but when nothing else came he sighed and walked over to him.

“No.” Derek’s voice was clear, certain, and unwavering and when Stiles glanced over he knew his face showed all of that without a doubt. “Their lives were rough, I will grant that. Their former packmates maybe even deserved what they got. Our pack, our family, we would never have treated members like that. No matter what, let alone our own family. Their alpha was their uncle and he was only the alpha because he had killed their father, his own brother, to take his power.”

“That’s just a guess” Stiles muttered.

Derek’s eyebrows demonstrated clearly how much he disagreed with that claim. “Stiles, they went
out together to deal with an omega. An alpha and beta from a healthy pack. Only one comes back and it’s the former beta, now an alpha. His power didn’t shift to his sons, but to his brother? No. He killed him and took the power. If you have any doubt, look how fast that pack fell. To be honest I’m surprised that Deucalion didn’t just recruit him. He wouldn’t have hesitated to kill his own pack for power.”

“Then why didn’t he? Wouldn’t it have been easier?”

Derek pulled his mate into his arms, feeling certain that he needed the closeness and touch. “Because of two reasons. One, they were abused and beaten down. They were used to being treated that way and would submit to him much easier. And two, that joining thing they did made them unique and that’s what he wanted for his pack. He didn’t need another brute, he had Ennis. And the man had already killed to rise up thanks to his own plans. I am sure Deucalion didn’t like the idea that he might start getting similar thoughts.”

Stiles doesn’t resist, he actually moves in closer. “I don’t care.”

Derek sighs. “You do. You like that they took care of each other. They screwed up, but you understand why they did it. You forgave Morell” he reminds the teen.

Stiles mumbles but Derek is pretty sure it was something close to ‘that’s different’.

“Maybe you should talk to her about them. Get her thoughts on whether they are worth a second chance away from the Alpha Pack.” He snickers a bit and Stiles pulls back to look at him in shock. “What? It’s funny. According to Danny they are pretty much terrified of pissing you off. I seriously doubt that they will even break the speed limit in town if they think that it will upset your dad.”

That garners a laugh from the teen. “Yeah” he agrees surly.

“What’s really bothering you?”

Stiles pulls away and walks back to the window. “I know you are the Alpha. It’s your decision who is in your pack.”

“Our pack.” Stiles glances back but Derek is looking absolutely firm. “It’s our pack Stiles. We are the Alpha pair, that means I don’t make these kinds of decisions, not about our pack, without you. But this isn’t about them joining our pack. They just want permission to be here. And if I, as Beacon Hills Alpha, don’t have a problem, then if the Arcanist does, then we have a problem.”

Stiles frowns. “I thought you said we made these decisions together” he reminds Derek.

Derek walks over but he doesn’t pull in for another hug, instead he looks out the window at the town. He is silent for a few seconds before finally answering. “Stiles, you know I wasn’t raised to be the Alpha. I wasn’t trained for it. But this isn’t about them joining our pack. They just want permission to be here. And if I, as Beacon Hills Alpha, don’t have a problem, then if the Arcanist does, then we have a problem.”

Stiles frowns. “I thought you said we made these decisions together” he reminds Derek.

Derek walks over but he doesn’t pull in for another hug, instead he looks out the window at the town. He is silent for a few seconds before finally answering. “Stiles, you know I wasn’t raised to be the Alpha. I wasn’t trained for it. But I have tried, and I think I have gotten better.”

“You have!”

Derek nods grateful for the fervid support. “But the reason I am High Alpha? The reason why the other packs are looking to us? The reason why every magical being in this part of the world wants to move here? It isn’t because of me.”

Stiles looks really uncomfortable at that, but Derek only smiles gently and continues before he can interrupt. “They are here because of you. You have me. You have your dad. You have the pack. You have all your friends, allies, and some powerful people who quite honestly scare me half to death.”
“Mab” Stiles nods in acknowledgement.

Derek nods. “All four of them to be honest, but she is definitely the scariest. The fact is that she seems to like and even respect you. Stiles we are all going to stand with you, but there are going to be some decisions that only you can make.”

“You think Lydia will follow my orders?” Stiles asks with a disbelieving look.

Derek looks serious. “Yes. She will argue with you if she thinks you are wrong. But only in front of pack. She has never challenged you in front of outsiders. Think about it.”

Stiles frowns but he realizes Derek is right. Lydia has yelled at him more than once, but never in front of anyone who wasn’t pack. He looks at his mate. “And you?”

“You listen. You don’t make decisions carelessly and you know you don’t know everything. You give people a voice and a chance to use it. And you are willing to forgive when warranted. You did with Peter and with Morell and with others. But you also know when not to trust, unlike Scott.”

Derek smiles as he sees the teen about to jump to his brother’s defense. “Scott is a good guy, but he’s naive. He trusts too easily, believes everyone can be saved or redeemed. It’s a good way to be if you are not in charge. He can argue to the person in charge, advocate for them, but at the end of the day, he doesn’t make the decision, nor does he have to deal with the consequences if he is wrong.”

“He thinks the best of everyone.”

Derek nods. “And he makes our pack better. You and even me. Hell, he even gets to Peter sometimes. But he doesn’t understand that sometimes you can’t take that choice. You sometimes have to make the tough call. My mother knew that. She wasn’t a monster but she killed when she had to. She knew that was necessary sometimes. Like you did with the witches.”

Stiles nodded thinking back to that fight. “I didn’t want to kill them.”

“I know. But you knew what you did would. That making them accountable for their magic, what they were doing, would be more than they could handle. And they paid the price. If you hadn’t stopped them, how many would they have killed? How many had they already killed?” he reminds and Stiles nods, remembering that they didn’t save all of the coven’s victims.

Stiles looks back over the town for a few minutes, thinking carefully. “Mab told me something.”

Derek waits. Stiles had given him some info about his chats with the Winter Queen, but he had held back. Even Lydia had noticed and asked Derek but they realized that it was something personal and so they hadn’t pushed. “She told me that I would have to be hard, like her. Sometimes.”

Derek waits, sure there was more.

“She told me that I was basically a king and needed to rule like one. I might even have to order someone killed.”

Derek’s eyes widen in surprise. He had not been expecting that. “She said that I needed to establish my rule firmly and clearly. That I had to be the one to decide if something or someone was allowed to live if they did something in my territory.”

Derek is watching when Stiles finally looks at him to see the Alpha’s reaction. “Sounds like good advice” he finally says softly and holds the smirk when he sees the other man’s shock. "Well, I
mean I'm not buying you a crown or anything, but the rest, yes she's right."

“You agree!”

Derek takes his mate’s hand and walks them back to the sofa and sits down carefully. He takes a few moments before deciding to answer. “Peter and I have talked. I have also talked with Satomi, Alpha Marshall, and Alpha Flores. They all had lots of advice. They knew that all of this, the business with the High Alphas, everything, was really about you. The fact that we are mates? They hope that means that werewolves will be safe here, maybe even have more influence in what happens. But more importantly? That finally, maybe, we can live lives without fear of hunters or other darkness. If that means they bow the head to you, they are willing to do so. But you didn’t ask that. You gave them pride and respect. You allowed them to choose to elevate me.”

Stiles frowned. “Wait. Are you saying it’s all politics?”

Derek actually smiled. “Yes. Peter has been working things like you wouldn’t believe. He is getting connections that we never could have managed by using your name. The other Alphas are too. Both Marshall and Flores’ packs have had nearly a half dozen new members join. Not to mention the smaller packs wanting to relocate near them.”

“But…but, I just, this all just happened!” Stiles protests.

“True. But word travels fast. Seers are getting visions, spirits are talking to mediums, all things are saying ‘come to Beacon Hills. You will be safe.’ And safe is something we haven’t had in a long time.”

Stiles is quiet thinking over Derek’s words. “How many have reached out to Lydia’s new system?”

Derek pauses to think. “Over a hundred.”

Stiles gapes. “What?”

Derek nods. “We get nearly a dozen inquiries a day. And that’s just the formal ones. Your friend Angela?” he asks and Stiles nods slowly “she’s called twice about seeing magical creatures near the campus. Not everything is coming all the way here. Once they enter your territory, they feel it and start relaxing.

Stiles looks happy but then he frowns. “But eventually someone bad will come.”

Derek nods. “They will. They can’t stop themselves. Hunters, monsters, power hungry mages. Eventually they will test us. Test you. And when they do, we, I, will stand with you. No matter what decision you have to make.”

“And Scott?” Stiles asks in a whisper.

“He will argue with you. Rage and scream and probably demand you do what he says. He’s an alpha. A true alpha at that. He can’t help it. He wants to be the leader. It’s instinct. But he will understand. Eventually.”

Stiles looks doubtful at that.

“Okay, maybe not understand. But he will accept it. Remember who he is dating? Allison is more like you than Scott. She is pragmatic. She will kill when she needs to, especially to protect the pack, Scott, and her dad. And you.”
Stiles sighs and leans in and puts his head on his shoulders. “He’s gonna cry” he says but Derek doesn’t reply, just holds his mate. “He is going to be really mad at me when it happens.” Stiles sighs again “but you’re right. The responsibility is mine and I have to live with that. Doc Strange, Wong, and the masters all told me that. Lizzie and Arthur did too. If I don’t, then others will make decisions for me and I don’t think that’s right either.”

Derek agrees but Stiles doesn’t need his words, just his support so he gives it. He is sure that by morning Stiles will give the twins permission to come to Beacon Hills. That doesn’t mean that they won’t have to speak and pledge loyalty to the High Alphas. And Derek also plans to make sure that both Peter and Lydia keep a close eye on them for a while as well. They were strong alphas, but neither one of them were up to deceiving his left hand and emissary, especially if they worked together.
Walking into the Avengers Compound after her trip, Natasha had hoped to have some time to herself, but she had barely gotten in the door when Stark’s AI reached out to her. “Ms. Romanoff? Mr. Stark and Agent Coulson would like you to join them in Conference Room 4.”

“Tell them I will be there in thirty minutes” she says in a resigned voice, knowing they would only wait so long.

“What the hell Romanoff?” Tony’s voice suddenly comes over the speakers. “Get up here!” She can hear Phil in the background arguing to give her some time.

“I need a shower. You can wait.” She ignores the rest of his complaining. She takes the stairs because she knows better than to use the elevator. She doesn’t trust that he wouldn’t override it and have it skip her floor and deliver her immediately. The man was like a toddler most times and since the dust up with Rogers, he had gotten even worse. Steve had definitely tempered Tony’s eccentricities, but the whole thing over Barnes had only made things worse.

The other issue, even after all of that, was that Rogers, Wanda, and Falcon had all disappeared and neither Tony, nor the government was having any luck finding them. She had originally thought that perhaps Fury was involved in helping them stay under the radar, but Coulson had been certain it wasn’t due to the actions of any current or former member of SHIELD. But the fact was that someone or some group, with resources that were significant, had to be behind their disappearance.

And after his speech at the UN, if Natasha was one to gamble, she would put her money on T’challa. The fact that what every major spy agency on the planet had been certain that Wakanda was a poor, third world country for the last hundred years despite the fact that it was, in actuality, the most advanced nation on Earth, meant that they could definitely pull it off. Of course the question was whether or not he would especially with how determined he was to get Barnes. Then again, the evidence proving his innocence was also pretty convincing, at least for some.

Of course, Stark wasn’t about to admit that anybody was better than he was with computers or tech, so he had gone the other direction. Instead he decided that Cap and his team had gone no-tech and were pretty much underground. Natasha had listened to him muttering about hiding out in caves or something while he was upgrading his armor to the latest generation of tech. After he destroyed all his armor rescuing Pepper and the President, Stark had lasted almost two weeks before he began working on a new version that was nano-tech based.

She had to give him credit. He never made the same mistake twice. After Lang had gotten inside his suit in Germany, he had designed next one to prevent that from ever happening again. And he added a parachute to avoid what happened to Rhodes. No, Stark learned from his mistakes but until he and Steve managed to actually talk all this out, the Avengers were fractured and broken. Of course the fact that Steve was as stubborn and bullheaded didn’t help either.

Toweling off after her shower, she contemplated taking a little extra time to make both men squirm but decided that the momentary pleasure of torturing them wasn’t worth it and quickly dressed and headed for the conference room.

“Finally!” Stark yells when she walks in.

“Twenty-seven minutes” Phil says with a smirk that he hides when Stark nearly snaps at the man.
“Well? Was the wizard right?” Stark asks as he sits down. “What did you find out?”

“It would seem that magic is, in fact, real. And it seems that druids and ghosts and faeries are too."

Phil Coulson had spent many years working with Shield. He had followed Nick Fury from Aliens and Captain Marvel, all the way through the Avengers. Had met several Norse gods, his hero from WWII, and more things than he ever would have dreamed possible. But all of that…the surprise, the wonder, and the excitement utterly paled beside how much he enjoyed the look on Tony Stark’s face at Natasha’s statement. Phil thought he could actually see the veins in his head throbbing as he listened to a KGB trained assassin, a world-renowned spy, a woman who fought to turn back an alien invasion, say something like that.

“Oh, and centaurs too. Unfortunately, I can neither confirm or deny Santa though.”

Oh lord, it just got better, Phil thought as he coughed into his hand. He wondered what it would take to hack into Stark’s system and get a video of this meeting to show others.

“You’re drugged” Stark finally managed to say.

“Did you want to hear about the werewolves?”

“OH, COME ON!!!” he yells, and Phil literally bites his tongue to not laugh. The best part is Natasha’s absolutely dead-pan delivery. She might as well be telling them that you can buy sliced bread at the store.

“Tony, you saw the tape of the hospital.”

Stark paused; mouth open for a second before closing it. “I saw something, obviously. Those guys did appear to have make-up or maybe some kind of prothesis going on. But that’s different from werewolves. Maybe they’re like Wanda, Hydra experiments, the result of science.

“Unless Hydra was doing experiments during the Roman Empire…probably not. The wolves said that their family have been werewolves for centuries.”

“Or so they said. Friday” Stark calls out. “What do you have on…what’s the guy’s name again?” he asks Nat.

“Derek Hale.”

“Derek Hale. Just give me the important stuff” he orders the AI and looks back at Natasha with a superior smirk. He loves using his tech to find out things.

“Derek Hale” Friday’s voice calls out. “Age 23, Born in Beacon Hills California to Talia and Robert Hale. On of apparently four survivors of a house fire that killed eleven family members. Received GED in New York after leaving California. Attended three semesters at NYU before dropping out. Sister, Laura Hale, killed seven years after the fire by wild animals. Mr. Hale was initially arrested in conjunction with Laura Hale’s death, but released after evidence of the animal attack was found. Wanted as a suspect in second murder at Beacon Hills High School of one Walter Jenkins, janitor, but later he was again exonerated. Known relatives: Peter Hale, uncle, and Cora Hale, sister. Peter Hale survived the fire with 3rd degree burns over 60% of his body and was comatose for over six years. Awoke and underwent unknown medical treatment for injuries. Cora Hale has no information from the time of the fire until recently when she was registered for classes at Beacon Hills High School.”

“Trace Hale family. Ancestors of note.”
Friday pauses for a second. “Talia Hale was the daughter of Abigail Hale and Martin Schriver. The Hale family name appears to be adopted by both male and female individuals marrying into the family. California records show Hale family members living in Beacon Hills in every existing US Census of California. I am unable to access any documents prior to that time in California.”

“Okay that’s impressive” Tony admits. “Any records outside of California?”

“There are records of a Hale family living in Scotland in the 16th and 17th century that are likely ancestors. The adoption of the Hale name by new family members appears to predate the family’s arrival in California.” Friday pauses. “No other information is available. I did find in US and California records that there are a significant number of individuals with connections to the Hale family in Beacon Hills and surrounding areas. Two Governors of California, one of Oregon, four US Senators, eleven US Congressmen, over twenty members of the state legislature, and numerous Mayors and other public officials.” She pauses for a moment, “According to the records I can access, I find direct ownership of significant amounts of property; industrial, agricultural, and residential that appears to belong to a series of trusts and companies that connect to past members of the Hale family and most likely now belong to the current three members.”

“Define substantial” Stark says looking impressed but also surprised. His family had money, lots of it, and they had been in California a long time, but he can say he never met or even heard of the Hales.

“Along with multiple bank accounts and holdings in various businesses that are more than likely associated with the family, current value of all properties I was able to identify with at least 90% probability is between 6.2 and 9 billion dollars.”

The three all look shocked at Friday’s estimate. Stark’s AI could and did pull data that probably no one else could manage and he had the AI looking into the Hales since Natasha’s initial report several days ago. Yes he knew the guy’s name but he wasn’t about to admit that. But this didn’t line up, I mean the guy lived in a loft in a nearly abandoned building!

“Think he can spin straw into gold?” Phil asks looking over at Natasha.

Natasha didn’t have to do anything but the look on her face was congratulations enough as Stark had another mini-aneurysm at that suggestion.

Stiles pulls out of his driveway to head to Deaton’s and check out this new wolf that Scott and Isaac found. Apparently, the kid had it rough and Deaton had basically drugged the kid to sleep off the exhaustion. It had been a total nightmare when Scott and Isaac had come to tell them what happened. He had been very proud of their rescue of the guy, but what they did afterwards had resulted in a rather heated argument that didn’t end with any satisfaction.

Derek had been furious that Scott had decided unilaterally to give the hunters to Chris to ‘handle’ without consulting Derek or Stiles.

“They were hunters!” Scott had argued. “Mr. Argent is supposed to deal with them!”

“No Scott” Derek had growled. “This is not Argent territory. He doesn’t get to make those decisions.”

“Oh, and you do?” Scott had demanded.
Derek had glared, both wolves eyes flashing crimson as they stared at each other. “No, I do.”

Scott had spun and stared at Stiles in shock, not to mention the reactions of the other wolves. “What?” Scott looked thoroughly confused. Derek, while slightly unhappy, looked less angry at the teen’s claim.

“Scott, I am the Arcanist and they came into my territory and sought to kill someone. That means that they violated my rules and when anyone does that, they need to answer to me” Stiles never raised his voice, but Derek had later admitted that the betas had all were weirded out by Stiles’ behavior.

“But…Stiles, they were human” he had said as justification.

“And if they were simply human criminals then my dad would have dealt with them. But they chose to be a part of the magical world by becoming hunters and that means that they answer for their actions to magical authority. Hunters may police their own, by my territory is not now, nor will it ever be, hunter territory.”

Scott had looked at Derek, almost as if he was seeking support, forgetting their argument mere moments before. “But…I mean, Stiles, we are still kids” he said. “This is bigger than us. What would you or Derek had done?” he finally managed to ask.

“I don’t know Scott, but it would not have been a slap on the wrist with a promise to not do it again. Do you even know what they had done? Did they kill the kid’s family? Was it another pack like the Hales, innocent? Do you even know what Argent was going to do to them?” Stiles had asked.

Scott hadn’t known, and it seems that Chris didn’t waste time. He had both hunters on a plane to the Hunter’s Council before Stiles and Derek even knew what had happened. He had included a report and promised to share anything that happened. Chris had also admitted that he hadn’t realized that Derek and Stiles didn’t know that Scott had handed them over though both Stiles and Derek could tell he wasn’t really upset about it.

“No. Scott, you may be an Alpha, a True Alpha as well, but this is not your territory and you don’t get to make those decisions. Derek is High Alpha as am I. If you cannot accept our authority, then this isn’t going to work” Stiles had told him and had seen the shock on all of the pack’s faces, especially Scott’s.

“What are you saying?” Scott had asked looking gutted and disbelieving.

Stiles sighed. He stared at his brother for a moment before he finally closed his eyes and inhaled deeply. Opening his eyes, the pack had startled at the white light pouring out of his eyes. “Fulgur, venerunt ad me!” There was a pause for a second and then the loft goes white and the crash of thunder literally shakes the entire building. The wolves screeched and ducked as the blue white lightning shattered one of the windows and came to Stiles hand like a tame animal, dancing across his body.

Derek stared in shock as he watched the lightning dance across Stiles body and the whole loft was filled with the smell of ozone, rain, and power. The hair on all of their bodies was standing on end and Stiles looked like something beyond words. He reminded all of them of when they almost lost him. The Queens had said he had given up much of his power to stay human but right then it didn’t look like he was lacking power.

It lasted for a second and then with a gesture the lightning leapt from Stiles, out the window, and
back into the sky. And then he was just Stiles again, eyes normal, but looking at his best friend with a sad expression. “Scott. I am not the same person I was before. I can’t let other people make decisions that are my responsibility to make. I need to trust that you all understand that. I am still trying to figure this out, but there are going to be some things that only I can decide.”

Scott stared in confusion. “I don’t understand.” And to be fair, Derek was fairly certain that was probably the same for most of the pack. Only Peter, Lydia, and Derek had talked about what it all really meant. Derek had talked with Allison and he thought she might understand as well, but she hadn’t actually said anything about it. The other wolves hadn’t given any sign that they really understood.

“Is it safe to come in?” Peter had asked from the door, Cora and Yvette standing behind him looking more than a little wary and uncertain.

Stiles had nodded and Peter had entered and after a brief explanation, it surprised everyone when Yvette had managed to explain it all.

“I do not understand, are you not aware of his status?” she had asked. The pack had mostly looked confused and she had sighed and signaled them to sit. “As you know I am a Necromancer. My magic is that of death and the spirits. Like all necromancers, I ultimately answer to the Night Lord, the one who stands above all Necromancers, everywhere, in power. He has powers that I cannot even begin to truly understand.” They all nodded. That made sense. “For those that use Sorcery, the most powerful user, the one that most sorcerers all honor is the Sorcerer Supreme.”

“That’s Steven” Stiles reminded them.

Yvette nodded. “Those that practice druidic magic, they answer to the Merlin and the Morgaine, the male and female aspects of Druidic Magic.”

“Lizzie” Erica said and everyone agreed.

“The High Enchanter is the most gifted practitioner of Magecraft. The High Witch is the most powerful Witch and the Lord Alchemist is the most gifted Alchemist. You see for each of the six domains of magic, there is one, or two for the druids, who is the most gifted in that art who bears the responsibility of managing all those who practice it. Some are very controlling like the Druids who swear oaths to obey the Merlin and Morgaine in their efforts. Others don’t even know who they are like the Alchemists and Enchanters.”

“Okay but what does that have to do with Stiles?” Scott asked.

“My master, the Night Lord, who I only heard of and never met before, came to me the night Peter Hale arrived to give me a message to deliver to Mr. Stilinski.”

“What message?” Peter had asked not looking particularly happy about it.

“He sent his greetings and asked permission to visit and meet him.”

Everyone had sat there for a second. Peter had blanched but the rest looked confused. “Okay? So what?” Isaac finally asked.

Yvette looked at the beta with profound disappointment. “Mr. Lahey. The most powerful Necromancer in the world sent a messenger to ask permission to visit your Mr. Stilinski. Think about that for a second.”

The pack had all suddenly looked a lot less certain. Finally, it was Boyd who had spoken. “He
needs Stiles’ permission to come here?”

Yvette nodded. “None of the seven greater powers will trespass in the Arcanist’s territory. I do not fully understand what it means, but I know that the Night Lord sees Mr. Stilinski as his peer, deserving of both respect and honor. I had to have permission to remain.”

That caused almost all of them to look stunned. Peter and Derek had known, but not even Cora had. “Stiles!? You needed his permission to stay?” she had demanded.

Yvette simply nodded at her before looking back at the pack. “Your packmate is not like other magic users. He is a Power. You can’t feel it here, but I do. This land, this territory? It teems with magic, like nowhere I have ever been before. I feel the spirits of the dead finding rest, drawn here to find peace and release. There are beings of magic desperate to take refuge and each of them needs his permission.” She looked at Scott and her eyes were kind. “Your friend is both a friend and an Authority. You must learn to distinguish when you need to show him deference he is due.”

All of them had been caught off guard by that, but before they could get any farther they were interrupted. A clap of thunder rang out that was even louder than the one Stiles had summoned, but it seemed much more spread out. They looked out the broken window and saw lightning flashing across the clouds that were covering all of Beacon Hills. Seconds later the clouds opened up and sheets of rain came pouring down, constantly lit up by the lightning that flashed every few seconds, thunder roaring alongside it.

“Damn Stilinski” Erica had muttered looking out at the storm raging over the town.

“Stiles?” Scott had asked sounding both confused and a bit irritated.

Stiles had stared for a second before he turned back to the pack. “This isn’t me. I’m not doing this.”

Everyone stared for a second and of course that was just when a particularly loud thunderclap and lightning blast seemed to go off right over the building causing everyone to jump and more than one to yelp.

“STILES!” Isaac had yelled.

“It’s not me!” Stiles yelled back but he had sensed something. Concentrating he had stretched out his senses and he knew this storm was not natural! It was magic! “Derek! This is magic!” he had yelled.

Derek had roared but it was almost drowned out by the thunder and rain. “What do we do?” he finally yelled.

Stiles had thought, trying to figure it out. Whatever was causing this was near, but not close. It was nearer to the preserve, near the…the circle! “Come on!” Stiles had yelled and quickly created a portal from the loft to the stone circle, his place of power.

Derek was the first one through, but not by much. The rest had followed, even Cora and Yvette had come and spread out when they arrived. The storm was still raging here, but the wind and rain was significantly less than it was over town. “Why are we here?” Scott had yelled to be heard over the noise of the storm.

Stiles had been trying to orient himself when he felt it. Like lightning and power and the fury of nature all concentrated in a tiny ball. It was coming right for them! “Hold on!” Stiles yelled and he concentrated and created a dome of air around the pack, cutting into the wind and rain, but they could still see the trees bending, almost breaking, as the wind outside Stiles’ protection jumped to
hurricane force levels.

“There!” Isaac yelled and they all turned to look.

It was stunning. There was no missing the creature as it was lit up like Stiles had been earlier with lightning dancing across its body and all four of its huge wings. The head of the thing looked like an eagle, but the things feathers were midnight blue with white streaks running through its feathers. The claws on all four legs looked almost metallic in the light of the electricity dancing around it. The creature flew past and as it turned; they could see the storm winds shift to follow. This thing was the storm itself!

“What is that!?!?” Erica yelled out as they watched it circle them. Now close enough, they could see that it was nearly three times the size of one of the centaurs, so it was huge.

Stiles however had almost frozen. He had watched it approach, the thunder roaring and lightning crashing, but there was something else. Something mournful in the wind. He could hear sounds of crying, of pain, of anguish that reminded him of his mother.

“Stiles! What do we do?” Scott had yelled at his friend but when the teen didn’t answer he looked at Derek. “Derek?!”

Derek watched the creature, something familiar about it and turned to his uncle. “Peter! What is that thing!?”

Peter shook his head. “It’s not possible! They don’t exist!”

“What is it?!” Derek yelled. But it was Cora who answered with reverence. “It’s a Thunderbird!”

Derek looked back up and realized he remembered! His grandmother’s stories! She told them about the Thunderbird, the mystical birds that were the living embodiment of the storms in this part of the world. They were protectors and guardians of nature and punishers of those of low morals or integrity. His grandmother loved telling all the Hale children stories from their pack, but also about all supernatural creatures and this was one of her favorites. How they brought life giving rains, shook the heavens with their power, drove away evil spirits, and punished those deserving it.

The pack watched as the Thunderbird landed on one of the large stones, balancing on the stone pillar, its wings open wide, lightning dancing off them and jumping into the clouds over the preserve as it stared down at them with electric white eyes.

“Stiles!” Scott, Erica, and Isaac had all called out, but the teen’s focus was on the bird and the sounds that echoed behind it.

It all changed from one second to the next as the Thunderbird closed two of its wings in and with that snap the clearing was suddenly, almost deafeningly, silent. The wind dropped to nothing, the thunder a distant rumble, and the being was staring directly at Stiles.

“Derek” Cora’s voice was cautious. The alpha glanced over at his sister who had moved closer. “Thunderbirds judge people remember? I think it may be trying to determine if Stiles is good or bad.”

Derek nodded. He had figure that part out himself but was glad that she confirmed his thinking. The others of the pack were all nervous, as was the necromancer, but everyone was waiting for orders and that caused a rush of pleasure. They were learning!
“Stiles?” Peter had gentled prodded the teen who was still in that staring contest with the Thunderbird. “Derek? What do you want us to do?”

Derek watched his mate and the being both staring at each other, but he hadn’t felt fear or danger, well danger but not directed at any of them. “We wait” he finally said.

The others had looked startled and ready to argue but he cut them off. “We don’t know what it wants, and they are not supposed to be a danger except to those who deserve it.”

“You speak truth Wolf-brother.” Derek would never forget the Thunderbird’s voice and doubted anyone else would either. If a storm could talk, that’s what it sounded like. Like words within the thunder and lightning and wind. “I have felt the earth and sky here changing. Becoming clean again, magic flowing like it did long ago. And I have been drawn here. Possibility and Hope calling me. And tonight, the lightning itself sang to me.”

The pack was pretty much speechless. None of the Hale stories had even suggested that the Thunderbirds were intelligent, let alone that they could talk in a language that people could understand. Abigail’s stories had heavily implied that the ability to see the evil doer was more instinct than thoughtful consideration.

“That was me. Sorry” Stiles had confessed. The Thunderbird looked amused. “I mean the lightning tonight. I didn’t know it would affect you.”

“You are the source of the magic in this place. The lines of life all flow here and to you. The land, water, and air all are being renewed and flowing with life not seen in many, many years. I sense others here, those driven out by man.”

Stiles nodded. “I am the Arcanist” he had told the being but it seemed that that title was less impressive when no one actually knew what it actually meant.

“I know not that word bright one, but I see the magic of ages within you. You have made this place a refuge, protected from corruption. I have looked into your heart and seen your trials and your hopes. You may do much good.”

Stiles had felt humbled by the being. “I am trying to” he had said simply.

“Then I wish you success. This place is flowing with power and energy. It will be a good place to nest.”

“Nest? You want to stay?” Cora asked in shocked surprise.

The Thunderbird didn’t respond immediately but looked at Stiles who looked nervous for a few seconds before he straightened up and addressed the being. “This is my territory and all that stay here must abide by my rules. This place is to be a safe place for all people, both men and magic.”

Head titled, the Thunderbird almost seemed to laugh. “Men and magic rarely live together well.”

“Didn’t the first peoples here live well with you?”

Conceding the point he nodded. “They did. But the men of today are not those men. But your terms are not a burden. I want clear air to fly and bring my storms. To replenish the earth and keep the dark ones from spoiling things.”
“I’m Stiles and this is my mate Derek.” Stiles introduced him. “He is the Alpha of our pack and rules by my side.”

“I am Keneun.”

And that is how Beacon Hills had gotten its first Thunderbird. Stiles and Keneun had spoken for a bit more, and after assurances that he wouldn’t be storming every day over the town, he had flown away. It seemed that he was going to be flying all over Stiles’ territory and would most likely nest in the mountains to the East of town which was good.

“So does this mean the drought is over?” Erica had asked at the end and that had broke the tension. They all had went back to the loft and split up. Scott had apologized about the hunters and not asking what to do first. Meeting Keneun had suddenly made the young alpha realize that things were way more complicated than he realized. Derek had also realized that Scott’s own alpha status was pushing him to make decisions and be a leader and they had forgotten that. As a result, Scott now had lessons with Lydia, Peter, and Derek every day on being a leader, being an alpha, and pack politics. The look of despair almost made Stiles laugh but he loved his bro too much to do that. He just offered him a ride home afterwards and they left after getting a kiss from his mate. He had went home for the night and crashed.

Philippe Argent entered the room and headed for the small desk situated behind the Argent’s family official seat in the formal meeting room of the Hunter’s Council. He had accompanied his Matriarch, Clarissant, on this trip and was rather proud of getting to attend and actually see his first official meeting of the Council, something very few of his family got to do.

Philippe was distantly related to her, but for a long time he had doubts about whether he fit in with the family at all. The youngest of three children, he had learned of his family’s true nature when he was 8 years old by accident. Both his brother, who was 16, and his sister, who was 14, had begun their formal training and he didn’t understand what was going on, so he did what he normally did, he hid and eavesdropped. Overhearing his siblings talking for several days before he was caught, he was then taken before his mother and father. After being impressed with the need to keep the family secret, they had begun his training as a hunter and it was, at the most generous description, abject failure. He was uncoordinated, physically challenged, and almost completed uninterested in what they were trying to teach him. He tried, for nearly four years he tried, but he could easily tell that he was a severe disappointment to his entire family. After four years, he missed more than he hit with a gun, and despite two years of attempts, his skill with a bow had actually gotten worse somehow. His sister had refused to even try to teach him anymore. Add in to that several minor physical limitations and the family had despaired of him ever accomplishing anything. His mother had decided that once he went through puberty, his Argent genetics would catch up and he would be able to become competent but Philippe saw the doubt and dismissal in both of his siblings’ eyes at that statement.

But shortly before his thirteenth birthday, the family got some exciting news. His mother was summoned to the home of the Argent Matriarch to serve the family directly and everyone got to go. Jean Paul and Marie were ecstatic about the move and started training with the family there almost immediately and took to it like ducks to water. Philippe had tried, but he quickly noticed that the trainers were much less willing to tolerate his mistakes.

After two weeks of trying, and failing, he had finally had enough. Instead of accompanying his siblings to training, he had slipped away almost immediately after leaving the family’s rooms on
morning. He had thought he would be caught, but instead his brother and sister were almost relieved. And the trainers, if they even noticed, appeared to consider the lack of concern for a missing brother by the siblings and apparently assumed that he had other duties and proceeded without him. Philippe was also rather certain that his absence was a relief for them.

Instead, Philippe had decided to explore the great house and do his best to avoid his entire family. It took nearly an hour, but when he opened the door to the library, he was overwhelmed. Philippe loved books. Like his brother loved guns and his sister loved knives, he was never happier than when he could be left alone to read. And here was the largest library he had ever seen, and no one was around.

That whole first day he had explored the place, figuring out how it was arranged and found shelves of family histories, bestiaries in dozens of languages, books on magic and the occult, myths, legends, and diaries of hunters. There were herbals with hand drawn illustrations of plants that were centuries old and books on geology, astronomy, chemistry, alchemy, and so much more. Philippe had struggled to make friends in real life, but in books, he found his kindred soul.

It was the third day of escaping his unconcerned siblings that he met his distant cousin Genevieve in the library. She was three years older than him and, like Philippe, was never going to be a hunter. Her wheelchair made sure of that. She was deemed unable to fight, let alone lead, and instead had been left to her own devices when her family had come to the house like his had.

It didn’t take long before the two had begun exploring the books once Philippe had discovered that she shared his love of reading. They managed to spend nearly three weeks in pure bliss before they had been caught by Philippe’s mother. She had finally gone to check on her children’s progress and after discovering her youngest son’s absence, she began investigating and when she realized he had been gone from training for nearly a month and no one had informed her, she was furious. She tore through the house until she finally found her son and Genevieve behind a large pile of books.

“Philippe!” she yelled as she spotted her truant son. “What are you doing here? Your brother and sister say you haven’t been training with them for weeks and the training masters tell me they thought you had been removed altogether! What do you think you are doing?!” She was furious and her voice carried, a lot.

“Mother!” Philippe had stammered, trying to explain himself. Telling her how he was wasting their time.

She wasn’t having it though. Elayne Argent was not about to have one of her children failing the family. She wasn’t foolish enough to damage family books, but she was furious enough that it crossed her mind. “You will return to training immediately! Everyday. Without fail. And you will not return here! EVER!” she had decreed.

Philippe. Not even thirteen years of age. The least coordinated, the weakest physically, the one who never dared to raise his voice to his parents or siblings finally snapped. “NO!” he yelled, louder than his mother had. “I WON’T!”

Elayne had frozen in shock and disbelief, but it quickly faded. “What did you say?” she said, her voice cold and controlled.

“I believe he said no, at least that is what I heard from across the house” an amused voice said behind them from the library’s doors accompanied by a gasp from Genevieve.

Both Philippe and Elayne had spun around at the speaker, about to reprimand the interruption but both froze. Standing in the door was Clarissant Argent, Grand Matriarch of the Argent Family, and
in whose house they were currently in. She looked rather unhappy at the screaming going on because it was one, undignified, and two, suggested that her family was not in control of themselves.

“My apologies Matriarch” Elayne said instantly. “My son has” she paused to look at her son “forgotten his responsibilities.”

“Something he is not alone in” she replied causing three sets of confused eyes. “Your other son and daughter did not seem to mind his absence. In fact they seemed to prefer it” she clarified.

Elayne didn’t know how to respond to that and stammered while the Matriarch moved to take her seat. Just then one of the staff came in with a trolley with tea and sandwiches.

“Why don’t we all sit” Clarissant indicated as the young girl began pouring four cups of tea and setting out plates and snacks at the small table as Elayne and Philippe nervously sat down as instructed.

“You too my dear” the Matriarch said to Genevieve who gave up on sneaking out and moved her chair over. “Now, first we are going to have a bit of tea and take some time to regain our senses. Then we are going to discuss several things about this situation.” Elayne opened her mouth to respond but quickly shut it when she saw the woman’s eyes watching her and instead, she nodded. Philippe and Genevieve both were too scared to do anything.

After several excruciating minutes of silence briefly broken by absolutely meaningless commentary, Clarrisant finally put down her cup and looked at the two children. “Now, I know that the two of you have been here, every day, without fail, for the last three weeks or so.”

Both had looked mortified and Elayne had been furious. “I also know that no one, not your families, nor the people who were to be training you, cared or even bothered to pursue your absence.” She turned to Elayne “I am curious how you discovered this. The last few weeks didn’t seem to concern you. What changed?”

Elayne Argent was a proud woman, but she was not stupid. She knew her position in the family. She was never destined to hold the title of Matriarch. No, but she was trained to lead and command and one part of that was honesty, especially to those above you. Wrong information kills and she was fairly certain that her Matriarch knew more than she would ever reveal.

“I had a break in my schedule. I went to the firing range and found Jean Paul practicing with several others. I observed, without interrupting, and was proud of his progress. I had the chance to ask speak to the range manager who had significant praise for both Jean Paul and Marie, but he didn’t say anything about Philippe. I assumed he was not doing as well and was trying to avoid upsetting me.” She acknowledged that it was probably a smart decision.

Clarrisant nodded and motioned for her to continue. “So, I went to the classroom. Marie was working with several of the other cousins discussing command, leadership, and other skills that would be needed. As the group was all female, I didn’t concern myself with Philippe’s absence and went to find Aaron to ask for updates on all of the children.”

“And what did he tell you?” Clarissant asked innocently, but all three could tell she knew exactly what Aaron told her.

Elayne swallowed down her anger. “He gave me objective summary of Jean Paul and that he was ready to join a team formally and felt working with a number of different teams would be beneficial. He was concerned that Marie was too bold, she didn’t think things through, but she was
learning and that her fighting skills were far above almost all the girls her age.”

“And Philippe?”

She looked furious when she glanced at her youngest. “He told me that Philippe had quit and not returned to any training with anyone. His efforts when he first came were far below what he would have expected and felt that he was unsuited to be a hunter.” Elayne was gritting her teeth at that. Furious that anyone would dare say such a thing about one of her children. Philippe had tried her, she knew he pushed her patience beyond the limits, but he was still her son and an Argent!

“And what does Hector say?” she asked.

Elayne deflated. She loved her husband, he had joined the family and taken the Argent name after they married as he was a third generation hunter from an unknown family and marrying an Argent was an unexpected opportunity, but Elayne was young and headstrong and she truly loved the man. However, he didn’t have the sense of family and tradition of the Argents. His own sister had refused to do anything with hunting and had become a rather successful chef. His father’s brother had joined the French military and had a rather enviable career as an officer, one that also refused any involvement with the supernatural. The fact was, Hector’s family had a very ‘take it or leave it’ attitude and he was perfectly fine with his children choosing another path. She shared as much.

“Hector’s family is young but perhaps they are not wrong. Not everyone is cut out for our life and from what Aaron shared, your youngest is supremely unqualified, unfit, and unable to be a hunter.” She turned to look at the boy, whose head was bowed in shame “and from what I can tell, entirely uninterested as well.”

Philippe had looked up to argue but he couldn’t not looking at those eyes that seemed to strip him bare. She knew he hated every bit of it.

“Philippe. Can you tell me what happened with the family in 1812?” Clarissant asked.

Philippe was surprised at the question, but then nodded happily. He had read about the family during that time on his second day in the library “The family was dealing with an extremely dangerous alpha that was planning on turning a large part of the Russian army to create an army of werewolves. Arturo Argent convinced the Emperor to invade Russia, using other pretexts, and while the French army focused on the Russians, he used the invasion to attack and kill the Alpha and his growing pack. They were successful, but Napoleon’s invasion was not.”

Clarissant nodded. “And what is a woodwose?”

Another lucky break, he read about them in a bestiary last week! “A wild man. Similar to a Greek Satyr or Roman Faun. A nature spirit.”

“I see. And what in Alchemical, what is the association with Antimony?”

“It represents man’s animal nature or free spirit. Often represented as a wolf.” Philippe frowned as he answered. He read that book two days ago! Does she know what he has been reading?

Clarissant smiled and turned to his mother. “The best leader is one who chooses the correct tool for the purpose. You do not use a sword to filet a fish. You do not use a hammer to shape glass. And not all are fit to be hunter warriors. Some are meant to be Hunter-Scholars.”

Elayne looks stunned. “Matriarch?”

“There was a time when we didn’t recognize that not all of our children are fit for this life. Dealing
with the beasts, like our most ancient foe, requires a commitment and determination that we have sought to instill in every generation, but despite our best efforts. Some are not fit to lead” she looks at Genevieve “and some are not fit to fight” she looks at Philippe. “But we also need the wise and learned among us to teach, to guide, and to help us understand."

Elayne nods slowly. She had heard of the Hunter-Scholars, but never really thought much about them as she had never met one before.

“This is why all families are brought here to evaluate their children, especially if they have a promising candidate."

Elayne looks confused. “You mean me?” Philippe asked in disbelief. No one noticed him! Not with Jean Paul and Marie around.

“Yes, you. Your brother and sister are true hunters. They would have been brought here eventually to finish their training, but you, and Genevieve” she adds looking at the stunned girl “were both identified early as having great potential. We ordered your families here to see what would happen.”

All three were stunned. “I was assigned here simply as a test for my son?” Elayne asked sounding defeated.

Clarissant barked a laugh. “Girl I lead the family! Do you think my actions are so simple and plain? Yes, I brought you here because of him! I also brought you here for your other two children. I also brought you here to test your own mettle for a possible assignment in Orleans, leading the family living there. And be certain that are several other reasons that I do not plan to share with you. Very rarely do I do something for a single purpose.”

“To wisely guide the team, the driver must see the road, the reins, and the horizon. Only then can you move safely. To lead your family, know all, share little, and keep them guessing as to your purpose and motives. What a soldier doesn’t know, he can’t reveal” Philippe quoted.

Clarissant laughed at the expressions on Elayne and Genevieve’s faces. “Oh child, you did very well. That quote from Yolanthe Argent, daughter of Marie-Jeanne, has guided many a Matriarch.”

Far from being upset, Clarissant was excited about both her potential scholars. Elayne quickly agreed to the new course of training, not that she would ever challenge the Grand Matriarch, so that when Elayne and Hector left for Orleans five months later with Jean-Paul, both Marie and Philippe stayed.

Marie had married four years later to another Hunter and was happily dealing with things in the traditional way. His mother and father still lived in Orleans as one of the Argent bases and Jean Paul had become the world traveler, mostly in Africa and Asia. Philippe had trained and studied with Genevieve as Scholars and both quickly excelled. Genevieve rarely left the great house, she preferred the grounds and gardens with the library nearby, but she also had her own sanctum. A computer system that rivaled some governments and that connected her to the entire Argent family and she loved it.

Philippe was now the personal secretary to the Grand Matriarch. At least that was his official title. Unofficially he was the Argent Librarian in training. He was learning to manage all of the histories, literature, and resources of the family. When the current Librarian retired, he would take over. For now, he recorded Clarissant’s actions for the family histories, served as her aide de camp, and sometimes spy.
Which is how he got here. Sitting in the official meeting room of the Hunter’s Council.

“Are you ready?” Clarissant asks as she takes her seat, done with talking to the others. She had been working with moving her motion about Beacon Hills to a formal vote but there were still several holdouts. The Calaveras were leading that resistance, but she felt she could manage it eventually. Now it would be days of arguments, negotiation, and trades. In her old age, she found the politics of the families much more exciting than dealing with rogue wolves.

“If we are ready to begin?” Rolph Silberer said calling the families together. A man leading a family? How sad she thought of the German hunter but smiled pleasantly. He at least was smart enough to agree with her.

“Sheriff?” the voice on the line was familiar and Noah only needed a moment before he recognized it.

“Agent Jones?” he asks.

“I am really sorry but I wanted to give you a heads up. Agent McCall just came back and found out about Barrows and is furious. He is saying some really nasty things about you” she tells him. “He’s acting like he knew the guy.”

“Didn’t your office get the report and video?” Noah asks holding off the headache he knows is coming.

“We did and it was very clear. Not to mention the damage he did in his attempted escape. That man should never have been allowed out. Or at least we should have been there to help” she sounds embarrassed but also angry.

“Thank you Agent Jones. I don’t suppose you know what he might be planning to do?” Noah asks her and feels his headache increasing at the silence.

“He’s already on his way there. I’m sorry. He was yelling about incompetence and demanding a review. Our office was not very supportive, but the field director gave him permission to go ‘review the evidence’ to make his own determination. I would guess he will be there in a few hours.”

Noah thanked the woman and called Melissa first. She deserved it and he wouldn’t put it past McCall to show up there and try something. He told her that she had permission to kick him to the curb. He didn’t have official jurisdiction here on this and Noah would deal with him. She was grateful but definitely unhappy. After that, he called in Tara and Jordan. They would be ready when he got here!
Chapter 22

Stiles pulls into the parking lot at the Beacon Hills Animal Hospital and turns off the engine as he gets out and spots Scott’s bike in the parking lot next to Deaton’s car. Stepping inside he makes his way towards the back and is surprised when he senses both Derek and Peter there along with Scott, Isaac, and Deaton plus the kid. Opening the door he notices a tenseness in the air that doesn’t make a lot of sense. Derek and Peter are both, for lack of a better word, prickly. Isaac looks overwhelmed, and Scott is surprisingly angry. Deaton is Deaton, of course.

“Uh, hello?” Stiles says and notices the young omega look up at him in surprise. The kid didn’t look old enough to be in high school!

“Stiles!” Scott sounds relieved.

“We have a problem” Peter says looking at the young Scott and Isaac, who looks like he wants to slink away.

Stiles stares for a moment at the eldest Hale before deciding nope. “Derek?” he asks instead.

“This is Eddie Henderson, from Montana” Derek introduces the kid.

“Uh, hi” Stiles says to Eddie before looking back at Derek. “How did a kid get all the way here from Montana?”

“I’m not a kid!” Eddie yelled, his eyes flashing golden.

“Sorry! No offense dude. Um, but how old are you?” Stiles asks him directly.

“Thirteen” Eddie mutters but everyone still hears.

Stiles stares for a second. “Eddie, where is your pack?”

There is a moment of silence before Stiles feels the boy close up and then the emotions hits him from all four of the wolves in the room from his pack bonds. Peter is furious, Derek is guilt ridden and angry, Scott is guilty and feeling pity for the kid, and Isaac feels terrified. He wants to push, he really does, but Stiles isn’t stupid. He has been in the Sheriff’s station too many times not to recognize this. He moves to sit down next to Eddie. “I’m so sorry. Can you tell us what happened?”

Eddie is desperately trying not to cry. To be brave, even when surrounded by these strange wolves. He woke up only a half hour or so ago and he had given the vet his name and his home when the other wolves had come in. The two alphas had argued but then the man, Deaton, had informed them that it was believed that the entire Henderson Pack was wiped out. A fight with Hunters he said!

But he didn’t know these people or where he was. He didn’t trust them. “You’re human. Who are you?” he asks instead.

“My name’s Stiles. This is my mate Derek” he introduces the Alpha. “His uncle Peter, my best bro Scott, and our packmate Isaac. You met Doc Deaton I guess?” The kid nods. “See? Now you know all of us, well, all of us here.”

“Where is here? And why do you have two Alphas?”
“Oh, that. Well Derek is the official Alpha of the territory. Scotty here is what’s called a True Alpha. He became one kinda on his own. But they get along. Derek is actually the High Alpha for this territory” Stiles explains.

Eddie looks confused. He doesn’t know what either of those things are. He has only heard of an Alpha, like his Aunt.

“Oh, and this is Beacon Hills” Stiles adds sheepishly.


“Uh yeah” Stiles answers. “You were looking to come here?”

“My mom. She had heard that the Hale family was back. That they were alive?” he asks looking around.

“They are” Stiles tells him and he is surprised by the look of hope on the boy’s face. “That’s Derek Hale and Peter Hale. Cora, Derek’s sister, is around here somewhere.”

Eddie was listening carefully to the guy’s heart but it didn’t trip up or indicate he was lying. But he had been running for so long. “How do I know you are telling the truth?”

Stiles looked at Derek and Peter who both nodded in agreement. “Smart boy” Peter agrees and the rest of them all look at the elder with various expressions of annoyance. “What? He doesn’t know any of us, why should he believe that we are who we say we are.”

“Can’t he hear heartbeats?” Scott asks looking uncertain. Maybe he was too young?

“Oh I am sure he can” Peter says with a snort. “But Emissaries are known to be able to control themselves and Stiles has already told him that he is Derek’s Mate. An Alpha Mate usually learns how to control themselves.” He looks at the teen with a thoughtful expression. “Do you know the family emblems by chance?”

Eddie shakes his head. He knows his family’s of course, and those of a couple of the packs that visited, but not anyone else’s. “Sorry. I was supposed to be learning but I wasn’t very attentive.”

Derek sighed and reached into his pants and pulled out his wallet. Pulling out his driver’s license he handed it to the kid who looked confused for a second before he looked at it really closely. Derek Hale.

“You are really the Hale Pack? The one that died out. The fire?” he whispers the last question but Derek nods and flashes his eyes.

“Will you tell us what happened to your pack?” Derek asks and the boy, looking like he is barely holding on, struggles. He wants to believe so much but hunters are cruel. This wouldn’t be the first time they tried something.

“Are you worried about those guys chasing you, the hunters?” Stiles asks shrewdly and Eddie looks frightened. “Scott and Isaac took care of them. They were sent to the Hunter’s Council with a formal complaint.”

“A complaint!? They killed my family! My Pack!” Eddie yells, his eyes streaming tears and getting flush while Peter and Derek both stiffened, anger clear on their faces. Scott and Isaac both looked sick. “They killed everyone! For no reason!”
Stiles suddenly was furious. Eyes glowing that bright white he looked at the kid who suddenly looked overwhelmed. “Hunters are not welcome in my territory. I will not allow anyone to kill like that here!” he swears.

Eddie spent some time with his Pack’s emissary, everyone did, but she never made him feel like this. This man was scary! “What are you?” he asks in a whisper.

“He is also the High Alpha. My Mate. And a very powerful mage. You are safe here” Derek tells him, his eyes flashing and his heartbeat steady. He looks at Stiles who ‘powers down’ but Derek can tell it’s all on the surface. He can feel his mate’s fury at the hunters. “I, Alpha Hale, offer unto you, Eddie Henderson, sanctuary within my territory for one moon. We will offer you safety and care as our guest. Will you accept our hospitality?” The words were formal, but he remembered his mother using them before.

Luckily, apparently Eddie did too. “Thank you Alpha Hale. I, Eddie Henderson, of the Henderson pack, do accept your offer of sanctuary. I will do honor to you and your lands and will not violate your hospitality.”

Peter smiled. “Wonderful. How about we get a late breakfast and then maybe reconvene at the loft with the whole pack so everyone can meet our new guest?”

Everyone nodded at that idea and Deaton, of course, declined. He did remind Scott to be back before lunch for his shift. Stiles noticed that Eddie had suddenly gotten a lot closer to Derek, gravitating to the Alpha almost unconsciously. Heading to the parking lot he spotted Peter’s car but Derek and Eddie rode with him while Scott and Isaac joined Peter instead of taking the bike. Stiles managed to send off a quick text to the pack to meet at the loft in an hour so they could all talk. But first? Food!

“You can’t be serious Clar!” Amelia Parsons said, not yelled. She might be angry and worked up, but she didn’t yell.

“I am serious Amelia. Beacon Hills must be placed under formal Interdict. The Council must act before things get out of our control” Clarissant Argent replied calmly. The families had been arguing over her proposal for nearly two hours and things had barely moved.

Silberer had started the meeting easily enough. As the current host, the leader of the German Hunters had set the agenda and they had managed to get through quite a bit before finally coming to her proposal. Rolph had not been in favor, but not even he was willing to ignore her motion.

“Perhaps there is another issue concerning you?” Aadesh asked. The patriarch of the Chakrabati family of hunters asked. Clarissant smiled at the Indian hunter. He was one of the three still on the fence. The break down had happened fairly quickly in the discussion into three sides. Rolph had aligned with the Araya Calaveras of Mexico and Amelia Parsons from Boston all against the idea of any restrictions, let alone an Interdict. She had pretty much anticipated that. The Germans were too practical for her tastes. The Silberer’s made their money in heavy industry and currency exchange and he liked to use his money to move things his way. While practical, he didn’t like to buck tradition and the idea of closing off a large territory of werewolves to hunters was not something he was keen on.

She figured that was the lever he used on Araya. Despite her dedication to hunting, she was also quite willing to accept compensation for her help. Clarissant wouldn’t have put it past the man to
have outright bought her vote. The problem was that Araya was neither a fool nor a patsy. She would have agreed carefully. If Clarissant could find the loophole, she was certain that Araya would be happy to switch sides, or at least be more open to discussion.

“I do not like the idea of a wolf pack setting such terms. Dictating whether hunters were allowed to operate in part of the United States? You are suggesting all of California be placed outside our jurisdiction! The others are only cities and you wish to declare such an area off limits?”

Amelia Parsons was not as open to compromise in comparison to the others. The woman was way too enamored with her position as the oldest American Hunting family. The fact that she also was related to most of the most renowned families in New England didn’t give her any humility either. She wore her lineage like a badge or privilege and status. Sure, the Argents enjoyed the perks that came with their name and status, but the fact was she drove home responsibility in equal measure, no matter the failure of Gerard and his daughter. The Parsons' Matriarchs had managed to attract at least a dozen lesser families under their banner and that had made the woman determined to be first among the families. It was only the Argent name that prevented an outright move. That, and the fact that she wasn’t one of the three founding families of the Council, which Clarissant knew rankled the other woman to no end. The only redeeming trait was that she wasn’t stupid or reckless. Amelia Parsons was practical to the extreme. The Parsons had been Hunters for centuries, but it wasn’t until Amelia’s great-grandmother that they applied that focus and determination to economic growth as well. Now Amelia oversaw a multi-billion dollar empire as well as her Hunters and she often paid more attention to her business interests than Hunting. Clarissant was fairly certain that was the cause of much of the problems with the American Hunters. The Parsons were supposed to be controlling them, but more often than not they simply got training and were then sent off to kill with little oversight or control.

Clarissant’s vassal families were not much better she had to admit, but at least they had seen reason and mostly agreed due to the involvement and suggestion by their allies. Marie-Amable Boutin was firmly in the Argent camp, but that was hardly a surprise. Founded in New Orleans, the Boutin family was established by the Argents when one of set of twin sisters decided that she wasn’t willing to submit to her sister’s rule. Leaving France, Louvillea Argent had arrived in New Orleans with a small team and set about making it her home. She married Claude Boutin and, in a surprise move, took her husband’s name. But surprisingly, her sister was actually happy for her. Francesca Argent had sent a wedding gift of immense value to her sister and new husband. A dozen hunters, well trained and willing to serve. A collection of books to start her own library and a dowry that made the new couple one of the wealthy elite of New Orleans. Claude Boutin was a trader and invested heavily in shipping, alcohol, and later on the family was one of the earliest to join the new oil industry. The Boutins were newer money compared to the Parsons, but in New Orleans they were old money with those highly appreciated European roots. Preferring to focus on their part of the country, the family had much closer ties to the witches and necromancers of the American South and while she often wrote off excess violence of her hunters as a minor issue, the Boutin Matriarch had always worked with the more reasonable members of the supernatural community. And of course, the close kinship with the Argents usually meant that the two were on the same side during debates in the Council.

“But chérie, our sister Matriarch has made clear that this is a different situation from those. The situation in Beacon Hills is much different, no?” Marie reminds them.

“Agreed” Julianna says quickly before Amelia can reply. “And let us not forget that there are other powers involved.”

Julianna Takeda Quintara, the youngest Matriarch on the Council, led the Brazilian Hunters and had quickly agreed with Clarissant’s argument. Julianna was one of the most progressive members
of the Council and her family had fairly solid relations with several wolf packs in South America as well as a large number of druids and witches. She and Araya occasionally clashed, but nothing major in the last decade or so. Amelia despised the younger woman much to Clarissant’s amusement so that they often were on opposite sides even when it was unnecessary. The Boston Matriarch had been heard more than once referring to the South American hunters as ‘seasonal workers’ and to a certain extent it was true. The Quintara did hunt, but it wasn’t their primary job. They were heavily involved in banking, logging, and mining, but most recently in eco-tourism. Julianna had started buying up massive tracts of land, stripped by other logging companies, and started reseeding with more profitable trees and plants. Her ‘reforestation’ system of sustainable harvesting had garnered her much attention, as did her changes to the family’s approach to logging and mining and that had helped gather many allies as her family became a leader in ‘green’ economics around the hemisphere. She also had established good ties to some of the indigenous tribes which helped both with business, and with hunting. The young Matriarch was smart and savvy in her dealings, so she was a good ally.

The problem was the holdouts. When the three founding families had first come together to form the Hunters’ Council, it had been simple. Argents from France, Silberers from Germany, and the Campbell’s from England. Over time it had expanded and changed until Nine Families now held permanent seats on the Council. Occasionally one of the other families would be invited to a meeting, if necessary, but mostly it was the core nine. The other families all aligned with one of the Nine, so it made work much easier.

Aadesh Chakrabarti of India had been the newest family until the Quintaras had been added and they had a love hate relationship with the Campbell’s of England, one of the other holdouts. Half the time they were as tight as the Argents and Boutin, other times they were adamantly opposed. Luckily Aadesh was significantly more reasonable than his predecessor, so he rarely was an issue, but the man was too hesitant to be an effective leader. The other fact was that his family and their vassals rarely ventured too far away from their territory nor did they particularly care what was going on elsewhere. The one real benefit was he had an Interdicted area in his territory, so she was hoping to use that to push him towards her side. But so far, he was happy instead to wait and contemplate his decision.

The last holdout, or at least the one who hadn’t committed was Kaneshiro. Kaneshiro Amaya was the Matriarch of the Japanese hunters and her business interests were a little too close to the illegal for Clarissant’s comfort. Her family may have danced close as well, but the Amaya family had direct ties to several crime syndicates both in Japan and around Asia, which did help her get information. The family, though acknowledging werewolves, generally dealt with other creatures that the other families tended to avoid. The Argents and the Amaya had dealt with some Oni some years back, in fact she was fairly certain that Christopher was involved with that incident, but they hadn’t really managed many collaborations since then. Kaneshiro had also managed to get her family connected to a number of technology firms and was making a significant impact there. In fact, the Amaya had developed the ultrasonic emitters that all of the families now used in their hunts. Kaneshiro had been mostly quiet so far, but Clarissant could tell that she woman was definitely taking it all in.

“Did not your family end the Hale pack Clarissant?” Kaneshiro asks looking as inscrutable as ever. Amelia snorted in amusement at the question.

“Unfortunately, they nearly did” she acknowledged. “Gerard Argent became unhinged and he, and his daughter Kate, and his daughter-in-law Victoria broke the family code. They targeted peaceful and stable packs for no reason, the Hales were only one harmed.”

“No reason?” Amelia says looking doubtful. “Surely hunters as experienced and reputable as Kate
and Gerard must have had reason for their actions?"

Clarissant narrowed her eyes at the woman. She had suspicions that the other Matriarch had some connection to her wayward family members, but no real proof. “Kate and Gerard have been declared Anathema” she snarled! The elder woman enjoyed the looks of shock on the faces around the table, not to mention several of the secretaries seated behind their leaders. “Kate murdered human children and is guilty of statutory rape as well. She has been expunged along with her pitiful excuse for a father!”

Amelia and Penelope both looked stunned by the venom in her words. “But Gerard has been dealing with rogue wolves for decades. Doing the work of the council” Penelope protested.

“No” Clarissant answers with forceful determination, “he didn’t. My former family member was a murdering bastard who targeted innocent creatures, attacked them, and when they fought back, declared them rogues and exterminated them. I have found proof that he killed hundreds for no other crime than fighting to free themselves from his torture. He killed a half dozen totally human children in your backyard Amelia, in Pittsburgh, back in 2002” she tells the woman.

“What? Do you mean the she wolf who attacked a family and murdered everyone there? That attack?” she demanded remembering Gerard’s account of the she-wolf who went feral and attacked the group of children visiting their grandparents. Gerard and Kate had been unable to rescue the children, but had put the wolf down.

Clarissant’s snort of derision cuts off the other woman’s thoughts. “That she-wolf was the mother of two of those children and was visiting her human parents. She brought the pack’s children to be safe while the pack tried to figure out who was attacking them. Gerard and Kate killed the wolf but not before murdering her parents. Since they were children of the pack, Gerard and Kate decided to use them to justify their rampage and killed all six of the totally innocent children!”

Aadesh leaned forward “Did you know of this Matriarch Parsons?” he asks looking quite disturbed.

“Of course not!” Amelia protests but based on the looks the rest of the Council looked less than assured. “Gerard of course told me of the situation, but not how you described it. How do you even know what happened?”

“We found Kate’s journal. She wrote down a great number of her atrocities, trophies of her kills I suppose. Her own words condemn her.”

There was quiet for a few minutes after that. “But that doesn’t justify such an extreme action by this council” Rolph says carefully into the quiet. “You have initiated rightful punishment to your family, as is your right, but this is much more.”

Clarissant nodded. “Agreed. And if it was only guilt for my family’s actions, I would not be pursuing this course of action. But the fact is that there is more happening there and we cannot afford to be on the wrong side of this.”

“You speak of the boy, the magic user?” Penelope states. “You said that he is something special, and that he is a power not seen in centuries. If he is so dangerous, then perhaps we should be considering a more permanent solution?"

Clarissant stared at the British Matriarch before chuckling. “Your funeral” she says flippantly and enjoys the tick in the woman’s face at the barb.
“Excuse me?” Penelope says at her most haughty. “Do you think this boy is truly such a threat? If so, then you argue for my suggestion most powerfully.”

“Let me make something perfectly clear” she says looking at each leader, catching their eyes, before moving on. “The Argent family will take no action there, nor will we allow any hunter affiliated with us to do so. If the Council chooses to act, they will act without us.”

There is a moment of silence before the room erupts in yelling. “You dare!” Araya yells at her. “The Council has always acted together once a decision has been reached! You would refuse to abide by our decision?”

“I will not put my family into a war we cannot win” Clarissant says firmly.

“Sister, your words trouble us” Kaneshiro says looking at the Frenchwoman. “You highlight a danger but refuse to address it. Was it not your own family who truly began this Council?”

Clarissant looks at the Japanese Matriarch for a second before leaning back into her chair. “Tell me Kaneshiro, have you ever fought a Nogitsune?”

The other matriarch looked surprised at the question. “Me? Not personally. My family has had a few encounters over the years” she admits.

“And in any of those encounters, did you ever defeat the creature?” she asks again.

Kaneshiro frowns. “Defeat is not the word I would use. We managed to drive it away once, another time it was bribed and given a different target, and once it left before we could act directly” she admits ruefully. “They are powerful spirits and dark. Direct conflict is unwise.”

Clarissant nods. “And did you know that a Nogitsune was recently imprisoned in Beacon Hills?”

The other woman looks surprised and shakes her head. “No. Since when?”

“During the second world war.”

Kaneshiro looks unhappy. That was the same time the one her family had been tracking had disappeared. “The void came to this Beacon Hills?” she says trying to align her memory of the family’s records. “Wait!” she looks up “you said recently? It is free?”

“No. It escaped it’s prison, but it came into conflict with the Hale Pack and the young magic user” she explains simply.

“Then what happened?” Marie-Amable asks leaning forward. She loves a good story.

“It lost. It was imprisoned again and the young mage arranged to utterly destroy it.”

“That’s impossible!” Kaneshiro whispers. “No mortal would have that kind of power!”

“Oh, he didn’t do it” she agrees easily. “I said he arranged to destroy it. He gave it to one of his friends and allies as a present. I don’t see it surviving that experience.”

“What kind of ally would accept such a present? Giving a demon spirit is a curse, it would destroy the one who received it” Aadesh says sadly.

“Oh no, she was apparently quite happy with it. Though it technically wasn’t a gift, the boy wasn’t that stupid, it was more a demonstration of his friendship and affection.”
“Friendship and affection?” Penelope exclaims. “To who?”

Clarissant smiles happily. She had been waiting to drop this bomb. “Queen Mab.”

It was like throwing a hand grenade. One second of stunned quiet, two of certainty that they heard wrong, and then an explosion of demands for clarification, not to mention several of the representatives looking very wide eyed and nervous.

“ORDER!” Rolph finally manages to be heard and brings the group to order. “Matriarch Argent. I think you need to provide more information to this Council!” he demanded with the proper blend of authority and respect for her position.

“IT is true. I have Christopher’s report and apparently the demon had attacked a hospital but was quickly defeated. The boy had given it to Mab in front of another Alpha and a Celestial Kitsune. I believe you know Noshiko?” she asks her counterpart.

Kaneshiro’s eyes widen. “I met her once when I was a child, but…did you speak with her?”

“I did. I spoke with both her and Alpha Ito about it and both, though cautious, were willing to speak with my agents. They confirmed the incident and the boy’s actions. Noshiko also shared that she felt that Queen Mab appeared to have a personal liking for the boy.”

“Dangerous to be liked by one of the Queens” Julianna warns.

Clarissant laughs. “Hardly. Apparently the boy, isn’t friends with just the Winter Queen.”

“What do you mean?” Penelope demands walking up to the group leaving the others behind still taking.

Clarissant nods in polite welcome. “The boy is also mentored by the Merlin and the Morgaine as well as the Sorcerer Supreme” she says clearly and notices the sudden silence in the room. The others all heard that as well.

Penelope pales. “What? That’s not possible.”

“Oh it is. And that’s not all. It seems that when he took up his new title and powers, he had three other visitors as well.”

“And who was that?” Aadesh asks.

“Titianna, Arethusa, and Orliath. It seems all of them came to visit him in Beacon Hills.”

The blood drained from Penelope’s face and Julianna and Kaneshiro both looked shocked. Aadesh opened his mouth several times, but no words came out. She glanced over and say that all of the others were equally stunned.
Unsurprisingly, Amelia was the first to recover. “All four of the Queens?!!?” she screeched! “That’s impossible. No Queen has been spotted in centuries and there hasn’t been an incident where more than one were seen together in millennia!”

“Yet all four came to this boy’s aid. Not to mention the Sorcerer Supreme and the Merlin and Morgaine. Do you see my concern” she asks them pressing her advantage. “This boy is nothing we have ever seen or dealt with and he has friends that we stand no chance against.” She looks at Rolph “Are your families ready to face the Wild Hunt? You know how Mab loves to set them on the tail of those who displease her. Do you think you can run fast enough to escape them?”

She turns to Penelope “And are you willing to have every Druid in the world turn against your family? Not to mention the witches.”

“Wait, what about the Witches?” Marie-Amable says in surprise. She hadn’t heard anything about witches.

“Do you remember the Comeau Coven?” she asks her distant cousin.

Marie-Amable looks confused. The Comeau? They were wiped out when they attacked some sorcerer in California. And good riddance, but what did that have to do with… “The boy was the one? His pack destroyed them?” she demands.

“Oh no. His pack didn’t even know they were there. The boy destroyed the coven all on his own. I found out about things when the High Witch Dionne contacted me about problems and I sent hunters to help Christopher and Allison out. They helped destroy a Darach and Deucalion’s Alpha Pack.”

“Wait! Hale and the boy destroyed Deucalion’s abominations?” Amelia looks flabbergasted. “I thought the Argents were responsible for that. Gerard?”

Clarissant shook her head sadly. “No. Gerard created Deucalion’s monsters.”

That led to a discussion of Gerard’s peace summit, the blinding of Deucalion, and the rise and fall of the Alpha Pack at the hands of Hale and his mage. By the time the story was done, no one was ready for more and Rolph called to extend the break until dinner and reconvene afterwards. Though the Council had a rule of no business at meals, Clarissant was certain that things were definitely going to be discussed. She signaled to Philippe who nodded. He had prepared a nice packet of information about what they had learned about Beacon Hills, suitably edited of course. She wasn’t going to tell them everything after all, knowledge is power and she was also rather certain that Christopher and Allison were limiting what they told her but she understood that and realized that the boy was probably censoring their reports to her. She would do the same. She was also serious that after speaking again with Dionne and the Morgaine, the Argents were not going anywhere near that boy, nor would she help the Council in any way. If it came to war, she would choose her side wisely.

Nodding to the others she headed to her rooms knowing that Philippe would follow shortly after he passed out his information to the other secretaries before letting her know how they reacted. With any luck, they would have the Interdict by morning.

“Derek?” Stiles asks quietly, hesitant to disturb the Alpha but it had been nearly an hour of quiet since everyone had left after they had come back to the loft after eating with the pack and then
hearing Eddie's story. Stiles had been on his computer trying to give Derek some space but they needed to talk about this.

“Sorry Stiles. It’s just…” Derek’s voice trails off, but Stiles understands. Eddie had told them the story of the hunters’ attack on the Henderson Pack and it had hit the Hale members particularly hard though none of the pack had really managed very well hearing the story.

Eddie’s pack, much like the Hales, had lived fairly peacefully in Montana near the northern border of Yellowstone and had for nearly sixty years. They hadn’t turned anyone in over a decade nor had there been any attacks on humans anywhere near their territory. But that didn’t matter to the hunters who had killed Eddie’s older brother without cause. They had attacked the teen, he was barely 16, when he was out with friends. The two humans with him hadn’t even known about werewolves but that didn’t matter to the hunters who slaughtered all three of them.

The Hendersons had reacted and tracked down the four hunters and struck hard, but still had managed to avoid any killing. Eddie’s Aunt, the Alpha at the time, had not allowed lethal force, but she definitely made a point. The hunter who had killed her nephew had every bone in both of his hands broken so he could never fire another weapon. The others were beaten severely with multiple broken bones and one of the hunters, who had apparently enjoying killing the ‘sympathizers’, lost an eye in the fight before getting knocked out.

The pack had thought it was over with, but the hunters had friends and they decided that the wolves ‘attack’ on the hunters justified a full-on assault. Over three days the hunters had killed eleven members of the family, only seven of which were wolves. Eddie and his older sister, who was only 18 at the time, had been ordered to hide by their parents as the wolves were no longer holding back. But even fighting fully, it only took another two days before the rest of the pack had been killed and Theresa had made the decision that they needed to run. For some reason that Eddie didn’t know, the alpha power had not come to either of them, but she wasn’t willing to wait and figure out why. The whole town was in an uproar over the deaths but she managed to get them out.

They had run, heading for Beacon Hills on their mother’s orders. They had made it to Medford, Oregon when the hunters had caught up to them. Teresa had gotten him to a safe hiding spot and tried to draw them off, but it was barely an hour later when he felt the final pack bonds snap telling him that his sister and last relative was gone. Eddie had managed to catch a bus to Sacramento and then was going through the woods towards Beacon Hills when they finally found him. He didn’t even know he had made it when he was shot by the two scouts. It was only luck that Scott and Isaac had been there and managed to save him.

“He’s safe now” Stiles reminds him knowing that it didn’t mean much. This was too familiar to the Alpha. Stiles could tell how much it had impacted all three of the Hales and even now Cora and Peter were with the boy in Cora’s apartment. Too many families had been destroyed like this.

“And the hunters?” Derek asks.

Stiles pushed down his fury with Scott and Isaac. Both teens had apologized to both Derek and Stiles for how they handled things after hearing the story. Scott was still struggling with the decision, a part of him holding on that giving them to Mr. Argent was the right choice somehow but Isaac had seemed to really get it. Stiles had called Chris to update him and he was coming over any minute for a formal discussion. “Chris will be explaining everything soon. He should be here any minute.”

“And what do we do? You know they are already out of your jurisdiction” Derek reminds him.

Stiles nods. He knows that but he has been thinking ever since hearing the story and he remembers
Mab’s words. He is going to have to make a pretty serious statement. He is about to reply when he sees Derek tense up and look back out the window. Stretching out his own magical senses he feels Chris and Allison nearing. It is harder with humans but Stiles knows both of them really well, so he has been practicing locating them along with several others.

It is only a few minutes more and Stiles is opening the door as both Argents walk in. “Scott called us to tell us what happened” Allison starts off and Stiles can hear anger in her voice. “Derek, Stiles, we had no idea what they had done.”

“Would it have mattered?” Derek asks softly.

Allison looks horrified. “Of course it would have!”

Derek however is looking at Chris who hasn’t replied yet. “Chris?”

Chris Argent looks determined, but also like he is having to swallow down something unpleasant. “Policing the hunters is the duty of the Council. I am not sure what other option there was” he tells them.

Allison looks conflicted looking between her father and Derek but doesn’t add anything.

“Who were they?” Stiles asks. “The ones here and the ones who murdered the Henderson Pack.”

Chris looked very unhappy. “Stiles” he starts “it’s complicated.”

“No, it really isn’t Chris” Stiles replies.

“The report we got was that the brother attacked some schoolmates during a full moon. Lost control and killed them. The hunters tried to intervene but were to late to save the kids. They ended up putting him down. Then the pack attacked and maimed the hunters. They were out of control.”

Stiles stared at the elder Argent and saw the unhappiness there. He glanced at Allison who also looked rather distraught. “So we don’t know the real truth. They are both saying different things” she says sounding miserable.

“Except we do” Stiles replies, surprising all three of them. “I was able to do my own research and my dad also helped. Did you know that Mark Henderson, the kid you said started all this, was best friends with the other two victims? That they had been best friends since they were all eight years old? That they all played together on several sports teams in high school? That the Alpha of the Henderson Pack was the principal of the school and one of the leaders of their community? That the Sheriff in town said that the loss of the family had devastated their community which hadn’t had a single violent death there in over sixteen years?”

Chris had paled and Allison had shifted from uncertain to angry. “They said he lost control” she snarled. “But if he had been friends with them for that long…”

“The odds of him losing it was pretty low. Not to mention that they were killed a good three hours before moonrise.”

“What!” Chris was startled. “The report said it was at 11:45, nearly two hours after.”

“They lied. The sheriff confirmed that the boys were killed just before 7pm. And they had been together all day hiking and fishing. Something they did just about every weekend” Stiles informed him. “Did your report mention that one of the boys was the sheriff’s nephew?” he asks.
Chris collapses on the seat and closes his eyes and Stiles can feel the defeat. He finally looks up. “Stiles, I didn’t know that, but I will inform the Council. I promise this won’t be ignored.”

Stiles looks at Derek and then Allison, both who are angry, but that anger is unfocused. “You will not tell me who they were?” Stiles asks again, his voice calm and professional. Allison looks up in concern, she hears something that worries her, but her father misses it.

“I don’t think I should Stiles. At least not without permission.”

“I understand. Then I need to make this official. Christopher Argent, regent of the Argent Family in the United States” Stiles begins formally and Chris suddenly is paying attention. Derek and Allison are also both staring at Stiles in surprise. “As Arcanist and High Alpha of this territory, I am formally notifying you as representative of the Hunter’s Council in my territory of a change in circumstances.”

“Allison whispers but she stops herself. Derek’s eyes narrow.

“You have twenty-four hours to notify all hunters within the states of California, Nevada, and Oregon that their permission to be in my territory is officially revoked. Yourself, Allison, and those men and women who directly answer to you and for whom you are responsible, may remain as representatives. All other hunters must immediately leave.”

“Allison gasps and even Derek looks shocked.

“Stiles!” Stiles nods. “Good. Then you understand. I expect you to notify your Grand Matriarch immediately and she can send word to the rest. Any hunter found in California after the deadline” he looks directly at Chris “will be considered an enemy combatant and will be treated as such. There will be no repercussions for killing them by anyone in my territory.”

“Allison and even Derek looks shocked.

“Stiles!” Stiles turns and walks to the stairs and heads up without another word or even a glance at the three stunned people in the loft. He is gone before Allison finally looks at Derek. “Is he serious?” she asks knowing that he is.

“Derek, you have to talk to him. This is crazy” Chris warns.

Derek turns to Chris with a blank expression. “He is the Arcanist. I will not challenge him on this Chris. As High Alpha I will notify all who look to us of his word. As of tomorrow, every pack and being will know that hunters are not welcome here except you. If any are found, they will be reported to us and dealt with. I would warn the others to leave. There are a lot of beings who will
be more than happy to pay back the tender mercy of hunters knowing that Stiles will protect them.”

Derek walks back to the window without further word.

Allison shakes off her shock and pulls her father out of the loft. “We need to call Clarissant immediately dad. We need to get the hunters out.”

“Allie, you have to talk to him. Get him to change his mind.”

She shakes her head. “Dad, that won’t happen. He looked like Lizzie and Mab just then. I think he is throwing down the gauntlet. If the Council doesn’t act, he will. And the hunters won’t win. You know he isn’t wrong about some of the hunters. There are a lot more like Kate and Gerard and if we are being honest, I think I am on his side on this one. Those bastards not only murdered innocents but lied and covered up their crimes. That whole group should be killed as an example to others, but you know they won’t be. The Council never actually punishes hunters.” Allison saw the determination in Stiles’ eyes. They had to convince the Council to step back!

Philippe rushed to the suite’s door to knock politely. The door opened easily. “Yes?”

“Matriarch. Regent Christopher Argent is on the phone. He says it is urgent” Philippe hands her the phone and she takes it with a frown and shuts the doors.

Philippe is beyond stressed. Dinner had been a nightmare for him. They honored the rules not to discuss business but the tension in the room was thick with stress and arguments left unspoken. The other secretaries had taken his packet of information but as near as he can tell, only two, maybe three of the other leaders had even glanced at it before dinner. They would reconvene in an hour and he knew that his Matriarch was going to push hard to make things happen.

He spent the next twenty minutes gathering his materials together when the door to the suit opened suddenly. “Philippe! Get Matriarchs Amaya, Boutin, and Quintara here immediately!”

“Before the meeting?” he asks in shock.

“Now!” she yelled. She actually yelled(!) before turning to go back into her room. He was moving almost before he realized it. He didn’t know how he was going to convince the other Matriarchs but at least she had only asked for the three most close to her cause.

“I think that perhaps this situation requires more thought. Perhaps we should gather some additional information on this new development” Rolph began almost immediately when they reconvened. Clarissant, Juliana, Kaneshiro, and Marie-Amable had arrived just as the meeting began after their quick huddle thanks to Philippe’s efforts but now they were back.

“It does feel rather rushed” Amelia added looking at the four latecomers with disappointment for their manners.

“It would appear that delay is no longer an option” Clarissant replies looking around the table. “It appears that the situation has changed rather dramatically. I received a formal notice from the High Alphas.”

That statement set off quite the reaction. “What do you mean?” Penelope demanded. She hadn’t
heard anything about High Alphas, not even in that rather alarming packet of information the Argents had provided.

“My apologies” Clarissant acknowledges but also makes it clear she wasn’t the slightest bit sorry. “It appears that the Hale Alpha and his mate, the mage, have been declared High Alphas by a number of other packs in the area. Six so far to my knowledge.”

“Six packs are impressive I suppose” Araya admits “but that is not sufficient to be true High Alphas.”

“Agreed” Juliana agrees “however it appears that that is only the wolves. There are also several other groups who have also recognized their authority. And I believe that you are familiar with the Delgado Pack?” she asks the Calaveras Matriarch.

Araya is surprised. “Yes” she admits. Her family has had a rather tentative agreement with the pack in Los Angeles. The Alpha was rather civilized all things considered and he had allies across the American Southwest not to mention a large portion of Mexico. He may not be in charge, but he was definitely well informed and connected. “So what?”

“Well it appears that the Delgado Alpha has been speaking with a number of other packs and has managed to convince nearly a dozen of his allies to visit Beacon Hills for the purpose of meeting the High Alphas. In a few weeks those six might be nearly twenty.”

Araya looks intrigued. She knows León fairly well and knows that he is very influential with many packs. The man has never been an issue mainly because his pack has been more interested in working with movies and television, but he has also managed to make strong connections to a number of allies in LA. She has her own people there, but they have an understanding and stay out of each other’s way. The Calavares rarely go into LA simply because it is not worth her time to deal with everything there and she has enough on her plate. The fact that he is not only supporting the Hales but bringing others changes things.

“We may need to deal with that situation agreed but” Amelia starts but Marie-Amable cuts her off. “It also appears that your hunters have facilitated a crisis.”

Amelia looks confused. “What do you mean?”

“William Parker. He answers to you, yes?” she clarifies.

“William?” Amelia pauses for a second. She knows some Parkers, but William? “Oh. Yes, he is the eldest son of David Parker. They are from New Hampshire. Why?”

“It seems that William recently led a group to Montana where he murdered an innocent pack along with several humans” Juliana replies angrily.

Amelia blinks. “I am afraid you have bad information. I received that report and shared it with the Council. The pack had gone feral and attacked several humans and then when the Parkers eliminated the feral wolf, the pack attacked and maimed the hunters. They were out of control. Killers.”

“It would appear that your hunter lied” Clarissant said icily and signaled Philippe who handed out another packet. This one with Christopher’s report of the boy’s testimony along with several supporting documents that the young mage had discovered. “Your hunters not only broke the code, they lied to cover it up and chased a 13 year old child and attempted to kill him.”
“Amelia?” Kaneshiro looks at the American Matriarch with a deeply concerned expression. “This is most disturbing.”

“I will of course investigate” Amelia promises looking at the other leaders who are all staring at her. “The Parkers have been valued Hunters however. I think it unlikely that they would do this. And based on the boy’s testimony who wasn’t even there?”

“It seems it was enough for the High Alphas to decree that all hunters were banished from his territory” Clarissant informed the group.

“He did what?” Penelope was shocked. “By what right does he think he may demand no hunters enter his town?”

“By right of power” Clarissant replies. “And his territory is not the town of Beacon Hills. It is all of California, Oregon, and Nevada.”

“Are you insane?” Araya demands in shock. She has been listening to all of this, but this boy declaring entire states as his domain?

“I am serious. His power is substantial. With his allies, he is rather formidable and he is very unhappy with us. In fact, he has informed me, and asked that I share with all of you, that any hunters remaining in California in” she pauses to look at the clock on the wall “twenty hours, will be considered enemies and eliminated by any who finds them if he doesn’t find them first. We are to remove our hunters immediately or else risk war.”

Everyone starts arguing but surprisingly it is Aadesh who asks the key question. “Can he back up such a demand?”

The room quiets when the soft spoken Indian Patriarch asks Clarissant that question. They all turn to her. “He can. I did leave out a fact from your packet of information that is relevant.” She looks at them with a smile “why have none of you asked about the nature of his magic?”

Rolph, Penelope, Amelia, Aadesh, and Araya are all caught off-guard at the question. Marie-Amable laughs loudly. “Oh, they don’t know!”

“And you do?” Araya asks looking at the New Orleans Matriarch.

“Oh yes. I did my own investigating when Clarissant first informed us of the boy. Unlike the rest of you, I don’t disdain to talk to magic users. We have good relations with the witches and necromancers in our territory. And I received notice from one of the voodoo mages that I have known for many, many years. She told me of a power rising in the west. The spirits are all talking about him. The one who is six.”

“The one who is six?” Amelia snorts but Marie notices the look of panic on Penelope’s face.

“Oh sister, you know” she croons. “That’s impossible. It has been centuries” Penelope almost pleads.

“Not anymore. The Arcanist, the boy, is a mage who can wield all six domains of magic” Clarissant tells the rest.

“What?” Kaneshiro whispers and the rest look impressed.

“That is an abomination!” Rolph yells looking at the others. “We cannot permit this to stand!”
“No” Penelope cuts him off with a look of fear. “I will not commit my family to such a conflict. I will order all hunters aligned with my family to leave immediately and will vote with the Argents to Interdict the boy’s territory.” Her words may show her fear, but there is determination in her voice and her eyes that the rest of the Council sees.

“Penelope!” Amelia looks shocked. She was certain the British Matriarch was on their side.

“The last Arcanist, the one who could wield all the domains of magic? That was the original Merlin! He reshaped all of Britain with his power and raised up Kings and magics like no other. If the boy is that powerful, he could destroy us easily.” She gasps and looks to Clarissant. “The land?” she whispers.

“Healing and growing powerful. I have reports of mermaids, brownies, centaurs, sprites, elves, dwarves, and fae all converging to name a few. The boy’s presence is reshaping that part of the world” Clarissant confirms.

“I too have heard whispers from some of our witches of a new power in the north. I did not realize what it was but after Clarissant’s words I reached out and discovered that in addition to the wolf packs, there are at least four covens of witches who have accepted his authority and there are a number of druids, sorcerers, enchanter, and even alchemists who have petitioned to move there” Juliana informs them.

Aadesh and Kaneshiro both whisper together for a few moments before breaking apart. “We do not have any hunters in that place” Aadesh says easily “nor do we plan to. Based on what we have learned we support the Argent proposal.” Kaneshiro nods in agreement.

“That makes six” Clarissant says looking at the final three. Amelia and Rolph both look furious. She knows that the German has more than a few hunters in America and any limits on Amelia rankles the woman.

“Seven” Araya corrects causing all eyes to shift to her.

“But California is your territory!” Amelia is shocked. There have been a few clashes between their hunters before over who has final say, but to give that up?

“No. It has been our responsibility, but not one we particularly sought or cared about. Besides, did you read the Argent’s information? The boy has indicated that he will not tolerate killing or unwilling bites as well. We may not like any newly bitten wolves, but we admit that giving the curse to those who are willing is not a crime. He has been rather clear on that rule to the wolf packs and others that, like his sheriff father, he protects all within his territory. And the destruction of Deucalion and his filth? That shows his intent and determination not to allow the wolves to act without consequence rather clearly. I will withdraw my hunters for now. Give him space to show himself for who and what he truly is. If he is false, then we may choose to act. But for now, I vote we leave.”

“Seven out of nine is binding on the Council” Clarissant says looking at the other two “within the rules of the Council, but it would be better to be unanimous so all hunters, great family or small, knows how serious we are.”

Amelia and Rolph didn’t like this. “He did destroy the Alpha Pack” Rolph finally admitted. His family had funneled quite a bit of money to Davies and his group for that hunt and he definitely appreciated the end of that particular problem. “Very well. I will support you Clarissant, but like Araya, if circumstances show otherwise, we may have to act.”
“Sister?” Marie-Amable prompted her northern counterpart. “Will you stand alone in this or with the Council?”

The Louisiana Matriarch already knew the answer. There was absolutely no way that Amelia Parsons would be the lone hold out of a Council Edict. She could not afford to be seen as weak or incapable and being the only vote against wouldn’t be a badge of honor like it would be for Araya or Juliana. No, for Amelia it would be proof that she couldn’t sway even one family to her side.

“Unanimous” Amelia agreed with a resigned look. “But what about your family Clarissant? Are the Argents not currently present in Beacon Hills?”

Clarissant smiled happily. “Christopher and his daughter have been invited to remain as representatives of the Council and to keep communication lines open between us.”

Amelia visibly struggled to restrain herself at that snub.

“Wise choice” Kaneshiro agreed and smiled when the others looked at her. “They fought the Alpha Pack and that Darach alongside the Hale Pack. They are battle allies at the least, a rather considerable concession considering the crimes of other Argents against the Hale Pack. That they could forgive and separate the innocent from the guilty suggests a rather more thoughtful consideration than the Parkers demonstrated. Not to mention, according to Clarissant’s report, the future Matriarch of the American Argents is a close ally of them which gives us eyes on this pack.”

Clarissant did not smile though she was very impressed. Kaneshiro had been furious when she learned of the attack in Montana and the lies used to cover it up. She had asked the others whether Amelia knew the truth or not, but either way, the Parsons Matriarch took a rather significant loss of political power today which was a dangerous thing she knew. But with Kaneshiro and Aadesh firmly on her side and Penelope unwilling to risk a battle, things had shifted significantly in the Council. Oh, she loved this!

“Davies!” the voice over the phone calls out. Randolph wasn’t expecting to hear back from Jonas after their last call.

“Jäger. Must say I am surprised to hear from you” he replies.

“Well I wanted to talk with about a potential problem in Ukraine and make sure you had gotten the word about the new Interdict that the Council just announced.”

Randolph freezes at that word. Certainly it was too quick for such a serious decision. “What Interdict?”

There is a pause on the line for a few moments before Jonas’ voice comes back. “Davies, the Council unanimously decreed a total Interdict on California, Nevada, and Oregon. It’s effective in 12 hours. All hunters are ordered out of the territory immediately and not to return under penalty of exile.”

Davies can’t believe this shit! Exile?! That means that the persons would not only be cut off from all hunter resources, they would be disavowed completely. As far as the Council is concerned, they could be killed in the streets, murdered in cold blood, and there would not only be no response, but there would not even be an acknowledgement. “You said unanimous?” he asks in disbelief.

“Yes. Even the Calaveras and Parsons both supported the edict. Tell me you are not still there
Davies. The Alpha Pack is gone. What are you doing?” he demands.

“We are not in the territory Jäger. We are actually in Idaho tracking a potential feral” he assures the man.

Randolph can hear the man’s sigh of relief. “That’s good, but still too close. Do you think you could bring your team back to handle the issue in Ukraine?”

Davies thinks for a moment. “How time critical is it? We are right on the edge of something.”

“Not seriously time. I can give you a few weeks if you need them” Jonas says easily. “Will that work?”

“Yes. Send me the info and I will have my team start looking at everything” he promises and they quickly hang up.

Randolph looks up slowly and around his office. “Trager!” he calls out. Seconds later the man enters.

“We need to move. I want us in another location within six hours, one that bastard Argent doesn’t know about!”

Trager pauses for a second before nodding. No need to ask which Argent was the bastard. Randolph has been raging about Chris Argent for days. “Any place you want us to go?” he clarifies.

“Move us a town or two over. I want to make sure we aren’t too far from Hale and his pack so we are in position when its time.”

Trager nods and leaves to get things going. He doesn’t mention the Interdict though he knows about it. He got notice from several hunter colleagues who knew he was in the area, but Davies isn’t telling the others about the edict. If they stay, as Davies is obviously planning to do, then they are totally on their own. He would rather leave but he won’t abandon his leader. He’s come too far to run now.

“Agent McCall” Deputy Graeme said with an obviously insincere smile. “Welcome back to Beacon Hills. How can I help you?” Tara had replaced the front desk person because she definitely wanted to be the one when McCall finally showed up and based on the man’s body language, he was going to try and bulldoze his way through anyone and everyone.

“Where’s Stilinski?” he demanded abruptly and reached for the barricade blocking entrance to the main part of the station, but he slammed into it when it didn’t open like he thought it would. Tara manages to contain her smile at that. Seems the new renovations were already paying off and they hadn’t had any boogeymen even try them yet.

“I’m sorry Agent McCall but there are new security protocols in place. No unauthorized individuals allowed in the work area unless accompanied by a deputy or staff member. Do you have an appointment with the Sheriff?” she asks with a saccharine sweet smile.

Raphael McCall grinds his teeth at the locked barricade. “I am investigating the death of William Barrows” he says while failing to control his anger.
Tara looks totally confused. “Oh really? I thought that issue was closed. All of the relevant reports and evidence was sent to the Bureau’s office in Sacramento. Did they not share that information with you?” Her smile showed pity for how he was being treated so unfairly by the other agents. “We did tell them to share it with you.”

“I prefer to do my own investigation” he says looking determined.

“Of course. A very smart decision Agent McCall. Always good to make sure you follow up when you set things in motion.” Though innocent, the reprimand is clearly there and they both know it. “Unfortunately, the Sheriff is out on a call but he should be back in an hour or so. Would you like to come back or would you like to wait?”

“I’ll wait” McCall growls.

“Certainly. Please have a seat.” Tara points to the rather uncomfortable looking chairs in the little waiting room, making no move to open the barricade. Seeing the look of confusion on the agent’s face, she smiles. “If you are thirsty, the vending machines are right around the corner” she points to the little alcove nearby before going back to the computer.

Out of the corner of her eye she watches the man stand for a second. She knows he wants to demand entrance, but she has already cut him off once and he knows that she, of all the deputies there, isn’t intimidated by him and would love to shut him down if he tries. And the fact was, he didn’t have the Bureau’s full backing to be here even though he had gotten permission to come. Moving over he sat down and glared at the deputy typing happily away at her computer. She hoped that the Sheriff would remember to pick her up one of Celeste’s muffins when he decides his coffee break is over.
Sheriff Noah Stilinski was having a good day. The last week had been rather enjoyable as he managed to make FBI Special Agent Raphael McCall’s last few days in Beacon Hills the most excruciating that he possibly could without actually doing anything wrong. First, he had a very leisurely coffee and Danish at Celeste’s and had a wonderful conversation with both sisters who promised not to tell Stiles about his visit. They did of course, but when they added what he was doing to Scott’s father, Stiles felt his dad deserved the indulgence. He did make it back only two hours after FBI Special Agent Raphael McCall had arrived after making sure that everyone in his office was both polite and very respectful to the man. Tara was very appreciative of the to go box that he brought her.

That led to one very irate FBI Special Agent Raphael McCall who then proceeded to argue, complain, and generally be an ass about being kept waiting. Noah was happy to let the man rant for nearly forty-five minutes before Tara knocked on his door reminding the Sheriff of his appointment with the mayor. He was apologetic of course, but this did take precedence to an unscheduled visit about a closed case. After he left, Tara happily encouraged him to make an appointment for the next day as the Sheriff would not be back after the meeting which drove McCall up the wall.

His meeting with the mayor went as well as can be expected. He didn’t have the heart to tell her that he was fairly sure that the whole Stark Industries visit was more cover story than real, but he was appropriately excited and supportive while she talked. Normally Noah avoided politics whenever he could but that day he enjoyed sitting back and letting her talk.

Tara had happily recounted the absolute meltdown that FBI Special Agent Raphael McCall had after his departure and Tara’s continued reply to anything with “So did you want to make an appointment?” finally got through on the fifth try, so he had his 9:00am appointment. Not 8:00am, because he had to speak with the shift change and other scheduled work with the deputies.

FBI Special Agent Raphael McCall had cooled off somewhat the next morning when he arrived at 8:58am exactly, but his disdain was clear. He came in and proceeded to demand copious amounts of materials on the Barrows case including field notes, video footage, and lots of other incidentals. Noah happily agreed and said they would start on it and then stopped, staring at FBI Special Agent Raphael McCall for the next step. It took three minutes for the man to break demanding to know why he hadn’t started. The sheriff had politely asked if their meeting was officially over and when FBI Special Agent Raphael McCall shouted it was, the Sheriff, at his most polite, kicked FBI Special Agent Raphael McCall out of his office and station until everything was ready, though he did offer to allow FBI Special Agent Raphael McCall to sit in the waiting room.

When FBI Special Agent Raphael McCall demanded a desk and office, the sheriff had politely, but firmly declined. By the end of the day, FBI Special Agent Raphael McCall had returned only to discover that Noah had emailed the FBI branch for formal confirmation for the full list of materials that he had requested and the office had not yet replied, so the Sheriff’s station had not started work yet. And of course, it was too late for FBI Special Agent Raphael McCall to reach anyone so he had to wait until the next day.

He called and got permission from the office for the materials and he called, didn’t visit this time, confirming that Stilinski had gotten ‘permission’. He was told it was and then hung up after telling Tara that he would be back by 4:30 that afternoon to pick it all up.

FBI Special Agent Raphael McCall arrived at 4:30pm on the dot only to discover his materials
were not ready. When he demanded to know why not, Deputy Tara Graeme informed him that it normally took several days to get materials from the archives in Sacramento. Which led to a screaming match before Noah cut him off demanding to know why everyone was screaming.

The man had lost it, yelling about the materials. Noah had told FBI Special Agent Raphael McCall that all the materials for the Barrows case was sent to cold storage in Sacramento for Law Enforcement already. When he demanded to know why it had been sent, Noah had happily told him that they had limited storage, especially for closed cases. But they had sent in the request and he was sure it would be retrieved soon enough, assuming that nothing else was too pressing.

Noah had learned that FBI Special Agent Raphael McCall had driven to Sacramento to try and get the materials but Tara had not put his name on the request so even after harassing the storage staff, they refused to give him the materials but instead had them couriered back to Beacon Hills Sheriff’s Department when he was finally able to get them this morning. Tara had reported that FBI Special Agent Raphael McCall looked about ready to have an aneurism when he finally got the box, but she assured him she had been nothing but pleasant.

What wasn’t pleasant was the man’s hotel. Apparently, his son had been rewarding several of the local brownies to visit FBI Agent Raphael McCall’s hotel room between 1am -5am to make all sorts of noise in the walls, floors, pipes, etc. The man had changed rooms six times already and the hotel staff was baffled by the situation as none of the rooms had any issues before or after FBI Special Agent Raphael McCall had stayed there.

But Sheriff Noah Stilinski was nothing but helpful. He didn’t have space available for FBI Special Agent Raphael McCall to work, but the Bureau could happily arrange something. Instead they had instructed FBI Special Agent Raphael McCall to work in his hotel room. So the man was sleep deprived, hungry, and beyond irritated, but he had his materials. Now they just had to wait until he made his next move.

“Sheriff, we are getting some weird reports about strange birds in the Preserve” Parish tells him sticking his head in the Sheriff’s office door.

Noah looks up “By the Hale House?”

“No sir, over on the south side.”

Noah frowns. That is on the opposite side of town away from most of the craziness but “wait, did you say birds?”

Parish looks sheepish. “Yessir. Mr. Thompson called. Said one swooped down and ate his dog.”

Noah’s eyes widened at that. “What he thinks an eagle or hawk grabbed his little dog?”

Parish manages to look thoroughly confused. “Not exactly sir. He said his dog was a, well sir, he said it was a full-grown lab.”

Noah groans. Dammit. “Take Graeme with you and figure out if you need to call the pack. You have the number?”

Jordan nods. All of the deputies ‘in the know’ knew both Isaac Lahey and Allison Argent’s cell numbers in case they needed to call something in. He headed out and he was fairly certain he heard the Sheriff muttering under his breath about ‘what next’.
“What’s wrong, can’t you keep up?” Jackson taunted as he ran through the woods. He didn’t want to be here, well not that he would admit to anyways, but he was trying to let them know he was having fun. The wolves had taken turns working with Eddie over the last few days and today he and McCall had taken the kid to run the borders on semi-patrol. It was only semi because one, it was the middle of the afternoon and two, Stiles hadn’t sensed anything dangerous recently so they thought it was fairly safe to do so.

“Watch me!” Eddie yelled and with a burst he almost managed to catch up to Jackson when Scott rushed by leaving both of them in the dust. “No fair!” he yells.

“McCall!” Jackson snarls out at the laughing alpha. Even after getting the bite, McCall had managed to get a boost by becoming an alpha as well. Though if he was being honest, Jackson thought it wasn’t worth it. Lydia had shared some of the new training their younger alpha had to do and it seemed that Derek, Peter, and Lydia were enjoying loading him down with reading and new training. This was his first real ‘free’ afternoon in a while.

Looking over at the snarling Eddie, Jackson held back a laugh at the intense expression on the kid’s face in full beta shift. He was already making serious strides in dealing with everything. Sure, he was still pretty traumatized by his family’s deaths, but he definitely felt welcome here. The first stumbling block had been Derek himself. Their alpha had wanted to take responsibility for the kid but he knew that his standing in the community wasn’t that great yet and he already had sort of responsibility for Isaac. Peter was definitely out as a possible guardian for the boy for so many reasons, but Derek was willing to try. That was until Melissa McCall had found out.

Jackson chuckled remembering the scene when she had arrived at the loft after McCall had apparently told her about everything. She came in, started ‘inspecting’ and within five minutes had absolutely dismissed Derek’s plan. She had given the kid a check up at Deaton’s before he woke up, so she was already prepared. It was pretty impressive watching her come in and pretty much cut off their alpha every time he tried to get a word in. Jackson had heard Stiles trying to warn Derek to give up but it took nearly an hour before he finally did.

The next day Eddie was fully settled in what once was the guest room of the McCall house and is now Eddies room. Peter had arranged for some paperwork to appear showing Melissa had been appointed responsible for Eddie after the deaths of his parents. By that point, he was a fully under her care and Derek had apparently given up fighting her on that. At least until she got an alert from her bank.

It seems that the High Alphas had agreed to give in Melissa’s demand to take care of Eddie, but they weren’t about to give up entirely. Derek had transferred money into her bank account for “costs and care” of her new ‘son’ and Jackson was luckily enough to be there when she arrived demanding answers. He was impressed how cool and relaxed Derek had been. He had simply informed her that Eddie was the responsibility of the pack and since she was taking care of him, they were providing for his expenses.

“Derek! You put double my monthly salary in my account!” she yelled.

Jackson truly admired the way Derek managed to look concerned. “Was it not enough?”

Melissa tried to look angry, but she ultimately conceded. “Fine, I suppose that was fine to get him settled” she eventually agreed.

Derek smirked at her. “Oh, that wasn’t to get him settled. That was the monthly allotment. It will
be paid from now on directly to your account on the first of the month.”

Melissa had frozen in shock and then started to try and fight, but Derek was as firm as she had been when she had declared that Eddie wasn’t going to live in ’a half rundown industrial building’ with a ’questionable home environment’. Derek had further explained that part of the money was for Eddie’s monthly expenses and the rest was in recognition of Scott’s status as a new alpha and to ensure that he could focus on his training without having to worry about family costs.

She really had tried to fight, asking Derek about the others, but Derek had just shrugged it off and not budged an inch. Stiles had finally stepped in and pretty much told her what he had earlier told Derek, that this wasn’t a fight she could win. “Well what about you? Why isn’t Derek paying Noah?” she had asked.

Derek had smiled easily. “I was recently arrested. Probably wouldn’t look to good if people thought I was bribing the sheriff. Besides, once Stiles and I get married officially, he won't ever have to worry about money either.”

That had been a shock to both Stiles and Melissa, but Derek had slipped away in the confusion and ultimately Melissa had been grateful. She was now able to turn down the extra shifts that she took to be ahead of things.

“Scott!” Eddie calls out just as Jackson smelled it. Something earthy, like rocks and soil all mixed up with a thick musk. Jackson spotted Scott who had stopped looking a bit uncertain. Despite being an alpha and being a wolf longer than the rest of them, Scott struggled with interpreting what his senses were telling him sometimes. Eddie was a born wolf though and he knew it was something else.

“Do you recognize it?” Jackson asks the kid.

Eddie shook his head. He didn’t but he did smell traces of something else, something magical that was wrapped up in the earthy smell. “No, but I do smell magic…I think.”

“Should we call Stiles? Or Derek?” Jackson asks looking over at the alpha.

Scott frowns, he smells it too, but there is something else there. Something that doesn’t feel like a threat. “Let’s check it out first” he finally decides and the other two nod in agreement. They start moving again, but a lot quieter and trying to avoid being detected. Following the increasing scent they go for another ten minutes before coming to the small stream that cuts through the Preserve.

“Anyone?” Scott asks looking around. The water is making it much harder to smell anything, it had been getting stronger, but the smell of the water and stuff in the river had pretty much overwhelmed the trace.

“I think so” Eddie says tentatively. He smells something, but the river smells are strong. Between water, mud, fish, frogs, and plants he is struggling to hold on to the unique smell from before.

“Do you think they went in the water?” Jackson asks looking at the edges of the stream for any signs. “And up or down?” he adds looking along the bank in both directions.

“We could split up?” Eddie suggests but both Scott and Jackson snuff that out.


Eddie and Jackson both snort but Jackson adds “Besides if we did split up, it would be you and me.
Mr. True Alpha can go it alone if he wants.”

Scott is about to argue but he catches the smell again coming from upriver. “There” he says looking up.

“Which side?” Jackson hisses looking for anything but spotting nothing. He really hopes it isn’t that damn spider.

Scott frowns for a second and looks at the small stream. It is barely ten feet across at the widest and not very deep in most places in this part of the Preserve. He knows it gets deeper further along before it gets to the small lake, but here is pretty safe. “Jackson, you and Eddie take this bank. I will cross over and we can come up both sides. Stay in sight of each other” he adds looking at the beta who flashes his ice blue eyes and nods. Scott grabs Eddie’s shoulder in assurance before making a quick run and leaping to the other side, easily clearing the water and mud of the banks.

He signals to Jackson and they start moving forward. They make it about a hundred yards or so before they have to pull back a bit to get around some trees blocking the way. Jackson frowns knowing they will be out of sight of each other but Scott gives the ‘go ahead’ so they move out and if he pushes a bit, he won’t admit it. Seconds later he is around the blockage, Eddie right behind, and they keep moving. Scott shows up a few moments later. Luckily the ground, though rocky in places, is opening up now. “Anything?” Jackson whispers loud enough for McCall to hear, barely.

“Nothing, just the scent” Scott whispers back.

Eddie frowns as he follows Jackson, something about the scent feels off but he can’t place it. He slows down for a second when he notices a small piles of rocks that look strangely like a bird. Stopping he stares at the rock when he realizes that it is not a pile, it is only one rock. “Jack-” he starts to say when he feels it, something behind him, but he isn’t fast enough. The huge hand grabs him and pulls, and Eddie goes up like he weighs nothing. “-SON!” he screams and sees the beta spin around and his eyes widen in surprise.

“Eddie!” he roars and starts to leap when Eddie sees a huge shadow step out of the trees behind the beta and reach out, snatching Jackson out of the air by the back of his shirt. Jackson roars, a roar that is quickly answered as Scott leaps the river, landing a few feet away an expression even more surprised than Jackson’s.

“What the hell?!” Scott snarls and then he rears back and lets out an alpha roar that reverberates across the preserve. Eddie knows the pack must have heard that one.

“Loud” a deep voice comments and Scott snarls but instead of leaping like he was attempting to, he face plants into the ground, hard.

“McCall!!” Jackson roars trying to spin around the giant holding him. He reaches out with his claws but the thick fur on the arm is like armor and he feels his claws just slide along not cutting anything. Feeling a sharp pain at the base of his spine he focuses and with a burst of clarity he feels his tail. From when he was the kanima. Just like that! He flicks it at the arm and feels the tip connect.

“Hey!” the giant holding him shouts in surprise but then Jackson is falling, and he hits and rolls over. Looking up he sees his former captor standing there holding his arm that now hangs uselessly from his shoulder. Huh, he still has his venom. Staring at the thing, he first notices that it must be nine feet tall! It is also twice as wide as Boyd and covered in shaggy fur from head to its HUGE feet!
He glances at McCall, who seems like he still can’t get up, and Jackson realizes that the Alpha’s feet are sealed in rock! Like seriously sealed in the rock. Looking over he sees the other shaggy brown giant holding Eddie, the beta’s arms pinned but the kid looks almost like a doll in its arms.

“What happened?” a deep bass voice says and Jackson sees the fourth giant looking at his former captor. This one has some grey in its fur so he assumes it might be the leader?

“I can’t feel my arm. I think that one poisoned me” he says indicating Jackson who is bracing to fight. The giant’s voice sounds both sad and disappointed and for some stupid reason Jackson almost wants to apologize.

“Wolves don’t have poison” the older ones says, but then looks closer at Jackson “but they also don’t have tails” he adds. “What are you little wolf?”

Jackson snarls but there is a much louder roar when Scott manages to straighten up some, though his feet are still stuck. “What are you?!” Scott roars, his eyes flashing red.

The giant stares at Scott for a second before replying. “Alpha. But you are not connected to this place, not truly. You do not feel of the land.”

Before anyone can figure out what they mean there is another roar and all three wolves spin around just as Derek, Boyd, and Peter crash through the trees, eyes flashing, claws and fangs out and ready to fight. The four giants don’t look surprised and with a gesture Jackson sees it seconds before the others do. Another five giants appear behind the three new wolves. That makes six to nine with Eddie and Scott out of the fight. This doesn’t look good.

“But you Alpha, you feel of this land” the elder says looking at Derek. “Are you the Alpha of this land?”

Derek doesn’t change back, but he does stand up a bit which isn’t saying much as the giants still tower over all of them by at least three feet. “I am Derek Hale. High Alpha and Alpha of this territory. Who are you?”

The giant nods like it means something. “I am ĜřĦœđžǣɮɉʨ.” All the wolves look at the giant. It sounded like someone put rocks in a blender! "But you can call me Dave.”

Derek is trying to shake off the name. “Dave? How did you get Dave from that?”

Dave laughs and it sounds like a small avalanche. “Oh, I didn’t. An old human friend gave it to me. He gave up figuring out how to say my name.”

Peter raises an eyebrow at that. “You are extremely well spoken in our language considering you don’t seem to be a very…sociable being” Peter delicately says. His eyes widen and he stares at all of them. “Oh my god tell me this is not for real. Sasquatch?”

Dave laughs again. “Afraid so. But thanks for not calling us that other name. Having your entire identity focused on your foot size is rather demeaning.” He signals and the one giant lowers Eddie to the ground. Another steps up to Scott and places it’s giant hand on the ground. The stone seems to suddenly shift into mud and Scott pulls free and then it is rock solid again.

“How did you do that?” Scott asks looking down where he was just trapped, tapping on the now solid rock.

“We are earth shapers. Rock and clay and soil all are ours to sculpt. This is my clan” he indicates the others who all nods politely.
Derek, now fully human along with the others as it appears this isn’t going to be a fight, nods at the clan of Sasquatches…Sasquatchi? “What are you doing here? We haven’t had any of your kind in this territory for as long as my family has been here. And aren’t you normally farther north?”

“Yes. Normally we tend to avoid the humans. They….smell” he finally says looking embarrassed. The pack looks insulted and surprised at the same time. “But the earth has been whispering to us that something has changed. That the ground is changing and calling to us.”

Derek relaxes a bit at that. “That would probably be my mate, Stiles. He is…special. He is tied to this land and it is changing because of him.”

“We know of no wolf that could do such a thing” Dave says skeptically.

“Stiles isn’t a wolf. He is human, but he is magic.”

“A druid?” Dave looks very doubtful but it does feel like earth magic.

“No. Stiles is…difficult to explain. We should all talk together” he looks around at the nine giants and knows that won’t work. “Scott, tell Stiles to meet us at the circle. And to bring the girls.”

Scott looks confused for a second before he nods quickly. Sending off a text he tells Stiles to come to the circle and bring Lydia, Allison, Erica, and Kira if possible. That will definitely even the odds if they need to.

Derek walks up to Dave and politely indicates the way and the clan of Sasquatch follow, moving much quieter than any of the wolves, even Derek and Peter. Jackson shakes his head. Another day in Beacon Hills.

Tara steps out of the car and looks over at Jordan with an unspoken instruction to let her take lead and he nods quickly in agreement. She had interacted with Thompson before as the man was notorious for ignoring the fire warnings and burning trash on his property even in times of drought. They had been lucky with the rain for the last month, it seemed that the whole of California was getting rain almost every day so not only was fire risks down, but lakes and rivers were filling up. The forest people were very happy about it. So since this was the first time in years they weren’t complaining, that was a win in her book.

“There you are! Well? What are you going to do about my dog?!” Mr. Thompson was yelling as he came out of his house. Spotting Tara he quickly headed for her. “Damn thing took Rocky!”

Tara nodded politely. “Mr. Thompson. Can you please tell me what exactly you saw? Why do you think a bird took Rocky?”

The man glared for a second. “Well? What else could it be? I was in the back yard” he starts around the house, heading for the small barn behind it, leaving Tara and Jordan to race after the rather quick old man. “I was working on my cabbages, they are almost ready you know, and Rocky was barking something fierce. I looked over but he was running around in circles, barking at nothing. Told him to shut up, but he kept right on. I ignored him and a few seconds later I heard him yelp out. By the time I looked back around he was gone. I heard another bark, this time from above me and looked over there” he points back to the house “and saw him being dragged off by some damn big bird!”
“About how much did Rocky weigh?” Jordan asks as he writes everything down.

“About 70 pounds I guess” he answers.

Tara nods politely. There is no bird she knows that would pick up a dog that big. “And it wasn’t just me. Mike Brown said he lost one of his goats!”

Tara sees Jordan taking notes so she has the man recreate exactly what happened as best as he can remember. She even takes a few pictures with her phone, promises to let the rangers know, and that they will follow up with Mr. Brown down the road. All in all, they only take about 25 minutes with the man.

“So…Mr. Brown?” Jordan asks as he starts up the cruiser.

Tara nods absently. There is no way an eagle could take off with a dog that big. But after some prodding, Thompson finally admitted that he hadn’t actually seen the bird or the dog over his house, he only heard it barking from what he thought was above the house. By the time he ran around the house, the dog was long gone. “Let’s see if Brown has anything better.”

He didn’t. Mike Brown was putting up a new fence for the small field where several goats were running around. He hadn’t been outside when something had taken Bruiser, one of the more irritable goats with a habit of attacking just about anything. He was also nearly 200 pounds so when Lee Thompson had thought it was a bird that took his dog, Mike had brushed the older man off.

“I think it was probably a mountain lion” he told the deputies. “I was in the house when all of sudden there was a whole bunch of noise coming from the goats including a loud scream. I grabbed my gun and ran out but there was nothing there. All the goats had run off and were hiding in the barn, it took a bit to figure out that Bruiser was gone, but I did find a big splash of blood in the field along with several others heading towards the trees” he pointed to the woods.

“You didn’t have them in a fence?” Jordan asks looking at the strange fence. About a third of it was a little over three feet tall and half was almost twice that, the rest was open but there were signs that something had been there before.

“No I did, but it apparently wasn’t tall enough if that damn thing could jump in and out carrying Bruiser. Since it wasn’t damaged, the thing had to jump but he won’t jump that” he pointed to the newer, taller fence. “Once I get the new one up it should be good. No mountain lion is going to jump a six-foot fence.”

Tara and Jordan thanked the man and headed back to their car and drove off. “Can a mountain lion drag a 200-pound goat over a six-foot fence?” Jordan asks the senior deputy. He had never been in wild areas before coming to Beacon Hills.

Tara shook her head. “Nope. So, it sounds like our bird may be behind both.”

“I thought you said no bird could lift the dog, let alone the goat.”

“Yep. Which means we call the pack. I mean we will also call Dana and Martin (the head rangers for the state parks nearest to Beacon Hills) but I know that they will shoot down the eagle or condor theory. What I am worried about is what if whatever took a goat decides to grab a kid” she says with a frown.

Jordan blinks. He never thought about that. Oh hell, the Sheriff isn’t going to like this!
Randolph Davies walks into the office building following Argent’s man as he leads them to the old hunter. He walks in and sees the man, coughing, and sitting in a chair with several books in front of him as well as a laptop.

“I take it you moved without being seen?” Gerard coughs out.

“Yes. We had identified your son's man. We left and headed North for several hours heading towards Idaho before we turned around. I even switched the vehicles out after our first stop. You were right about the trackers.”

“Of course I was. I taught him everything he knows. Slipping trackers on your cars would have been his first move. Unless you do something stupid, you should be able to stay hidden until its time to strike. How many men do you still have?” He coughed up more of that smelly black bile, but his glare told Randolph the man was still dangerous.

“We lost two who were called back by families but I had them take the cars with the trackers and they didn’t know our plans. That leaves me with sixteen men and women. What about your allies?” he asks showing he has sources of his own.

Gerard laughs. “I have nearly a dozen men loyal to me” he answers and Randolph nods knowing that he has at least half again as that many. But our allies have nearly three hundred. Unfortunately, we need them for other actions but when the time comes, they will give us at least a hundred. They don’t know the truth of course, so they will be limited, but they can take out Hale’s allies.”

Davies frowns in confusion. “Who?”

“The local police, my son and granddaughter, the friends and families of all of them. The hunters will be free to deal with the pack.”

“Then you will be even happier to hear the latest” Davies says with a smug smile.

Gerard frowns at the man. He hadn’t heard anything beyond that damn Interdict that came down from the Council, damn them. “What?”

“Seems young William Parker got himself into some trouble. He and his team dealt with a pack in Montana but didn’t clean up fully like they should have. Left one of the dogs alive to go running to Hale. That’s what triggered the final move to declare Hale off limits. Seems he embarrassed the Parsons Matriarch in front of the others or something. She was furious and is demanding that he answer to her. His dad got a heads up so he warned his eldest to lay low and well after he heard about missing one of the dogs, he reached to me and is on his way. In a few days we will have another 14 hunters to add to the party. I also got a call from another friend who said he might stop by as well. But don't think he is bringing anyone.”

Gerard nodded in satisfaction. Things were definitely lining up. Davies and now Parker would bring his total of hunters up to over four dozen. The Hydra forces would be able to take out the Sheriff, he growled. McCall was supposed to do that but the man was apparently running the agent around in circles over some stupid prisoner and his scheme to get the fool fired, which had backfired spectacularly. The Sheriff’s ‘heroics’ had made him even more popular and had made McCall even less effective with law enforcement. Luckily, they still had some people in positions of power who were watching out for him. The man was ready to snap. If Gerard managed things
right, McCall would not only eliminate the sheriff and his men, but would then be set up to take the blame for it letting the Hunters and Hydra slip away. Of course, if they could manage it, they could also make him look like a hero to the Bureau and that would give them someone solidly in the ranks that would serve Hydra well. Either way he would be prepared to use him whichever way ended up working best. He would be a high value asset or a scapegoat taking the attention and fall. Dead men didn’t give up secrets after all.

He wishes he could say that he made a rather impressive appearance, but being completely honest, he didn’t. Stiles had got the call to come to the circle as they had ‘guests’ and to bring the girls. So, he gathered them up and had opened the portal for Erica, Lydia, Kyra, and Allison to go ahead of him. Luckily the girls were all together so that part was easy as he was stepping through he spotted the rest of the pack approaching and smiled but then he saw their guests.

“OHMIGOD!!! SASQUATCH!?!?” he yells in surprise causing Derek, Peter, and Lydia to all look completely embarrassed.

“At least he used the right word” Peter says looking at Derek with something close to despair.

“What? What do you mean?” Stiles asks.

“They don’t like the other more commonly used descriptor” Peter explains looking at Dave's feet surreptitiously.

“Stiles rolls his eyes. Dude, the name comes from the Salishan language groups of the Pacific Northwest. Sèsq̓əc was the oldest known use of the term. It was only when people with cameras showed up that they called them that” Stiles snorted and then noticed the rather surprised looks on his pack’s faces. “Oh come on! I get warned that magical and supernatural beings are going to be drawn here and you actually think I didn’t go on a research bender for every possibility?”

Stiles turns to the Sasquatch with the most grey in his fur. “I am Stiles Stilinski. Are you the elder for this clan?” he asks politely.

Dave nods. “I am and I believe you are the one we have been feeling. Your Alpha feels like the land but you, you are so much more.”

“He smells of earth” the one that freed Scott says almost as an accusation.

“But also of fire and water” a female voice says surprising everyone.

“What?” Erica startles but manages not to say what she was thinking. They all look alike but the voice had a definite female quality to it.

“Agreed Peggy” Dave says “But there is more.” Dave leans forward, staring intently at Stiles who holds his ground. “How are you doing this little one? We have not sensed the elements in one of your kind for many generations.”

Stiles was still looking at Peggy when he realized that Dave was talking to him. “Me? Oh…you smell the elements?” he asks and Dave nods slowly. Stiles concentrates and that blue white light comes to his eyes and he draws in a deep breath and his tattoos glow. The tattoos on his right arm glow red and Dave steps back.
“Fire” he said looking carefully at Stiles.

The red faded and his left arm glowed a yellow-green. “Air” Peggy says leaning forward.

His right leg glows golden and the first one leans forward inhaling deeply. “Earth” he says almost reverently.

Finally, his left leg glows blue. “And water” Dave says nodding. “You wield all the elements. We have a legend of one like you from before the Sundering but we did not believe it was truly possible.”

“The Sundering?” Lydia and Peter said at the exact same time.

Dave nodded unhappily. “Long ago, we lived across the ocean with our cousins. They preferred the icy wastes of the mountains while we preferred the deep forests, but we were family. We lived in peace together but the world began to change so we left those lands to find new ones. We crossed the ice bridge many millennia ago and came to this land where we have lived, but we kept contact with our cousins for many generations, until humans came and made it impossible to stay connected.”

“The Yetis!” Stiles whispered excitedly to Derek while grabbing his arm but not interrupting Dave.

But he had heard and smiled. “Yes. Your people call them that. They are rock shapers like us, but they prefer the great mountains. I remember learning of a story they told of a powerful mage, one like no other, who came to be in that land and she was both friend and ally to them. She could wield magics like no one else before or after” he explained.

“That would be the second Arcanist” Stiles says with excitement but noticed the Sasquatch looked confused. “Several millennia ago there was a woman with powers like mine and she lived in what is now China” he explained. “We only learned she existed a little while ago but we don’t have any details.”

Dave looked sad. “I am sorry to say we do not either. Our cousins may remember more but we have not spoken with them in centuries.”

“You said the earth called you here” Derek asks trying to refocus the group.

“Yes” one said.

“Phil” Dave introduced the one who captured and freed Scott. “We find it easier to use your language and names.

Stiles looked embarrassed. “That doesn’t sound right. We should try to learn your names” he says to Dave.

“Of course, my name is ĜřĦœdžǣɮɉʨ.”

Stiles looked stunned and stared for a second before looking desperately over at Lydia who was looking at the Sasquatch in shock. No help there.

“Uh” Stiles started to say but then stopped not knowing where to go.

Everyone was quiet for a few moments. “So…Dave it is. Now Phil” Stiles finally said sheepishly and all of the Sasquatch laughed that rocky laugh of theirs at the teen “you were saying?”
Phil smiled at Stiles. “We heard the earth singing like it hasn’t since before humans came here. It sang of joy and hope and healing. We started moving down here to find its source.”

“And no one saw you?” Allison asks in disbelief. She knew that they were not in the Bestiary and her dad was probably going to lose it about this.

“We shaped tunnels and walked. We stay underground most of the time so humans don’t see us but occasionally we need to cross paths with your kind and we take precautions” Phil explains.

Everyone was trying to process the idea that apparently there is now an underground tunnel from Beacon Hills to Canada when Lydia interrupts their thoughts. “What kind of precautions?”

Dave chuckles and then he gestures and the other eight all join in. Their arms move with surprising grace and ease, despite their huge size when a golden glow surrounds them for a few seconds and then there’s a flash.

When everyone’s eyes clear the Sasquatch are gone. Instead there are five rather large human men and four woman that look like a bad comedy movie version of lumberjacks down to the plaid shirts, boots, and overalls. They would probably pass for human if the smallest of them wasn’t six foot six!

“You can turn human?” Peter says in shock as he recovers before everyone except Stiles who snorts.

“Not exactly. The legends say that they can appear human but their shadows give them away” he says and points to the ground. Everyone stares and sees that the sasquatch shadows are still there but now attached to human lumberjacks. It looks really strange. “That why it’s safer for them to be out at night or away from lights.”

“You are well informed little one” Dave says in approval.

“Lizzie and I talked about you briefly and I read up afterwards. It’s how I know that your clans are peaceful and not a threat. But you haven’t really answered Derek. You said the earth called you, but called you to what?”

“To find a haven. A place where we can live safely” Dave looks sad. “It is difficult for our kind to be too crowded together. We live very long compared to humans and we seek solitude and peace to connect with our forests and stones. Our clan grew too large so we split and were planning to seek out a new home farther north but then we heard the calling. We seek a home” he says simply and Stiles smiles and looks at Derek for his opinion and the Alpha nods.

“Well then” Lydia says with a smile stepping forward. “Allow me to formally welcome you to Beacon Hills, territory of the Hale Pack and the Lands of the Arcanist Stilinski. I am Lydia Martin, Emissary to the High Alphas. I offer you refuge and sanctuary to rest in our lands. If you wish to remain, I would be happy to speak with you further” she intones formally.

Dave nods respectfully. “Thank you, Emissary. I accept your offer of rest and refuge. On behalf of the Clan, we wish to make formal entreaty to make our home in these lands.”

Lydia smiles and looks over at Derek and Stiles and looks smug. They can tell she is excited to have another sit down. The other Sasquatch start talking to the pack members introducing themselves. Stiles has to bite his tongue to keep from laughing. Their names are so not what he expected!!
“So then Lydia asked them about the construction of the tunnels and all, Dave was really happy to talk about it. She got Kreyna to come join along with some of his herd who have been talking with Derek and Lydia about constructing the new house. Dave said they would be happy to help so now him and Phil are working with the Centaurs on some new design elements” Stiles told his father as he set the salad down on the table.

“We have nine-foot tall sasquatch here now?” Noah repeated still not believing everything after his son had started his recounting of the day. “Where are they going to live?”

Stile snorts. “That’s easy. They are creating a cave system under the Preserve. Lydia also introduced them to Merek and Thalin.”

“The dwarven brothers who were causing all those problems in the industrial district?”

Stiles looked sheepish. “Sorta. I mean yeah that was them, but they have mellowed a bit now that their clan has shown up. They have been setting up their forges and workspaces before starting to mine but now with Dave, Phil, and the other Sasquatch, they can combine efforts. Dave said that they often encounter seams of metal and other ores in their rock shaping but they don’t really use it for anything. Lydia is going to negotiate a trade deal between them. The sasquatch will give the dwarves the ore they find as they make their homes and afterwards as well, but they will do it in an environmentally respectful way. Dave was very concerned about that. In exchange, the dwarves will provide them some finished metal work as well as ‘credit’ to buy other things to improve the caves.”

“Too bad Kreyna isn’t getting anything” Noah says biting into the lasagna his son had cooked. “How are they doing with their situation?”

Stiles smiled. “Actually pretty well. Derek and Peter have purchased several tracts of land next to the preserve to extend it and created some storage buildings that the herd can use. They don’t really like buildings or caves, but they do like covered spaces for their possessions. The dwarves have agreed to provide them with weapons and some metalwork in exchange for some design work and the centaurs are trading with Dave’s group by coordinating on some sustainable harvesting of the forest. It is cool to see everyone getting along nicely” Stiles says happily.

“Except for the fact that there are now a large number of Bigfoot” he quickly apologizes for the term when Stiles looks about to interrupt “sorry, Sasquatch, roaming the Preserve.”

Stiles shakes his head. “Dave promised that they will use their illusions whenever above ground. They will just look like hunters or loggers. Peter is planning to establish a nature conservatory in the Preserve to provide a ‘cover’ for any of our friends. The place will be doing ecological preservation along with sustainable management techniques so he will have a number of ‘interesting’ characters as employees. He is also setting things up so no one bothers Kreyna and the herd.”

“Any real people going to get jobs?” Noah asks with a snort.

“Well” Stiles drawls out. “Both Erica and Isaac expressed some interest and Peter thinks that he could hire some of the druids and witches that want to come and live here. He originally figured it would be mostly cover for them, but after he and Lydia put their heads together, he now thinks that it could actually be profitable.”
“It really makes me nervous whenever those two agree about something” Noah says shaking his head.

“Me too” Stiles agrees but then laughs. “Of course Lydia had apparently created an ‘arcanist tax’ in all of our agreements with everyone that Peter was extremely surprised to discover applied to him as well.”

“Arcanist tax?” Noah says looking at his son with concern.

“Close enough. We wanted to make sure all the supes who came here agreed to help support the place, share knowledge, all that stuff. What I didn’t realize until a few days ago, that there was a 5% tax on any money made in the territory by anyone with ‘official sanction’ by Derek and me. This was to support the new sanctum but also to make sure we didn’t drain all the Hale funds to help out when we needed to. Everyone has been on board, which was a surprise to me, but Peter hadn’t realized his new venture, if it made money, would be expected to pay as well. Lydia had enjoyed springing that on him as the Hale Emissary” Stiles snorted. Watching those two was always entertaining, if stressful.

“So why isn’t Derek joining us tonight?” Noah asks, deciding to press after Stiles had dodged his question earlier.

Stiles sighed. “Derek, Cora, and Peter are all going to the Hale Vault to take an inventory and see what we need to do with what’s in there. And if there are any other ‘surprises’ that we need to know about.”

“Are you worried about anything in particular?”

“No. It’s just I think it is going to be difficult for all three of them to go there and see so much of their family’s history. It will remind them of everything they lost. Derek, well all of them, really took it hard when we found that trunk at the house, so though there probably won’t be as much there that’s sentimental, it will still be hard.”

“And you didn’t want to go with them?” Noah pressed.

Stiles looked miserable. “I do and I don’t. I want to be there to support them. I want to see what there for myself and Derek said he would take me later, but I think that they all needed this to be just for them tonight. Peter has been there recently to get Talia’s claws and later to return them, but he admitted to avoiding spending any more time there than he needed. It would like us going up to the attic” he added.

Noah frowned. After Claudia had died, Noah had managed to pack up a lot of her stuff and put it in the attic because it was so hard to see every day. Since then, he hadn’t looked at any of her stuff, and he didn’t think Stiles had. They both had avoided being up there very often in order to avoid seeing all of that. He felt for the Hales tonight as it was going to be rough.

“You know I never came here before” Cora says as they walked down the stairs to the Hale vault underneath the school.

“Only a few of us ever did my dear” Peter replies easily. “Outside Talia and I, our mother and grandmother were the only ones who ever bothered. Everyone knew it was here, but it was viewed
more as a storage unit than anything. None of the pack particularly cared to be honest.”

“Laura came down to put mom’s claws down here before we left” Derek tells them with a sad twist to his voice. He hadn’t really talked about it but seeing the spirits of his family had been amazing but he couldn’t help but feel cheated that Laura wasn’t there. At the time it didn’t seem to matter but afterwards, her absence really bothered him.

“So, what exactly are we looking for?” Cora decides not to go down that minefield and tries to redirect their attention.

“Well, first we need the log book” Peter says moving towards a small desk with several large leather tomes sitting on them. “Here” he points to the books and opens the first to what looks more like an accounting ledger.

“What does it mean?” Derek asks looking at the scribbles.

“It uses the Hale cypher. We will have to translate it but each entry gives the item description, history, and other key information about everything that’s in here” Peter explains.

Derek looks around at the large room and then back at the books. “Peter, there is no way that matches up. This room is big, but not that big. There are five large books.”

Peter nods with excitement. “I know. Whenever we came down here, we only used this book” he points to the one he currently has open. “The others were never used. I glanced at them, but they were much older. Two of them are not in the same cypher or if they are, they are not in English. I could never figure it out but I think they may be the inventories of the other vaults.”

“Wait, other vaults?” Cora asks looking confused.

“Oh yes” Peter almost purrs. “The family has others and I have found hints of the other Hale vaults out there, most long forgotten, that may have much more in them.”

Derek frowns but nods. “Take the books Peter. You, Lydia, and Stiles can figure out what to do with them later. Let’s look around a bit and see if there is anything else we need” he instructs and seeing both agree, they move off in different directions.

“Did you want any cash?” Peter’s voice calls out a short time later and Derek frowns and heads over, ignoring the shelves of strange items before he finds his uncle by a large safe.

“Cash? Why?”

“Well, the family has a rather large collection of bearer bonds here. Over a hundred million if I remember correctly.”

Derek rolls his eyes. He knew about the bonds of course; the whole family knew that they were there even if they didn’t know how much. He admits to being a bit surprised by the amount. “Do we need it?” he asks looking at his uncle.

Peter pauses to think about it. “Well, until we free up some of our assets, it would help with some of the projects you and Stiles keep throwing my way. I wouldn’t want to go too deep into it. Maybe five million for now?” he asks looking at his nephew who nods after a moment’s thought.

“Make it six. I want you to set up funds for the pack for college while you are at it” Derek says after he thinks about it.
Peter snorts. “A million for tuition is way more than they need, but I am sure we can use it eventually. I have already reached out to our finance people to get some of the family money moving again. What did you and Laura do with the insurance money” he asks looking like he just thought of it.

“Laura didn’t really want to touch it but knew she had to do something. She set it up in a small fund to cover basic needs, mostly paying for your care and for emergencies. She invested the rest pretty heavily I think but I haven’t checked in a while. A couple million if I remember right. She was really excited about some tech stocks that she wanted to invest in I think” Derek told him.

“We can find out later. Give me the information you have, and I can make some calls” Peter says with a thoughtful stare. Laura had been very interested in economics and had been working with her mother on learning how to manage money. However, she was also a bit too emotional. She tended to make her decisions on emotional reactions. If she liked something personally, she would often believe it was better than it was. He didn’t know what tech stocks she bought, but he hoped it wasn’t any of the many that went belly up, but it probably was. He would chase it down and let Derek know.

Derek had left Peter to keep looking and reaching the end of the shelves he spotted some sheets covering something up against the walls, smaller shelves perhaps. He wandered over and caught the smell of leather and paper. Curious he walked over and pulled on the sheet which came off rather easily revealing a set of bookshelves with glass covers over the shelves. Looking in none of the books had anything on the spines but appeared to be made rather well. He reached to open a shelf when it resisted and he realized their was a small lock on the shelf. Surprised he looked at the others, but they all had similar locks. Why would something in the vault be locked? “Peter, Cora?” he calls out and in a few moments they both converged on him.

“Derek what did you…” Peter trails off in shock and Derek looks at his uncle completely surprised by the look of almost reverence on the man’s face.

“Peter?” he asks carefully, but the man doesn’t hear him. He is gently touching the shelves whispering something even Derek is not able to catch. He looks up and sees Cora who thankfully looks as confused as he does. “Peter!” he doesn’t quite yell, but he does shout, a little.

Peter shakes his head and looks at both of them. “Derek, I swear I thought these books were in the house. There was a secret bookcase in the library behind one of the other bookcases. When I finally had a clear enough head, I even went and looked but that whole section of the library had burned so I thought they had all been destroyed. I never even knew they had been moved. The last time I saw them was nearly a year before the fire and they were there. How and why they were moved here I have no idea.”

Cora looks on the verge of growling. “But what are they?” she demands.
Peter looks at his niece and then at Derek before smiling. A real smile. Not one of Peter’s typical smirks or his ‘I’m better than you are’ or ‘I know something you don’t know’ expressions. No. This is one of near joy. “These are the Hale Chronicles. The family history Derek. All of them. These are the ones Mirabelle kept and maintained, and that my mother did after her.” He looks back at the glass shelves with a near religious expression. “This is our everything.”

All three Hales stare at the shelves with varying degrees of surprise, appreciation, and hope but finally Derek takes a deep breath. “No Peter, it isn’t” Derek says calmly and both Peter and Cora, who had become transfixed by the books, look at him in disbelief.


“Our family is everything. This is not us, we are. And our pack. Take away our house, this vault, our money, our territory, these books. It doesn’t matter. As long as we are here, fighting for our family, that is our everything” Derek says the words with determination and certainty and at the end his eyes flash for a second but it’s enough for both Cora and Peter’s eyes to respond. “But, it seems this is going to be a rather significant project to understand and Peter you don’t have the time to do it.”

Peter suddenly looks furious. He thought Derek didn’t understand their importance until he explained this thoughts, but these were too important to leave them here! There could be details on the other vaults, allies they once had, more information than any Bestiary, and more. He would make time!

“Cora” Derek says turning towards his sister with a formal tone. “We need a new Hale Chronicler. Someone to take on the role that Grandma Abigail had that has been lost too long. I know it is asking a great deal, and it may not be to your liking, but would you accept this duty?” Derek’s voice is calm, forceful, and reassuring. Peter is suddenly reminded of his sister and looks over to see Cora’s stunned expression.

“Derek” Cora’s voice almost breaks but she looks over at Peter. “I don’t know if I’m the right person for this.”

Derek nods. “I understand. But this is our family’s history. I would rather it be managed by one of us three but neither Peter nor I have the time to properly devote to it. In the past it was always an elder, often the previous Alpha or Alpha mate. And if necessary, we can wait until we have someone who can do that. But I do believe you can do this. You would have to not only read all of these, and find information to help Peter, Lydia, Stiles, and myself, but you would have to determine what to share. You would also be responsible for writing the new Chronicles taking up from where grandma left off.” He frowns. “How do we figure out which is the most recent?” he asks looking at Peter.

Peter is looking at his nephew rather proudly. He was set to fight and argue, and Derek cut him off before he had the chance. Cora would be perfect for the responsibility and if Peter was any judge, his niece would agree fairly quickly. He remember her growing up and having all of those stories at her command was something she couldn’t resist for long. “I have no idea. But we will need the keys for certain. I am fairly confident that those marks in the glass are rune sigils. I don’t think we should try to break the glass or something bad could happen. I wouldn’t put it past my mother to put some kind of self-destruct or booby trap on them.”

Cora looked at the cases with a yearning expression, but she didn’t test the glass or the case. “Will these work?” Derek asks pulling out a set of strange keys on a rather familiar looking keyring.

Peter and Cora stare in shock at the keys in Derek’s hand. “Where did you get those?” Peter
demands as he grabs them and sees they do look like they fit. He puts one in and it turns easily opening up the glass front and pulling out one book and handing it to Cora.

“They were in the trunk Stiles found” Derek says softly, and both of the others look at him in surprise. “I caught mom’s scent on them and recognized her key ring, so I had them in my room. When we decided to come, I grabbed them at the last second since they were the only thing I couldn’t figure out why there were there.” He shrugs. “Guess it was a good idea?”

Peter smiled and Cora gasped. “This is the book for 1870-1873” she tells them and regretfully puts it back up and moves down a few books and pulls it out. “1881-1884” she confirms and then starts moving. They started near the end closest to the center of the room so they quickly hone in on the more recent volumes and with the key ring that Peter graciously hands over with a respectful “Chronicler”, Cora finds the Chronicles for the ten years before the fire and grabs them before locking back up. Peter looks constipated at leaving any of them behind. “I would rather they stay here until we have a more secure place. Derek, can we discuss some changes to the house and library?” she asks as she puts away the books in her bag.

Derek smiles and nods. She never officially accepted but he knows she did in her heart. Peter grabs his books and they head out. Once again he thinks of his mother and everything she seemed to know to do and wonders if he will ever measure up.
“This is a surprise” she says looking at the man walking into her office. “Last I heard you were dead.”

Phil manages to look a bit embarrassed, but he shrugs. “Protocol unfortunately. My status was fairly top secret and then everything happened with Hyrda and I’ve been busy” he tells her as she offers him a seat on the sofa.

“Well, I am glad you are okay, but still mad you lied about it. When Tony told me he saw you, he was still rather worked up about it” she says with a smirk. “So, what is this about? You looking for a job too?”

“No, I’m good actually. Been keeping busy.”

“Rebuilding Shield?” she asks and at his surprised look “of which I know nothing of course.”

Phil sighs. “Does that man know nothing about keeping quiet?” he asks her.

“Well, as CEO of Stark he did need to let me know about some things. Besides, Maria Hill has been sending you all sorts of toys as well.”

Phil chuckles. “Ah. That is a better rationale.” He frowns a bit “Actually it’s your role as CEO of Stark that I have come to talk with you Chairwoman Potts.”

Pepper smiles at the obvious flattery. She has been with Tony for years and despite Phil’s years with Shield, she has a bullshit detector that is second to none. “Oh really? And how can the CEO of Stark Industries help an out of work former spy?”

Phil acknowledges the dig. “Romanoff recently made a trip to California and used you as a cover story.”

“Beacon Hills” Pepper replies easily. “Not entirely a cover story.”

“Really?” Phil looks more than interested.

“Tony gave me some information on what’s going on there and I have had some of our people looking into things. It is very interesting especially as no one seems to be paying attention to the things that are happening there” she says.

“Like?”

Pepper leans back and takes a sip of her tea. “Well to start with, the air quality in Northern California has seen an 11% decrease in particulates over the last month. We have also observed increase plant coverage in the rural areas. Several wineries in Napa have also reported rather exciting news about grapes.”

“Grapes?” Phil looks surprised.

“Yes. It seems that this was supposed to be a rather lackluster year. But for some reasons the grapes are all growing phenomenally well. Which is true across the region for all crops actually but no one else seems to have noticed yet. Of course, that improvement may be the sudden regular rainfalls that have been going through California in the last few weeks, again despite predictions of
a dry season. In fact, our hydrologists say that if it continues like this for another month or two, we will see California’s aquifers restored to levels not seen in decades. Then there has been signs of new businesses and economic development centered around Beacon Hills and a sharp reduction in people moving out of the area. There is a normal ebb and flow anywhere but there has been a noticeable shift in the last month or so that won’t show up for the government probably for at least a year or but we pay closer attention, especially when the area is ‘interesting’.

“You said not entirely a cover story?” Phil says after a moment’s thought.

Pepper nods. “Tony came up with the cover story based on our actual plans. He has been looking at setting up a green energy center for a while now. A mix of research and prototype development. No heavy manufacturing, more like an innovation hub. After your report and his digging, he thought Beacon Hills might be a good choice. And after Natasha’s report when she got back, I think it might be a good idea to have our foot in the door so to speak.”

Phil ponders for a moment. He needs a reason to be there, but he didn’t really think that this would line up so easily. “Pepper” he finally says looking at her “I need a good reason to go there and…” he pauses.

“Snoop around?”

“Collect intel” he offers instead. “Agent Romanov’s report was clear that what was going on really wasn’t Shield business and I am good with that, but in my recent work, I have been dealing with some ‘special people’ and it seems that Beacon Hills has more than it’s fair share and unlike previous contacts that Shield made, these are not the kinds of people I think should be in anyone’s files. I think that I need to check it out personally, make a few contacts in case something happens.”

Pepper nods in understanding. “You know that Natasha was really impressed with the people there. She even did an amazing job for her cover story” she tells him a bit surprised. But of course she was undercover at Stark for a while so she had the chance to learn a lot about how they did things.

“Not surprising. Romanov excels at everything” Phil laughs. “Are you seriously considering going there?”

Pepper looks at him for a moment before getting up and walking to her desk. Picking up a file she comes back and hands it to him as she sits down.

Phil opens it up and is pleasantly surprised. “You already have plans? It’s definite?” The folder contains rather detailed outlines for a rather significant facility in Beacon Hills.

“Well, we have some work to do to finalize things and I was going to send someone there, but if you have a day or so, I could prep you on what I need and you could manage it for me while you are ‘gathering intel’ or whatever you need to do. As long as you actually do what I need” she adds.

Phil smiles. “I’m all yours.”

Pepper returns the smile. “Tomorrow. Tonight, we are having dinner and you are going to tell me everything that you have been up to since you ‘died’!” she smiles and then frowns. “That you can actually tell me I mean.”

Phil nods. He could use a friendly ear.
“Do you often come out here?” Kira asks looking around the woods with a bit of concern. Ever since she found out about, well, everything she has been a bit nervous around the pack and walking through the Preserve doesn’t seem like the best idea.

Allison laughs. “Actually yes. My dad and I set up a range out here to practice my archery” she tells the other girl. “I also use it with my knives so I thought it would be a good opportunity for you to practice without your mom.”

Kira rolls her eyes. Ever since she discovered her heritage her mother has been pushing her, training her to use her sword and learn about her powers. She even attacked her in her dad’s classroom one time. “Well that would be nice I guess, but you don’t have a sword” she points out.

“True. But using your sword isn’t always about sword fighting. Your mom is good at that and can teach you pretty well considering how much experience she has, but you may fight foes that don’t have a sword. I thought we could try techniques for you to use when facing opponents who have different weapons or styles of fighting.”

Finally, they come to the clearing where Allison has set up her targets, fighting dummies, and several other pieces of equipment including some rather strange looking items. Chris Argent is there putting out several items and looks up at the girls and smiles. “Kira” he says politely.

“Mr. Argent? Are you going to train with us?” she asks looking surprised.

He shakes his head. “No. I have a meeting to get to but I promised Allison I would set things up for you two so you could get some training in.” He looks at his daughter “I should be back by dinner, are you okay to clean up and bring everything home?”

Allison nods and he says goodbye to both girls before heading out. Kira watches him leave as Allison goes over to pick up her bow and quiver of arrows. “Is he okay?” she asks with concern.

Allison looks after her father with a frown. “There were some hunters nearby who we were watching but the left right after the Hunters Council sent word of the Interdict. They were chasing the Alpha Pack and weren’t happy to hear it had been defeated.”

Kira frowns. “But isn’t that a good thing? Erica told me about them, and I think learning they were beaten would be make them happy.”

“Well, that it was someone else who did it appeared to be a problem for them.”

“But they left?”

“Yes, which would be a good thing, but they haven’t been seen since. Two of them went back to their homes but the rest are missing. Dad’s worried that they may be up to something. He doesn’t trust their leader and not having an eye on them makes him nervous” she explains.

Kira just nods politely. She doesn’t really understand the whole Hunter thing. Erica explained it but her mother told her that Kitsune rarely deal with them so her mother didn’t have a lot of history with them and her opinion wasn’t very high of how they operated anyway. “So, I thought we could start with testing your reflexes.”

Kira looks confused but Allison noks and arrow in her bow. “Think you can block my arrows?”

Kira’s eyes widen. Allison is going to shoot her? Stammering her answer Allison walks off as Kira
pulls out her sword and takes her stance. Allison turns, aims and fires all in one smooth motion and Kira almost screams but she swings her sword and feels the blade slice the arrow in half. It was at least two feet off to her side, no danger. “I did it!” she yells with excitement.

Allison smiles and draws another arrow. Kira frowns when she shifts her aim before firing. She barely manages her swing but she still snaps the arrow in half but she realizes that if she had missed it would have hit her! Kira looks at Allison in shock. “You tried to hit me!”

Allison looks innocent as her dimples appear before she is nocking another arrow. “And I’m going to again!” she fires.

Kira manages to move just enough that when her sword misses this time the arrow misses by less than an inch. “Allison!” she yells looking at the other girl but Allison is already firing again.

A bright orange lights Kira’s eyes and her sword dances in and splits the arrow down the center, shattering it. She doesn’t get to enjoy her success as Allison is firing again. ‘Ok, let’s do this’ she thinks and swings again.

Derek left his meeting with Kreyna and Dave feeling pretty good. He had managed to get a lot of questions answered about the plans for the new house. Who was he kidding, that place wasn’t a house, it was a compound! He had started with the old Hale house plans but Stiles had started adding what he wanted and then Stephen and Wong had showed up and it expanded again. Then Peter and Cora got involved and they brought in Lydia and surprisingly, Boyd. Both of them added quite a bit along with his uncle and sister until the place was looking more like Stark Tower or something like that.

He had argued that it was serious overkill and they had all reluctantly agreed but then Kreyna had joined in and started talking about how to disguise large parts of the place from your casual viewer. Then Dave joined in and fully half the place suddenly was underground. The most recent plan had multiple levels shaped into the bedrock and he had thought that everyone would object to living in a cave but instead they were all excited. Stiles had moved most of the magical stuff he wanted down there, Cora wanted to create a new vault for the chronicles and a library that could be sealed off safely. Peter had added storage rooms, training spaces, and enough sleeping spaces that they could house a pack 10 times the one his mother had led. The former idea of escape tunnels had turned into an underground complex that was going to be masterfully hidden so that even if a dumb teen member of the pack did bring a girl down there, they wouldn’t see 90% of the place. There would be no cutting things off with mountain ash this time.

“Are they always like that?” Aiden asks as they walk back to the old Hale house clearing.

“Apparently” Derek replies with a shrug. He had taken the former alpha along to observe how he interacted with the two elder non-humans but also because he was trying to figure out how to integrate the twins into their own pack. Learning that Aiden was a bit adrift since Ethan and Danny were dating, Derek had figured bringing him along and watching him would help Derek better understand the twins. “Dave is still pretty new, and Kreyna is a bit standoffish, but he definitely prefers dealing with me than Stiles.”

Aiden snorts in agreement and Derek manages to contain his smirk. The twins had finally gotten their sit down with the High Alphas after Danny’s visit and it had gone fairly well. As well as could be expected he supposed. The two of them were highly respectful and almost terrified of Stiles when they arrived. Derek had been shocked by the scents coming off of them, but he didn’t
mention it then or even later, he knew Stiles would have been thrown knowing that. They had told them about how Deucalion had recruited them, their old pack life, and everything they did under the orders of the Alpha Pack. They were honest, open, and fully transparent and Stiles had even shared he had watched for signs of deception and saw nothing. He was also rather sympathetic to their situation.

Turns out that they hadn’t been very trusted on their own among the Alphas and were just one step above the betas that they used for cannon fodder. If it wasn’t for their ability to merge, Derek seriously doubted that Deucalion would have selected them but apparently the man knew about their potential and that was why he had selected them over their uncle. They had admitted to killing their own pack but after hearing everything they went through, even Stiles had admitted he would have been hard pressed to blame them for that.

“This is more than just a house” Aiden says cautiously. He had mostly observed, silently, but he had paid attention to the talking, even if he didn’t contribute too much.

“Yes. If it was just for the pack, it wouldn’t need to be so elaborate, but with Stiles and I being High Alphas, Stiles being the Arcanist, and Beacon Hills becoming a new center of magic and the supernatural community, the place is going to have to be much more than just a pack house. But I do like the idea Kreyna had about shifting some of the elements around to other locations.”

Aiden nods. Then looks interested “Is he really going to start a magic school?” he finally asks sounding almost amused.

Derek snorts. “And miss out on playing Headmaster? Oh, he’s serious about it. Of course, now it has shifted from magic school to supernatural school and is getting lots of advice from other magic users. Some of his witch friends are getting worked about about it as well, seems that there are some serious gaps in learning magic when it’s mostly on your own or one on one. He also wants the place to be open to the non-humans who have been shut out, the centaurs, werewolves, Dwarves, and anyone else to get the chance come together so he moved a big chunk of the plans he originally had for the house in order to build the new place that would stand on it's own. Peter has agreed to tie it in with his wilderness stations and the Sasquatch and Dwarves are going to build it out mostly underground as well so it won’t attract too much attention.”

Aiden looks doubtful. “Alpha Hale”

“Derek.”

“Derek” Aiden starts again “You do know that a lot of people are talking about Beacon Hills, don’t you?” he asks looking worried. “Ethan and I had managed to make a few connections during our time with the pack that we didn’t lose when they died, and we had heard rumors and more about things here when we tried to find out what had happened. Even in Hawaii, when we were looking for a possible place to go to before we ran into Danny, talk was already starting about the Hales and Beacon Hills.”

Derek looks concerned. “Really?”

Aiden rolls his eyes and sighs heavily. “Derek. You guys killed Deucalion, Kali, and Ennis.”

“Ennis isn’t dead, I think.”

Aiden nodded at that point, a surprise that both of the twins had found out when they had talked earlier. Though learning about his severed arm seemed to make them less concerned about his possible return and had made them even more polite to Stiles. “Well everyone thinks he is. As far
as we know he wasn’t picked up by a boat like we were. But people had heard what happened and no one was expecting the sad remains of the once powerful Hales to manage that. Then there was word of the Darach and then the rumors started that one or even more of the Fae Queens were spotted. It is going to be impossible to keep people from getting really interested in what is going on if this continues. And all of that” he gestures back to the meeting “is going to get you a lot of attention. And not just from supes.”

Derek nods in agreement as they reach his car. Stiles and Lydia had been discussing that earlier. They were both worried that people would discover the supernatural and then things would be way more dangerous. Apparently, they had called Stephen, Lizzy and Arthur and were discussing ideas. “Stiles is working on that” he says, and Aiden surprisingly drops it. Derek doesn’t laugh but he has discovered that the quickest way to get either twin to drop a subject was to mention that Stiles had it under control or was dealing with it. They were no longer panicking when he was around, no longer worried that he would wipe them out if they made a mistake, but they were not about to cross him. God help them if Erica ever figures it out how much they were wary of him, she would make their lives hell.

Stiles scratched at his neck again, trying to drive away the tension that his headache was giving him. It had been getting worse all afternoon and he was over and done with it. First, he had a minor disagreement with his dad over the vegetarian egg white omelet Stiles had made with soy bacon, which he had to admit to himself was truly bad. He knows that people like it, but he must have screwed it up somehow. So Stiles was certain that either Tara or Celeste would give him something unhealthy in sympathy. Then he had a rather unproductive session with Lydia about the growing supernatural population in Beacon Hills. They were both worried that people would notice but he couldn’t figure out what he was going to do about it. After a rather intense shouting match, they had both apologized and decided to take a break whereupon Lydia started quizzes Stiles on how dating Derek was going. Which was fine, it was, they had been on several dates and had more than a few make out sessions, but Derek was absolutely firm, ‘oh god was he!’ on nothing else till Stiles was 18. But it was weird talking about it with his ex-crush even if he was over her and lizard lips.

The good news was that they had a semi-breakthrough. Realizing that Stiles had people who could help, he and Lydia had sent out several emails to Martinique, Kiran, Wong, and even roped in Yvette to ask her boss to see if anyone had any ideas of how to keep people, if they found out about the supernatural, from spilling the beans and oh yeah, how to deal with every single person having a video camera on them at all times that immediately loaded to the internet!

Ah well, at least Lydia was right that this was bigger than just them so others were just as vested in helping figure this out. Lydia had decided that she needed some retail therapy so she had called Jackson for a quick trip to San Francisco for some shopping and dinner. To be fair, she had been working hard so she deserved the break. He was a bit surprised until she admitted that Kira and Allison were out in the woods sparring and she had no interest in that.

Then there was the tension in the pack. Scott and Isaac were still having issues with the twins, which Stiles couldn’t argue with, but at the same time they had opted to give them a chance so it didn’t seem fair to just shut them out and keep treating them harshly. Boyd and Erica, surprisingly, seemed more willing to give them a second chance than anyone. Stiles guesses that having seen Kali, Deucalion, Ennis and how they all acted, not to mention the story of their original pack, had reminded the pair of how close they came to running away and when the twins had shared that the
Alphas were looking for members of Derek’s pack to ‘pick off’, well the betas were very glad they had decided to stay with Derek.

“Argh! Why won’t this damn itching stop!?” Stiles yells out. Derek is out with Aiden at the house site talking with Kreyna and Dave about plans and he was going to go too but he decided not to when Derek gave him a silent signal. It was actually amazing how quickly he was picking up on Derek’s signals, but Stiles could tell he wanted him to sit this one out. And to be fair, he wasn’t exactly needed. Stiles had already talked with Dave since he arrived, about the sanctum and had updated his notes about what he wanted. But Stiles figured Derek wanted some time with Aiden alone. He was also fairly sure that Kreyna was still just a little freaked out around Stiles, which was a bummer as Jaymin and Taleesa were totally adorable!

Stiles flops down on the couch scratching the phantom itch. “I hate this!” he yells again just as he realizes pack is near. Glancing over he watches for a moment before the loft door opens and Cora strides in looking pissed off.

“Would you stop!” she growls out and Stiles sits up looking surprised.

“Stop what?”

“You have been pacing and muttering all morning and now you have moved up to yelling” she growls out and Stiles flushes remembering that she is just two floors down and while he ‘tuned’ her out, he guesses it’s not so easy for her to turn off her hearing.

“Sorry” he mutters getting up to pace again, not noticing her reaction to that “I just can’t sit still.”

“Did you take your medication?” she asks remembering someone said something about that once.

Stiles snorts. “No. I haven’t had to in a while. My ADHD was the result of my magic messing with me. Once I started using it, everything evened out and I was fine.”

Cora stared slightly confused. She had never been sick and had been young when the fire happened, so she didn’t really remember the human pack members and being sick. And all the adults in the Alvarez pack, except the Emissary, were wolves so she really didn’t know anything about humans and what to do when they were sick. “So then go do some magic or something” she finally says in frustration.

Stiles rolls his eyes and gives her a look that was almost 40% Derek glare of frustration (he was practicing) and snorts again. “It’s not the same thing” he tells her.

“What, you were mentally messed up before because of your magic, your messed up now, so why isn’t it your magic again?” she demands crossing her arms and glaring much better than he did, at least a 80% Derek damn her.

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Stiles stares and opens his mouth for a moment and stops, mouth just hanging there. Cora stares at him with her Hale glare and finally he closes his mouth with a snap. Could it be that simple? Is his magic trying to get his attention? Suddenly focused, Stiles moves over to the open area and drops down to sit cross legged and he closes his eyes.

“Shhh” he orders and he can tell she bristled at that and he is glad his eyes are closed. “I’m taking your advice. Maybe my magic is trying to alert me to something.” He starts his breathing and meditation exercises to focus and connect him the ley lines and the land.
Cora shuffles forward, but only just a bit “Something dangerous?” she asks carefully. Stiles actually hears the slight rustle that he is pretty sure means she has her phone out and when he hears the clicks he is sure of it.

“That’s what I am going to find out. There are so many magical people here that it is all just a fog now, I don’t really react to things unless I am concentrating. But maybe the headache is the land reacting to something” he tells her and then takes a deeper breath and in seconds he connects.

Sinking into the shadows he heads for a river a light that he feels nearby. In seconds he is there and once he connects, the world lights up. He feels the ley lines all around town and his thoughts spread out, expanding each time they cross lines, opening him up. He feels Yvette down below, apparently taking a nap as surprise, surprise the necromancer is a night owl. But he also feels Peter heading back to the loft and he idly wonders if Cora called him. He starts identifying the various people around the area he knows and feels and everything seems alright but there is something…he shifts his perceptions and moves to the preserve. He senses the centaurs and the Sasquatch, he even feels Derek and Aiden but he doesn’t feel that whatever he’s feeling involves them. Moving along he senses the pixies and sprites that they spotted a week ago and with giggles and mental kisses he passes a group of dryads that had apparently been here for years but only woke up after Stiles ascended. It’s not them either. He feels something familiar…pack? He moves and spots the bright orange and ozone that’s Kira and the sharp tang of Allison's aura, still sparring. He smiles for a second before he feels it. With a jerk his sight shifts and he feels a mass of black and green, a ‘wrongness’ heading for the girls, and moving fast!

Cora is watching his face, unsure whether to call Derek or not when she hears Peter coming out of the elevator. Finally! She is about to call out when Stiles scent changes sharply to something angry and fearful. His face contorts and then his eyes open and Cora gasps. She has heard everyone tell her about Stiles and she has seen some of his magic, but the spastic teen suddenly looks like something that she would not want to mess with. His eyes are glowing blue white and she can see the normally hidden tattoos on both arms glowing brightly as well as the ones currently hidden by his jeans. She is about to open her mouth when he starts to levitate up and all of these glowing symbols and lights start surrounding him. She isn’t afraid, just concerned, but that doesn’t prevent her from stepping back several steps when she impacts something firm yet warm and she suddenly realizes it’s Peter.

“What happened?” her uncle’s voice is firm and determined, no humor or his typical sarcasm. This is the pack's Left Hand, looking for threats to the pack.

She stumbles for what to say, she just wanted him to quit pacing! “DANGER!” Stiles voice echoes with a hum of power and both betas react with flashing eyes and claws flicking out as they react to the Alpha voice. Cora is bracing for a fight before she even realizes that the human just did that!

“Where” Peter calls out, apparently not surprised or at least not showing it.

“Kira and Allison!” Stiles yells and suddenly his hands are moving, and a fiery ring opens. “Go, I will get the others! You have only minutes!”

Peter roars and leaps for the ring, Cora only a breath behind him as the ring closes.

Allison and Kira had moved onto knives versus sword and Kira was doing significantly better than
Allison. Despite her rather remarkable skill with the ring daggers her father had gotten her, Ali was having no luck getting inside Kira’s sword zone as the Kitsune moved with lightning fast reflexes and speed. Ali had done better with her arrows, actually managing to graze the other girl twice, but in hand to hand with weapons, she could see that a straight on approach wasn’t going to work.

Instead she shifted to a less offensive stance and began playing defense, attempting to lure her opponent in and possibly make a mistake, but from Kira’s smirk the kitsune saw the Hunter’s plan. Unfortunately it wasn’t Allison’s plan and she realized it when Ali’s foot snaked out and grabbed Kira’s ankle just as she placed her foot. With a spin-jerk, Ali pulled away from Kira, pulling her leg forward and the other girl was suddenly off balance. Twisting she spun her daggers and dove in for the point when the sound of steel impacting steel rang out and Ali’s eyes widened in surprise as her daggers were blocked by the katana.

“Nice try” Kira said and Ali looked down and saw what had happened. She had attempted to trip Kira by pulling her leg forward, counting on Kira to have her center of balance and weight closer to her back leg so that Allison’s move would throw her off balance. Instead Kira had shifted her center forward with her entangled leg so Ali ended up pulling all of her forward, not just the leg. Kira was now not only on point, she was able to block both daggers and stop the attack. Of course now they were tangled.

“You do realize that this close, your sword is limited, unlike my knives” Ali said sweetly with a smile.

Kira smiled back. “Do you remember I’m a thunder Kitsune?” Kira says and her eyes flash bright orange and Allison has only a second’s realization before the electricity hits her and she is bouncing on her butt from what felt like a a slightly reduced shock from a taser.

“Ow” Ali says slowly as she lays on the ground before opening her eyes to see Kira looking down at her worriedly. “Okay, remind me not to do that again. Let’s go back to when I was shooting at you from a distance.”

Kira laughed and offered her a hand which she willingly grabbed and with Kira’s help got back to her feet with only a little wobble. “Sorry” the kitsune says with a worried look “I tried to dial it down.”

“You did” Ali reassures the other girl. “Still hurts though. However, great technique for fighting. We definitely need to get you to do that and see how it would work with the wolves.”

Kira laughs at that and Ali joins in when the air suddenly buzzes and both of them feel it. Something’s coming! Spinning around so that they are back to back Ali wishes her bow was closer but before she can say anything she spots a fiery portal open and she hears a roar and suddenly Cora and Peter come rushing through before it snaps shut.

“What’s happening?” she barks out at the two wolves in full beta form.

“Stiles said something’s coming, and you were in danger” Cora growls out. Ali takes a second before moving to the SUV confident the others would be able to watch her back and she grabs her bow and slips on the quiver. Now more confidently armed she jumps on the hood and then the roof of the vehicle and draws an arrow. Kira, Cora, and Peter have surrounded her in a ring, all watching the woods, straining to detect anything. “Should we run?”

“I can sense anything” Kira says, her eyes flashing.

“No, but Stiles said we had only minutes so it’s close” Peter snarls around his fangs. "I think it's
better to stand our ground here, this is a good place for a fight.” Allison doesn’t reply but smiles a bit at Peter’s observation. Her father had picked this place just for that reason.

They are on guard when another portal opens and they all spin, eyes on it as Isaac and Scott come barreling out. “Scott!” Allison yells and the young alpha locks onto her and moves towards the SUV, Isaac right behind and they add to the ring giving each warrior less of the circle to cover. “Did Stiles tell you what it was?” she demands.

“No” Scott replies but then he hears something. Something large and loud. He spins towards Peter “That way” he growls and the others move to focus on where he’s pointing.

“I don’t hear…there” Cora started to object when she heard the sound of trees splintering. Scott’s alpha power gave him enough of an edge that they had sufficient warning to brace but they were not prepared for what came bursting through the woods. The head was reptilian and huge, larger than a lions, with fangs and a black-green ichor dripping from those horrible teeth that smelled of death and caused the ground to smoke when they hit the forest floor. It was at least five feet up and the neck was so long that they hadn’t seen the body. It was bad, but they were ready, trained, and JESUS there’s more than one!!! A second lizard pokes out followed by a third before a hulking shadow comes from behind and Ali gasps seeing that all three of the lizards are connected to a body the size of a large elephant! It has three heads!!!

“Move!” Scott roars and leaps forward, Isaac on his flank as Cora and Peter go left and Kira moves right. Allison starts firing but her first two arrows bounce off the thing’s scaley hide. She stops and realizes she needs to make her shots count and looks for the others and spots that Scott and Isaac have their head trying to watch them both so it has paused. A stationary target? Yes, please! And she fires and feels a rush as her arrow pierces the glaring eye on Scott’s side. The head shrieks and jerks away but Isaac is there and slashes with his claws. It tries to duck but that just puts it in Scott’s way and he reaches out with both hands to tear at the other side, just below the jaws causing another shriek. It snaps and tries to bite the two wolves but they are moving quickly and in sync and are dodging those teeth as they score hit after hit.

Glancing away she looks over at Peter and Cora and the two betas are having similar impacts, though slower. She isn’t able to get a clear shot as the head is moving too much and she doesn’t want to risk hitting the wolves. But she has to admit both Hales are fighting well. Worried, she looks over at Kira who is alone but seeing the condition of the third head, she almost smiles. One eye has been destroyed and the ugly scar is dripping ichor from it. There are several chunks carved out and then the head, furious with pain rushes forward like a battering ram and Ali freezes in fear for her friend. Kira however uses her katana to block the head like she had with Allison earlier and unleashes a much more powerful burst of electricity causing the head to shriek and pull back, but Kira is ready and awaiting and she jumps, leaping higher than even Ali on the SUV and brings her katana down on that thick, scaly neck with a scream and suddenly the head is bouncing on the forest floor, blood pouring out from the severed neck as it thrashes around.

Looking back she sees Scott and Isaac have made serious progress and apparently so did Kira because the girl ran to help Cora and Peter. It is moments later when Scott finally manages a deep enough cut in the middle head’s neck that the thing seems to shudder and Isaac pounces, tearing into the other side. They both are a flurry of claws and suddenly the second head is down. One to go!

Allison looks over and feels a bit of relief. Peter and Cora, while not as strong compared to Scott’s alpha strength, they had done enough damage and it is only a few moments after joining them that Kira spots her opening and with a scream the third and final head goes flying, blood spattering wildly from the third neck as the body stumbles before collapsing with enough force to shake the
ground and Ali’s SUV.

All six of the pack are staring at the beast and the three heads, breathing heavy. “Everyone okay?” Scott yells looking around, trying to spot any injuries.

Kira and Allison are both fine, but Peter, Cora, and Isaac have all taken wounds, but luckily none of them seem to have been bitten. Peter took a bad hit when he tried to shield Cora and looks to have two or three broken ribs. Isaac has a bad gash from one of the things claws when he got too close to the body as the thing had legs with long, sharp talons. Cora has multiple gashes on her arms and back, apparently there were spines behind the head that were razor sharp and she had gotten caught by them several times.

“Well that was unpleasant” Peter said looking worriedly and breathing very carefully as it still hurt even with werewolf healing.

“Good thing Stiles detected it, whatever it is, was” Isaac says looking at the thing and trying to block out the smell of blood and poison coming from the heads. "Anyone know what the hell it was?” he asks.

No one seems to, at least not going by the shakes of head. “That thing's scales were like armor. If you all hadn’t shown up, Kira and I would have been seriously outmatched” she says gratefully as she pulls out some bandages for Cora’s arms. She knows they will heal, but they still look bad and it might help.

“Why didn’t Stiles come?” Kira asks sounding slightly resentful. His magic, or Derek, would have been a big help.

“I thought he was, but maybe we took it out too fast?” Scott offers.

Cora is the only one looking in the thing’s direction when it happens but she can’t believe what she is seeing so she stares, watching for a second before screaming a warning. “NO!”

Everyone spins and jaws drop at the sight. The creature’s body is stumbling back up, standing and the three necks are all thrashing again, but there is a pulsing mass in the each one of necks, green and squishy, with a wet sheen and the most horrendous smell! They are engorging, the mass at the end growing bigger and bigger as the necks all swell to nearly twice their girth. They are staring in shock when Peter whispers “Oh please no.”

No one gets to ask him why before the middle neck rips in half and the giant mucus and pus bulb on the now two ends split open and there are two, slightly smaller heads looking disoriented before focusing on the pack. The other two necks follow after and suddenly there are six heads all swirling around and roaring.

“Hydra” Cora shouts and they all move.

Tara really wonders who she pissed off in a past life, or maybe she annoyed a witch somehow, there were witches in town now, right? Either way, something or someone was out to get her. Mr. Thompson had been screaming again that another one of his dogs had been taken, this time one of the old bloodhounds and he was sure it was the same bird, though he had been out at the market when whatever happened, happened. Tara and Jordan had returned to check things out but they had
no luck. There were no signs of anything this time and they were there for nearly two hours when the damn god came trotting around the barn, happy as can be. At that point Mr. Thompson had admitted that she had a habit of getting out and running around but he had been certain that wasn’t the case this time!

Jordan had managed to give the old man a rather stern lecture about wasting police time and resources that she was fairly certain the man wouldn’t have taken from her, but if it got him to knock it off she wasn’t going to complain. By the time they got back in the cruiser, Thompson was rather subdued, Jordan was looking pleased at himself, and Tara was seriously contemplating a box of eclairs from Celeste’s.

“Should we check on Brown while we are here?” he asks looking way too happy.

She rolls her eyes but puts the car and gear and drives over. They get out and see Mike has made good progress on the fence. He is happy to see them and no, no other issues. “But I did hear that Riley lost a sheep, but he called the rangers.”

They thanked him and headed out but decided that since Riley hadn’t called them, not their problem. Besides that was way too likely to be an actual mountain lion. Tara was slowing down approaching the curve in the road when something caught her eye and she slammed on the brakes, throwing Jordan forward to slam into his seat-belt.

“Tara!” he yelps but they both see the deer, a young buck running furiously across the road like something was after it. They watched it running into the meadow in confusion. “What’s chasing it?” he asks looking around and not spotting anything.

“I don’t…” she starts but then her eyes widen in shock as she sees it. Thompson apparently was only kind of right. It swoops down and grabs the deer and with a twist, breaks its neck and then takes off, never touching the ground. Seconds later, it’s gone.

“Tara” Jordan whispers staring after the sight.

“Uh huh?” she mutters.

“Was that…?”

“Think so.”

“That was not a bird” he whines.

No. That was not a bird. Not unless birds are the size of a pony, with leathery wings, claws, fangs, and a rather long, serpentine tail that can snatch a young deer on the run, kill it, and fly off with it in its talons. Also, she is fairly certain that the metallic scales she spotted are not common on birds.

“Are you serious!” Parrish almost wails.

“Yep. That was a dragon.” Dammit, she wants a raise.

Scott slammed into a tree, his breath punched out by the impact as he slid down before snarling and staggering back up. This was not good. Six to three they had managed, but six to six was not
anywhere close to good and that was before Kira had accidentally made it seven. She had tried something different and had split a head in half, cutting it right between the eyes and part way down the neck. I think she had hoped that not cutting it off would make a difference. It didn’t. The Hydra had managed to form two new heads from the one she split so now they were fighting a losing battle against the thing with heads that they couldn’t cut off.

Peter had managed to blind one of the heads, clawing out both eyes, right before another had dove in and almost bit his arm off. He had just avoided it but on the back swing it had hit him right in his broken rib and he went down hard. Coughing blood as it seems that at least one of the broken ribs had punctured his lung.

Cora had managed to move him out of the way, Kira and Isaac providing a distraction while Allison had managed to shoot several flash bangs at the beast giving them all a brief pause. It was short lived though as the thing rushed her and smashed her SUV. She rolled away safely but all of her spare weapons were now out of reach. “This thing is too much!” Allison shouted and Scott roared his challenge. He wasn’t going to let this thing near her!

Just then the air shifted and another fiery portal opened up and the roar that came through shook the trees louder than Scott’s had. A huge form came flying, larger than anything as the merged form of the twins powered into the monster followed by Derek in his full alpha form, Boyd and Erica right behind, and Stiles coming through right as the portal closes with Eddie and Yvette jumping through at the last second.

Stiles doesn’t have time for them and summons his shields as he looks in shock at the beast in front of him. The wolves have launched multiple attacks and Allison takes the shift in the fight to grab Peter and pull him towards Stiles while Cora joins the others. Now it’s seven heads versus three alphas, four betas, and a kitsune. They have the advantage again but Aiden and Ethan suddenly tears the head off the one they are fighting with a retching sound and a fountain of ichor and other bodily fluids. They roar in triumph.

“No!” the others who were already there all yell out, but too late.

Derek, Boyd, and Erica all look shocked but then Isaac explains. “It’s a Hydra. The heads regenerate!” he says ducking the one he was fighting. Derek and the Franken-wolf both look in shock as the beheaded neck bulges and rips apart and in seconds two heads emerge. It’s now even again at 8:8.

“What the Hell?!” Erica yells but she jumps back just as one head turns on another. She watches in shock as one of the head bites into the neck of another that appears to have been blinded. The head bites deep and in seconds the blinded head drops to the ground, the neck flailing around. “Oh that’s disgusting!” she yells.

Boyd and Isaac are both next to the neck that is throbbing and growing when they hear a shout “DOWN!” and both of them drop without thought just as a blast of fire roars right where they were standing, engulfing the regenerating head and the stench of burning flesh and ichor is overwhelming but the neck twists before collapsing and going limp. It’s not regenerating! Another head dives for Isaac and he moves, but it’s not enough as the jaws close on his leg, biting deep and he can feel the burning sensation of the poison. He screams.

Boyd and Scott are both there in seconds, driving claws at the eyes of the head causing it to release and jump back as another head dives in. Scott blocks it and Boyd is already moving himself and Isaac out of reach as he pulls the blonde beta away as Scott covers their retreat. Erica and Derek increase their attacks on the other heads to help give them cover.
Boyd reaches Stiles who looks slightly pale. Yvette and Eddie are seeing to Peter but Eddie comes over to help. “Stiles, you killed the head!”

“That’s the only way to stop a hydra from spawning two heads when you cut one off. But it took a lot Boyd. I don’t know if I can do that seven more times” Stiles admits as he watches the fight. Kira yells for him just as she does a spin, jump, and strike and her katana chops off the head she was fighting. Stiles inhales deeply, the tattoos on his arm glowing brightly as he unleashes another stream of fire. Boyd rears back in shock at the heat, it is much more than he expected and he watches as Stiles pours his strength into the flame, holding it until the neck is burned completely before letting go. He starts to sag, and Boyd jumps up and stabilizes him.

“Derek!” Boyd yells “Stiles can’t do too many more of those” he tells his alpha and he hears Derek grunt in acknowledgement without taking his attention away from the fight. They have taken out two heads leaving six still fighting, but the thing is being a lot more cautious now that fire is in the fight. The twins have separated and are fighting separate heads, Derek and Cora have their own heads to fight, and Kira is actually fending off two of them with Scott and her dancing back and forth trying to confuse their two. Peter and Isaac are both down and out for the fight and Allison is still shooting but she is mostly managing to distract a head when she can. “I have to get back” Boyd tells Stiles who nods and shoves him and he heads to help Kira.

“Stiles” Peter groans and the teen looks at him. “Can you call more fire?”

Stiles thinks. He probably can get two, maybe three more but that is pushing it. Summoning fire is one thing, but the Hydra is resistant to magic thanks to its scales and own magic. Stiles’ fire is only effective once the head is gone and it takes a lot to burn the stump enough. As they saw, the Hydra can bite its own heads off to initiate regeneration so if he doesn’t burn enough, it won’t last. But fire is only one option.

Stiles focuses on his legs and the tattoos on both light up. Peter and the others look confused but Stiles has a plan! He reaches down and finds water beneath them and calls it, drawing it up. While at the same time he reaches for the earth under the Hydra, shifting and moving it down. He feels both forces closing in on each other. “EVERYONE JUMP BACK!” he screams and the pack obeys that command without hesitation. Derek had been drilling them on that. Even the twins had gotten it over and over that in a fight if either Derek or Stiles gave a command, obey. Don’t argue or try to figure out why. That training pays off as all of them jump back and retreat, even Derek. The Hydra looks confused and starts after them, when its foot comes down to a squelching sound. Then there is a loud crack and the ground drops at least two feet and the beast drops down into thick, sticky, mud.

The wolves back further away as it thrashes and then six heads let out a shriek so loud even the humans are almost knocked over. The wolves are much worse off and Erica and Isaac both drop with their ears covered. Scott, Derek and the twins all simultaneous let out a roar that is equally as deafening but not piercing as the Hydra’s and almost drowns it out. The very trees shake with the force of the alphas’ united voice and Stiles and the other are seriously impressed.

“That won’t hold it long!” Derek yells and almost like a prediction the Hydra shoves against the mud and manages to get a claw up. One of the head looks at the one that Scott and Boyd attacked and in a sudden strike it bites it off, dropping the blinded head to the ground.

“Stiles!” Cora yells seeing it but two of the heads swing around almost shielding the flailing neck and Stiles, exhausted, tries to summon fire. Maybe he can push past them.

Suddenly there is another shriek and a flash of movement as something drops down behind the Hydra from the treetops. They can’t make it out but they can definitely see the sudden explosion of
fire that engulfs the severed neck in a fire jet so hot they can all feel it from the other side of the damn thing. The Hydra’s heads all spin around at the intruder but it is already moving away, flying out of reach though the heads desperately try to bite it out of the air. It comes around and Stiles looks in shock at the reptilian wings and lizard like body flying around the Hydra shrieking back at it in defiance.

“HOLY SHIT IS THAT A DRAGON!” Erica screams but no one responds as the thing blasts out another jet of fire but the Hydra shrugs it off and tries to bite it again. The dragon, about the size of a really large dog, easily dodges and uses its own claws rather effectively, digging gouges in the head that got too close.

Stiles stares in surprise at the display and that the dragon is ignoring them...but then looks over at Kira. “Kira, can you take another head?” he yells out and she looks back at him with a look of absolute disbelief. To be fair, the rest of the pack is looking at him pretty much the same.

“The dragon’s fire can’t hurt it, but it can burn the stumps!” he yells and his eyes widen as he summons a shield that just barely stops the head launching at Cora who was momentarily distracted. He is almost sure he is right about this.

Kira looks back at the two beasts fighting and really wishes she had gone with Lydia instead. But she focuses and draws in her strength like her mother has been training her to do. She feels the surge of strength and the air dances with electricity and she runs, leaps, and with a rather impressive twist she swings and almost severs the bottom jaw of one of the heads clean off. The Hydra screams and rears back as another dives for her but Derek is there and he gouges its neck with a deep strike and before it can recover, Kira is there to deliver the coup de grace, slicing the head and sending it backwards. The Hydra screams but the dragon’s is louder as it blasts the stump mere seconds after Kira’s cut and almost instantly the neck drops limply.

The dragon lets out a roar of triumph which is echoed by the wolves. The Hydra, now down to four heads, is becoming wilder and more frantic, still half stuck in the mud. But one of the heads sees the wounded and shrieks causing the others to all swing and look at them and with a heave, it pulls out of the pit and charges. Stiles’ eyes widen in shock but he summons a shield and hopes for the best as the wolves try and race after it. He sees the dragon behind it and the dragon’s roar is loud…how is it roaring without opening its mouth? Stiles has only a second to wonder before he realizes the roar is behind him and even less time before a jet of fire comes over his head and into the faces of the Hydra’s four heads who all rear back to avoid the blast. Just as a second dragon, slightly larger than the first flies over him then and roars.

By now the others have caught up and Ethan and Aiden have rejoined together and have attacked the Hydra’s backside and tail and from the sudden bellows of pain, their claws are doing a damn good job. Derek and Cora jump on the side, distracting two heads while Scott, Boyd, and Erica move against the others leaving Kira free to watch for her chance. Erica’s head hisses angrily at the blonde, jaws wide as it glares at her right before an arrow pierces the thing’s eyes and it shrieks. It had paused too long and Allison had taken her shot perfectly. The head tries to move away from the she wolf, keeping it’s good eye on her but that leaves it blind to Kira who slides up and with a swing takes the head. The three remaining shriek but with a blast from one of the dragons, the neck drops and the Hydra starts backing away, but the twins are there and they strike again and it screams and tries to turn but that lets Derek and Cora strike deep cuts into a head while Scott does that to another. The Hydra rears up, but it can’t escape. It only takes another minute before Kira manages to complete the attack on the head Derek and Cora had wounded and once she does, a dragon blasts it. The other’s roar almost taunting. The last two heads fall quickly after that with each dragon searing the necks and the body finally collapsing in a heap.
The wolves all stare at the monstrous body lying half in the mud surrounded by severed heads in some macabre scene of death when they watch the two dragons land slightly off to the side, away from the pack, but watching them closely with intelligent eyes. Derek doesn’t collapse. No, he just sits down all at once. Erica and Cora, they collapse and are lying flat on the ground, chests heaving. Boyd is bent over breathing deeply while Scott is sitting down trying to catch his breath. The twins are separated and moving, but really slowly. Allison has moved to help Isaac and Peter. Stiles looks over at the Hydra's body before looking at the two dragons.

Now that he is up close and looking carefully, they are really impressive. Both of them are about four feet tall from feet to the top of their backs, but their necks give them a lot more height. Their tails are long and ridged and both are covered with scales that appear to be a black with iridescent copper and streaks of gold that look really cool if he is being honest. But then again, they are dragons. The thing is they both helped and they are sitting there looking at Stiles and those eyes are not the eyes like the Hydra. That thing was crazy! The dragons’ eyes are calculating.

“Uh, thank you” Stiles says looking at the two dragons and opening his magical senses. Both of them light up with magic and life energy that is pretty close of overwhelming. The Hydra was what he sensed earlier but these two are just as powerful as it was. “I’m Stiles” he introduces himself.

“Did you just say hi to a dragon?” Cora mutters in disbelief.

“> > It is how one shows good manners cub << The voice is pretty close to indescribable. If fire and lava and wind all had a voice, this would be it. But it also had, for some unknown reason, a slight British accent. Which makes absolutely no sense. > > I am Frommenth ♦ My mate is Yndriesdi. <<

“You have got to be shitting me” Erica says into the stunned silence.

Yndriesdi looks at the blonde she-wolf who manages to actually blush at the dragon’s amused reaction.

“Thank you for the help with the Hyrda. I am not sure we could have stopped it without you.” Stiles says as Derek slowly moves over to stand beside him.

> > We felt the ascension of the six-fold and have come << Frommenth says seriously and everyone turns to look at Stiles who groans.

Taking pity on the teen, the Alpha straightens up to address the dragons. “I am Derek Hale, Alpha of this land, and mate to the Arcanist. On behalf of my pack and all of us, thank you again for helping defeating the Hydra. Do you know why it came?” Derek asks to cover for Stiles.

> > The rising of one such as your mate has opened doors to those long lost ♦ While many will be drawn here most will not risk his wrath ♦ The serpent-abomination is a creature of rage and fury, but without thought beyond killing and devouring ♦ It is drawn to power and kills whatever it finds ♦ It is a mindless beast << Yndriesdi tells them with a rather unpleasant tone.

“Oky, but what about you? Why did you come?” Stiles asks surprised at the level of disgust he hears from the dragon regarding the Hydra.

Yndriesdi does what Stiles can only assume is the dragon version of a laugh. > > We are among the last of our kind risen one ♦ The magic here is strong and growing stronger ♦ It will be a good place to nest <<
Chapter 25

“Dragons Stiles? Are you kidding me?” the Sheriff yells again. To be fair, Stiles thought his dad was actually taking it better than he had expected. After Yndriesdi and Frommenth had helped them out with the Hydra, they had explained that they had come from what Cora had guessed was the Andes Mountains in South America. The dragons had been reluctant to talk much about themselves beyond the basics, despite Erica and Isaac’s rather enthusiastic questions.

“You know that Graeme and Parrish saw them? They snatched one of Brown’s goats and Thompson’s dog!” That had been a surprise when Stiles heard about it. Apparently old man Thompson had seen enough to think it was a bird but nope.

“Dad, I already talked with them about that. Yndriesdi apologized for the dog” he reminded his father.

“And the goat?”

Stiles shrugged. “Not as much. They figure if we eat them why can’t they.”

“Because we are not supposed to be feeding dragons!” Seriously, he was wondering if Eichen had vacation rates.

Stiles let his father pace and mutter. The truth was that he hadn’t even mentioned the whole nesting thing as he was fairly sure that might push his dad over the edge, especially with McCall still causing problems. “Dad, I will speak with them. Derek and Peter have already talked about taking steps to make sure that they have a secure food source. They had been travelling hard to get here and were pretty hungry” he explains.

The sheriff looks suddenly worried. “Traveling? Stiles, could anyone have seen them?” he asks trying to figure out how they will deal with that wrinkle.

Stiles shakes his head. “No. Frommenth explained that they were much smaller on the flight up, which was part of the problem.”

Now Noah looked confused. “Smaller? You said they were the size of a large dog or small horse.” Stiles looked guilty. Really guilty. “Stiles” the sheriff intoned with his most parental/cop tone of voice that caused his son to flinch knowing he had been caught.

“Dragons can change size. They flew up from South America and were only the size of house cats. Trust me that they weren’t seen, especially as they flew at night. So no worries pop. I promise.”

Noah relaxed a bit at that. Okay, so they don’t have to worry about tabloids or other crazy reports along the way, but they came close to being spotted once they got here and got bigger… “Stiles.” His son looked up and he could see the look on his face. “You said that they were smaller on the flight up because they can change size?”

“Yeah?” Stiles draws out the word nervously.

“How big are they really?”

Stiles looks slightly panicked. “I told you dad, the size of a large dog. Small pony, remember?” he says with a nervous laugh.
“How. Big. Can. They. Get?” Noah says very slowly. Each word its own sentence while pinning his son in place with a glare. He stares as he can see Stiles trying to think of something. “Stiles” his voice warns.

Stiles deflates. “A little bigger than that, if they want” he says sheepishly.

Noah doesn’t respond. He just continues to stare and let his son squirm. On one hand he is proud of his son’s resistance, but Noah isn’t going to let this one go. “Okay fine. A lot larger!”

“How large?”

Stiles doesn’t make eye contact and mumbles his reply and Noah, praying he heard that wrong “Stiles, repeat that.”

“Large enough to eat an elephant” he repeats and Noah’s eyes go wide. Jesus!

He collapses in his chair desperate to figure out how this is his life. “But they won’t be that big dad. Yndriesdi assured me that they wouldn’t be getting any bigger for at least two years” his son says trying to sound like it’s a good thing.

Noah shakes his head but something about that sounds…ominous. “Stiles…why two years?”

Stiles suddenly looks like he realized that he said something he didn’t mean to. “Uh”

“Stiles!”

“Because they don’t want to have to eat at that size. When they grow big, they have to eat enough to stay fed based on their size and they don’t like to do that when they are….” the last word is mumbled inaudibly.

“When they are what?”

“Nesting” Stiles finally says.

Noah stares looking like he has been smacked. “Nesting?” he mumbles looking uncertain before the blood drains from his face. “They are having baby dragons!?!?” he yells. Stiles sighs as his dad starts pacing again.

“Good afternoon my dear. Tea?” Peter says grandly gesturing the redhead into his apartment.

Lydia sniffs and catches the aroma of something delightful. “It smells delicious. What kind?” she says sitting in one of the two leather chairs next to the table with the elegant tea service.

“It’s a honey orchid oolong” he says pouring the vibrant yellow tea into the delicate cup before handing it to her.

She sniffs and is impressed at the delicate floral aroma. And the taste! “I am impressed” she admits looking at the beta who is sitting back in his own chair with his own cup. “But you didn’t call me here for tea” she says with an arch look.

Peter nods and looks a bit more serious. “No. I didn’t. I wanted to speak with you about the
“Your wildlife center that you are doing to provide cover for what we are doing in the Preserve?”

He nods. “It started as just that. I figured that the centaurs would need some facilities even if they don’t like to spend a lot of time indoors. I had spoken with Vorgin and Beverly about their needs and the really hadn’t planned on anything. They were planning something simple until we started putting our heads together. I had figured that with Stiles’ magic affecting things, it might be good to have something that could serve as a distraction or cover for what was going on there.”

Lydia nods. Even her mother had made an offhand comment about how the town seemed to be buzzing with ‘new energy’. In fact she had even noticed that several businesses that had been struggling were suddenly doing better, not to mention the third new restaurant to open in town since Stiles’ rise. And the Preserve? The woods around town, around all this part of California really, had started to really show the affect which is why she and Stiles had started to get worried. “I am not sure a ranger station would be enough to cover everything that is going on. Even my mother is noticing things.”

Peter gives a shrug. “And it’s getting worse. Stiles’ brownies? You know the rest of their clan finally found them and are on the way to Beacon Hills?”

Lydia shrugged. She had heard something about that from Usilis the last time she saw him at Stiles’ house. Which was unusual as the shy creatures really avoided being seen even by those in the know. “Stiles mentioned it but didn’t seem worried since they were all at his house.”

Peter snorts. “Stiles is happy that Usilis is cleaning and taking care of the house for him and his father, but the other two are not there.” Lydia looks surprised at that. “One of them, Skeip, has chosen me and Cora to take care of. Nasch has taken up at the McCall residence as far as I can tell.”


Peter laughs. “Two hundred and forty-one.”
Lydia’s jaw drops. They are about to be invaded by a literal horde of brownies! She looks at Peter and sees that he is rather nonchalant about the whole thing. “Why aren’t you concerned?”

“Well, I mean 241 centaurs would be an issue. 241 dwarves would be a very loud issue. But Brownies? I figure that once we rebuild the house, we will probably have at least three or four there. Once Stiles has the school up, that will probably get another few. After that? We are going to have a very clean and sparkeling town” he laughs.

“Peter! This isn’t funny. It’s one thing when Melissa’s house gets cleaned but that leaves over 200 of them looking for…’work’!”

“I am sure your mother will be grateful. As will the Whitmores, Reyes, Boyds, etc., etc.”

Lydia manages to recover faster at that bit of news. Of course the Brownies would target the members of the pack. They already adopted the more ‘high ranked’ members… “Wait? What about Derek?” she asks looking at him.

“Oh. Usilis bounces between Derek and Stiles. I don’t think he is willing to let anyone ‘poach’ his persons. He will certainly move to the house once it is done. From what I understand, his prestige has rather skyrocketed in his clan. According to Skeip, he will probably be a clan leader once they arrive. In fact all three will. They are apparently arguing over who gets who from the pack and town. A rather important Brownie has already rather firmly declared that she will be serving the Emissary. According to Skeip there was actually blood drawn over that.” Peter looks rather pleased to relay that.

Lydia isn’t sure she believes him, but then again, she knows that her rank in the pack has definitely had an impact. She has noticed it in her interactions with the others, not just the werewolves. “Would they be interested in spreading out, or just here in Beacon Hills?” she asks suddenly.

Peter looks caught off guard. “I…I don’t know. Skeip just said that there were fights and factions over everything. Why?”

Lydia looks calculating. “Is Skeip around? I have some questions” she says and almost before the words are out of her mouth the small figure is stepping out of the shadows.

“Lady Death” Skeip bows respectfully. “You had questions for me?”

Lydia is startled at both the appearance and the address to her but she recovers quickly. “Yes Skeip. Peter was telling me that your clan is having…discussions over who to serve and it is becoming…stressful?” Skeip nods at her description. “Does your clan want to all live here in Beacon Hills or do you think they might be willing to be spread out as long as they were within the territory of the Arcanist?”

Skeip had looked concerned but then he looked thoughtful. “Our clan wants to be here, to be in the land of the great one.” He pauses to think. “But I think as long as we were under his protection, that would be well.”

Lydia smiles. “Skeip, there are several wolf packs led by Alphas throughout our territory. Do you think that any of your clan would wish to ‘adopt’ any of them?”

Skeip smiles happily. “Oh yes mistress! To be protected by and serve an alpha would be a great honor! Especially if they are sworn to the service of the High Alphas.”

“And we also have some others, elves, witches, sorcerers. Would they be acceptable?”
Skeip’s eyes widen as he nods furiously. “Oh yes! The homes of magic makers are most desired by my people. The walls and places of those humans sing to us. To serve there would be most welcome.”

Lydia smiles but then she frowns. “Skeip, are you sure your people would want this? I am sure that Stiles and Derek would give you a place to live free and safe where you didn’t have to clean or take care of anyone.”

Skeip scoffs. “Humans are not fit to care for themselves” he dismisses with a snort. “You are not capable of keeping a home right. We do. We make homes good places to be. Places where heart and souls are warmed. Brownies take care of good humans. We would not wish to live alone.” He suddenly looks painfully sad “we have been alone for far too long.”

Lydia’s eyes water at the pain there as she remembers how the three were locked away and left to die by the sorcerer but she watches as Skeip suddenly seems to shake it off. “But we are free now. Free to be our truth. To take care of good people. To make homes better for those who care for all of our kind.”

“What are you thinking?” Peter says narrowing his eyes as he looks at the Banshee.

“Well, I am sure that the Brownies talk to each other, even if they live apart, right? So if they are in all the homes of all of our allies…”

“Then we have a second, magical communication system in place” Peter finishes looking stunned. He really only wanted to warn the Emissary about the impending issues of the Brownies’ arrival but this, this was beautiful. “With all the packs, covens, and connected people, 241 may not be enough” he laughs.

Lydia smiles and thanks Skeip who disappears almost as fast as he arrived. “We need to draw up a list” she says reaching for the notepad on the table.

“And we should probably rank it” Peter adds. “They are fairly conscious of rank so I imagine that there may be some arguing over who gets to ‘adopt’ who.”

Lydia nods. She puts her name down first with a smirk before adding the rest of the Hale pack. After all, they are probably going to be the highest prestige jobs. She laughs.

Derek and Scott are running the others through their training exercises, watching them incorporate Eddie into the pack’s work, even though they are not pushing him as hard as the others. “We need to discuss Eddie” Derek starts and sees Scott tense up.

“Derek…”

“Scott, you are an alpha. You need betas to help stabilize your power. Even if you are part of the larger pack, you still need it” Derek repeats for about the third time. Scott had been resisting and Stiles had explained that the teen still had a sliver of hope of returning to human that he wasn’t ready to let go of despite the fact that he really didn’t want to go back to being human. Stiles and Scott had talked, and he admitted that being human would mean being left behind from what the pack was doing, but it was still hanging on for the young alpha.
“I know that all of this” Derek indicates all of Beacon Hills “is still pretty new, but would you really want to give up your strength and speed and other gifts and be human again? I know you didn’t ask for this Scott, but you have taken to it like you were born to.”

“I know Derek” Scott replies with a sigh. It’s not logical, he knows that, but taking a beta seems like such a final step. He’s not even sure that he’s ready to be responsible for someone that much.

“Scott” Derek is following both Peter and Stiles’ advice on handling this “if you were human again, how would you feel staying behind when Allison goes out to fight something with the pack?”

Scott looks startled. “Why would I stay behind? I mean she is human too.”

Derek sighs and manages to avoid rolling his eyes at the teen. “Scott, Allison has been training, one way or another, her whole life to fight. Her parents prepared her, not to mention she has quite a few generations of it behind her. And if you could become human again, odds are that you would be the human you were before the bite. You can’t fight with us if you have asthma. Would you want to stay behind with Danny?”

Scott frowns. Okay sure, he wasn’t the most athletic, but he was…okay he was pretty pathetic. He hadn’t made it through a single game without an attack before the bite so fighting would be tough. But he could learn medicine like his mom and Deaton. He opens his mouth to say this but stops. No, he couldn’t. He wants to learn all of that, but he couldn’t stay back while they fought on their own waiting to take care of whoever got hurt. Even learning it, he would want to be in the fight but asthmatic Scott would be a liability. And if he is being honest, the truth was he enjoyed the rush, the thrill, and he could even admit to himself, but never to Peter or Derek, that he liked letting go and giving in to the wolf sometimes. He looks up and sees the smirk on Derek’s face and groans figuring that the older man was pretty much reading him on that.

“It is exhilarating when you let go.”

Scott looks at Derek with exasperation before he remembers “Chemosignals?” he asks and Derek chuckles. “Okay, obviously I still need to do more work on that.”

“And using all of your senses. You are a great fighter Scott, fast and strong. You are determined and focused when fighting, but you forget about the other parts of yourself. Not to mention, having a beta or two would also stabilize your own status and make you just a bit faster and quicker.”

Scott looks interested at that. He knows about the whole ‘power’ thing, but he really didn’t think that would apply to his situation. “Besides, imagine how Jackson will react when you get even a little better” Derek adds and Scott actually laughs.

They talk a bit more but Scott knows the Alpha is right. He needs to do this and honestly, it’s not like the kid hasn’t grown on him and his mother. Derek’s point about the fact that they are ‘denning’ together will make it better for both of them, easier actually than having one so young answering to Derek. In a normal pack, Eddie’s parents would be there to anchor him and connect him to their alpha so not being close wouldn’t be a real issue. But for this case, Scott really is the better option.

“Okay, but first we explain this to my mom and make sure Eddie is okay with this” Scott says and then pauses and looks confused. “Derek, why didn’t Eddie get the Alpha power if the rest of his pack is all dead?”

Derek glanced over at the youngster to make sure he is distracted before answering. “Only two
reasons. One, he isn’t the last member of his pack or two, it was a wolf that killed his alpha.”

Scott’s eyes widen as he stares at the boy trying to digest which of the two options would be worse. “Do we know which?” he finally asks.

“Stiles is looking into it.”

Stiles looked around the clearing wondering once again if he should have had this meeting at the loft. Lydia and Kira were pulling out some refreshments while Boyd, Isaac, and Jackson were pulling out chairs and tables to set up before they headed out. Kira had asked to stay and her mother was actually meeting Martinique, Sophie and Gwen at the coffee shop to help direct them here.

“You seem anxious” Lyra says looking amused.

“No Master Mahti” he easily replies to the Sorcerer, but he doesn’t fool her based on the rather ungracious snort he hears. “Okay, maybe a little” he admits.

“It is most…untraditional” Lyra says looking around the clearing. She had been a student of the Ancient One long before Doctor Strange had come, but training only gets you so far. The new Sorcerer Supreme was gifted in ways far beyond her, but with those gifts come a heavy burden, one she does not envy.

“Traditions are not always best” Wong replies looking amused. Stiles is grateful that both of his teachers are here, even if Doc Strange wasn’t available to join them. He knew that Wong would keep him informed. Apparently, there was something going on that required his attention, so he had asked Master Mahti to join Wong at this gathering. “But it is different.”

Stiles smiled at that. Inviting this group of magic users was pretty much unheard of but then why should he start trying to be normal now?

“Stiles? Allison called and she is on her way with Kiran and Professor Chavez-Morales” Yvette let him know and he thanked the young Necromancer. Lizzie and Arthur had politely declined his invite, but Deaton and Morrell had pretty much invited themselves instead. While the Merlin and Morgaine were unable to attend personally, they had apparently notified the two druids that they were expected to not only attend, but to report back to them afterwards.

So, Alan and Marin were representing the Druids. Martinique, Gwen, and Sophi were the witches while Wong and Master Lyra were here as sorcerers. Yvette was the necromancer, the Professor as Alchemist and Kiran as Enchanter. He had actually managed to get all six fields of magic represented. Stiles smiled as he spotted some of their other guests. Frommenith had arrived before the pack had but was currently asleep in one of the trees. Stiles was pretty sure that no one else had realized that the dragon was here but he couldn’t hide his aura from Stiles, not here in this place at least. Yndriesdi wasn’t around, but after Stiles had spoken with them yesterday, he didn’t expect her to come. She was definitely focusing on other things. Usilis was appearing and disappearing by the refreshment table, fixing things after the betas set them up wrong but he was moving so fast that he almost seemed invisible, though he was fairly sure that Whulibela had spotted him. The dwarven sage had arrived about six days ago with a large contingent of the brothers’ clan and she served as both magical and spiritual leader for their group. She was introduced by Merek to Derek and Stiles and she had quickly become fascinated by the new Arcanist. It seems the dwarves had
remembered the last one, so she was very happy to be here. She had even offered, well more like demanded, to be a part of the new school they were building and Stiles had to admit he had liked her after their meeting. She was probably a hundred years old if she was a day and she reminded him of a cross between his own Babcia, Lydia, and Erica. Either way, he was glad she had come and was now talking with the Centaurs Beverly and Yanlia and Sasquatch Dave. Seems Yanlia was the herd’s mystic and was responsible for the small amounts of magic that the centaurs used.

Eriphse was talking with Celeste, Arwen and Kato Sakura, Alpha Ito’s Emissary and they seemed happy enough. Kato was totally enthralled by the fae sisters and when you added in the Dryad Princess, the man was thoroughly outmatched. Eriphse had arrived without notice or invite, but that was mainly because Stiles still wasn’t 100% sure how to reach the Dryads. They always scooted away when he was magically looking around, like trying to touch a spring breeze, but she had arrived right after he had and introduced herself as representative of the Parliament of Trees. Lydia had pulled her away to talk and promised him a full accounting after the official meeting.

Stiles noticed the betas heading out and waved to the guys as Kira and Lydia started wandering around with a rather determined focus. He almost laughed as he recognized Lydia’s ‘party mode’, that way she got when she was entertaining. A mix of keeping an eye on everyone, making sure that they saw her and that she spoke to everyone, as well as networking. It wasn’t long before Noshiko arrived with the witches, so Stiles had rushed to welcome them and trade hugs with all of them. Sophie and Gwen looked absolutely excited while both Noshiko and Martinique looked more reserved.

“I hope it is okay that I tagged along” a smooth cultured voice says, and Stiles looks up in surprise as Edmund walks out from the trees.

Stiles is surprised to see the mystical merchant, but he smiles easily. “I didn’t think you ever left your shop Ed. I would have invited you” he adds quickly.

Edmund waves it off. “I doubt I can add much to your discussions my boy, but I feel that it is important to be here to observe. The feel in the currents is strong” he mentions looking around.

Stiles frowns. He has been keeping a light touch on the lines, something that Yndriesdi had rather tartly reminded him of after their fight with the Hydra so he was feeling everyone, but nothing he wasn’t expecting. There was a bit of a pulse right as he thought that and he turned around and spotted a shimmering among the trees, but it didn’t feel threatening. He started forward but paused as he felt something familiar, a tang of something and then he smelt it. Fresh grass and flowers. A spring rain. A breeze that feels invigorating.

“Risen one” the musical voice says happily and Stiles looks at the woman stepping out of the trees in surprise. He can feel the others all reacting around him in different ways, many bowing immediately, others staring in surprise, but they all react.

“Your majesty” Stiles says with a polite bow of his head, a greeting to equals or a visiting peer.

She smiles and damn Stiles now knows what people mean when they say someone lights up a room. The woman’s expression is like a sunrise with golden hair framing her face and those lilac eyes that are both ageless and innocent all at once. The others had described the Spring Queen rather well, especially Erica, and she didn’t miss a detail. Right down to the crown of flowers in her hair, though this time they are a mix of pale lavender, blue, and pink with the occasional white bud. “I hope there is a space here for me, I do so like new beginnings” she says with a smile.

Stiles offers his arm and she laughs as she takes it. “I most definitely would have extended an invitation your Majesty if I but knew how” he explains as he moves toward the circle where chairs
are set up and he smiles as he sees the vines burst out of the ground like they did with Mab and by the time they arrive, two rather beautiful chairs, just a shade less than thrones, are waiting for them. Stiles spots Lydia’s rather annoyed expression before it disappears before anyone else spotted it. Orlaith sits down regally and looks politely to Stiles with a look that seems to say ‘It’s your show’.

Stiles looks around and clears his throat. “If everyone will take their spot” he says respectfully and watches as everyone sits, stands, or whatever makes them comfortable. There is a shaking in the trees above and suddenly Frommenth drops down next to Kira and Lydia causing most everyone else to react in shock. He hadn’t gotten around to mentioning the dragons to everyone. It seems that more than a few people were getting a lot of shocks and surprises at this event.

“Perhaps we should begin with introductions” Stiles says trying desperately to get everyone’s focus again and after a few mutters and stares he mostly does. Stiles signals Lydia and she stands and begins the introductions while Stiles sits down to let her take over.

“Your Emissary is well chosen Risen One” Orlaith says barely above a whisper and without looking like she was paying any less than 100% attention to the proceedings. “You have a mated pair of dragons as allies now as well. A good beginning.”

Stiles nods in acknowledgement and then tries to focus on Lydia and just as she wraps up, he clears his throat. “Thank you all again for coming here today. I hope this is just the first instance of our coming together, but we have an urgent need to discuss and figure out” Stiles says looking at everyone. “Magic is growing and flourishing here” he says and sees the satisfaction and hope in more than one set of eyes “but it is still vulnerable. If humans find out what is really happening, things could get bad.”

He notices the expressions of happiness have shifted somewhat. Some are determined, some are worried, and more than a few show serious concern. “Lydia and I have been looking for a solution but we seem to only find more questions and problems. But we thought that maybe if we reached out to all of you and put our heads together, we could find a solution.”

“What are you hoping for?” Lyra asks politely. She knew. Stiles had already reached out to her but she knows that many of the others don’t know exactly what he is thinking.

“How can we protect knowledge of magic and the supernatural here in this territory? How can we prevent people from finding out and revealing everything to the world? People have phones, cameras, and they are noticing things happening. How can I protect everyone?”

Everyone starts looking around and there are lots of side whispers, but no one seems ready to take the floor until Yvette stands and everyone goes quiet to look at the young woman. “Arcanist, I may have part of a suggestion” she offers.

“That bastard is ruining everything!” McCall yelled as he entered the house where Argent had moved to outside of Beacon Hills. He stomped in furiously and pretty much ignored the other men who were all there meeting with the old man.

Gerard looked at the agent with a sneer that he quickly hid. “I thought you had it handled?”

“I went through that damn report line by line. The video, witness statements, everything. Somehow Barrow got free, attacked the doctors and was attempting to flee when he attacked Stilinski. The
man is on tape shooting him. The damn regional director is planning on giving that drunk a commendation!” he ranted.

“Did you really think planting a psychotic serial killer in your ex-wife’s hospital was really going to somehow solve your problems?” Trager asks appearing to be honestly curious.

“Of course not!” McCall looked at the hunter with dismissal. “It was supposed to be a complete fuck up! They would screw things up and Stilinski would be under intense scrutiny and maybe even suspended.”

“And what good would that have done?” Randolph Davies sneered. “The police are completely clueless there.”

McCall rolled his eyes. “That’s not the point. If Stilinski is out of a job, even temporarily, then his son will be freaking out. If he is, then Scott and Melissa would both have to deal with them. That would eliminate those monsters’ resources.”

“I thought you said the cops didn’t know anything. And isn’t your son one of those dogs?” Davies asks looking rather smug.

McCall glanced at Gerard who didn’t interrupt but he saw the old man got it. “Stilinski’s kid has his dad’s access. That means Hale does. Not to mention, the brat is smart. If he is helping, then they are better off even if he is worthless in a fight. Not to mention, if my ex is dealing with Stilinski, then the monster that used to be my son (he stressed those words), would be dealing with that, taking out another support. Does that makes sense to you or is it too complicated?” he sneers and Davies looks like he is going to lunge when Gerard cuts it all off.

“ENOUGH!” he roars and then breaks into a coughing fit. “Distracting your ex and that idiot Sheriff would be worth it, but there are other ways to manage that if we need it. And his son is worthless and weak. He hasn’t taken the bite and my son hasn’t even given him rudimentary training. He may be smart, but he will break easily. My sources indicate he might be working with the vet, so they may be training him to be an Emissary or something.”

“So why did the Council Interdict this place based on these losers?” William Parker asks. The man and his team had arrived and were pretty much lying low to avoid anyone knowing where they were. Matriarch Parsons were demanding they return but his father had reported that he had not been able to relay the message yet as they were dark but as soon as they checked in, he would deliver the message. He hadn’t been happy about it.

“Apparently Hale is with some magic user now” he added.

Gerard frowned but he had heard that too but he had lost nearly all of his contacts and connections. The Grand Matriarch's price on his head was high enough that he didn't risk some of his more unsavory allies. The Council had locked things up tight and he had managed to get only a dribble of information, damn them all! “It is most probably the druid, Morrell” Gerard sneered. “She isn’t much more than the vet but she did work for Deucalion so she actually has a modicum of skill. Seems she changed sides and crawled into bed with Hale to save her own skin.” Gerard wasn’t too surprised. He despised the woman as she had stymied him more than once. Her attaching herself to Hale was a smart move. Without that blind bastard, she would be an easy target from those wanting revenge for his manipulations. “As to why? I am certain that is the work of my disappointing son. He cried to Clarissant about it and I am sure he managed to spin a tale to convince her that a cover up was needed. That’s all this is. A way to move things around until the time is right” he truly couldn’t believe his son had pulled it off, but his contact that was well placed in the family had pretty much confirmed that the Grand Matriarch was doing this to cover up her embarrassment over his actions. Once she felt she had done enough, this mysterious danger would disappear. “It
also appears that my daughter missed one of the dogs. Hale’s sister has returned and joined him.”

“Seems that Kate wasn’t quite as good as she thought” Parker laughed. The others pretty much ignored him but McCall saw the daggers Gerard glared for a second before his expression changed.

“Sometimes one gets away from you, but then you know all about that too don’t you?” Gerard smiled and the others all smirked as the man flushed angrily but he wasn’t stupid enough to challenge the old man. “Besides, it doesn’t matter. We will take care of both Kate’s and your loose ends with the rest of them. However, we have another situation to deal with.” He nodded at one of the new men that Gerard had brought with him. The man came up and laid out a set of blueprints.

Raphael stepped forward to look at what appeared to be a mostly underground facility that descended several stories of what appeared to be mostly storerooms. “What is it?”

“This is a Shield Depot. There are currently a significant number of weapons and resources stored there, it was mostly inactive, more of a supply depot, than an active facility” the man announces. “According to our sources, there are some cutting edge weapons there. We can empty the place with a significant enough force, they only have a skeleton crew guarding it. Those weapons would give us a major advantage in fighting Shield.”

“So let’s do it. We can be there and back in a day” Davies says almost salivating at the thought of what they may find at a Shield facility.

“Just because it isn’t well guarded, doesn’t mean they won’t notice” Gerard says with a laugh. “If we hit the place, the entire west coast will be crawling with every federal agency and a few international ones. Not to mention the possibility of those costumed idiots in New York.”

“So, then what?” Parker asks confused.

“We hit the depot, but once we do, we relocate far away. So if we hit it before we deal with the pack, we will have the weapons, but any delay may cost us everything” Gerard tells the man.

“So we deal with Hale and his friends and then the depot” Davies says greedily.

“If we cause a major event in Beacon Hills, every place within 500 miles will go on lockdown” McCall says before Argent does. The place would be much harder to hit, not to mention with everyone on alert, the response time would be faster, maybe too fast.”

Gerard smiles, finally someone with a brain! “We will have to time it to hit both. It will lose us the weapons to deal with Hale, but we don’t need Shield tech for that. Our Hydra teams will strike the depot the same time we deal with Hale.”

The hunters all nodded and stepped forward as one of Gerard’s personal hunters handed him a board. “We will strike all at once. Capture the pack, wipe them out, seize the depot, and then? Then we will be in the wind and those dogs will never see us coming. Can you imagine what hunting them will be like with this?” he points to the inventory of the depot and Parker and Davies both look at the list with naked greed. Even dividing it up, it will give them a massive edge.

Randolph knows with even a fraction of those supplies he won’t have to beg for money for years!

“Timing will be everything” McCall says looking over the detailed notes and targets. “One wrong move and we might lose everything” he warns.

“That’s where you come in. You will need to deliver a nice package to the good Sheriff’s Office. We need to know what they know so planting this” he hands over the small box of listening
devices “should tell us everything.”

Raphael smiles at the tech in his hand. This crap is way better than the second hand junk he usually has to work with. Besides, one last visit to plant these will allow him to rattle Stilinski again. “I can go by tomorrow” he says before turning back to the plans. Checking his watch he smiles, it won’t be long before all this is over.

“I’m tell you Derek, we made good progress” Stiles says as he works on the salad for their dinner date. They had finally managed to carve out some time for the two of them for dinner and a movie, no pack or other business on the schedule, and Stiles had not exactly made threats, but…anyways, they were making dinner in the loft and planning to watch some Netflix, just the two of them.

“So you’ve said” Derek replied patiently. Stiles had been talking for two days about his ‘magical summit’ and despite the fact that they didn’t have ‘the’ answer, they had a lot of ideas. It seemed that their best solution lay in blending all six forms of magic to create the protections they want, but figuring all the details was taking significant work and research.

“But it was amazing!” Stiles continues on without noticing the amused reply from his boyfriend. “Kiran was certain that we need to have a physical foundation for the spell effect while Martinique and Morrell both feel that something more natural, like a grove of sacred trees would be better. The Spring Queen promised to send word from her mages as well if they found anything. Lydia is really excited about all of it and hopes that we will be able to come up with something in a few weeks if not sooner.”

“Uh-huh” Derek added when Stiles paused to breathe. He was fairly certain that the teen didn’t really need his participation in the ‘conversation’.

“Oh, and Dave said that there were veins of quartz all over Beacon Hills that we could use or that could fortify the new buildings!”

“I remember” Derek says with a smirk.

However, Stiles was actually listening this time and looked over at the Alpha before sighing. “I’m rambling again, aren’t I?”

“A bit, but it is pretty exciting even if I have heard most of it already” Derek admits with a smirk.

Stiles huffs. “Well, what have you been doing?” he asks generously showing he is just as interested in Derek’s day.

Seeing the attempt for what it was, but appreciating the effort, Derek manages to not roll his eyes. “Well, I did get a call from Alpha Delgado.” Stiles frowns, the name is familiar, but he is sure that he hasn’t met an Alpha with that name. “From LA” Derek prompts and Stiles remembers. “He has asked for permission to visit, along with representatives from several other packs in southern California, Arizona, and New Mexico.”

Stiles frowns. “That’s pretty far away. Why do they want to come here?”

Derek smiles as he looks at his mate. “Just because they aren’t in your territory, doesn’t mean you aren’t affecting them.” Stiles blushes and Derek grins. “You are affecting a whole lot more than
you realize. I’ve gotten calls from friends back in New York asking about Beacon Hills.”

“Really?” Stiles says in disbelief.

Derek chuckles. “Really. Alpha Delgado has also been contacted by other alphas. He mentioned the possibility of possibility inviting all the packs in the US to meet.”

Stiles eyes widened in surprise. “A real werewolf convention?” he shouts excitedly.

“We are NOT calling it that!”

“No…HowlerCon or FullMoonCon or AlphaCon!” Stiles rambles happily. “I mean come on Derek. This is the perfect chance to meet in plain sight!”

Derek knows that telling Stiles this early was probably a mistake. At the rate he was going, this was going to be the cheesiest thing possible. Stiles was going on about seeing if Edmund could get some other ‘real’ vendors to come when he suddenly stilled and went silent. Derek who had turned back to finish up the steaks was pulling them off the grill when he realized that Stiles had stopped talking. Looking over at the teen he was about to ask what he was thinking when he saw the expression on his face and froze. “Stiles?”

Stiles looks over at him with a expression tinged with apprehension and fear. “I feel something Derek.”

Derek reaches over and makes sure the stove is fully off before coming over. Focused, he looks at the teen “What are you sensing Stiles?” Stiles’ eyes have already gone glassy and distracted. “Tell me about it. Can you describe it?” he asks and he pulls out his phone and sends a quick text to Lydia with a pack alert. Stiles had actually had the idea and used his father’s police codes for the pack to have their own shorthand messages. Derek had sent ‘get everyone here’ to his Emissary.

“Cold. Very cold. I feel like it is darkness and it’s moving. I can taste fear all around” he whispers.

Derek is taking notes but he keeps prodding. “Do you smell anything?” knowing that his magic often triggered his senses.

Stiles inhales deeply and his eyes look confused. “Lillies? I think. But incense too. Several kinds. It’s strong but I can’t place it.”

“Do you hear anything?” Derek prompts gently.

Stiles tilts his head. “Whispers. Voices talking but I can’t make out the words.”

“What kind of voices?”

“Men. Women. They are all talking over each other. I don’t think they are talking to each other. Just like they are all talking at the same time.” He frowns and takes a deep breath. “I hear scratching sounds…like, maybe bugs or something?”

“Okay, can you tell where it is? What direction? How far away?”

Stiles frowns. “It’s not close, it’s on the very edge. Closer to LA, I think. It’s not moving. just sitting there, poking me.”

“Poking you?” Derek catches on the strange phrasing.

“I guess” Stiles mutters. “Or pushing. Or…”
“Or what Stiles?” Derek asks as the loft door opens and Peter and Cora walk in looking confused. They knew this was supposed to be their Alpha’s night off.

Cora opens her mouth to speak but Peter stops her staring at the scene in front of them. She looks surprised but he puts a finger up to indicate silence and nods at Derek to continue.

“Or what Stiles?” Derek repeats.

Stiles is obviously struggling to find the words when there is a knock on the door followed by it opening and Jackson and Lydia walking in. Lydia looks a bit rattled as well.

“That’s it!” Stiles says looking satisfied. “Someone knocking!”

“Knocking?” Derek asks and looking at Lydia again he frowns. “Lydia, are you okay?”

The redhead looks out of sorts. “I…I’m not sure Derek. I’ve been feeling off for the last hour or so. Like something is…whispering at me.”

Derek frowns not liking the similar responses from the two of them. Just then there is another knock but the door stays shut so Cora moves over and opens it and Yvette comes in. “My apologies Alphas” she says looking at Derek and Stiles “But I received a message and felt that it was important that I come immediately.”

Stiles looked at the young woman in surprise but Derek was more than a bit concerned. “What message” he asks, his eyes flashing crimson almost automatically sensing danger.

“The Night Lord is here. He wishes to meet with you” she says looking at Stiles with determination.

Stiles blanches. “He’s here?!.”” he asks, not squeaking in the slightest. Peter however cannot claim the same as the beta pales in shock. The most powerful Necromancer in the world wants to visit!

“Hello Sheriff” the man says politely offering his hand.

Noah shakes the man’s hand noting the nice suit, not too extravagant, but definitely well made. But despite the rather ‘business’ look, the man has the air of law enforcement or government. Reminded him of some of the agents that he encountered when he was in the military actually.

“Phil Coulson, I am here to follow up on Ms. Rushman’s initial visit” he says with a smile and Noah’s eyebrow goes up at that. “So is he Stark or Avengers?”

“I see, please come back to my office” the Sheriff says with a nod and a glance at Tara who was watching, and she covertly maneuvers her phone up and snaps a pic before they enter the office. Noah is fairly sure that she will be trying to confirm their visitor’s identity.

Noah gestures to a seat before going around the desk and looking at his visitor politely. “Sheriff, Chairwoman Potts was rather impressed with Ms. Rushman’s initial assessment of Beacon Hills and the opportunities here for Stark Industries. Ms. Potts is looking for a location for their new green technology innovation hub, and currently this is at the top of the list.”

“Noah said looking doubtful. “You are looking for a high tech hub and you selected our

“Really?” Noah said looking doubtful. “You are looking for a high tech hub and you selected our
town? Don’t get me wrong, the mayor will be thrilled, but I don’t see how we can compete with the Bay area or other places.”

Phil smiles. “Do you know how expensive it is to build in San Francisco, even for Stark? Honestly, Silicon Valley has a lot going for it, but we are betting that the future is going to be in virtual work environments which means that we don’t need to be in a major hub. What we need to do is find a place with potential, and make it great. Even if we pay our people half of what we do in the Valley, their buying power will be outstanding here in this town. And we aren’t going to pay half. And like I said, we upgrade the infrastructure a bit with your town’s help, and we all benefit” he adds with the grace of a salesman.

Noah nods appreciatively. The man is definitely good. If he wasn’t sure that the man was armed when he sat down, he might even buy it. “So, what’s the next step in Stark’s process. A bid like Amazon did?”

Phil shakes his head. “No. We don’t like that public mess. Besides, if we make it known we are looking, real estate prices will skyrocket.”

Noah snorts. “They still might. A good bit of land here is all owned by one old family, depending on what you need.”

Phil opens his portfolio. “Ah yes, the Hales. Apparently, the family founded the town and still own a good chunk of the property through foundations, corporate holdings, trusts, and so forth. I must say we were surprised by how much they actually own scattered all over California. It was tough to find it all out, as they definitely don’t seem to show off” he adds with a trace of admiration.

Noah smirks. “I’m not surprised Stark Industries was able to figure all that out.”

“Well, it does make it significantly easier for us if we only have to deal with a few, or one, owner. This is the initial goal” he says as he pulls out a map and lays it down on the desk. The sheriff leans forward and looks at the map with some surprise. The industrial area highlighted is probably the worst in town. Abandoned buildings and warehouses, and two factories shut down. Three old buildings worse than Derek’s current loft that are mostly used for graffiti, illegal raves, and the occasional drug deal. “That’s not exactly the best neighborhood” he says slowly.

Phil smiles and lays down the overlay. Noah whistles. The plans pretty much take out blocks of the worst of the area, multiple blocks. The building is actually a complex of structures that is spread out with all sorts of new green spaces, fountains, and other artistic element around the complex. They have even moved roads around to better set things up. This will be a major coup for the mayor and the county as a whole. He also figures that the Hales will make a bundle selling not only the property Stark wants, but the value of everything around it that they also own will be ungodly. “How many people will be working here?” he wonders aloud trying to wrap his head around the thing.

“Now, it is a lot of experimental space, so not too much. Also it won’t be manufacturing, just innovation, design, and experimentation. Probably looking at about 1,000 researchers and another 500 major support staff with about 1,000 regular support staff, most of those being hired from the local area to handle security, custodial, basic stuff” he says easily.

Noah leans back. 2,500 new jobs, 1,500 high paying ones bringing new people to the town? Add in partners and kids, the town will see a huge boom. Then once they are here, then you will have new shops, restaurants, and businesses to support the new population. Then add in new police, fire, and teachers as well. This could easily translate into 15,000 in a few years. And that’s not even mentioning the temporary boom from the demolition and construction work. “You definitely seem
“pretty certain” he finally says feeling a bit overwhelmed.

“We like to be thorough. As long as things go well with Mr. Hale and the mayor, Ms. Potts is looking to start by the end of the year.”

“That’s great. So how can I help you?” Noah asks.

“Well, if you could arrange for a meeting with Mr. Hale, that would be good. Also, if you could use any pull you have to help with the plan. I think the mayor will be willing, but small-town politics can be just as complicated as national ones and we want to avoid any problems.”

Noah nods feeling like they have reached a conclusion. “How exactly do you know Ms. Rushman? She was very impressive on her visit” he says politely.

Phil smiles. “I recruited her for Shield.”

He laughs. “I really thought you would try to hide that.”

“Well, your deputy took my picture when I came in, so I am sure she is already doing a search, you noted by weapon when I sat down, and not to mention Romanov was rather descriptive of the Hales and what she encountered on her visit. But I do believe I have given a completely valid reason to meet with them that should arose no suspicion from anyone else.”

“So is this still a cover for you coming here?” he asks looking at all the plans.

“Oh no, this is all real plans. I actually do have to ask about this while I am here. Pepper and I just combined our needs to help us both out and allow me to look around.”

“Then I am happy to assist you both” Noah says standing up and shaking his hand.

Phil smiles but suddenly there is a ruckus and shouting outside the office and Noah moves quickly to open the door onto a scene of angry yelling. McCall!

“Stilinski!” McCall yells looking around Tara and Jordan who are currently blocking him. “I have questions for you!”

Noah frowns, he really thought he managed to get rid of the guy.

“Raphael. So nice to see you” Phil says easily.

Noah actually manages to restrain the feeling of joy he experiences as he sees the blood drain from the agent’s face. “Coulson.”
“What the hell are you doing here” McCall snarled quickly recovering from the shock of seeing the rather nondescript man.

“It’s a nice town, thought I would visit” Phil responded easily looking calm and with a hint of a smirk. He noted that the other deputies were watching the interaction while desperately trying not to look like they were eavesdropping. “I admit I am surprised to see you here. What on earth did you do to piss off your bosses to get sent here?”

McCall quickly looked around before locking on to the sheriff. “What is he doing here?” he demanded pointing at Phil.

Noah smiled easily. “Not really sure that is any of your business Agent McCall. Mr. Coulson has business with the town that doesn’t really involve your investigation.”

McCall looked back at the agent and sneered. “Really? What business does a worthless agent turned traitor have?”

Everyone reacted to that statement except Phil. “Wow. Drama is definitely not one of your strengths Rafe. You know if you had spent even a little more time on actually trying to be a good agent, you wouldn’t be quite the loser that everyone says.”

McCall’s eyes flare and Noah quickly steps up, putting himself between the two men who appear to be on the edge of actually throwing punches. “That’s enough!” he yells out. “McCall, I don’t particularly care for that implication. You better have some evidence if you are throwing those kinds of words around.”

McCall doesn’t take his eyes off Coulson, but he steps back, a little. “He was with S.H.I.E.L.D. Stilinski. You remember them? The guys that hid the world’s largest terrorist organization. The guys who gave our enemies access to our most classified and dangerous information. Why don’t you ask him about how he was at the center of it all?”

Noah looks back at Phil with a questioning expression. Phil hadn’t twitched or blinked during the entire rant and he looked calm, cool, and collected, especially next to the raving FBI agent. “I was with Shield Sheriff, but I was cleared, as were a great many loyal agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. I will admit to being taken in and deceived. Hydra was probably the greatest at infiltration and deception. But I have been cleared as I am sure you know and I am working as a civilian now.”

“Hah!” McCall interrupted. “I ought to arrest you right now and we will see how innocent you are.”

Noah did not look happy about that statement. “Arrest him? For what, exactly?” he asks staring at the agent. “From what I see there is a rather respectable man standing here, working for a company that the town is very interested in having a relationship with, being verbally insulted by a, frankly, unhinged agent who seems to be looking to ‘shoot first, ask questions later’. Perhaps another call to the field director is in order?” he asks staring down McCall.

The agent snarls and looks back at Phil and dismisses him. “You aren’t worth my time you has-been.” He turns to the Sheriff “I will speak with you about the case in private” he orders and spins around and heads into the Sheriff’s personal office leaving the two men behind.

Noah looks after McCall in surprise. The man has always been a hair trigger off, but he has never
seen him act so out of control. He looks back at Coulson. “Bad blood?”

Phil smiles and shrugs. “I really never gave the agents at the bureau much thought or attention I’m afraid. Kind of gave them a complex as they typically were relegated to crowd control whenever we arrived. I think it annoyed them” he offers with a tone that said ‘what can you do’.

Noah heaves a deep breath. “Is he going to cause any problems for you?” he asks after a second and looking at his deputies and silently reminding them to get back to work, or at least pretend to.

“No. Stark’s lawyers are literally the best. He doesn’t want to deal with that. I would be more concerned with the fact that he is currently alone in your office.”

Noah swears and spins around and power walks to his office, Phil following behind. He walks in and sees McCall flipping through the files on his desk. “What the hell, McCall!” he yells.

The agent looks up without a trace of guilt or concern at being caught and steps away, hand in his pocket, as he comes around the sheriff’s desk. “What’s wrong Stilinski? Surely you have nothing to hide.”

“How exactly have you not been fired yet?” Phil asks with what sounds like genuine concern. “I mean the drinking alone should have gotten you bear duty in Alaska.”

McCall snaps and it catches Noah by surprise, he leaps at Coulson, blood in his eyes, but the man had been watching for it and side steps. McCall isn’t done though and manages to grab Phil’s arm and swing the agent around, followed by a leg sweep. Phil spins and with a twist he delivers a rather stunning right cross to McCall’s square jaw sending the man to one knee. McCall stands quickly and reaches out to grab him, but Phil catches the Fed’s fist and twists the man’s arm behind his back and up causing a grunt of pain. He grabs the thumb and yanks and McCall swings again but this time he is off balance and ends up hitting the floor, hard.

“ENOUGH!” Noah yells as McCall scrambles back up. The agent looks rough with a bloodied lip and a suit that looks like he just played football in it. Coulson looks just the same as he did before. “This isn’t over Coulson” Raphael snarls and turns around and leaves, slamming the door behind him. Noah watches through the blinds as the FBI agent tears out of the station, the deputies making no move to stop him. He looks back at Phil with a smirk. “Nice moves. He must really hate you to act like that. I have almost never seen him lose his cool like that.”

Phil nods and hums absently as he walks over to the Sheriff’s desk looking at everything curiously. “No he doesn’t, does he?” he asks putting his hand into his pocket and grabbing his phone and pulling it out. “Seems he is letting his desire for petty revenge get out of hand. Looking around in your office trying to find some mistake you made or report you messed up” he indicates with a wave of his hand at the papers on the desk.

Noah frowns realizing that he had pretty much forgotten that part. “But those files have nothing to do with anything. Except a missing dog” he adds with a mutter.

“Mmmmm” Phil nods and opens an app on his phone. Watching, he smiles as he gets a reaction on the detector. “I guess. He was always right on the edge. I really am surprised he hasn’t been fired yet with his complete lack of ability” he says idly and picks up a pen and paper and scribbles on it. “But I really do need to speak with the mayor if you have any suggestions on what she is like, I would appreciate it. Maybe her favorite coffee I could bring?” he says and holds up the paper.

“Americano” Noah says dully reading the pad and looking at the man with shock. ‘He planted a bug’ written clearly.
Eddie walks into the coffee shop glad to have finally gotten some time to himself. He really appreciated Derek and Stiles accepting him, not to mention Scott and Melissa, they’ve all been great. Giving him a home as well as a new alpha, but it is hard. He hasn’t had a chance to really think, let alone deal with the loss of his family and his pack. The young beta had been running on adrenaline for so long, that once he could relax, it all came crashing down. He tried to stay strong, not show any weakness, but he didn’t really do a good job. He had been alone in the woods, trying not to cry when Derek had suddenly appeared. Eddie had been surprised, but the High Alpha had just sat beside him without speaking.

He had expected the man to say something, but he hadn’t. He just sat there with him. Eddie didn’t last long before the dam holding everything inside collapsed and he broke down. Derek had apparently been waiting for that and had pulled him in close and just held him while he cried. He was ashamed, but the man didn’t flinch or pull away or anything, he just let him let it all out. After a while he finally stopped and was just breathing really heavily, silently crying when the Alpha started talking.

It was stupid. He talked about how his mom loved cooking big dinners. Then about his little brother breaking one of his toys while his older sister pretty much tortured him while they were growing up. For the next hour, the Alpha talked about his family and Eddie just listened. Finally, the man seemed done, at least he had stopped talking, but he still held the boy close. It took another half hour before Eddie told Derek about his sister cutting her hair one time and their mother screaming at the sight of it. That led to another and another until he was telling him story after story about his pack. Until finally he got quiet as well.

“The others don’t understand. Losing your pack, they can’t know what it’s like. And I will do everything I can to make sure that they never do. But Peter, Cora, and I, we get it. You can always come to us when you need something” Derek had told him.

“Why didn’t you want me as your beta?” Eddie had asked in barely a whisper.

Derek had squeezed the boy’s shoulder a bit tighter. “I wanted you, but Scott really needed someone and with you living with him, I felt that it would be better for the both of you. Besides, I may be High Alpha, but I really have no intention of going up against Melissa and she wasn’t about to let you live with anyone else.”

Eddie had snorted at that. Melissa wasn’t a wolf, but she had the soul of one. Eddie was surprised she hadn’t asked for the bite, but then she really didn’t need it. She could get just about anyone to obey her without it! They had talked more about packs, family, and that the Hales and McCalls would be there for Eddie and it had helped. Knowing that his Alpha’s Alpha understood, did make things easier. Not to mention they had the scariest Emissary Eddie had ever seen. Lydia Martin was a terror!

‘Excuse me!” a voice said as he collided with someone his own size in the line. He looked up at the green eyes staring at him from a mop of black hair and a very flustered expression. “I’m so sorry! I seem to be messing up everything today.”

“At you okay?”

At the question, the boy seemed to almost deflate. “This town is so weird” he says with an almost whine. “I don’t know why we had to move here.”
“Are you new too?” Eddie asks suddenly interested. If he was the same age, maybe they would be in school together.

“Yes” the other boy replies. “We just moved here. You’re new too?”

“Yes. I came to stay with friends of my family” he says quickly. “I’m Eddie. Eddie Henderson.” He sticks out his hand with a smile.

The other boy takes it easily and shakes. “Hi Eddie. I’m Billy. Billy Disonno. Are you starting at Beacon Hills High? I’m going to be a freshman there.”

“Me too! I’m thirteen, but I will be fourteen soon.”

“Cool, I turned fourteen a few months ago. Have you met some of the kids at the high school yet? Some of them are kind of scary” Billy said looking around to make sure that none of them were nearby.

Eddie laughed, picked up his own order and followed the other teen to a table. “Kind of. The family I am staying with, my al…cousin, goes there. His name is Scott so I have also met a bunch of his friends.”

“I have only met a few, and one guy was a total jerk. Personality of a lizard. His girlfriend was pretty amazing though. Red headed, smart, beautiful, but somehow really scary.”

Eddie almost choked in his coffee. “Jackson and Lydia” he finally managed to get out and saw Billy suddenly blanch. “You know them!?” he squeaks.

“That was the best description of both of them” he manages to get out around his laughter. Billy looks like he is about to bolt but pauses at the other boy’s laughter. “Oh god, Scott calls him Godzilla” he gets out before laughing again.

“Um” Billy looks around furitively making sure no one is listening to them, but no one is close. “Did you get permission from the werewolves who live here to come?” he whispers.

Eddie’s eyes widen with fear. “What?” he squeaks out.

“You’re a werewolf right? I’m a witch so I can tell, your aura you know?” he says casually with a reassuring smile.

Eddie stares at the other boy for a second “you don’t look like a witch” he says doubtfully.

Billy looks around again and then wriggles his fingers over his coffee cup and Eddie watches as it disappears in a flickering light. “Ta da” Billy says before reaching into the empty space and suddenly the cup is back.

Eddie is a bit worried but if Lydia has seen the guy and he’s alive, then it might be okay. “Does the pack know about you?”

Billy shrugs. “I’ve only met the two and then only once. Well, I did see red again and she was better without Godzilla” he smirks when he sees Eddie smile slightly. “But I keep feeling like someone is watching me. There are no local covens that I can tell so I haven’t really worried about it.”
“Are your family witches?”

Billy looks sad for a moment. “My mother was, before she died. My father dabbled in magic, but he had other commitments. He’s off traveling so I am here with family and they don’t have any magic.”

“Oh, you probably need to talk to our Alpha then” Eddie says.

Billy frowns. “Why? I mean I can, sure, but witches and weres usually don’t really interact.”

Eddie looks uncomfortable. “It’s complicated. And I am really not supposed to talk about it without permission.”

Billy snorts. “Typical. The adults always make decisions for kids without asking them what they think or want, like we are too stupid to have an opinion. My brother is like that. Does whatever dad wants and is sooo popular. The ‘golden child’ that can do no wrong. Well, he used to be” he adds with a chuckle.

“He ’used to be?’, what happened?” Eddie asks leaning forward. This sounded good.

“He did wrong and got a bunch of friends to go along with him, caused a huge mess” Billy said flatly with no expression. He held for about five seconds before they both started giggling. “Dad was really mad. Kicked him out of the house and everything. I mean he forgave him like always, but it was funny for a while.”

“I didn’t have that issue, but my sister once shaved half her head. Like almost bald.”

“Wait, half? You mean one side?” Billy barks.

Eddie starts to snicker and shake his head. “No. She shaved the front. Ear to ear, all the way to her forehead. Could reach the back” he snorts.

Billy joins in the laughter and then Eddie starts talking about some of the others in the pack. Finally, he has a friend of his own to talk to.

Tara walks back into the station after responding to another fun call. Celeste had let her know that apparently a horde of Brownies had arrived in the area and were taking up residence. She really didn’t know why she was getting the call, but both of the sisters felt it important to notify her and the Sheriff about their arrival. Tara was going to brush it off when a tiny man popped up, seriously he couldn’t be more than two feet tall, and gave her a serious inspection, one that she apparently did not pass based on his tutting and frowns. Celeste introduced him as Mirkle and apparently after his inspection he simply nodded and disappeared in a puff.

“What was that?” she had asked the woman.

Celeste had laughed and told her she now had a roommate. Tara hadn’t been amused but the woman had explained that Mirkle had ‘claimed’ the deputy and would now be taking care of her and her home. She also explained how to ‘pay’ him. Apparently, she didn’t get a vote in any of this. Celeste had tried to soothe her over with a box of her special cream puffs, Tara’s favorite she admitted, but she was still peeved. The Sheriff had one too and she was told to speak with him, so she headed back to the station with her treats.
“Oh, what did you bring?” Sandy asked from behind the dispatch desk. The woman had become as addicted as the rest of the station.

“Cream puffs” she replies and sees the other woman’s eyes light up before looking regretful.

“That’s not good. Those are so dangerous.”

Tara laughed but she spotted Martin, Rodriguez and Ryan all trying not to be noticed as they tracked her, well what she was carrying actually. “I don’t think you will have to worry, the boys are already eyeing them. Suddenly determined, Sandy grabbed one of the delectable puffs from the open box Tara was holding to her before she suddenly grabbed a second one. Tara winked, she had already had three on the drive over. Finally placing the box down, she grabbed two, one for the sheriff and one for Parrish before she left the rest defenseless. The other deputies fell on them like piranha as she headed over to the Sheriff with his share.

“Thanks Tara!” Ryan called out. The deputy had a definite weakness for Celeste and Arwen’s delicacies. Frowning, she wondered if it was time to bring more deputies in on the secrets. After the Argent girl had told the group about werewolves, she and Parrish had encountered a lot more, but she wasn’t sure that the Sheriff had told Martin, Stevens, and Rodriguez about all of the other stuff happening, let alone anyone beyond werewolves. She would have to ask as it would be nice to share the joy of say finding out that dragons were real. Then again, Martin and Rodriguez had been a bit standoffish after seeing Isaac in the station and seemed to be struggling with working with the pack. Maybe it would be better to leave them be until they adapted a bit more to things like she and Parrish had. Strange considering they knew about this stuff for a lot longer.

Phil shuts the door to the hotel room and moves over to the small desk on the side of the room with a sigh of relief. After his rather eventful conversation with the Sheriff and convincing the man to leave the bug alone so that whoever was listening wouldn’t try something different, he was tired. First, he had found two other bugs, including one on the Sheriff’s jacket before they had slipped outside to argue over them. Stilinski had been ready to go after McCall and arrest him, but Phil had reminded him that they didn’t actually have proof it was the agent who had planted the bugs. Besides, knowing they were there allowed them to control the flow of information. They could let them hear worthless info, even some decent info that suited their purposes, while insuring that nothing of consequence would be overheard. The Sheriff had informed Coulson that anything that needed privacy would be done at a bakery in town that he knew. Apparently, the owners were very trustworthy, but Phil had a sneaking suspicion that it was more than that.

Sitting at the desk, he pulls out his tablet and opens it up, establishing a secure link with the new Shield network that Stark had created for them, one that Hydra would be hard pressed to even find, let alone hack. The man was arrogant as hell, but he did amazing work. Phil quickly sorted through the notices and messages and was relieved that nothing seemed to require his immediate attention. He pulled out a USB drive from his pocket and inserted it into his laptop.

Phil smiled when the file explorer box opened up and the folders with various innocent sounding names showed up, all designed to make sure that if it was found, it would be deemed useless. He even knew that if he opened the folders he would see documents, photos, and other files one might expect. But it was a front. He clicked on the item count and typed in the password despite there being no sign that one was expected. But as soon as he did, the real data appeared. Moving to the first file, he opened it and started to read.
Twenty-six minutes later he picks up his phone and dials. “Coulson?” the female voice on the other end answers.

“I’m sending you secured files. Read over them and begin putting together a plan” he instructs as he begins to send the files through their network.

“Anything more specific?” she asks with a resigned sigh used to the man’s ways.

“I really don’t think I will need to explain May. Call me back in two hours once you have assembled your teams and plans for the strike force.”

“You were supposed to be staying out of trouble Phil” Melinda says letting a bit of frustration into her voice.

“A long planted seed is finally bearing fruit May. You are going to like this one” he promises her before hanging up. He smiles, this is going to be fun.

“If you wanted to be alone, we could have just eaten at the loft” Derek says with a smirk. Stiles had declared that they were having an afternoon picnic and had a basket, blanket, and everything. Derek was carrying most of it, of course, but they were now trekking through the woods, about three miles from both the Hale house and Stiles’ clearing.

“We are not alone there” Stiles replies with a snort. Between the pack coming and going, Peter and Cora dropping in, not to mention Yvette and the upcoming visit with the Night Lord tomorrow, Stiles wanted a break. And while he loved Usilis for all of the little guy’s help, it was a bit weird knowing he was hovering around when he wanted a little private time. “Besides, I need a break from everything.”

Derek appreciated that. His own schedule was pretty full. Peter had left this morning to visit the Flores pack and see about setting up meetings with a pack or two in Oregon who had reached out to Alpha Flores after they felt the effect of Stiles’ territory growth and the rumors of the High Alphas. Derek was certain however that Peter’s real motivation was to be far away from the Lord of the Necromancers in case the man decided that his resurrection violated some rule or another. He was also pretty sure that based on Lizzie and Dr. Strange’s comments that the man wouldn’t do anything like that. There appeared to be a rather convoluted political dance around all of them and Stiles and the Alpha didn’t think that the Night Lord wanted to go to war, which attacking a member of Stiles’ pack would pretty much guarantee. But it did give him a little pleasure to see his uncle more than a little flustered about it. “Are you worried about tomorrow?” he finally asks after a few moments of unusual silence from his mate.

Stiles frowns and doesn’t immediately respond, but instead shifts their direction and suddenly they are in another little glade next to one of the ponds in the Preserve. Derek remembers coming here to swim with his family and almost laughs at how he forgot about it. “I mean I don’t think he is here to cause trouble or anything. Yvette has been very polite, but she really hasn’t told me anything.”

“She may not know” he suggests and Stiles nods.

“Considering how Deaton and Morrell act around Lizzie, you are probably right, but it is a bit weird. I mean Martinique has talked to the High Witch and she is apparently satisfied with what she was told and doesn’t appear to want to visit. Lizzie told me, and Wong confirmed, that the Grand
Enchanter and Lord Alchemist probably haven’t even noticed anything has happened yet. But the Night Lord is really different, everyone is really wary of him and really of all necromancers."

“The spell you used for Peter and me to talk to our family, that was necromancy, right?” Derek asks

Stiles nods. “Shadow necromancy actually. The books talk about Light, Shadow, and Dark” Stiles offers as Derek puts their blanket down and starts getting out the food as he sits down.

“What’s the difference? I mean I assume dark is bad?”

“Eh, not really. It’s more about intention and methods. Light Necromancy is about guidance and peace. Helping spirits go to their rest, removing hauntings, purify land, that kind of stuff. Dark Necromancy is more about undoing or twisting death. That is where we get zombies, ghouls, ghasts, and the like.”

“Vampires?” Derek asks handing Stiles a bottle of water.

“Actually, while vampires use necromantic magic, they aren’t actually created by it. More like the ‘curse’ of werewolves, passed down from sire to spawn.” He actually made the finger quotes on that one.

“And Shadow?” Derek prods when Stiles is quiet for a bit.

“It’s the in-between. Seances, communing with the dead, prophetic magics, basically anything to do with ancient knowledge. All necromancers can use all three types, but why they do something really determines if they are ‘good’ or ‘bad’” Stiles shares his research.

“Can creating zombies be good?” Derek asks skeptically.

“According to some beliefs” he says easily. “They can be near immortal guardians or protectors. It pretty freaky, but I did read about some of the creatures created by dark necromancy and they are kind of like supernatural vultures or carrion eaters. They are supposed to ‘clean things up’ I guess.” Stiles then proceeds to explain all sorts of fun facts about the undead while Derek is glad that their meal is basically sandwiches, fruit, and chips. He isn’t sure he could manage if anything looked even close to guts or brains like pasta.

“So you aren’t concerned about tomorrow” Derek asks again after Stiles pauses in his recitation to eat a bit.

He shakes his head, but slowly. “Not concerned, just cautious?” he finally manages to say. “Yvette pretty much said that he isn’t mad or anything and just wants to meet me is all. And apparently helping your family find rest was a bigger deal than I realized.”

Derek frowns. He didn’t really like that others were even in the know but he guesses he has to concede that the most powerful Necromancer probably would be able to figure that kind of thing out. “Bigger how?” he asks instead of complaining.

Stiles leans back until he is laying flat, looking up at the sky. “The supernatural or magical community often doesn’t find peace in death and so their presence upon the earth can be a source of great tragedy for those that encounter the angry remnants.’

Derek looks at Stiles for a second. “That sounded like you were quoting someone.”

“I was. Spiritual Magic and the Veil. It was one of the first books I got, actually the one I found the
spell I used on you and Peter. Humans, mortals that is, seem to have a much easier time moving on after death. Some hang around, but most don’t. For the supes, it’s the opposite, few move on and most stay around.”

“Doesn’t that mean that there should be a lot of undead problems?” Derek asks.

“Sort of. I mean not every leftover can actually do something so sometimes they are just lost souls unable to move on or act out. A few can haunt while others, if they prepared, can become undead. The necromancers usually find those spirits and help them to move on. At least according to Yvette. Most times people never realize that a necromancer has even been around.”

“Then why didn’t anyone come here after the fire?”

Stiles sits up. “Technically, they would have to have been invited. Since this was Hale territory, they wouldn’t trespass. Laura could have called for one if she had known or had stayed around long enough for Deaton to mention it. And, since Peter was still here, the Hales were still ‘in possession’ of the land so they stayed away. Basically, it is all that political stuff about the different magics not interacting with each other. Not to mention that the necromancers don’t have the best reputation.” He shrugs like ‘what can you do?’

Derek pulls out one of the apples and with a flick of his claw starts to peel it. Stiles stares before laughing at the sight. Derek sighs and rolls his eyes. “It’s not a big deal Stiles” he tells his mate.

Gasping for breath, Stiles looks over with tears in his eyes. “I am just imagining you with potatoes or onions. Who needs a knife when you have claws?” He laughs again at the rather disappointed look on Derek’s face.

“You know I have knives in my kitchen” he reminds the other man.

“I know, I know. It’s just that…. ” he suddenly drifts off, his eyes unfocusing as he cocks his head like he is listening to something.

Derek, recognizing the signs, opens his own senses. He hears a large number of animals, but then he usually does around Stiles whenever they are in the Preserve. Rabbits, foxes, moles, birds, insects, and even some nearby deer. He can also hear a faint buzzing that tells him that there are a half dozen sprites about a mile away to the east. But nothing else. He takes a deep breath in through his nose and another in his mouth, searching for scents and flavors on the air, but besides them, there is nothing but the forest smells. Soil, trees, flowers, and the animals. He knows that at least from the north and west, there is nothing within five miles that is out of place. South and east is currently downwind, but based on the animal sounds, he doubts anything is near. Since things are clear in the local area, he focuses on his pack, testing the bonds but everything seems normal. No stress or emotional issues from anyone as far as he can tell. He opens his eyes and looks back at Stiles. “Stiles?” he prods gently.

“Something is here. Very close.”

Derek stands up and looks around. He would swear that there was nothing, but he trusts Stiles’ senses. It might be something that can confuse werewolf senses. “Do you recognize it?” he asks carefully.

Stiles shakes his head, but he finally comes to enough to stand up and start looking around. “No, and it’s really hard to figure out. I know I feel something, something powerful, but it is like trying to grab fog. I know it’s there, but I can’t see or touch it. Only feel the effects.”
“Should I call the pack?” he suggests but the teen’s body language isn’t one who is threatened or fearful.

Stiles concentrates. “No?” he finally asks, not says. “I don’t think that is a good idea.”

“Mighty One?” a delicate feminine voice calls out behind them and both men spin around to see a dryad standing there. She is tiny, only about four feet tall, with skin like tree bark and flowers in her hair. Her feet are grass stained and her dress appears to be woven of grass and leaves. She seems much more insubstantial than Eriphise appeared when she visited.

“Hello?” Stiles says carefully not wanting to spook the ephemeral being. “Are you what I was sensing?”

She shakes her heads and laughs, a sound like wind blowing through leaves, but still somehow joyful. “No, Lord. They come to speak with you and the Great Wolf. They mean no harm to you.”

Derek looks at Stiles who seems to be mouthing the words ‘Great Wolf’ and an expression like he is planning on having t-shirts made. “We speak to any and all who come in peace to our home” he tells the dryad trying to be serious but non-threatening.

She smiles and dances away, vanishing into the shadows under the trees. Derek and Stiles look at each other before looking around. “Do you sense anything?” Stiles asks in a whisper.

Derek shakes his head. He didn’t detect the dryad, but then again, she smells like trees so not sure how much he could help there. But he doesn’t see or smell anything.

The two of them are standing there, waiting for what they don’t know, and Stiles is about to make a joke about their situation when one of the trees steps out of the shadows, walking towards them. Stiles stops and blinks but it’s still there. Once it moves a bit closer, he can see it is less a tree than it is tree-like. It is man shaped, at least Stiles is assuming it’s a male with the beard of moss. There are leaves and twigs surrounding him and inside the rather impressive horn/branches on his head. He is wearing some kind of tunic with a appearance like moss and there are pinecones hanging from all over including the gnarled wooden staff he is leaning on. He steps out fully and looks at both of them and bows his head politely.

Derek and Stiles return the bow. “Hello?” Stiles says looking at the…tree spirit?

“Greetings Lord of the Land. Greetings Wolf Walker.”

“I am Derek Hale, Alpha of the Hale Pack. This is my mate Stiles Stilinski, Arcanist.” He stands tall even though the green man is hunched over and doesn’t appear threatening, especially since the shy dryads seem to have vouched for him, but Derek is not about to take any chances.

“It has been a long time since a magical bridge has walked the earth” he says smiling at Stiles. “And almost as long since wolves have declared a High Alpha to follow. You two shake the very earth with your footsteps.”

“Sorry?” Stiles says looking embarrassed. He is reminded in many ways of the Queens and he feels that this being deserves respect or at least politeness.

“No apologies are needed. The world calls forth what is right when the need is greatest. A terrible darkness is coming, and she needs you to hold onto the light through the coming storm.”

Stiles really doesn’t like the sound of that. “What darkness?” Derek asks as his eyes flash crimson.
“I do not know Walker” he says with a sigh. “I cannot see clearly what is to come, only that it does. It is beyond my powers, but your actions here are changing the land, restoring it to a state not seen in centuries. It calls to us.”

“I don’t mean to be rude, but who are you?” Stiles asks finally unable to hold it back. He thinks he should know who the man is.

He smiles. “I have been called many things. The Green Man by some. The people of your mother and father called me Leshy” he says to Stiles who suddenly recognizes the name. “All are both right and wrong. I am a warden of the green, caring for the forests of the earth. A servant of nature. When the dryads here awoke, their songs called to me and I came.”

“Are you alone?” Derek asks looking around but not spotting anyone. But then he hears something moving in the woods. He looks around sharply but then the Leshy chuckles.

“You will have no greater success catching that one than your pack did Walker” the Leshy laughs. Derek stares at the green man.

“Wait? The thing that has been chasing my pack around that Stiles hasn’t been able to find? It’s real? Another Leshy like you?” Derek demands. Stiles looks surprised but also looks at the Leshy.

He shakes his head. “No Walker. I am the only of my kind. You may call me Iskender. My companion today is Mielikkar. He is another Guardian of the woods.”

“But he’s been here a lot longer. Even before we realized the dryads were here” Stiles says looking around and stretching his own senses. But he can’t spot anything easier. Iskender is hard enough to spot and the Leshy is only a few feet away. His nature magic makes him blend into the land so smoothly that Stiles can’t pick him out with his magic. This Mielikkar must be the same.

“He came the night of your ascension Lord. He was part of the ritual of the Queens. He is how they bound you to this land in truth” Iskender explains.

Derek and Stiles both look confused and stunned. “But I thought it was Derek” Stiles says while Derek shakes his head.

“It was. The Queens said it was a three-fold ritual. Birth, Blood, and Breath. He was born here, he bonded with the land using his blood, and I bit him and accepted him as the sign of the land’s acceptance of him” Derek says remembering that night.

“All true Walker. But while you are a champion of the land, you are not it’s only one. The Nemeton once stood here, a most ancient and powerful wellspring of magic and life. Your pack was born, fought, bled, and died here, and in any other place, that connection would have been enough. But these lands are home to ancient and powerful magic. They host one of the few remaining true Nemetons left in this world. And those wellsprings of magic for the world change what can be.”

“Wait, what do you mean ‘one of the few remaining’?” Stiles said feeling a hint of panic.

Iskender looked miserable. “Man’s actions have caused much damage to the land, sea, and air, but none as great as the loss of the Nemetons. Where once twenty-seven stood, wellsprings of magic and life, collectors and givers of both, now only five remain. This one was dying until you took on it’s burden and now, with your lungs breathing air, your heart pumping blood, you are helping cleanse and restore the magic. That is why the lands here are reacting so strongly.”

“So this Mielikkar helped out that night, even though we didn’t see him?” Derek finally manages to
“Did the Queens or Lizzie call him?” Stiles asks looking grateful, if confused.

“No Lord. No Queen of the Fae would dare do such a thing. It would be a crime most foul. Nor would the Morgaine. Such an action would be an act most profane. Mielikkar cannot be compelled or forced by any power, neither captured nor held. The most powerful magics would simply slide off him and fail their master’s intention and instead serve him. Even your power Lord, even here in the center where your power is greatest, you cannot force him. He chose you to receive his blessing, for he wishes you success in your efforts.”

“Uh, okay. Well, thank you!” he calls out to the woods. “I really appreciate your blessing!”

Derek looks like a cross between embarrassed, worried, and mortified. “Stiles” he growls lowly but out of the corner of his eye he catches a flash of bright white and starts to turn but then freezes.

“Hey, I’m being polite” Stiles replies not noticing Derek’s reaction. “If this guy helped me out, I want to say thank you even if he is shy. I mean he apparently likes to give the pack the run around, which is actually kind of funny if you think about it. I mean everyone has been chasing after him and not even getting a glimpse of the guy.” He stops and looks at Iskender. “Is he a guy? I mean you said he earlier, but you are kind of a guy, I mean you look person shaped. But Frommenth is a guy and he isn’t guy shaped.” Derek grabs for his arm but Stiles dodges. “Dave is a guy too and though big and hairy, he is still pretty guy shaped. The Centaurs aren’t, not really. They are half-guy shaped wouldn’t you say Derek?” he asks and hears a small whine and looks over at the Alpha who is standing there frozen.

“Derek? Dude? What’s wrong?” he asks looking at Derek who doesn’t move or respond. Stiles comes around and sees Derek staring ahead but the expression on his face is indescribable. One of exaltation and disbelief. “Derek” Stiles tries again much more gently but the Alpha doesn’t even blink.

Stiles slowly turns to follow Derek’s line of sight and sees the flash of white before he finally looks and he freezes at the sight. There, standing under the trees in a shaft of the afternoon sun is a sight that sucks the very air out of his lungs. At a guess, he is pretty sure that this is Mielikkar, even though he is definitely not guy-shaped. He stands about six and a half feet from his four feet to the tips of his ears on his head. And he is white, a white that Stiles has never really seen anywhere but he cannot believe is actually real, nothing could stay that clean, but he is. His coat glows like mother of pearl in moonlight and his hooves are black, but that only makes the white coat even brighter. His mane and tail are thick strands of white, metallic silver, and some kind of iridescence that seems to be all colors at the same time. And his eyes, good god those eyes! Large, deep, and a midnight blue-purple that seem to hold the answers to every question you could possibly think of. And there in the middle of his head is a both delicate and fierce twirling horn of white iridescence like his mane. Every description, drawing, movie, or fan page that Stiles has ever seen depicting a Unicorn failed to utterly capture the majesty of it standing there in front of them.

“This is Mielikkar” Iskender says gently. “He wishes to speak with you both.”
“Okay, let’s go over this whole lost Nemetons explanation again” Lydia says flipping to a clean sheet of paper on her notepad.

“Lydia! It’s been two hours! I need a break!” Stiles says dropping his head to the table top with a loud thump. It’s not like he doesn’t understand. He and Derek had called the pack in after they got back from the meeting to update everyone and they had all showed up, minus Peter and Eddie, and were significantly surprised by their alphas’ news.

Everyone had been excited to learn what Erica and Boyd had first seen had been identified and was a friendly, but the blonde had been a bit annoyed that they hadn’t gotten to actually see it. Everyone had questions and demanded Stiles go over everything multiple times. Jackson, Scott, and Boyd had lasted about 20 minutes before they drifted off and started quietly playing video games. Cora and Erica lasted another 15 before they both got bored and left. Allison and Isaac had stayed through the first hour, but they didn’t last much longer. Lydia however appeared to be willing to go marathon distance with this. Stiles was fairly certain that a big part of it was that she was pissed off that she had once again missed out on meeting someone. Especially someone like Mielikkar.

“Enough Lydia. You can continue later” Derek says cutting them both off before either could say anything else. “Besides, it might be worth it to give us some time to digest everything we were told. We might remember more details” he suggests and Stiles holds in the laughter at seeing the suspicion in the Banshee’s eyes as she tries to figure if Derek is being honest or manipulating her.

“This is important Derek” she reminds him.

“Agreed. When a living embodiment of life itself shows up to talk to you, it reminds you that you are not as big a deal as you thought you were, and you can say that it made an impact” he tells her.

Surprisingly, it is Jackson who looks up and over at that. “What do you mean not a big deal? I mean it came to you didn’t it?”

Derek looks at his beta and nods. “He did, but as we’ve been trying to tell all of you. Being in his presence was like nothing I have experienced. Not even the Queens made me feel that way. If you could imagine what ‘right’ feels like as a being, he was it. I think if he told me that he needed to run me through with his horn because it was necessary, I am not sure I would argue.”

The other pack members looked more than a little concerned at that statement. “Derek…” Scott says slowly “…that’s not right. Nothing should be able to do that.”

Derek shakes his head and looks at Stiles for help in explaining this. “It’s not that Scotty. It’s just that if he did ask, there is would be no doubt whatsoever that it was the truth and that there was no other way, that it was the right thing to do. You know me, you know how suspicious I am of everything and everyone” he says with a shrug.

Everyone nods in agreement at that. “Well, I trust him. 100%. You can’t meet him and not. He is literally goodness made real. It’s just hard to explain how it felt.”

“Lord?” a piping voice says softly and Stiles looks over and sees the Brownie standing there with a look of awe on his face and holding a wooden box with absolute devotion.

“Usilis? What is it?” Stiles asks going over to the Brownie and kneeling down.

“I was told to bring you this. A gift to the new Lord of the Land. From one Guardian to another” he adds and holds out the small box, no bigger than a deck of cards.
Stiles takes the box, a warm brown color and smooth surface, almost like it has been polished, and gently opens the lid.

“Stiles, be careful” Scott shouts looking nervous.

Stiles sucks in his breath at the contents and then looks over at Lydia. “This might help you understand” he says and holds out the box.

Lydia, looking curious, comes over and looks in and gasps. “Stiles, is that what I think it is?”

“A treasure beyond words or price. Worth more than anything” he says as he looks over at Derek and hands him the box.

The alpha looks down and gasps, inhaling deeply and feeling a sense of absolute rightness flood through him. That scent! “Stiles” he whispers looking at his mate.

“I know Derek. But it is a gift that if used right, can do wonderful things.”

“Oh god, what is it?” Erica demands, no longer able to hold it in and she rushes to Derek who shows her the box. She squeals in delight. The others rush over to see the small wooden box. Inside, sitting on the bare wood of the plain box, are several long iridescent hairs.

“Oh…what are those?” Jackson asks confused. Scott and Boyd both seem to agree with the beta while everyone else looks annoyed at them.

“They are strands of hair from Mielikkar” Stiles says respect clear in his voice. “Unicorn hairs.”

There are several oos and ahs from the others, but no one tries to touch them. The wolves all inhale the scent of the hairs and Stiles can see the moment that smell hits them by the almost drunken swaying that follows. “Wow” Scott whispers. “Dude, did he really smell like that?” he asks Derek.

“No” Derek says and the other wolves all look a bit disappointed. “It was so much more. This is the barest whisper” he says dreamily. The pack all look fascinated and Stiles sees both Erica and Isaac taking another sniff.

“What will you do with them?” Cora asks curiously.

“I’m not sure. For now, we will put them someplace safe. But they are unbreakable. They cannot be cut, burned, or damaged in any way. I am going to have to do some serious research about it” he says with a sigh.

“So…about the Nemetons” Lydia says slyly and Stiles gives her a dirty look.

“Where is he?” Araya Calaveras quietly demanded of the three men in front of her.

The men all looked uncomfortable and were trying to avoid their Matriarch’s gaze, but she wasn’t having it. The men knew that angering her was not in anyone’s best interests.

“I am not going to ask again. Where is my son?” her voice was calm, but then again she didn’t need to make threats. She kept a tight rein on her hunters but her son had been acting out of character. And then he along with four of her hunters had disappeared. He had been rather annoyed after her return from the Council meeting as she hadn’t taken him with her as he was dealing with a problem in the south, but she knew he had been angry at California being declared off-limits.
“He went on a hunt” Miguel finally broke and told her.

“I see” she replies leaning back in her chair and looking at the man. “And where is this hunt, exactly?”

Miguel looks at the other men, but they are avoiding his gaze, hoping to perhaps avoid the Matriarch’s wrath by remaining silent. It doesn’t work. With a glance, her man steps up and knocks Diego to the ground, grabbing him and pulling out a knife, shocking the other two men.

“Lake Tahoe” Miguel says quickly.

Araya narrows her eyes. Her son surely cannot be so stupid as to go against the edit of the Council. An Interdict means that she cannot act or interfere, or worse, take vengeance. She turns to Joaquin “Get ahold of my son or any of his hunters and tell them to return immediately.”

“No. That is too close to the Interdict. If they have entered California, then they are disavowed” she states flatly. The men all look shocked at that. The Calaveras are strict to the Code, but Severo is her eldest son.

Damn it, Araya thinks. She didn’t even get to explain why the damn place was forbidden. Her fool of a son has run off, quite likely to his death, not knowing that it’s not the pack that’s the threat, it’s the boy. And knowing her son, it is unlikely that he will even think to consider a human dangerous. But there may be another way. She cannot send her people there, but she has other contacts. Contacts that are not hunters who could try and intercept her son. She dismisses the men, urging Joaquin to make every effort while she considers her best chance of success.

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