I Know Places
by Imaginationfever

Summary

"Call me the devil's advocate, but to me it was obvious all humans were inherently evil."

Juliet is a two hundred year old vampire on a diet, just trying to make it through high school. Again. Her priorities change when she meets Stiles, the one human she just can't seem to hate no matter how hard she tries.

Stiles/OC

Notes

A/N: Hello to both new and old fans of this story. Welcome to I Know Places, my vampire insert Stiles/OC. It's kind of a mammoth read, so I hope you've got supplies ready for a binge!

For those of you who might have read this on FF.net, I wanted to assure you that I'm the same author who posted it on there. This version will be a little bit different, in the fact that I've rewritten a lot of the chapters, just to give it an updated shine. The plot has remained the same, but I have added/taken out certain scenes, and I've filled it out with more cohesive and interesting language – plus fixed a few small continuity errors.

To all of those who maybe haven't read this story in the past, I wanted to give a warning for the coming chapters. There will be an increase in gore, violence and sex as the story goes on. It's rated Explicit for a reason. We start off relatively light, but things begin to go dark the deeper in you go.
I hope everyone who reads this – whether it's your first time or your tenth – enjoys reading it as much as I did writing it.
I wasn't a good person.

Or maybe I was, at least, when I was human. I suppose it depends on your outlook on whether or not people could be born evil. Call me the devil's advocate, but to me it was obvious that all humans were inherently evil. Being turned into a vampire only enhanced the darkness already inside me.

As a human I didn't have an outlet for my urges. As a vampire I did, and for the longest time I was the very definition of evil. I killed and tortured and manipulated humans like they were my playthings, dolls to be toyed with at will. And the desire to do so wouldn't ever entirely go away, not even now. It was written into my DNA.

But then I met Myra, and suddenly I didn't enjoy it quite as much as I once did.

I'd always kept an eye on my bloodline, made sure they were safe and had enough money to live comfortably. I'd never actually interacted with any of them; until her.

She was standing on the beach when we spoke for the first time, knee deep in water as the sun began to set, a joint between her lips. I still don't know what it was that made me approach her. Maybe it was because she reminded me so much of myself. Or perhaps I was finally just growing lonely.

We grew close, closer than I'd ever gotten with a human before. Eventually she figured it out, what
I was. Who I was. She was my flesh and blood, and when she begged me to stop killing, begged me all the way to her death bed, something inside of me cracked.

As a vampire, there's a sort of switch you can flick. One that shuts off your humanity, so you can live this lifestyle guilt-free. I'd been unfeeling for so long that when she came along and flicked the switch back, it was like a physical blow to the chest. The night she died, I cried for the first time in a hundred years, and I knew I had to fulfil her dying wish; to become somebody she'd have been proud of.

So I packed up what little possessions I had. Figuring that my best bet was to keep a low profile, I closed my eyes threw a dart at a map of the United States. It landed in southern California, some out-of-the-way place called Beacon County. I was physically eighteen, but passable as younger. I figured I could enrol in school, create something of a life for myself and try going cold turkey from being evil. It seemed to work for the vampires in modern pop culture.

And so that was how I found myself in Beacon Hills.

If I'd known the trouble I'd go through in that tiny, insignificant, godforsaken town, maybe I wouldn't have moved there. Maybe I would have headed in the opposite direction; run far, far away, where the dangers of wolves and hunters and banshees and innocent, hilarious, attractive teenagers couldn't possibly hurt me.

But I didn't know. I walked there blindly, meeting my fate with my chin held high; completely ignorant to the fact that I was in for the ride of my sorry existence.
The moon was nearly full.

In a few days, it would be at the peak of its cycle and I'd no doubt have to deal with werewolves running rampant around the forests surrounding the small town of Beacon Hills.

I could smell the scent of an alpha sticking to the trees in the forest, and I knew it would have had to have been there mere hours, if not minutes before me. I sighed tiredly – barely a few full days and I was already exasperated – pulling out a cigarette and slipping it between my lips, cupping my hand around the end as I lit it up. My palm glowed in the light of the small flame, and my skin sizzled with the heat.

I tucked the little blue lighter back into my pocket, walking towards where I'd heard the sounds of a search party making their way through the forest, the police dogs' barking echoing off the trees.

I'd only been hoping for a late night stroll – trying to enjoy my freedom before I entered the hell scape that was human high school the very next day. I wouldn't have been able to sleep anyway, and at the very least, it was nice to see the stars without the lights of suburbia getting in the way.

I hadn't been expecting the police to be there. They were so loud, stumbling through the forest like uncoordinated children – they might as well have been carrying giant neon signs reading 'eat me'. It was tempting, but I'd sworn an oath, and it was one I was planning to uphold.

From the chatter over the police's radios, they were searching for a dead body. Curious, however
not even in the slightest way my problem. As I puffed on my cigarette, I vaguely toyed with the idea of finding the murderer myself. Surely my vow not to kill any humans didn't include murderers – if I found and ate a killer, shouldn't I at least be awarded a medal or something?

It would be easy enough to tail the cops until they found the murderer of the young woman, or at least until I stumbled across them myself. With these thoughts in mind, I halfheartedly followed after them, avoiding the distracted officers with ease.

I trudged through the forest, footfalls silent on the earthy ground, cigarette held in one hand, the other trailing absentmindedly across the rough bark of the trees I passed.

I paused, cocking my head and listening to the sound of heavy footsteps stomping towards me, young voices ringing out through the woods, chattering carelessly as they moved through the trees. They weren't police, and they certainly weren't very intelligent, out here all alone, on tonight of all nights. If you could believe it, there were even worse things in the forest tonight than me.

It was two young boys, and they certainly sounded innocent enough. In the blink of an eye I was standing behind them, intentionally stepping on a large stick so it snapped under my weight. Silence made humans uncomfortable. The sound echoed through the trees like a gunshot, and the two teenage boys gasped, spinning around with their hands held to their chests as though to keep their racing, human hearts from leaping out of their bodies.

It was hard for them to see me through the darkness, my dark clothes blending in with the shadows. Their eyes followed the glowing end of my cigarette as I took a drag, and I assessed them carefully. One was Latino, with large, innocent, puppy-dog eyes and floppy dark hair. The other had a buzz cut and a splattering of freckles and moles across his pale face. Both of their hearts were still pounding wetly, and each reeked of anxiety.

Things did get ever so boring in small towns; sometimes you had to make your own fun.

“And what are two young boys like yourselves doing out in the woods on a night like this?” I asked them playfully, leaning my weight against a tree and watching as they scrambled for a believable lie.

“Uh, no-nothing,” the freckle-covered one stammered. “Just out for a stroll. Doing some brotherly bonding,” he gave a wide, unconvincing smile, clapping his companion on the shoulder. “What – what’re you doing out in the woods, huh?” he turned the focus back onto me. I silently pondered the opposite of smooth.
I sucked in another lungful of chemicals, watching carefully for their reactions as I spoke. “Hunting,” I told them. Smoke slid out of my mouth with the word, lit up in the silvery moonlight drifting through the gaps in the canopy.

This was a lie, of course – hunting inferred I was going to actually be eating something at the end of the night. This particular excursion was more about the satisfaction, and the cure for the ever-present boredom that plagued my immortal existence.

The boy with the puppy-dog eyes sucked in a breath, then coughed loudly, pulling out an inhaler and taking a puff. The one with the buzz-cut didn't seem as affected, crossing his arms and narrowing his eyes at me suspiciously. I tilted my head, blinking innocently, though I doubted he could tell through the dark. While he put on a calm front, his heart was beating wildly in his chest.

A gust of wind swept through the trees, mussing their clothes then travelling to hit me, enveloping me in their scent.

One of them smelled like animal, and they obviously either owned a lot of pets or worked closely with them. The other's scent was intoxicating, mint and chocolate, mixed with a musky aftershave. My gums tingled and my eyes burned as, with great difficulty, I shoved down the instinct to snap the animal boy's spine and sink my teeth into his clueless friend's neck.

It would be so easy, too. It was dark, and they had no weapons. They wouldn't even have time to scream before they were choking on their own blood, and my hunger was satiated. I could already taste their blood on my tongue, tangy and hot and so satisfying I could almost cry.

“Hunting what?” mint-and-chocolate asked, and the sound of his voice was enough to jolt me back to reality. My lips quirked up into a dark, rueful smirk – these two children hadn't the faintest idea how close they'd just come to their ends.

I wanted to stay, play a little more, but the longer I stayed, the more danger they were in. Better for me to move on.

“Stay safe, boys,” I said flippantly, turning on my heel and slowly blending back into the shadows. “Who knows what's out there?” I added, unable to resist one final, teasing jibe. “Wouldn't want to run into the big bad wolf.”
I grinned at my own private joke, thinking about the wild, bloodthirsty alpha running through the wood. If they didn't head home soon, they might find themselves as werewolf chew-toys by morning – that, however, was not my problem.

“Wait—” one of them called out from behind me, but I didn't bother to turn around, walking further into the trees, my mind already on my next source of entertainment. That was life as an immortal, just a cycle of one thing after another, anything to keep my mind active and thinking, lest I go insane from my impending eternity.

Things were so easy back when I embodied 'evil'. It wasn't hard to find fun, not when you thrived on finding minds to pull apart and spit in; not when you lived with a background chorus of human screams; not when you had so much blood flowing into your mouth it threatened to choke you.

Now, what was I? Reduced to wandering the woods of some backwater town in California, searching for something to cure the boredom that seemed to have settled into my bones like a cancer? There were only so many books you could read and so many exercises you could go through before you got sick of the monotony.

I wandered towards the sounds of the search party, idly calculating how easy it would be to pick off one of the deputies. It wouldn't be difficult at all, they were spaced so far away from each other. I could get one from the back, out of sight of the others, cover his mouth and snap his neck before anyone knew he was missing.

I knew it wasn't something that could ever happen, knew I wouldn't allow it. I wouldn't go that far. I wouldn't hurt so much as a hair on anyone's head – if only in respect for Myra's memory. Still, a little bit of fantasising never hurt anyone, did it?

I kept out of the light of the officers' torches, dropping what was left of my cigarette into a wet patch on the ground. Rain filtered through the canopy above me, and soon my long, raven hair was clinging to the leather of my jacket, my bangs sticking to the sides of my face. I brushed it away from my ear, cocking my head as I concentrated on what the police were saying.

Most of them were silent, diligently searching for the other half of the missing body. Some were muttering between themselves about what they'd found, one of which being one of the two boys from before. I listened as he was chastised by the man who was obviously his relative, and as they walked further away from where I was standing, I distantly wondered what had happened to the other one.

My train of thought was derailed as I heard a growl from somewhere deep in the trees to my left. I
spun around, fangs dropping instinctively as I let out a warning hiss. I wasn't planning to get into a fight with a werewolf tonight. After all, according to legend, one bite and I was – as they say – dust.

I knew I might as well properly assess the threat. If I was going to live comfortably in this town for the foreseeable future, that threat would probably have to be eliminated, or at least in some way made a non-issue. I could always move, but that sounded so tiresome.

Another growl reverberated through the trees surrounding me, and I heard the distant rumble of a stampede. I groaned in agitation, leaping into the air and grasping ahold of a low-hanging branch, pulling myself upwards with ease. I made myself comfortable in the fork of a tree, one leg swinging freely in the air as I watched the deer sprint through the trees, desperate to get away from the monster in the shadows – or rather, the other monster in the shadows.

Sensing me, they steered clear of the tree I'd pulled myself into, leaving several feet on either side. My alert eyes watched the shadows, my perfect eyesight searching for any hint of the alpha. I was prepared to go toe-to-toe, should it come to it, but I would have hated to get blood on my shirt. Plus, I never had been a very good fighter.

My skills lay in the areas of intelligence: espionage; strategy; and, when the occasion called for it, torture. That didn't mean I couldn't hold my own in a fight however. And if I was going to go down, I would go down swinging.

The alpha, whoever they were, wisely stayed out of sight. I knew they knew I was there, but they never approached. Probably because they knew one small, measly nomadic vampire wasn't worth the trouble.

Once the stampede had dispersed I dropped gracefully from the tree, landing silently in the dirt. Tilting my head up, I sniffed at the air cautiously. A familiar dead, rotten smell met my nose, along with the stench of freshly-spilled blood. Hunger surged through me and for the second time that night I was forced to shove it down.

I had to focus on finding this body. From there, I'd hopefully have a scent with which I could track the killer, and then I could finally have some real fun.

I'd sworn not to eat humans, but murderers weren't really human now, were they? I could attest to that. And I didn't have to eat him – just play a little, something to take the edge off before my first day of school in the morning.
A twig snapped to my right and I slid seamlessly behind a tree, out of sight of the boy stumbling clumsily through the forest. It was the animal boy from earlier in the night. I watched as he clicked his mobile phone on, using the glow from the screen to illuminate the ground in front of him, frantically searching for something. I kept hidden, my eyes darting to the dead body – the source of the scent I'd been tracking.

I sniffed in again, but found only the stench of blood and rotting flesh, mixed with faint traces of werewolf. I deflated. Of course the alpha was behind this. Why couldn't it have been some kind of sick, masochistic human? Didn't I ever get to have any fun?

I huffed silently, crossing my arms and beginning to leave when I was stopped by the sound of paws hitting the moist earth. I froze, stopping my breathing completely. All my natural instincts screamed at me to run, but I ignored them, glancing to the human boy. This innocent kid was about to be killed by an alpha, or worse, turned by one. The new me couldn't just let it happen while she sat idly by, she had to do something.

I exhaled sharply, hands clenching into fists, prepared to fight. I didn't know what shape this alpha would take. Would they be normal? A half-turned man-wolf with canines and facial hair? Or would it be a real wolf? Sleek and slender, smaller but just as deadly? Or would it be something else entirely?

I spun around as the boy cried out, slipping from my defensive position. While I'd been distracted by the alpha I'd failed to notice him approaching the corpse half hidden in the earth. He jerked backwards with another cry, all but throwing himself down a steep hill at his back. I rolled my eyes, dashing to the top of the hill and staring down at him, trying to make sure he was okay and keep an eye out for the alpha. I watched as the boy panted for breath, clamouring to his feet and brushing leaves and moss from his hoodie.

Another threatening growl sounded throughout the forest, this one louder than any I'd heard that night. I'd been distracted, I hadn't noticed it until it was too late. I leapt down the hill, sliding across the ground and shoving myself at the giant beast.

Unnameable, ugly beast from hell seemed to about cover it.

I tackled it, but not in time to stop it from sinking its teeth into the poor boy's side. I frowned, full of pity and self-loathing, but knew I had to focus on the fight at hand. Luckily I didn't have to worry about the kid, he scrambled to his feet, sprinting in the other direction as fast as he could.
I wrapped my arm around the werewolf's throat, but couldn't get the grip that I needed to snap its thick, furry neck. Nevertheless, I squeezed, and it reared its head up towards the nearly-full moon, letting out a piercing howl that made my sensitive ears ring. With one powerful shake it threw me off, sending me slamming into a nearby tree. The wood cracked under the assault. I sprang up from the ground, my eyes a bloody red as I let out a feral snarl.

It charged at me, and we met with a loud bang, smashing together. It may have been stronger, but I was faster, and I darted out of its reach before it could wrap its monster jaws around any part of me. Its paw scraped my thigh, ripping right through my dirty old jeans and slicing the skin underneath. I pressed my lips together to swallow a cry and shoved my other, un-injured leg out as hard as I could. It connected with what I assumed were the beast's ribs, and I heard a satisfying crunch that made me grin with sick pleasure. It whimpered and scrambled backwards.

I pressed a hand to my bloody thigh and decided that, now that the boy was out of harm's way, I had tempted fate enough for one night.

Biting my tongue through the pain I turned and got the hell out of there, running as fast as my injured leg would carry me, all the way back to the cold, half-empty house I now called home.

I tried not to show I was limping as I made my way through the crowd of students heading towards the front doors of their school. Despite my best efforts, my tattered shoes slapped against the pavement in an uneven beat. It was obvious something was wrong. I absent-mindedly patted the swollen part of my leg, cursing the mutt that did it to me. Scratches from an alpha took longer to heal than anything else, so I was stuck with the ache running down my leg every time I put weight on my foot.

People stared as I walked, but that wasn't too surprising – I was a new student at a small town school, people were bound to gawk – so I didn't pay much attention. I adjusted the bag thrown over my shoulder and pushed past a freshman walking too slow for my taste. I sucked in a breath, wincing as I caught the scent of the lively humans, trying not to think about just how easy it would be to let my fangs slide free and munch on their delicate little necks.

It definitely sounded like a better alternative to geometry, or whatever the fuck it was kids studied at high school these days.

I grumbled a cuss under my breath, digging in the pocket of my jeans to pull out a cigarette, lifting it to my lips and lighting it in one smooth movement as I walked through the front doors. I'd just turned the first corner when a soft warm body slammed directly into me.
“Oh – sorry,” a voice began to say as he looked up. I tilted my head, staring back at him blatantly. It took a moment, but I recognised him; he was the mint-and-chocolate boy from woods the night before. I couldn't tell right away if he recognised me, because his eyes were immediately drawn to the cigarette between my teeth. “You can't smoke that in here.”

They didn't even let kids smoke between classes? No wonder teen suicides were up. I took another puff, the corner of my lips twitched up into something imitating a smirk. “Watch me.”

“Hey,” he exclaimed suddenly, recognition lighting up in his honey-brown eyes as he gestured wildly to the smoke. “You're that girl. The one from last night, in the woods.”

I narrowed my eyes, flicking the ash from my stick and watching him carefully. “What of it?” I asked nonchalantly, listening to his heartbeat as it raced. He was clearly surprised by my blunt question, blinking at me uncomprehendingly. I stared back, unwilling to elaborate.

“Well, uh, well – you go to school here,” he said, stumbling over his words like an insecure child.

I frowned, wondering if he had a disability, or whether he was just stupid. “Obviously,” I drawled lazily.

He cringed, as though I were embarrassing him. But if he didn't want to look like an idiot, he should probably stop saying stupid things. “I meant that I haven't seen you around before,” he said, blinking his honey eyes at me innocently. “Are you new?” he asked conversationally.

“Yes,” I told him blankly, lifting the cigarette to my lips to take another puff. His heart raced and he avoided my eyes. I idly remembered that humans needed to blink regularly – when I didn't they tended to get uncomfortable. I promptly shut and opened my eyes in a repetitive motion.

“Um, where did you move from?” the kid tried again. I wondered why he cared. Were all humans so persistently inquisitive?

I may have been new to this way of life, but I knew before coming here that I needed a cover-story. Before I hadn't stayed anywhere permanent, hadn't remained somewhere long enough for my identity to be an issue. It was different here, annoyingly so. “I'm from New York,” I told him with a shrug. That's what it said on my falsified records, at least.
“Ah, the Empire State!” he cheered with a kind of goofy grin. “The Big Apple!” I stared back at him with an impassive expression, unsure how I was supposed to react. Was he trying to be my friend? Humans were so strange. “Right,” he muttered awkwardly, glancing over his shoulder at where his friend from the other night was pulling books out of his locker.

He was the one who'd been bitten, and I knew by his wet-dog scent – plus the way he wasn't curled over in agony – that he was going to survive the bite. He was transforming into a wolf, and I wondered if he even knew it.

“Who's your friend?” I asked the mint-and-chocolate boy before me, jerking my chin in the newborn pup's direction.

“Scott,” he called, making the dazed-looking boy perk up, turning to face us expectantly. I met his eyes, searching his gaze. I needed to know if this boy was somehow going to be a threat. “This is the girl from the woods last night,” mint-and-chocolate told the one called Scott, pointing to me with his thumb.

The wolf's eyes widened for a moment, but otherwise he didn't react. “Scott McCall,” he told me, holding out a hand to shake. I took it, noting that he was running just a few degrees hotter than a normal human. I nodded in vague greeting, my eyes sliding over to the other boy when he too held out a hand to shake.

“Stiles Stilinski,” he said as I reluctantly took it, trying not to grimace when I felt the thrum of his blood from under his skin. “Whoa, you're cold,” he mumbled, frowning down at my pale skin, and I quickly ripped my hand from his grasp, tucking it into my pocket instead. “Um, and you are?” he asked stiltedly, and I wondered whether he were just perpetually awkward.

Realising I hadn't introduced myself, I lifted my cigarette to my lips, taking a puff before telling him my alias. “Juliet Cooper,” I said with easy confidence. The first name was real, but the last was something fake I'd pulled from a phonebook.

If there was one thing vampires were good at, it was lying. Especially with no heartbeat to give us away.

The school's bell rang from above our heads, and Scott cringed at the piercing noise. I knew it was his brand new, extra-sensitive hearing capabilities making him wince, and I had a flash of empathy for him as I remembered when I'd first turned and how difficult it had been to handle everything.
He'd get used to it – after all, he had no choice. This was his life now.

“Well, we should get going,” Scott said, glancing over his shoulder at something down the hall.

“Okay.” I replied unfeelingly, not in the mood to waste any more of my time chatting with the two young delinquents anyway. I strode past them, ignoring the way Stiles flinched when my cold arm brushed his warm one.

I opened my bag, walking down the middle of the hall and not bothering to watch where I was going as I dug out my schedule and the accompanied map. I had English first, which was preferable to anything else. I loved to read anyway, and after two centuries of speaking the language, I doubted there was anything a forty year-old high school teacher could tell me that I didn't already know.

After English was French, which I didn't mind. I'd lived in Paris for a few years. I wasn't an expert at the language, like I was some others, but I knew enough to get by. I wandered in through to the back, barely glancing at the elderly woman standing by the board. I took a seat on the far left, dropping my bag to the ground and tapping my fingers against the wooden desktop, boredom practically seeping from my pores.

“Hi,” a quiet, shy voice spoke from my left, and I rolled my head towards the culprit. A young girl sat beside me, all dark hair and pretty, angled facial features.

“Yes?” I asked her bluntly, hardly in the mood for idle chatter.

She looked taken aback, unsure how to answer me. She looked like she was about to tell me it didn't matter, backing down until a sudden determinedness came into her eyes and she tilted her chin up slightly. Something deep within me was impressed, but I squashed it down, not in the mood for any sort of sentimentality. “I'm Allison. I heard from somebody that it's your first day too.”

I raised an eyebrow, deciding humouring her was my best bet at getting out of this as quickly and as painlessly as possible. “That's right.” There was a moment of silence before I realised this was the part where I was meant to supply my own name. “Juliet,” I told her reluctantly.

“Where did you move from?” she asked, a polite smile on her apple-red lips.
“New York,” I answered robotically, moving to pull a book and pen from my bag so I looked busy. Maybe if I seemed to be distracted, she'd stop trying to talk to me.

“Oh, I love it there,” the girl sighed wistfully. It was quite obviously a segue, an opportunity for me to ask about her time there, thus feeding the conversation. But I had no interest in talking to her any more than I absolutely had to.

Thankfully the ageing teacher called the class to attention before she could make anymore small talk. I was relieved, a few more minutes of mind-numbing chatter and I would have had to resort to compulsion, which could only end badly. Mind-control was a slippery slope. You start out with good intentions, then end up naked on a boat in Mexican waters next to a dead guy named Lito.

The class dragged on, as did the next one, and the next, and throughout the day I found myself questioning why I had ever even decided to come back to school in the first place. It wasn’t challenging or educational like college had been; it wasn't socially stimulating, surrounded by such young, un-evolved minds; and to top it all off, it was like sitting in the middle of a hormone cocktail, the children's scents swimming around me like a fog.

The moment the last bell rang I was fucking gone, walking as quickly as I could without raising suspicion and hightailing it the hell out of there. I breathed in the beautiful, crisp air as I walked, bag slung lazily over one shoulder.

I made my way into the woods only a few miles from my house, deciding I preferred the hum of nature to the creaking of old wood, and the fresh scent of moss over the stale smell of aged dust.

I folded myself down at the base of a tree and cracked open a battered old copy of *Catcher in the Rye*. I glanced up at the sun; looking up at it sent a searing pain through my head, and my gaze immediately sought out the thick, heavy ring sitting on the middle finger of my right hand, the lapis lazuli stone glittering in the sunshine. The only thing standing between me and a very painful, fiery death.

I liked the forests here. They weren't so thick you could barely walk, but they weren't so thin it was basically a field with a few trees. So when I decided I wanted some downtime, some time to relax without all the stress and scents surrounding my new peers, this was the first place that came to mind.

Despite the sun weakening me, I still preferred it over the dark. It reminded me that I was different to the others of my kind who lived in shadows. It made me feel better about myself, in a strange sort of way. Like I didn't have to hide. Like I was free – when really, I was anything but.
“What are you doing here?” a cold voice asked out of nowhere, and I looked up sharply, not expecting a man to be standing above me. I inwardly cursed my distraction – it was going to get me killed one of these days.

I didn't want this guy to think he intimidated me in any way, so despite the anxiety prickling in my blood, I remained where I was, lounged about at the base of a large tree as though I were utterly at ease.

I took a deep breath in, keeping my expression carefully schooled when I caught his dog-like scent. **Werewolf.**

I tipped my lips up into a small, mocking smile. “I'm reading a book,” I told him, smirking up at him lazily, like the situation somehow amused me. Survival 101: don't appear intimidated by your enemy. Ever.

The unnamed wolf glared down at me with a pair of brilliant, baby blue eyes. “Why are you in Beacon Hills?” he restated his question, bulging arms crossed over his chest, his body language screaming that he was irritated and on the defensive. Was he expecting a fight? I didn't feel like killing a wolf today, but I'd defend myself if I had to.

“Why are **you**?” I countered pleasantly, blinking up at him with my own set of dazzling emerald greens, putting on a superficial act, hoping it would make him underestimate me. When he didn't answer I sighed, putting aside my book and standing to my feet in one smooth motion. “How about, instead of questioning each other's motives like a couple of paranoid ninnies, we simply get straight to the heart of the matter?” I said bluntly.

The werewolf's face didn't so much as twitch, and I leaned back against the tree trunk casually, looking for all the world like I wasn't coiled into a tight spring, prepared to launch into an attack at a moment's notice.

“Are you the alpha?” I asked when he said nothing, my voice flat and steady.

“No,” he answered immediately, his heart keeping a steady beat. Either he was telling the truth, or he was just a fantastic liar.
“Prove it,” I replied tersely, narrowing my eyes at him. “You'll forgive me if I don't take your word for it,” I added with a saccharine smile. He exhaled sharply, aggravated. I stared back impassively, refusing to back down. “Show me those pretty little eyes of yours,” I goaded him, keeping in mind that I was faster – I'd easily be able to get away before he could sink his teeth into my flesh.

The werewolf scowled deeply, but complied, clearly deciding it was easier just to humour me than to argue. Smart wolf. His eyes glowed a bright, shimmering blue; which was interesting. I idly wondered what fucked up thing had happened in his past to make his eyes turn such a depressing colour.

Okay, so that confirmed it. This wolf wasn't the Alpha currently terrorising the mild town of Beacon Hills. But then how did he fit in to all of this?

I relaxed my stance in an effort to show him that I wasn't necessarily a threat. At least, not in the immediate sense. “Juliet Cooper,” I offered like an olive branch. I didn't hold out my hand to sake, but he didn't seem to mind. The thought of having to him having to touch me was probably about as repulsive as it was the other way round.

“Derek Hale,” he told me, and my eyebrows raised in surprise. A Hale? Of course, I'd heard of the Hale pack; who in the supernatural community hadn't? They were powerful, or they had been, once upon a time. A few years ago they'd disappeared completely, and I hadn't heard anything of them since. Still, I didn't exactly have my ear to the ground when it came to the werewolf rumour mill.

Apart from the slight rise of my brow, I kept my expression neutral, giving no real sign of recognition.

“I suppose you're one of the alpha's betas, then?” I presumed, cocking my head and eyeing him carefully, watching for any hint of deception.

“No,” he told me, eyes flickering around the clearing shiftily, like he was half expecting my entourage of bloodthirsty ninjas to appear from thin air and attack. “I don't know who he is. But I intend to find out.” There was a layer of disgust to his voice, and I got the sense that he held some kind of personal vendetta against this mysterious alpha.

“You knew the dead girl?” I asked him shortly.
His only reply was a stoic nod of his head. I would have had to have been deaf – or human – to miss the skip of his pulse. She'd meant something to him.

“Well, looks like we're on the same team. I don't want some alpha on a power trip ruining my chance of a good solid few years here before I have to move on. Hunters catch wind of animal attacks, there're only so many species of supernatural they're going to take a run at. And you and me, buddy? We're on the top of that list,” I told him in a lazy drawl, nothing he didn't already know.

“Will you be causing any 'animal attacks' of your own?” he asked tightly, levelling me with a hard, penetrating gaze.

I smiled bitterly before pursing my lips to cover it. I wish, I wanted to say, the cold, hard truth. “Not to worry,” I told him blankly, “I drink the stuff on ice.” I didn't add that this was a recent development, and that the grasp I had on my control was tenuous at best. “What about you?” I asked, watching him carefully. “Come full moon, am I going to have to worry about you chomping on some kid's liver?”

His eyes narrowed, but otherwise he didn't rise to the bait I'd set. “I have full control.” His crossed arms tightened as he chewed his next few words. “Unfortunately, so does the alpha.”

“And which will make him harder to catch,” I finished with a grim, knowing nod.

He looked like he wanted to say more, but before he had the chance the sound of young voices floated towards our location. We both froze, heads tilted towards the newcomers. I took a deep breath in, huffing reflexively when I caught the scent of mint and chocolate on the wind. This kid was fucking everywhere.

Without verbally agreeing on anything, both myself and the werewolf had disappeared from our places a good acre away. We reappeared within human earshot of them, but neither of them noticed us, too focused on their conversation to realise we were there.

We were silent, watching the two boys as the one called Stiles joked about Scott being a werewolf. I found the irony in their conversation hilarious, but bit my lip to hide the smile.

The Stiles boy laughed at something he'd murmured, then turned in my direction. He noticed us standing a few yards away, both silently waiting for them to realise we were there, and jumped,
heart racing in his chest. I tilted my head, peering at the pair thoughtfully.

“What are you doing here? Huh?” Hale asked in more of a growl than anything else, striding forwards until he was mere feet away from them. I followed behind at a more leisurely pace, my arms crossed as I watched the interaction carefully. Stiles glanced up at me from under his lashes, immediately shooting his gaze away when he saw me already looking, like he'd been caught doing something he shouldn't have been. “This is private property,” Hale snapped roughly, and the boys winced.

“Sorry, guys, we didn't know,” Stiles said, awkwardly readjusting his jacket and avoiding our eyes. Perhaps he sensed what most humans sensed when confronted by us: pure, unadulterated danger.

“Yeah, we were just looking for something but, uh, forget it,” Scott added, staring at Derek oddly, sensing something completely different to his human friend. Surprisingly, Hale reached into his pocket, pulling out a small, plastic object and throwing it to Scott, the boy snatching it from the air with deft hands, seeming to surprise himself.

We all glanced down at the inhaler now held in his grasp, until Derek suddenly turned around, shoving his hands in his pockets and jerking his head at me discretely.

I hesitated, flicking my eyes between the two confused boys in front of me. Stiles' heart picked up again, and I flashed him a smirk. Something must have come across in my eyes, because they both averted their gaze uncomfortably. Content with the fear I'd instilled, I spun on my heel, shoes sinking into the mud as I turned to follow Derek Hale back to the tree we'd previously been standing by.

And so the teenage boys were left alone in the woods, utterly confused and no doubt slightly unsettled by our little encounter.

“You could've cut the tension with a knife,” I muttered once we were out of sight, pulling out a cigarette and my lighter from my pocket, shoving the stick between my lips and lighting it before tucking the lighter back into the safety of my pocket. I'd had that old thing for nearly a decade, it had sort of grown on me. “You know about the boy, then?” I asked, realising that he hadn't been surprised by Scott's scent just now.

“The alpha's new beta, the kid we just saw?” he asked rhetorically, and I clicked my tongue in response, nodding slightly. “You go to school with him, right?”
“Regrettably,” I responded dully, raising a single eyebrow to appear more bored than I felt. It was important that this werewolf perceived me in a specific way. It was how I'd survived this long. Hale stared back at me, a question in his eyes. “I'll keep an eye on him,” I promised with a huff, reaching up to brush my jet black hair from my eyes. “But if anything comes up, he's your problem to deal with.”

And I meant it. I would watch him, make sure the kid didn't get himself gutted by a hunter because he was too stupid to keep the supernatural a secret. But beyond that, this kid wasn't my problem.

“If you need to find me, I live in the burnt down house two miles North of here,” said Hale tersely.

...Sure, because that wasn't creepy and irritatingly enigmatic.

“Okay,” I responded, already feeling sort of drained. I could only handle so much human contact in a day before it started to get to me. I was tired, sick of people, sick of fighting against the instinct to kill those people. Feeling like this was probably one of those situations where you reciprocated your details, I sighed, rattling off my address to him reluctantly.

I sent the wolf him one final, sardonic smile before scooping up my book and disappearing through the trees. The only thing on my mind was picking out a new novel and drawing myself a scolding hot bubble bath to soak away the stress.

I pushed my way through the sea of sweaty high school students, a red cup full of some kind of shitty watered down beer held in my hand. “Hey baby,” some drunk senior moaned, pressing into my side. I pushed my hand against his chest, giving him one hard shove to the side, sending him stumbling back into the crowd. I wiped my hand on my jeans in disgust, slipping through a gap in the throng and moving towards the corner of the room.

I had no idea why I'd thought this would be a good idea. Me and a hundred, sweaty teens stuffed into a house? It was practically an all-you-can-eat buffet. But this was what normal teenagers did, wasn't it? They went to parties and drank awful booze and made decisions they'd regret in the morning. It was how things worked these days, and you either evolved with the times or got left behind.

I took another sip of the disgusting beer, grimacing in distaste as it slid over my tongue, foamy and gross.
I thought that maybe I should have smuggled in some of the good stuff, but didn't really give it more than a passing thought. Like I'd waste quality alcohol on these hormonal pricks.

I leaned to my right, discretely tipping the contents of my cup into a pot plant and then carelessly tossing the empty red cup over my shoulder.

I felt eyes on me, and not in a creepy, leery type of way. Glancing to my left, I met eyes with Stiles Stilinski. He was staring at me with wide eyes. He looked torn between awe and terror. I raised an eyebrow challengingly, wondering if he was going to approach me. He didn't, turning on his heel and marching around the corner and out of sight.

I was somewhat bemused by the encounter, but I couldn't be bothered following up on it. My eyes were scanning the occupants of the party, searching for something interesting, anything to justify coming here. Part of me hated it; it was loud and smelly and pathetic. And yet part of me loved it; because it was loud and smelly and pathetic. As usual, I was torn.

Deciding I'd had enough for one night, I turned to leave, stopping short when my eyes slid over a dancing Scott and Allison. I pursed my lips, listening to the sound of his heart beating wildly in his chest. This could be bad; if he snapped and lost control, there was no telling what kind of damage he could inflict. All it would take is the right person asking the right questions and we were all, quite potentially, done for. He glanced up at the full moon, grimacing and clenching his hands into fists.

I huffed, rolling my neck and pushing myself off the wall. Looked like I was going to have to clean up yet another goddamn mess tonight. He mumbled a terrible excuse to Allison, who looked confused and worried, then pushed his way through the crowd. With a sigh I followed him, shoving my way past the drunk, witless teens. By the time I'd caught up to him, he was already in his car and driving away.

I shrugged to myself, knowing that at least the immediate danger was gone, and he'd probably go home, lock himself in his room or something to ride it out. Either way, there was no way I was following him home to find out, so I turned on my heel, heading in the opposite direction of the party, down the street leading to the woods.

I paused, realising one gaping hole in my plan. Allison.

Exposure wasn't something to be taken lightly. If there was one thing we vampires took seriously,
it was the secrecy of our kind. It was how we'd survived so long in the first place.

Allison would be left suspicious by Scott's leaving, and when I asked myself 'what would Myra do?', I knew the answer was always going to be help them.

“Allison?” I spoke before I could talk myself out of it, my tone sounding pleasantly surprised to see her there.

The dark haired girl turned around, blinking at me in bewilderment. “Oh,” she murmured, apparently surprised to see me there. Understandable, I didn't exactly give off a high-school-party type vibe. “Hi, Juliet,” she said politely, still looking over her shoulder for Scott. “Have you seen—?” she began to ask.

“Scott?” I supplied, fishing out another cigarette and slipping it between my teeth. “He wasn't feeling well,” I said; not a total lie, “he had to get going.”

“Oh,” the poor girl looked so terribly disappointed that I almost felt guilty. Fucking emotions. “Uh, I don't want you to think I'm leeching off of you,” she said suddenly, and I had to bark a laugh at the wording, “but could I get a ride?”

“Don't have a car,” I responded blithely, flicking the ash from the tip of my smoke and shrugging my shoulders.

“Oh,” the human sighed again, and I cringed at my tactlessness.

“You don't wanna stick around, enjoy the party?” I asked, attempting that inane chatter that she seemed so fond of. Humans seemed to be put at ease by the whole charade that was smalltalk.

“No, I think I just wanna go home,” Allison sighed, glancing over her shoulder at the party, some horrible, repetitive tune pumping through a horrible, low-grade sound system. Hormone fuelled humans spilled out onto the lawn, their bodies sweaty and flushed, writhing against each other as they drank horrible, barely-real alcohol and pretended to have the time of their lives.

It was the Earthly version of hell, I was sure.
“Yeah, I don't blame you,” I muttered as I looked to the sky, blowing out smoke rings in an effort to chase away the impending boredom.

“Smoking's bad for you, you know,” Allison said quietly, her head cocked as she watched me inhale.

“So I've been told,” I replied flatly without missing a beat, and instead of making her uncomfortable, she only laughed, gripping her jacket tight and beaming at me with all the brilliance of the sun. “I could walk you home,” I offered reluctantly. She seemed like a nice girl, and sure, I wasn't looking for friends, but would it be so terrible to have an ally or two in this town?

I'd already aligned myself with werewolves, why not add a human to the list?

“Thanks, but it's miles,” Allison sighed. “I'd never get there before curfew.”

I hummed in response, flicking the ash from my cigarette again. The hair on my arms stood on end, and I turned just as another form made their way up to us. I knew who it was before I even looked.

“Hey, Juliet,” Hale said cheerfully, as though we were buddies. “I couldn't help but overhear,” he told us with an apologetic look that was so obviously fake it made me want to bash my head into the cement, although Allison hardly seemed to notice. “You need a ride?” he offered with that same, charming smile.

“Allison,” I huffed out around a mouthful of smoke, uncaring, “meet Derek Hale.”

“Nice to meet you,” she said politely.

“I was just heading out,” he said with that smile still firmly locked into place. I wondered briefly on his motives. Did he wanna eat her? Or something even more nefarious? Who knew what wolves dreamt of doing to pretty little humans like Allison? I didn't pretend to know what went on up inside those canine brains of theirs. “I'd be happy to take you home,” he said with a wolfish grin.

Allison hesitated, turning to look at me as though I was the authority on all things Derek Hale. I paused, eyeing the wolf closely. His pulse was steady, and I didn't really get a blood-thirsty, serial killer kind of vibe from him – it took one to know one, after all.
“Derek's good people,” I assured her. I wasn't sure whether that was a lie or not; I decided not to let it bother me. “He'll get you home safe,” I added, and of that much, at least, I was certain.

“Great,” Allison beamed again, and I smirked back uncomfortably. “I'll see you at school?” she asked me, and I hummed in agreement. With a final wave of her hand, she turned and left, following Derek to the sleek, ostentatious car sitting idle on the curb.

Nothing made me feel better or more myself than a leisurely nighttime stroll. I made my way slowly through the suburbs until I hit the forest, deciding to walk through it on my way home. I continued to puff on my cigarette, considering taking a hospital run in the next day or so to stock up on my blood stores – I didn't want to risk them getting too low.

I was about halfway home when I caught a familiar scent on the wind, stopping dead. “Derek?” I asked, tilting my head in his direction as he stepped out from behind a tree.

He'd been quick, apparently, in taking Allison home. Or perhaps, I'd been slow, meandering my way through the town, unconcerned about time as I wandered back towards my house. Derek leaned against the tree trunk, crossing his arms and sending me a completely apathetic look, one that even I was impressed by. I took another drag from my cigarette, watching him carefully.

“Giving the girl a ride home. Risky move,” I muttered, now that I could speak freely.

“Well, I needed to draw Scott out somehow,” he shrugged.

“And what's your plan, exactly? Taunt the boy into submission?” I asked wryly.

He opened his mouth to retort, but paused when the sound of someone running through the forest pricked at our sensitive ears. They were close to where we stood, bathed in moonlight and waiting for them to approach.

“Speak of the devil,” I smirked, listening to the new beta's racing heart and gasping breaths. Derek had led him here, of that much I was certain. What were the odds that I, too, was stumbling upon them? Why couldn't I just be left alone? Why did it always come back to these boys?
“Where is she?” Scott growled as he appeared between a gap in the trees, looking around wildly, having trouble spotting us as we blended into the shadows with our dark clothes and hair.

“She’s safe,” Derek told him stonily. “From you.”

He all but catapulted out of the darkness, throwing himself at the teen wolf. I sighed in sheer exasperation, sucking in another lungful of chemicals and watching them with only a mild interest. Derek was stronger and smarter, but there was something infinitely dangerous about a brand new, out of control werewolf on the full moon.

They rolled across the ground, wrestling one another, each trying to land a hit. Either way, I’d have to put my money on Derek, and I smirked as I saw the older wolf pin the younger one down.

“What did you do with her?” Scott roared, beginning to border on hysteria.

Before he could retort, the distant sound of hurried footsteps met my ears, and both Derek and I snapped our heads up, each of us hearing the threatening sound. I sniffed the air, smelling the sweat of humans and a hint of wolfsbane on the wind.

Hunters.

“Shh, quiet.” Derek hissed at Scott. I hastily crumbled the cigarette in my palm, the lightened end searing my skin, leaving burns that disappeared in moments. I dropped it to the ground, muscles coiling as I prepared to defend myself.

The footsteps raced towards us, and I scowled, tossing up my options. I could run. I was a thousand times faster than the human hunters, and it wouldn't be hard to lose them in the darkness. However, something in me told me that leaving the two wolves to die was a bad idea. I couldn't afford to start off here on the local werewolf population's bad side.

“Too late,” whispered Derek, dread in his luminescent eyes. “They're already here. Run.”

The two wolves took off in opposite directions. I growled in frustration, but refused to allow my true face to show. The best course of action was to let the hunters assume I was a wolf. I didn't want to make them think anything else, least of all vampire.
I raced off to the left, sprinting around so I came up behind the hunters as they began to let arrows fire, ones that exploded upon contact with trees. I watched as Scott got shot and itched to make them pay. I knew, though, that I couldn't kill them. In my experience, killing hunters only made the remaining ones more likely to come after you. I couldn't kill them all and I couldn't run forever.

With that in mind, I picked off one of the smaller ones at the back of the group, covering his mouth with my hand and wrenching his weapon from him, tossing it as far as I could into the darkness. I snatched the back of his jacket, hooking it onto a low hanging branch and letting him hang there. He yelled out for help and one of the other hunters turned his attention from Scott to me. It was probably for the best; I had a much better chance at surviving this.

“Take him,” the leader said as one of his goons turned to me. I groaned, moving forwards with large strides until I reached him, pulling my fist back and slamming my knuckles into his nose before he could do anything to stop me. He cried out as the bone shattered under my fist, blood pouring from his face as he crumpled to the muddy ground.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw Scott scramble to his feet and take off into the darkness. Knowing he was out of immediate danger, I didn't stick around to play with the hunters, sprinting after the wolves too fast for their weak human eyes to see.

They ran through the trees, dodging branches and leaping over logs. I had to slow my strides to keep pace with them, running at a jog so I remained just behind them, continuously checking over my shoulder for any sign of the hunters.

Finally, after a long few minutes of running through the dark night, Scott came to a stop, collapsing against a tree trunk and gasping for breath. “Who are they?” he asked. He must have noticed me during the fight, because he didn't look too surprised to see me standing behind Derek, arms crossed casually over my chest.

“Hunters,” the older werewolf told him sombrely. “Their kind have been hunting us for centuries.”

“Us?” Scott yelled, outraged as he dragged himself to his feet, eyes shifting between us both, distrust shining within their depths. “You mean you! You did this to me!”

I wanted to tell him that Hale wasn't an alpha, so it would be impossible for him to have turned him, but I decided to keep my mouth shut. Getting involved in wolf politics wasn't going to help me keep hold of my low profile.
“Is it really so bad Scott? That you can see better? Hear more clearly? Move faster than any human could ever hope? You've been given something that most people would kill for,” Derek told him with feeling, and I rolled my eyes at the spiel. “The bite is a gift.”

“I don't want it,” the new beta insisted loudly, staring across at the older wolf furiously.

There was a pregnant pause, and I shifted my weight, growing antsy. I wanted to get home and draw a bath, an option sounding far nicer than standing in the middle of a hunter infested forest with a pair of drama-queen werewolves.

“You will,” Derek assured Scott, who scowled in reply. “And you're going to need me if you want to learn how to control it.” He leaned closer to the terrified boy, pressing his hand to the bark above his head, making him flinch back with trepidation. “So you and me, Scott? We're brothers now.”

He'd apparently decided that was enough, stepping back and turning away, slowly heading back into the forest. Scott swallowed and looked up at me where I stood leant against a fallen tree, the epitome of relaxed.

“Does that make you my sister?” the teen wolf asked bitterly, closing his eyes tightly. I pretended I couldn't see them watering.

My lips twitched up into an amused smirk. I preferred to maintain the low profile now that there were hunters involved, so the last thing I needed was some baby werewolf knowing all my dirty little secrets. For now, I'd let him believe whatever he wanted. I wasn't going to be revealing anything any time soon.

“See you at school, Scott,” I told him with a false smile that melted off my face the second my back was turned. I was gone before he'd realised I'd moved.

I wandered into my house, flicking the light on as I passed the switch. The small living room to my small, two bedroom house lit up with a warm glow, revealing my old red couches and walls covered with books. I threw my keys on the table in front of the television, toeing off my shoes and kicking them back beside the doorway. I didn't bother locking my door, letting it swing shut and moving through the lounge and into the decent sized kitchen. I pulled open the door to the fridge, fingering the packets of blood sitting on the top shelf. I decided on some A-positive, pulling it out.
and shoving it into the microwave.

I detested technology. It was stupid and confusing and unnecessarily difficult to use. All it was
good for was a headache. I missed the days of warm fires, horses and carriages, and hand-written
letters. There were some inventions I tolerated, however. Such as microwaves, and showers. They
all came in handy, made life a little bit easier.

The microwave beeped, and I pulled out my packet of blood, ripping the top off and dropping it in
my bin as I passed, settling down on the couch and taking a deep sip of my dinner. I sighed in bliss
as the warm blood ran down my burning throat, putting out the fire and causing a sense of calm
drip over me. I'd tried pretty much every drug there was, and very few worked on vampires. Since
we were technically dead, our bodies didn't process the chemicals the same way, they didn't give
us the same high.

**Blood**, however, that gave us a high no drug would ever be able to give a human.

Our bodies came alive, drinking it was like breaking the surface of the water and taking a breath of
fresh, pure air. All my senses became alert. Everything was brighter, louder, sharper, *better*. My
body buzzed with energy, the good kind, the kind that I knew would allow me to pick up a car like
it weighed nothing. And at the same time, it relaxed me, making all my worries disappear.

And that was just the stuff in the bags. That didn't even come close to how it felt straight from the
vein.

I missed it, I craved it so much it hurt. But I had a promise to keep. So, instead of leaving the house
to stalk some pathetic little human – or better yet, that irresistible smelling Stiles boy – I discarded
the empty blood packet, turning on the radio and curling up into a ball on my couch, trying to enjoy
what little high I had left before the crushing boredom once more swallowed me whole.
By some miracle I actually got some sleep that night, but then woke up the next morning honestly not feeling very well. It wasn't possible for vampires to get sick *per se*, so I shrugged it off. I downed a blood bag, then lit up a cigarette and made my way to school, bag slung carelessly over my shoulder.

By the time I got to the high school, I was already late, but I couldn't find it in me to care. I went about my day like it was any other, going to class, pretending to take notes and pretending to listen as the teachers spoke. By the time the school day was over, I felt even worse than I had when I'd woken up.

Throughout the day I'd managed to pin the feeling down to worry; worry about the hunters in town. Sometimes, it seemed like I would never be free of them.

Of course, it had occurred to me that I could leave. I really could just pack my bag, sell my house and get the hell outta dodge. But I was trying to turn over a new leaf, trying to become a better person. I knew I had to do everything in my power to become the person Myra had wanted me to be – had *believed* me to be – even if that meant going against my instincts. *Especially* if it meant that. They'd gotten me in enough trouble over the years as it was.

So, after having had a long and emotionally taxing day as I tossed up my options, I couldn't wait to get home, have a glass of tequila with a chaser of blood, and read a mildly entertaining novel.

Unfortunately, I only got so far as passing the art room before I was stopped by a boy sporting that familiar buzz-cut. He stepped out in front of me, wearing his lacrosse gear with a determined frown on his face that reminded me of a grumpy kitten.
“Yes?” I asked him tiredly, raising an eyebrow as I listened to his heart thud like it was trying to break free of his chest. When he didn’t say anything I rolled my eyes, hitching my bag higher up on my shoulder. “Let me guess: Scott told you that he saw me in the woods with Hale last night and since you both need answers, you figured I was the slightly less intimidating one to approach,” I said flatly.

His heart stuttered at my words, his Adam's apple bobbing up and down. I flicked a lock of hair out of my face, pinning him with my entrancing green eyes. “But there's one thing you should know before you open your mouth,” I warned him carefully, making sure he understood each and every syllable, enjoying the way the blood disappeared from his face as I shifted closer. “I am much, much more dangerous than Derek Hale could ever dream to be.”

The Stiles boy didn’t say a thing, blinking up at me. Meeting his stare, I was suddenly surprised by his eyes. I hadn't noticed before, but his eyes looked like how he smelt; chocolatey and intoxicating.

I covered up my brief falter with a smirk, stepping around him and turning down a hallway, struggling to keep a human pace when all I wanted to do was run. I eventually found the door, shoving it open and stepping out into the sunshine. In the span of a second, the pack of cigarettes were pulled out of my bag, and I lit one up, shoving past some guy in a red jersey. I hopped down the steps, striding down the path, meaning to head home. I slid around a form, pausing as I caught a whiff of a familiar scent. Scott.

I glanced curiously over my shoulder as I walked, brow furrowing as I noticed the new teen wolf was stock still, staring at something across the parking lot. I followed his line of sight until I was met with a most unpleasant sight.

Hunter.

He was staring at Scott, not playing the least bit of attention to me – a small blessing. I knew it was him; the same one from last night. My hands clenched into fists but I focused on walking neutrally, not letting anyone notice that something was off. The older man was smiling at the boy, and not in a menacing way. I peered past him, blinking in surprise as I saw Allison – the girl who tried being friends with me – in the car behind him. They were related. That, or she had a thing for older guys.

I took another drag of smoke, watching him from the corner of my eye until I turned the corner, then I was gone, having disappeared from sight.
I'd run to Derek's place in the woods, not wasting any time. He'd said it was burnt down, but I hadn't expected it to be in complete ruins. Everything was black and charred, crumpled into piles of ash and riddled with dead leaves and graffiti.

I'd made no attempt to be quiet, and so the wolf heard me coming, appearing at the top of the rickety old staircase, that perpetual frown on his face.

“Damn, Hale,” I muttered, tentatively sniffing the air. The whole house smelt so strongly of death that it made even me grimace. “You live like this?” I asked wryly, peering around at the remains of what I was sure was once magnificent dwelling. Now it was nothing but a skeleton, a ghost of what it could have been.

“What happened?” he asked instead of answering me. At least he was smart enough to realise this wasn't a social call.

But I couldn't help myself, turning to look at him teasingly. “How do you know I'm not just here for a chat and a good cup of tea?” I fluttered my eyelashes innocently. Derek stomped down the untrustworthy stairs, looking the opposite of amused. “Fine,” I muttered, rolling my eyes in exasperation. “It's the lead hunter, the one from last night?” I reminded him, tilting my chin up so my eyes met with his. “He's Allison Argent's father.”

Derek didn't appear outwardly surprised, but I could tell he hadn't known. He looked like he was considering my words, gaze hardening with whatever it was he was thinking. “Does Scott know?” he finally asked, the words low and serious.

“He just found out,” I told him, and he nodded before turning and striding through his sad excuse for a door. I followed him out, wincing at the sunlight streaming down through the trees surrounding the scorched remains of the property. “Where to, Dog Breath?” I asked as he began stalking west, heading for the town.

“Scott's planning to play lacrosse tonight,” Derek grunted irritably, like he wasn't even sure why he was answering me. I understood – I could sometimes have that effect on people. “I'm going to make sure nobody dies just because he wants to look cool in front of Allison,” he added gruffly.

“So, we're just going to lurk in the shadows like a couple of creepy stalkers?” I asked, head tilted, keeping stride with him easily as I followed him into town.
“I need to be close, in case he loses control,” said Derek.

“He's a new pup,” I scoffed. “Of course he's going to lose control.”

“Which is why I'm going,” he reiterated firmly.

“Sounds fun, Cujo,” I said mockingly, but the taller werewolf gave no more than a huff in reply. His ire turned into surprise when I continued to trail along after him.

“What are you doing?” he demanded, coming to a stop in a small clearing. I paused, spinning gracefully on my toes to look at him.

“Uh, I'm being your backup,” I said blandly, because I'd thought that was obvious.

But Derek looked less than impressed. “I don't need you there,” he said forcefully. “Don't you have better things to be doing?” he added as if to sway me away.

I snorted at the comment. “Fuck, do I wish,” I laughed bitterly, and his expression narrowed into one of consternation. “Look, I'm offering to be a helping hand. Just accept it and move on,” I said, silky smooth and innocent.

“What do you get out of it?” he asked suspiciously.

“The knowledge that the people of this town are safe from supernatural harm,” I told him as solemnly and as earnestly as I could manage. I could tell from the glint to his eyes that he didn't believe me. I gave up and let loose another laugh. “Alright, I'm bored and literally have nothing better to do. I want the free entertainment – so sue me,” I said with a careless shrug.

“The last thing I need is a trigger-happy vampire getting in my way,” he bit back.

Eyebrows raising at his impudence, I took a fraction of a step closer. “So long as you keep your wet nose out of my face, I'd say we'll be just fine staying out of one another's way,” I countered flatly, the words concealing a threat.
Derek's jaw twitched, and he clearly wanted to argue, say something more against me, maybe try and bully me into not coming. But I was stubborn, and once I'd decided on something, no crabby little werewolf was going to change my mind.

“Do try to keep up,” I finished with a light, teasing grin, flashing him a wink before disappearing, leaving him in the dust. I heard his irritated and frustrated grunt as he fought to keep up, but I remained out of his reach. I decided to slow down the closer we got the the school, letting him catch up to me before we both stopped at the tree line to the lacrosse field.

The tension between us was thick, but I liked it. It was more entertaining than sitting at home alone – of that I was certain. I was running out of ways to starve off the boredom, and if playing babysitter to the new pup was going to help, I wasn't going to complain.

The rest of the lacrosse boys were running some kind of drill, but I wasn't interested in them. My eyes were on Scott, whom had just been bowled over by some other kid that stood over him, sneering down at the young wolf.

As if telepathically linked, Derek and I both slowly walked from the forest, closer to the game. We both knew that this would have a negative impact on Scott's mental state, meaning he was more likely than ever to lose control. We kept back from the field, watching them talk amongst themselves as Scott was told to try again. I let my bag slide off my shoulder, setting it on the ground by my feet.

My lips twitched with amusement as Scott ran at the other boy at full force, slamming into him and knocking him flat on his ass. My smile was quickly wiped away however, when I caught sight of his glowing eyes and fangs. I sucked in a sharp breath, watching as Stiles hurried to his friend's side, pulling him out of the sight of the crowd and towards the main building. “Follow them,” Derek growled from beside me.

I wanted to argue – I didn't like being told what to do – but I knew there was logic to his command. It would be suspicious for him to wander into the school for no apparent reason, but not me, I could get in without question, thanks to actually being a student there. I didn't want to play wolf's pawn, but the secrecy of our kind was at stake, so I nodded, ducking my head and trailing after the boys where they'd disappeared inside the building.

The door led through into the boys' locker room, and by the time I reached it, I was glad I'd put aside my ire and come, for Scott was up in the rafters, snarling down at a hyperventilating Stiles, who was backed into a wall, eyes wide in terror.
I appeared between them, holding my hands up placatingly to help calm the new pup down. “Hey mutt!” I yelled up at him, keeping steady and calm so I wouldn't transform myself. The wolf snarled at me, edging closer to the end of the rafter, preparing to launch off and attack. “Okay, I meant Scott,” I amended through gritted teeth, hands still held up in surrender, to show I wasn't a threat. “Calm down, everything is fine. You don't really want to hurt Stiles, and I'm not looking to hurt you, so why don't you just take a deep, calming breath and change back, okay?” I suggested smoothly.

But it didn't do the trick – apparently he didn't like something about what I'd said, and in a move too quick for human eyes to see, the teen wolf leapt from the rafters. Lips pulling back in a snarl, I slammed out a hand and caught him easily around the throat.

A pained, choking noise came from his mouth before I threw him backwards into a row of lockers. He dinted them where he slammed into the metal, and I pulled myself up to my full height, which was unfortunately several inches smaller than him. I didn't want to have to reveal myself, so I kept my lips pressed shut to conceal my fangs. He roared again, like a wild animal, picking himself off the floor and taking a run at me. I sucked in a deep breath, thanking my lucky stars he still had a helmet on, so there was no chance he could bite me. I dodged out of the way of his arm, sliding to the right and punching him square in the gut.

His hand shot out and he landed a slap across my face, sending me flying back into the wall. I growled deep in my chest, sliding to my feet and walking back towards him, hands clenched and ready to break some bones. Before I got close enough to do any damage, we were both hit with a face-full of the freezing cold spray from a fire extinguisher. We both pulled back, the urge to fight disappearing with the cold. I immediately turned to glower at the culprit, while Scott collapsed onto a bench, peeling off his helmet and letting his head fall into his hands.

“Nice, asshole,” I bit, brushing the thick coating of white powder from my jacket. “This had better not stain,” I added grumpily. Stiles gaped back at me, seemingly lost for words.

“Stiles?” Scott panted, back to being himself once more. “What happened?” he asked in a rasp.

“You tried to kill me,” said Stiles irritatedly, ripping off his lacrosse gloves and throwing them carelessly into the corner. “And you would have succeeded if Juliet hadn't gotten here in time,” he added sharply. I had a feeling that was meant to be some kind of a thank you, and felt uncomfortable, turning to lean against the wall, my arms crossed over my chest and refusing to acknowledge the words. “It's like I told you before, it's the anger. It's your pulse rising. It's a trigger,” said Stiles, patient and grave.
“But that's lacrosse,” Scott replied, a desperate tone to his voice. His fangs and glowing eyes were gone, replaced by the innocent face of a lost, scared little boy. He bowed his head as I watched, keeping my expression carefully schooled, giving nothing away. “It's a pretty violent game if you hadn't noticed,” he added, trying to sound jovial, but just sounding sad.

“Well it's going to be a lot more violent if you end up killing someone on the field,” Stiles responded, and really, the kid had a point. “You can't play on Saturday. You're gonna have to get out of the game.”

I automatically tensed as I noticed Scott's heart rate spike, silently preparing for another fight. “But I'm first line,” he tried to argue, but he already knew the truth.

“Not anymore,” said Stiles firmly, but there was still a tenor of compassion in his voice. He felt for his friend, who suddenly wasn't the boy he'd always known. He was something else.

Scott dropped his head into his hands again, and I watched him carefully. It would be all too easy for him to fall into another change. In these early stages, everything was so unpredictable, particularly for a pup so young.

“How did you know?” Stiles asked me suddenly, spinning in his place on the bench to pin me with a hard, bewildered stare.

I lifted up a single shoulder in a shrug, letting it drop, suddenly tired. “I saw it happen,” I told him, blinking down into his eyes from where I remained standing. It wasn't the whole truth, but at the same time, it wasn't a lie. “Just thought I'd lend a hand,” I added simply.

“Great,” said the human, voice layered with sarcasm. He stood to his feet, taking a step towards me, eyes narrowed in something like consternation. “So how about you answer a few questions for us?” I frowned at his words, tightening my crossed arms and cocking my head to the right. “That's right, your little intimidation tactic earlier didn't work on me,” he tried to snarl, but it was almost funny on a human, making it hard to take him seriously. “So, you tell me what you know, or I'll—”

“You'll what?” I snapped, allowing a dark, amused smile to spread across my ruby red lips. I took a step forwards, making the young teenager jerk backwards in an effort to keep away from me. Amused, I took another step forwards, then another, until the human was backing up like a child afraid of the boogeyman. “You'll do what, Stiles? Hurt me?” I asked sharply, backing him into the lockers, making him yelp as his back collided with the cold metal. “Don't think that just because I saved your sorry ass this time, that it means I won't tear your throat out with my teeth given the slightest opportunity.”
That threat held a lot more weight if he knew what I truly was, but it scared him just the same, his pupils dilated with fear, a slight sweat breaking out across his brow. My lips twitched up into a wholly satisfied smirk, and I happily backed off turning back towards a wide-eyed Scott.

“But – but I have so many questions,” he said, not quite a whine, but I wouldn't have faulted him for it. He was begging me, I could see that – but I just wasn't a charity kinda girl.

“Don't we all, kid,” I responded flatly, straightening my jacket and frowning at the white power from the extinguisher still staining it. With a thunderous looked at Stiles, I lifted my hand in a lazy salute, turning to leave the room.

“Please, Juliet,” Scott pleaded, grabbing my arm to stop me from stepping out of the room. I froze, looking down at the warm hand on my arm, marvelling at his nerve.

Ripping my arm from his grasp, telling him in no uncertain terms that touching me wasn't going to be allowed, I scowled and I once more turned to leave. “What if something happens?” it was Stiles that spoke up this time, and I looked over my shoulder at him in irritation.

“Excuse me?” I asked, wondering if that was some kind of pathetic attempt at a threat.

“What if Scott accidentally hurts someone, and we need help – your help? Supernatural help?” he asked bravely, feeling more confident as he spoke the words. “Help from another werewolf, I mean?” he pressed hopefully, and it was obvious now that they were growing desperate.

Although he was wrong about my species, he did have a point. It wouldn't be a bad idea for them to be able to contact me. If things went from bad to worse, I was their best bet at successfully covering up a murder, being the only one with experience doing just that.

I huffed, spinning back around and holding out a hand expectantly. Stiles looked between me and my hand, unsure what to make of it. He hesitantly stepped forwards, reluctantly slipping his hand into mine, then grimacing like the touch of my skin disgusted him.

“Ugh,” I snarled, ripping out of their grasp for the second time in as many minutes. “I meant for you to hand me your phone, dumb-ass,” I snapped at him, clicking my fingers impatiently.
“Oh!” the human blinked, red blotches appearing on his freckled cheeks as he turned around, clumsily cracking open a locker and pulling out a small, modern cell phone. I snatched it from him, frowning as I saw it was a touch screen. I was the clumsy one this time as I awkwardly slid my finger across the screen, trying to unlock it. “You just, uh, you swipe—”

“I've got it,” I hissed, finally succeeding in opening it. Then I stared at the phone with a bothered glare. I'd gotten ahead of myself. I wasn't familiar with his type of phone – I had no idea where to even begin to look for the contacts in it.

With a frustrated growl I handed it back to him, and the human took it cautiously. For his sake, I hoped I was imagining the amusement sparkling deep within his honeycomb eyes. Grumpy, I recited my number, watching as he punched it into the device, then saved and shut it with ease.

“That is for emergencies only. Are we clear?” I growled, staring across at the boy, a warning in the curl of my lip and the steel in my eyes.

“Crystal,” Stiles replied, flashing me a smile that melted away under the force of my glare.

“Thank you,” said a voice from my left, and I shifted my gaze over to where Scott stood, smiling at me awkwardly.

“Don't mention it.” I turned sharply on my heel and headed straight for the door, calling out over my shoulder, “I mean it, don't mention it. Ever.”

They mumbled agreements, but I was already through the door and making my way back towards the field, uninterested in anything else they had to say.

The next day was, by comparison, better. I actually slept, and woke up feeling awake and alert. I skipped breakfast, deciding I'd just feed that night after school instead. However, when I got home that afternoon, I realised I only had one blood bag left. Cursing myself for being so stupid, I dressed inconspicuously and went straight to the hospital.

I'd lived in New York before this, on the Upper West side. There we used taxis to get around, there was no need for me to own a car, so I didn't have one now. I pondered perhaps going down to the dealership and buying something once I'd moved here, or maybe compelling one off of somebody,
but for now I could walk. At the very least, it helped me to clear my mind.

I stepped through the automatic doors of the hospital, wrinkling my nose at the smell of death and disinfectant. I walked past the front desk like I belonged there, my head held high. I'd been here enough times to know where the blood bank was, and navigated the halls easily, slipping past doctors and patients alike until I made my way into the small, chilled room.

“Can I help you?” the nurse at a desk against the far wall asked, standing from her seat to greet me, a scowl on her bright pink lips, as though expecting some kind of trouble.

I walked forwards, keeping my eyes locked onto hers and drawing her in. Keeping our eyes locked, I blindly handed over my empty bag. “You're going to fill this with blood bags,” I ordered her without pause.

“I'm going to fill it with blood bags,” she droned monotonously, pupils contracting as she spoke.

“If anyone asks any questions, you'll tell them it was a paperwork mishap and all the bags are accounted for.”

“I'll tell them they're all accounted for,” she repeated, utterly mindless. A smile flickered to life on my lips and I blinked, effectively breaking the connection. She looked down, shaking her head once or twice to steady herself before turning around to complete her task. I watched her carefully, also monitoring the door to make sure nobody entered the room while she was filling the bag.

She finished, shutting the freezer door and moving back over to me, holding out the bag full of blood. “You'll forget I was ever here,” I commanded her as I turned to leave.

I didn't wait to hear her repeat it, simply moving through to the hall and making my way out to the entry. I was just passing the front desk when I got hit in the face with a mouth-watering scent that was quickly becoming familiar (much to my displeasure).

“—I always thought that we had this kinda connection...” I heard his voice say and I paused, glancing over my shoulder to watch the boy flounder as he talked to a pretty girl I vaguely recognised from school. “You know, unspoken, of course...” I smirked, smoothly sliding into a seat around the corner, crossing one leg over the other as I watched the scene before me unfold. Watching this kid make a total fool of himself? Now that was what I called entertainment. “Maybe it would be kind of cool to...get to know each other a little better,” he was still saying hopefully.
“Hold on, give me a second,” the girl's sweet voice said, and I listened to the rustle of her clothes as she moved. “Yeah, I didn't get any of what you just said. Was it worth repeating?” she asked callously.

“Uh – um...ah...no,” he stuttered, exhaling sharply. I bit my lip to smother a laugh. “Sorry. I'm gonna sit...you don't care, okay.”

He sat down heavily in the seat beside me, picking up a magazine and holding it upside-down in front of his face, merely staring at the glossy pages blankly, no doubt wallowing in his misery. “That was brutal,” I smirked, resting my chin on my hand as I watched him. He jumped out of his skin, hand grasping at his heart as it leapt in surprise. I wiggled my fingers at him playfully, enjoying the way that blotchy red blush spread across his mole-speckled face.

“Juliet,” he squeaked, rubbing a hand over his short hair. “Didn't see you there.” He glanced around awkwardly, heart still beating wildly in his chest. “You didn't, by any chance...uh...” he trailed off, not seeming to know how to ask.

“Hear every word of that truly tragic encounter?” I finished for him, a wide, sadistic grin playing at my lips. “'Fraid so.”

Stiles groaned, burying his face in the glossy cover of the magazine he still held, like he longed for the pages to open up and swallow him whole. My cruel grin melted away, replaced by a much more mundane smirk. He seemed to sense my ease, and looked back up at me curiously. “What're you doing at the hospital?”

Even as he asked his eyes drifted to my feet where I'd left my bag. The zip was open just an inch, and the top of a single bag of blood was visible within its depths. I kicked the bag with my boot, knocking it underneath my chair, concealing what I had hidden within. I told myself that he probably hadn't gotten a good look at what was inside, and even if he did, I doubted he was smart enough to draw the right conclusion from it.

“Just visiting,” I told him nonchalantly, deciding to forgo the compulsion this time around. I wouldn't have said I could trust him, but he was willing to keep his friend's condition a secret, so I figured he wasn't about to run off to the hunters to dob me in. Besides, he probably knew I would just kill him if he did. “What're you doing at the hospital?” I asked, head tilted curiously.

“Oh, well you see, Scott and I, we...” he trailed off again, scrambling to finish his excuse.
“Yes?” I prompted with wide, falsely innocent eyes, awaiting his response. I could tell from his hesitation that it was going to be good.

Scott appeared by our side, staring down at us with a crease between his eyebrows. “Finished, Stiles. We can go now,” he said shortly.

It was obvious that neither of them trusted me – fine by me, considering they weren't exactly on my Christmas list either. Besides, I wasn't looking for friends. They were the last thing I needed right now. I could tell Scott wanted to talk to Stiles alone, so I grabbed the strap of my bag, pulling it up onto my shoulder and standing to my feet. I didn't bother saying goodbye, just turned around and left. I knew they were up to something, I could tell by the way Scott's heart was racing and he was shifting his weight from foot to foot in anxiety.

I stopped just outside the doors, pulling out a cigarette and lighting it, leaning against the wall of the large building and listening to their conversation closely, sensitive ears piercing through the thin glass door separating us with ease.

They'd been here looking at the body that had been found, or at least, the half of the body. I cocked my head, listening as they whispered about how they thought Derek was the killer, and how they were going to get him arrested. I considered going straight to Derek to give the guy a heads up, but that wasn't my problem.

Derek wasn't my responsibility. He could handle a few teens sniffing around in his business, and if he couldn't, well then he probably deserved whatever he got.

I heard the two boys walking towards the exit, and I rounded the corner just as they stepped out onto the pavement, whispering about how they had to go to Derek’s burned down house that night to dig up the rest of the body.

I rolled my eyes at their narrow-minded thinking, stepping onto the road and crossing over towards the trees that bordered the hospital. There was the loud rumble of an engine, and I turned at the mouth of the forest, glancing over my shoulder in time to see a large, blue Jeep drive past me, Stiles and Scott inside.

Against the odds, Stiles’ eyes seemed to find me even in the shadows, and he stared at me as he passed. I was the first to look away, already disinterested as I turned towards the trees, blending into the darkness surrounding me and enjoying my lengthy walk home.
I was watching some old war documentary on the History Channel when I got the call. I'd just curled up under a pile of blankets on my couch and I had to sit up to reach it, doing so with a scowl. I picked up the old little thing, a Nokia I'd gotten back in 2005. The number calling wasn't programmed into my phone, but I wasn't surprised; very few were. I muted the TV and answered it begrudgingly.

“Juliet!” the worried voice of Stiles yelled through the speaker, and I frowned out of instinct, already regretting answering the call. If this wasn't a real emergency, I was going to key his car first thing in the morning.

“What do you want?” I asked, admittedly quite crabby.

“Scott's missing!” Stiles shouted back at me, in something of a panic.

I paused, frowning at my television uncomprehendingly. Black and white images moved on the screen before me, but they made no sense, my mind somewhere else all together. “What?” I asked Stiles, bewildered by his words.

“Look, long story short, we had some wolfsbane in the car with us and it got to Scott. He flipped out and when I stopped the car he just legged it – into the forest! I have no idea where he went.”

I'd gotten hopeful when I thought it might have been some kind of kidnapping – hunting down some bad guys to kill sounded fun – but instead Scott had a wolfsbane-induced panic attack, and just ditched Stiles to walk it off in the woods.

“Get Derek to help you,” I told him, already bored with the conversation, sinking slowly back into my pillows, lifting the remote, prepared to turn the volume back up.

“Ah, yeah...we kind of got him arrested,” Stiles told me, a wince in his voice. I snorted in loud amusement, finding the whole thing objectively hilarious. “Come on,” Stiles snapped, and through the connection I could hear the sound of tires rolling against the road. He was driving. “Will you just help me?”
“No,” I said firmly, already moving to end the call.

“Please, Juliet,” he pleaded over the line, and I paused, lifting the phone back up to my ear. “I'm begging you. Please,” he said, hopeful and sincere.

I ground my teeth together, breathing deeply and counting slowly to five. I didn't want to go traipsing through the woods with a human, looking for some new wolf pup I barely even knew. It wasn't my problem. But again, unbidden, that dangerous question floated through my head.

*What would Myra do?*

With an irritated huff, I spat my address over the line and promptly hung up. In the next breath I was in my bedroom, pulling on some jeans and sweater. I yanked a beanie on over my onyx hair, and reluctantly stuffed my feet into a pair of shoes.

I took my time tying the laces, because I'd gotten ready too quickly, and Stiles could only drive so fast. I was just stuffing my phone and cigarettes into my pocket when there was an impatient knock at my door. Then I was in front of it, cracking it open to stare at the human boy, unimpressed and still unhappy to be leaving the house for such a stupid reason.

Stiles paused, not seeming to know what to say. “So, uh, so this is where you live?” he muttered, looking past me and into my house. The lights were off – sometimes I forgot to turn them on at all, since I could see so well in the dark. He couldn't see much of the house, but he still peered around curiously, as though he'd discover all my secrets hidden in the shoe rack by the door.

“Obviously,” I drawled, dry and still utterly unimpressed.

“It's nicer than Derek's place, that's for sure,” he said, trying to make conversation for some reason I couldn't fathom.

Frowning in displeasure, I jerked my head towards his jeep where it sat in my driveway. “Are we going or what?” I asked, and he nodded, leading the way back to his jeep. I opened the passenger door, slipping into the car and cringing when I was enveloped in his mouth-watering scent.

“So, you can track him by scent?” Stiles asked me as he settled into the drivers seat, oblivious to my plight. The car started with a low rumble. “You can do that, right?” he pressed when I didn't
My nose wasn't quite as sharp as a wolf's, but I could manage some basic tracking. "Yeah," I told him with a nod he didn't see. Without asking I rolled down the passenger window, taking a deep breath of the fresh, uncontaminated air. "Take me to where you lost him," I said, squinting as the wind stung my sensitive eyes. "I'll track him from there."

He took a sudden sharp turn into a side street, clearly anxious to find his friend before he did something he'd seriously regret. Eventually he pulled up at a seemingly random place in the woods, and I stuck my head out of the open window, sniffing cautiously. I caught the familiar scent of wet dog and Scott's brand of deodorant.

"Okay," I said, gesturing for Stiles to drive on. He pressed his foot to the accelerator gently, moving the jeep forwards inch by inch. We continued along the path for a few minutes, until suddenly I lost the scent. "Stop," I commanded, barely waiting for the vehicle to come to a complete stop before cracking open the door and sliding out. I moved deeper into the woods, but not so far that Stiles couldn't see me. I paused, pressing my hand to a tree trunk that smelt faintly of werewolf. "He went up into the trees, I think," I called back to Stiles, who'd clamoured out of the car, waiting by the road side as he watched me, shifting his weight anxiously from foot to foot. "I can't track him like this."

The boy deflated, shoulders slumping in disappointment.

I pursed my lips, feeling like the right thing to do was console him, offer him some form of comfort. He blinked and I was standing in front of him. He jumped, startled by my sudden appearance. I lifted my hand, moving touch his shoulder but deciding at the last moment it was too awkward. "Uh, don't worry?" I said, though it sounded more like a question than a reassurance. I wasn't good at this sorta stuff. I never had been. "It's not a full moon, so he's probably not going to hurt anyone. He should still be in control," I added quickly.

He nodded, crossing his arms and leaning against the front of his car, staring out into the foggy woods. "More than anything I'm just worried about how he'd be able to live with himself if anybody did get hurt."

At one point, I wouldn't have understood that kind of logic. What did it matter if anybody got hurt? I'd spent centuries ruthlessly killing my way across America – and any other country that took my fancy – without a shred of guilt. It had been an indulgent sort of lifestyle, one that allowed for freedom and fun in a way humans would never understand.
However, now that I'd flipped my humanity switch – as it were – I supposed I could see what he meant. Loss of life could be tragic, in some ways. To be the cause of it was a large burden to carry, of that I was certain.

I wasn't too sure whether werewolves had the same humanity switch as us vampires did. Wouldn't everything be so much easier if they did?

I crossed my arms, mirroring Stiles' stance and turning my gaze to the lingering fog that draped the forest floor like a glowing, ethereal sea. “Maybe he just needs time?” I suggested, still a little awkward, but mostly just pensive. “The change can be overwhelming. He'll show up soon,” I added, distracted by the flow of my own train of thought.

“Did this happen to you?” Stiles asked, glancing over at me from under his lashes, as though sheepish to be asking at all. “Back when you were bitten?”

If there was ever a time to come clean, it was now. But the truth of the matter was, I just wasn't an honest enough person.

I pulled out the oldest trick in the book and changed the subject. “Come on,” I said, pushing myself off of his car and moving back around to the passenger seat, peeking up at the darkening sky. “It's getting late,” I added, glancing over at the trees, thinking briefly that the human wasn't safe out in these woods – who knew what kind of terrors were out there, waiting, watching?

Then again, I was overlooking the biggest threat of all; the one sitting right beside him in his jeep.

“Right,” Stiles muttered, walking around and sliding back into the driver's seat. The ride back towards town was silent, each of us lost our own swirling seas of thought.

I wandered onto the field the next day, cigarette in one hand, phone in my other as I made my way to the stands. I hadn't been planning on coming to the game – I didn't care for lacrosse as a rule – but an urgent text from Stiles made me reconsider.

*Found Scott. We're at the school. He's definitely playing. May need your help.*
I took a long drag from my cigarette and reluctantly took a seat on the stands. I wished, not for the first time, that I hadn't chosen this town to stay in. Things were so much easier back in New York. But then again, I hadn't had a soul back then, which made everything so much easier.

I wondered, yet again, why the human boy was suddenly leaning on and trusting me of all people? In his mind I was associated with Derek Hale, but he didn't trust the wolf as far as he could throw him. So what was different about me? The logic behind it baffled me, and I scowled to myself in confusion.

The lacrosse team slowly made their way onto the field, and I flicked the ash off the end of my smoke, watching them closely as the game began. Stiles plopped himself down on the bench, then looked over his shoulder, eyes scanning the crowd. I wondered who he was looking for, then was surprised when his eyes caught mine and lit up with relief.

I frowned, I didn't want the boy to get attached to me. It would only lead to heartache on his end when I inevitably either killed him or left town. Either way, if I continued to give him any kind of hope for a friendship between us … well leading him on was just as cruel as hurting him outright, wasn't it? So I didn't respond to his smile, simply letting my eyes slide past him like I hadn't even noticed he were there.

I watched the game disinterestedly, spending most of it just monitoring Scott's heart rate. It rose with all the running he was doing, but not high enough to cause me worry. I wondered what I'd do if he turned right here on the field. I'd probably just fake a seizure or something to give Stiles a chance to get him to the safety of the tree line.

All in all, the course of the game was pretty boring. The home team was losing by two and Scott had yet to catch a single ball. I was getting plenty of dirty looks for not cheering when our team miraculously got a goal, but I couldn't have possibly cared less.

I looked down at my phone, barely paying attention to the game when suddenly a cheer spread through the crowd. I glanced up, blinking at the field in surprise as I watched Scott dart out of the path of the opposing team, dodging their advances and sprinting to the other end of the field, aiming and shooting, the ball sailing from the crosse and into the net. I pursed my lips, focusing my full concentration on the game. From there things only got worse, from my perspective, at least.

It seemed like Scott was keeping things under control, at least that was until he turned towards the crowd and I caught a glimpse of his glowing amber eyes. I stood abruptly, walking through the cheering crowd until I made it to the bottom of the stands.
I stormed over to Stiles, forgetting that I was supposed to be ignoring him. “What the hell is he doing?” I asked, and he jumped violently when he noticed I was sitting on the bench beside him, not having heard me approach.

“Uh, winning us the game?” the boy replied once his heart had calmed down.

“You realise there's a hunter in the crowd,” I hissed back, keeping my posture casual and relaxed, the last thing I wanted to was alert anybody that something was wrong. We both glanced to the field, pausing our conversation as we noticed Scott freeze, glancing around wildly.

Stiles jumped to his feet. “No, no, no,” he muttered, grabbing his head worriedly. Everything stopped as we watched, waiting to see what he'd do. With one mighty swing of his arm he brought his crosse back, throwing the ball directly into the net. “Yeah!” Stiles screamed in triumph as the horn sounded, signalling the end of the game. I continued to keep an eye on the boy as the crowd poured down from the stands to congratulate the team. “Whoo!” Stiles yelled again, throwing his arms into the air. Some of the teammates ran towards him, clapping him on the back before moving on to celebrate with the next person.

Somebody's arms wrapped around me and I looked over my shoulder at the player in a red jersey. I scowled and shoved the stranger off of me, wiping the sweat he'd transferred to my hands off on my jeans with a low grunt of annoyance.

Soon enough the stands were clear of people, and I stood to leave. As I made my way off the field, I caught a snatch of a conversation between the sheriff and somebody on the other end of his call. I paused by the tree line as Stiles' father was told about Derek Hale's release. He hung up the phone with a heavy sigh, moving over to his son and mumbling what he'd found out. Stiles stepped back with wide eyes and his head shot to the direction I'd walked off in. It was impossible for him to see me in the dark, but I felt as though he met my eyes, heart pounding wildly in his chest as he turned and darted back towards the locker rooms where I knew he would be telling Scott what he'd heard.

“How was your time in the slammer?” I asked aloud, fishing a cigarette from my bag and lighting it up, resting my weight against a thick tree trunk and not bothering to glance over my shoulder at the wolf whom had padded up behind me. “Get any prison tattoos?” I added in a sneer.

“You could have gotten me out,” he grumbled back sourly, stopping beside me and staring out at the crowd of people slowly leaving the field. I could sense the weight of his concern, and knew this whole situation was probably worse than I even knew.

“I didn't care enough to try,” I told him honestly, lifting one shoulder in a halfhearted shrug. I felt
more than saw Derek scowl, and the usual smirk appeared on my lips as I turned to leave. “You'd better get rid of the evidence Scott left behind,” I told him, gesturing to the glove laying on the now-empty field. He didn't respond, but I didn't care. I turned, striding off into darkness like I were a hero and it were the sunset.

This was where I belonged; alone in the shadows, where it was easy to keep from hurting anyone. Where it was easy to keep my promise to Myra.
Something's Gotta Give

Wake me up

Say enough is enough

I'm dying to live

Something's gotta give

Pull me out

Of this sinking town

I'm dying to live

Something's gotta give

Something's Gotta Give – All Time Low

Things were normal the next day. Being the weekend, I spent it at home, lounging around indulging in alcohol and blood, watching shitty TV and listening to old jazz records. It was a bummer when Monday came back around, but I knew my little slice of isolation couldn't last forever.

Walking into school that morning, I definitely hadn't been expecting to see one of the school's buses with its back door ripped completely open, blood covering the tacky yellow paint like street art covered the downtown walls. I couldn't get too close without arousing suspicion, but I knew I'd have to look into it. I figured Stiles would probably know something about it, what with having the sheriff as his father and all.

I made my way to class as usual, stepping through the door to chemistry, taught by class-a douche-bag – Mr Harris. I strode past him without so much as a blink of acknowledgement. I moved down the aisles between the tables and slouched into my seat at the back of the class. I shared this period with Scott and Stiles, and while I could usually tune them out, this particular time I couldn't help but listen in on their hushed conversation.

“Maybe it was *my* blood on the door,” Scott muttered to his best friend anxiously, twisting a pen in his hands.
“Could have been animal blood,” Stiles suggested optimistically. “You know, maybe you caught a rabbit or something?”

“And did what?” Scott asked and I tuck a piece of my raven hair behind my ear, turning so I could hear them slightly better.

“Ate it,” said Stiles slowly, like his friend was an idiot.

“Raw?” the young werewolf gasped, as though horrified at the thought. I smirked at his innocence.

“No, you stopped to bake it in a little werewolf oven,” drawled Stiles with the utmost sarcasm. A laugh bubbled up from my chest, spilling out of my lips before I could do anything to stop it. The sound was louder than I had anticipated, making the whole class, teacher included, turn to look at me. I clicked my tongue awkwardly, then cleared my throat and turned to stare at the board resolutely, acting like nothing had happened. I caught a glimpse of Stiles grinning in my peripheral vision and pressed my lips together firmly.

“Mr Stilinski, if that's your idea of a hushed whisper then you might want to pull the headphones out every once in a while. I think you and Mr McCall would benefit from a little distance.”

“No,” Stiles argued, only to be shut down by our dragon of a teacher immediately.

“Let me know if the separation anxiety gets to be too much,” he drawled, pointing at them to move to opposite sides of the room. They sighed, picking up their things and walking over to their new desks. Scott wandered up to the front of the room, while Stiles moved back towards me. I mentally crossed my fingers, hoping he wouldn't chose the spare seat beside me.

Unfortunately, I wasn't a very lucky vampire.

“Hey partner!” Stiles chirped as he slid into the seat next to me, dropping his things on the table in front of him. I blinked back at him impassively, deciding it best not to respond. I turned back to the page in front of me, picking my pen up and going back to my idle drawing. “Wow,” he breathed, scooting his chair closer to mine and bending his neck to look at my work. “That’s amazing. Have you had art lessons?”

Yeah, a hundred and fifty years ago.
I kept my mouth shut, studiously ignoring him as I continued to sketch the mane of a mighty lion. “Do you think you could draw me?” he asked loudly, leaning so far over in his seat that he nearly toppled over, and would have fallen flat on his face if I hadn’t shot out an arm to steady him.

“Mr Stilinski,” Mr Harris sighed loudly, as though Stiles were shaving weeks off his lifespan with every unnecessary comment made, turning back around the face the class and crossing his arms. His beady little eyes narrowed in on Stiles, whose cheeks flushed a tantalising red. “Do I need to move you again?”

“No sir,” Stiles responded, ducking his head and focusing his attention on the textbook in front of him.

A minute of tense silence past, then some girl with a fake tan in the front row was shouting, “hey! I think they found something!”

Everyone leapt from their seats and ran over to the windows, peering out of the glass curiously. I rolled my eyes, propping my feet up on Stiles' vacated chair and continuing my sketching.

“That's not a rabbit,” Scott muttered worriedly. I wasn't concerned, chances were it was the alpha that had made such a mess, not Scott. Even if the boy was a werewolf, he was new at it and barely knew his head from his ass. I knew I could take him in a fight, no question, so I didn't let it bother me. If I needed to know, I'd find out from one of the deputies later on. For now I just needed to focus on getting the tail of my lion just right.

Whatever they saw scared them, because everyone in the group jumped back, letting pathetic little screams out of their pathetic little mouths. I didn't so much as flinch, rolling my eyes and ignoring everything they were muttering about, focusing my hearing on Scott and Stiles, who'd broken away from the group and were mumbling between themselves in a corner. “So this is good. He's not dead! Dead guys can't do that.”

“Stiles,” Scott breathed, staring out the window with a stricken look on his face. “I did that.”

Interesting. The boy seemed to be under the impression he was the one to do it. And by the furtive glance Stiles shot me, I knew they were going to come to me, expecting answers.

They took longer than I anticipated to corner me, taking seats at the empty lunch table I'd scored
myself, glaring away anyone who tried to take the seat opposite me. Scott slid into the spot in front of me and Stiles appeared beside me, placing his tray on the table with a rattling thud.

“What?” I asked flatly, despite already knowing what they were going to say.

“Scott seems to be under the impression he was the one to attack that guy on the bus last night, because he had a dream that something like it happened to him. Can you tell him he's wrong please?” Stiles said in one long breath, turning in his seat to face me fully, eyes wide and pleading.

I tapped my hands on the empty metal table in front of me, not having bothered to keep up with the charade of eating food. “How the hell should I know?” I asked rudely, frowning at the pair of boys in displeasure.

“Um, because you're also a werewolf?!” Stiles very nearly yelled the words, and a group of seniors at a table over spun around to stare at us as if we were part of a travelling freak-show.

I cringed, crossing my arms and glancing over at Stiles with a disapproving scowl. “Say it louder, why don't you?” I drawled through gritted teeth. “I don't think they heard you over in Connecticut.”

He pressed his lips together like he were holding back a retort and I rolled my eyes in sheer exasperation, starting to think maybe Harris was onto something about Stiles shortening his lifespan.

“Look, is there anything I can do?” Scott asked from across from me, and I broke my stare at Stiles to look at him flatly. “Something to help me remember what happened?” he added hopefully.

I was old – older than these children could even grasp – but I was a vampire. The amount I knew about werewolf lore was sketchy at best. In the supernatural underworld, our two species were famous for not getting along. We didn't make it a habit to study one another's biology; not if we could help it.

But he was staring at me with those big, puppy-dog eyes; so lost, so alone in this new, terrifying world that he'd been dragged unwillingly into, and I knew that I couldn't just ignore him completely. I had to throw him a bone – pun absolutely intended.

“You want my advice?” I asked, cocking my head.
“Yes!” he cried, desperate.

“Talk to Derek Hale.”

Neither of them liked this answer very much, both of them giving loud groans of annoyance. “Could you, just for once in your life, actually be helpful to someone other than yourself?” asked Stiles in a tired voice, as though I were being incredibly taxing.

I clenched my jaw in an effort to keep from flashing him my fangs, and it was silent for a moment as Stiles cracked open his yogurt and Scott bit into an apple. “You're not hungry?” Stiles asked after he'd swallowed a mouthful, gesturing to the empty table in front of me.

“Why?” I asked, unable to stop that smirk that spread across my lips this time. “You offering?”

His face twisted into a confused frown but before he could comment, a somewhat-familiar red-headed girl slammed her tray onto the surface of the table, plopping confidently into the seat beside Scott. People began to flood the table, and I scowled, scooping up my bag and sliding from my seat, letting a good looking younger boy take it, moving over to the doors and stepping out into the sun before Stiles had even noticed I'd gone.

I wasn't expecting anyone to knock at my door at nine o'clock that night. I thought nobody even knew I lived there, except for Stiles. But as I opened the door, I regretfully remembered the only other person I'd given my address to.

“Derek.” I greeted him amicably, leaning in the doorway and watching as he shoved his hands into his pockets, a scowl on his lips.

“We've got to go question the driver who was attacked,” he told me in an utter dead-pan, his expression not even twitching. He turned away, moving down my porch steps and making his way back towards his car, which was parked out front of the house. It was a solid a beat before he realised I wasn't following him, turning around to stare at me exasperatedly. “What are you doing?” he asked in annoyance, still scowling at me through the darkness.
“Waiting for you to grow some manners,” I responded tightly, crossing my arms and returning his stare with an obstinate one of my own.

He blinked at me, eyes narrowing. “You want me to say please?” he asked, the look in his eyes telling me he was beginning to regret showing up at all.

“Yes,” I said, maddeningly stubborn.

The werewolf huffed, tipping back his head so his face was turned to the sky and closing his eyes as though he were praying for patience. “Please come with me to question the driver,” he muttered reluctantly, voice so quiet I wouldn't have heard it if I weren't a vampire.

I grinned with false brightness, reaching my hand inside my door to pull my old Harvard hoodie from where it hung on the back of the door handle. I wasn't cold, but I knew it was meant to be a cold night, and walking around without a jacket on would look suspicious. I shrugged it on over my t-shirt and closed the door, shoving my hands in the pocket at the front and meeting Derek at his car.

He started the engine, and it gave a low purr before he pulled out onto the road, the ride nearly silent. “Why come to me at all?” I asked, an understandable question. “I'm sure you can handle a simple interview without a big, strong girl like me there holding your hand the whole time,” I finished with a derogatory pout.

Derek’s hands tightened on the steering wheel, but he otherwise didn't react. “Things will go a lot smoother if you just do that mind control...thing that your kind can do,” he said with a curl of his lip, telling me exactly what he thought of my little talent.

“Oh, so you can think it's disgusting and immoral all you like, until you actually need it for something, right?” I bit back at him irritably. “Typical wolf,” I spat, focusing the power of my glare out the window, where it was swallowed up by the passing houses of quiet, sleepy suburbia.

Derek's pulse stuttered with anger, but he had a tight control, getting it back down to its usual pace within moments, and I was content to pretend it hadn't happened.

The car began to slow down, and I sat up, knowing we hadn't reached the hospital yet. “Why're we stopping?” I asked tightly, muscles coiled in preparation for a fight.
“Because cars need fuel,” grunted Derek as he turned off the engine, and I realised we were stopped at a gas station. I relaxed minutely, slowly letting my tense muscles uncoil.

Derek slid out of the car, moving to the back of the car to pump the gas.

I leaned forwards in my seat, messing idly with his radio. I didn't know how it worked, and all the buttons looked the same, and while I tried not to break it accidentally, I also held the opinion that, if I did, it certainly wouldn't be anything for me to cry over.

There was the low grumble of another engine, and I looked up from where I was struggling to change the radio station to see a large, hulking blue car pull into the gas station opposite me. I frowned at the vehicle, the expression deepening when I heard the sound of tyres on gravel from behind me too. I knew immediately that we were surrounded.

At first I assumed they were probably part of a gang that Derek owed money to or something – he sure seemed like the type to get in over his head in gambling debt – but my stomach swooped in unmistakable panic when the hunter – Allison's father – from the other night slid out of the car. Derek looked between the older male hunter and the ones getting out of the other car, slowly and deliberately putting away the gas pump.

I cracked open the passenger side door, setting my sneakers on the hard, gravel-coated ground and slipping from the car. I shut the door quietly behind me and my eyes flickered between each of the hunters boxing us in. My fists clenched in anticipation of a fight, nails biting into my own skin.

“Nice ride,” Argent said with a smug sort of a smirk, stepping closer to Derek's sleek black car. “Black cars though, very hard to keep clean.” He slowly ran his hand up the side of the car as he strolled closer to the bristling wolf. “I would definitely suggest a little more maintenance. You have something this nice, you wanna take care of it, right? Personally, I'm very protective of the things I love.” I watched with crossed arms as he picked up the window washer from the bucket, running the wet side over the glass of the windshield. “That's something I learned from my family, and you don't have much of that these days. Do you?”

I heard Derek growl under his breath, his body tensing as he prepared for a fight. “Derek,” I said tightly, a warning. All of their eyes snapped to me, and I winced internally. Externally, however, I was expressionless, stony faced with my chin held high.

“Juliet Cooper, right?” Argent said, that ugly, smug little smirk on his face boasting that he knew my name. He paused the cleaning job he was undertaking to look at me fully, blue eyes scanning the length of my body, but not in a sexual way. He was looking at me like a hunter watched their
prey, looking for weaknesses. I didn't intend to show him mine. “I haven't heard much about you yet,” he said, the words a threat. “But I'm sure you can understand what I'm talking about.”

My gums tingled, and I was just itching to flash my fangs, but I swallowed the urge. As far as I knew they were operating under the assumption that I was a werewolf, which for me, was definitely a good thing.

“There you go, then,” he smiled when I nodded, dropping the window washer into the bucket and dusting off his hands. “You can actually look through your windshield now. Doesn't that make everything so much clearer?”

The egomaniacal hunter turned to leave and I felt anger swell up within me. Who gave him the right? I couldn't care less about Derek on a personal level, but we were part of the same club, if you would, and I sure as hell wasn't about to let this guy threaten a members of my club while I was standing right there.

But Derek could take care of himself. “Forgot to check the oil,” he said, tone dripping with condescension.

I smirked wickedly, fingers just itching to play. “And the tyres,” I added sweetly.

Argent paused, his whole body seeming to freeze, but when he turned back around it was with a smirk set onto his face like concrete. “Check the man's oil and tyres,” he said lightly.

A man from behind us moved forwards and without warning slammed the butt of his gun into the window, smashing it to pieces. I didn't flinch, I never flinched. I just stared back at him, wishing I could justify snapping his worthless little neck. It would be so easy – my mouth began to water as I imagined the beautiful sound the bone would make as it cracked in two. “Looks good to me,” said the goon with a smug little smile that I desperately wanted to punch off.

“Drive safely,” said Argent in a saccharine kind of voice.

The humans all slid back into their cars and left us there, alone. Derek growled, loudly this time, the sound reverberating around us as he slammed his hand against the back of his car so hard I was surprised it didn't dent.
“Where the *fuck* do they get off?” he snarled, the words dripping with loathing. I wasn't very good at handling people's emotions, and I certainly wasn't going to coddle the wolf after that display, so I merely shrugged and cracked open his passenger side door, leaning over to brush off the glass off the seat. It rained onto the ground with a thousand tiny little *pings*.

“Go pay for your gas,” I told him, barely wincing as the a shard of the glass cut into the palm of my hand.

Derek muttered some delightfully colourful profanities under his breath as he turned on his heel and stalked into the gas station. I finally got the majority of the glass off the seat, turning my hands palm-up so I could stare at my bloody hands. Slowly but surely the cuts healed themselves, although it still left blood smeared on my pale skin. I wiped it off on my dark jeans, jumping back into my seat and kicking my feet up onto the dash, waiting for Derek to come back out.

“No,” he dead-panned when he reappeared, sliding back into his car, looking more calm than he had been when he's left. “Feet off my dash,” he barked, and I pouted.

“Killjoy,” I muttered even as I obeyed, sliding my feet down and crossing my legs. The rest of the ride to the hospital was made in silence, Derek trying very hard to control his simmering rage and myself ignoring Derek's simmering rage to the best of my ability.

By the time we got to the hospital I was already wishing I'd stayed home, but I knew it was important we did this. I needed to find out who the alpha was and kill him if I ever wanted some peace and quiet in this fucking, godforsaken town. We strolled passed the main desk like we owned the place, not making eye contact with anyone as we slipped into the victim's room.

We paused in the doorway, eyeing the man who lay in the bed, broken and bruised, struggling to recover from the attack.

“Quickly,” Derek urged me, turning to keep watch by the door.

I crept towards where the bloodied man lay in the bed, his eyes clenched tightly shut. I stared at him, letting my voice fall flat as my power of persuasion did its magic. “Open your eyes,” I commanded him tonelessly.

His eyes snapped open and he stared unseeingly up at the ceiling, my puppet to control.
“What do you remember?” I asked him in a croon, but instead of answering, his eyes slid past me to where Derek stood at the door.

“Hale,” he wheezed suddenly, staring at Derek with horror in his reddened eyes.

“How do you know me?” the beta demanded, abandoning the door and surging forwards to stare down at the injured man properly.

“I'm sorry,” he spluttered, like it pained him to talk. “I'm sorry.”

I frowned, leaning back over his face to make our eyes meet. Some people could resist if we tried to control them from a distance, like over the phone. Once they looked in our eyes, however, there was no chance except vervain, but that stuff wasn't easy to come by, these days.

“What do you remember?” I asked him slowly, watching his pupils dilate and contract rapidly.

“Red eyes,” he breathed, heart racing in his chest. “Bright red eyes. And blood. So much blood,” he cried, red eyes flooding with overwhelmed tears.

“What else?” I pressed, catching his eyes again drawing him even deeper under my spell.

“He–he,” the man stuttered, then a wheezing, choking noise came from his throat, his pupils shrunk to pinpricks and he began to seize. I knew then that there was nothing more we'd be able to glean from his broken, battered mind.

“We need to get out of here,” I hissed at the werewolf beside me, spinning on my heel and grabbing him roughly by the collar of his jacket when he didn't immediately move. “Now.”

We were gone before anyone could see us, escaping out into the night, no remorse in our hearts, only anger at the alpha that caused all of this. We slipped back into his car, and within moments we were back out on the main road, travelling further and further away from the hospital and the only lead we'd had on the alpha's identity.

“They don't know you're a vampire,” Derek eventually said, breaking the tense silence that had
filled his car, each of us lost in our own tornados of thought. “They think you're a werewolf.”

I looked over at him, and knew he was referring to the hunters we’d encountered on our way to the hospital. “I know,” I said curtly, trying not to think of all the ways he could use this knowledge against me.

“It gives us an advantage, however slight,” he said, much to my surprise. I slouched in my seat, casting him a thoughtful glance.

“I suppose,” I allowed, turning my eyes back to the hidden moon, its glow just barely breaching the clouds that were holding it hostage. “At least if they come after me with wolfsbane, I'll be okay.”

“And that’s the most important thing,” he spat as though I were the most selfish creature on earth, and I utterly disgusted him. To his credit, I wasn't about to deny it. “We have to find this thing,” Derek said after a long moment as we came to a stop outside my house. It stood tall and silent in the night, and as I stared at it I realised that it was lonely. I didn't want to go back in there was just be alone again – but at the same time, hanging out with Derek in his car for any longer wasn't exactly a sparkling alternative.

His wording suddenly caught my attention. “Since when is it we?” I asked hotly. I did not like the idea of teaming up with the werewolves in this town any more than I already had. Already I wanted to shoot myself in the brain just to get a few minutes to myself.

“Since it killed that man,” insisted Derek with a note of passion to his voice that surprised me. He turned to look at me, green eyes piercing in the shadows of his car. “Since we know it'll kill again.”

“I'm a vampire,” I reminded him shortly. “What do I care if more people die?”

“If that were true, you wouldn't be helping me in the first place,” he told me, blunt and absolutely onto something.

I pursed my lips, deciding not to snap back at him and instead opening the car door, swinging around until my feet hit the road. “Contact me if you find anything,” I muttered over my shoulder, sliding out of his car and slamming the door shut behind me.
I stormed my way up the path to my porch, a stray cat on my lawn hissing at me and scurrying away. Once I was safely inside the house, I toed off my shoes and slipped off my hoodie, making my way up the stairs and turning up my favourite jazz record so loud that it drowned out my own thoughts.

That way I didn't have to listen to the voice in my head telling me that an empty, lonely home wasn't really a *home* at all.
“Juliet.”

I looked up from the textbook I was doodling in, frowning as I thought I'd heard somebody grunt out my name. I scanned the room, but nobody in my french class was paying any attention to me.

“Juliet.”

No, it was definitely coming from *outside* the classroom. In fact, it sounded kind of like...Derek?

“Juliet.”

I slammed my textbook shut, slipping it into my bag and standing smoothly from my seat. “Where do you think you're going?” the teacher barked, a stern scowl on her orange painted mouth. Strange colour to wear on her lips – but I could hardly keep up with the fads these days, they were too many, too confusing.

I glanced up lazily, catching her stare and holding it. “I'm leaving,” I told her. She blinked a few times, shaking her head as if to clear it before nodding at me in agreement, giving a vague wave at the door as if to encourage me forwards.

I stepped out into the hallway, glancing left and right for any sign of Derek, but the corridor was empty, no sign of the annoying wolf beginning to become something of a thorn in my side.
“Juliet.”

It was coming from a floor down. I walked to the stairs at a human pace, jumping down them as quickly as I could without looking suspicious before searching for the werewolf again. I took a breath in, my body freezing when I smelt blood. Luckily for him, he had werewolf blood; practically repulsive to my kind. It could sustain us in a pinch, but it was unappetising as all hell, and made us feel sick to boot.

I let the scent act as a sort of beacon, allowing it to pull me through the school towards the source. I rounded a corner and ran straight into a pale, sickly looking Derek Hale.

“Well, well, don't you look like death warmed up,” I piped callously, raising an eyebrow as I watched him lean against the lockers for support, eyes flicking to the blood dripping down his arm onto the linoleum floor, creating a trail that led right back to him. His skin was pallid and waxen, covered in a light sheen of sweat. I grimaced at the tangy scent of it in the air.

“Yeah?” Derek breathed, eyes narrowing in a halfhearted glare. “Well you actually are death warmed up,” he retorted, but the sound was weak, holding none of its usual flare.

Rolling my eyes, I didn't bother to comment. “What happened to you?” I demanded, thinking that that probably should have been my first question.

“I was shot,” he told me around a cough.

“Not wolfsbane,” I said grimly, hoping I was wrong. Derek winced, squeezing his yes shut tight against a wave of pain, and I knew I'd unfortunately been right. “Welp, it's been nice knowing you, Hale,” I said in a brisk farewell. I wasn't good with goodbyes.

Derek let out a low growl, and I froze. Again, those words followed me like a curse...

I sighed, deep and full of an ancient exhaustion. “What do you need?” I groaned reluctantly, like a child being told to share their toys.
“Get me … to Scott,” he wheezed. “Need him to … get antidote…”

Before he could finish his sentence, the school bell rang, and the wolf cowered against the wall, hands pressed to his head like the sound caused him agony.

All at once students began to flood the hallway and despite how much it disgusted me to touch him, I slid up beside him, wrapping my arm around his waist and heaving the majority of his weight onto me. He seemed relieved by the help, letting me practically carry him down the hallway.

“Let's get you out of sight before one of these kids spots your trail of blood,” I muttered, letting his feet drag along the ground so he at least appeared to be walking himself.

I pulled him out of the school, down the front steps and out onto the footpath, ignoring the way the sunshine sent daggers of pain through my head. There was no way I was going to be able to get him to the tree line before somebody noticed us. I was just beginning to grow concerned when I caught sight of a familiar buzzed head of hair sitting in the front seat of an equally familiar blue jeep.

“Come on,” I mumbled to Derek, pulling him out onto the road in front of the human boy's car.

Stiles slammed the breaks on, but not fast enough and his car slammed into my side. I grunted as I felt my ribs give way, cracking under the impact. Without thinking I let go of Derek, and he tumbled lifelessly to the ground.

I hissed in pain, grasping my injured side. Stiles leapt from his Jeep, rushing around to stare at us like we belonged in the nuthouse. “What the hell?” he asked shrilly, throwing his hands up in the air. He glanced down at his jeep, eyes widening as he noticed the dint in the front bumper. “You dented my Jeep!” he cried like I'd murdered his first born.

“You broke my ribs!” I snapped back, clutching my aching side. I felt a familiar heat spread across my middle, the one that I'd come to associate with my body’s healing process. I groaned as my ribs clicked one-by-one back into place, then glanced down at a barely-conscious Derek. Other cars began to back up behind Stiles' jeep, beeping at us in human impatience.

“What are you doing here?” Scott asked in a hushed voice, appearing beside Derek, bag slung over
his shoulder.

“I was shot,” he puffed in reply, holding his arm gingerly to his side.

“He's not looking so good, dude,” Stiles spoke up, wincing as he took in the blackened blood trailing down his arm.

“Why aren't you healing?” Scott demanded.

“I can't.” Derek coughed. “It was, it was a different kind of bullet.”


I snorted loudly while Derek shot the human the most exasperated look I'd ever seen in my life. “No, you idiot,” he growled, glowering at the boy from his place on the ground.

“Wait, that's what she meant when she said you had forty-eight hours,” said Scott in something of a eureka moment.

“What?” Derek grimaced. “Who said forty-eight hours?”

“The one who shot you,” Scott responded innocently. The older wolf's eyes began to glow a bright blue, and I leant further over him, blocking his face from view of the small crowd this display had garnered. “What are you doing? Stop that,” said Scott in a hiss.

“He can’t, genius,” I growled back. This was serious; we were getting dangerously close to exposure. “Now would you tow stop lollygagging about and help me get him into the goddamn car?”

“Lollygagging,” Stiles muttered to Scott in something like disbelief. “Who says that?”

But his friend wasn't even close to paying him any attention. “Derek, get up,” Scott was commanding Derek as strongly as he could, which wasn't very. He huffed, jumping to his feet and
moving around so he could get a better grip on the older wolf. “Help me put him in your car,” he ordered Stiles briskly.

Stiles looked like he wanted to argue, but I cut him off with a glare, reaching over to pull Derek to his feet in one scoop of my arm. I couldn't carry him myself – I was physically quite small, and it would make people suspicious. Instead Scott led him around to the passenger side and secured him in the seat. The person sitting behind Stiles blared their horn for the hundredth time and I flipped them off irritably, cracking open the back door and sliding inside without asking permission.

“I need you to find out what kinda bullet they used,” Derek mumbled to Scott while Stiles hurried to climb into the drivers seat.

“How the hell am I supposed to do that?” Scott asked, shrill with panic.

“She's an Argent. She's with them,” the older beta panted.

“Why should I help you?”

“Because you need me.”

Scott sighed, accepting defeat. “Fine, I'll try,” he said slowly, running a hand over his face as if already exhausted, before glancing back at the banked up cars behind the jeep. “Get him out of here.”

“I hate you for this so much,” Stiles grumbled, putting the car into gear and finally moving down the road. “I can't believe this is happening,” he muttered to himself, pulling out onto the main road and glancing at me in his reardown mirror. I wiggled my fingers at him and he exhaled sharply, turning his eyes back to the road. We drove in silence for a few minutes before Stiles took one hand off the wheel to dig in his pocket, pulling out a cell phone and handing it over to me. “Can you do something useful and text Scott, see where he is with finding the bullet?”

I bit my lip, looking down at the silver contraption in my hands. I pressed the button then slid my finger across the screen, frowning at all the multicoloured boxes within the glass.

“I'm sorry, is it too hard for you?” he asked with wide, mocking eyes as he noticed me frowning down at his phone silently.
“Shut up,” I murmured back, finding the little button that said messages and pressing it open. I picked Scott's name and beginning to type the message. It took me a few minutes as I, ironically, wasn't exactly the fastest typer in the world. Finally I sent it and only a few moments later a text came through. “Need more time,” I read out before sliding the phone back into Stiles' waiting hand.

“Hey, try not to bleed out on my seats, okay?” he spat at Derek as the wolf began to peel off his jacket, clutching his wounded arm in pain, sweat covering his face. “We're almost there.”

“Almost where?”

“Your house?”

Derek spun around to look at the boy in alarm. “No, you can't take me there.”

“I can't take you to your own house?” Stiles asked in disbelief.

“Not when I can't protect myself.”

“Juliet can protect you,” he said like it were the most simple solution in the world. I scowled at the implication that I'd ever put myself in danger to protect a mutt.

“I'm not putting my life in her hands!” snarled Derek like the very suggestion were insulting. I scowled at him, nails digging into my palms.

Stiles slammed his foot to the brake, bringing the car to a stop as he veered off to the side of the road. The jeep jerked to a stop, and I caught myself on the back of the front seat, wincing at the blow.

“What happens if Scott doesn't find your little magic bullet?” Stiles asked loudly, turning around in his seat to face Derek fully, a furious, exasperated look on his face. “Hm? Are you dying?” he asked mockingly.
“Not yet,” panted the wolf. “I have a last resort.”

“What do you mean? What last resort?!” Stiles yelled, staring back at him and waiting for an answer I was confident wouldn't come. Derek pulled back the sleeve of his shirt, revealing the bullet wound in his forearm, caked in blackened blood. “Oh my God, what is that?” Stiles gagged, having a hard time stomaching the sight. How very human. “Ew, is that contagious?” he coughed. “You know what? You should probably just get out.”

“Start the car. Now,” growled Derek.

“I don't think you should be barking orders, what with the way you look,” Stiles replied sharply, and I snorted at the thinly veiled dog pun. “In fact I think if I wanted to, I could probably drag your little werewolf ass out into the middle of the road and leave you for dead.’’

I smiled, amused by his little threat. It was kind of cute.

Derek growled, the sound a promise of violence. “Start the car, or I'm going to rip your throat out with my teeth,” he said, then paused, glancing over at me. “Or better yet, I'll have her do it. And then you'll really be in trouble,” he added with a sadistic kind of pleasure.

Stiles swallowed thickly, his Adam's apple bobbing beneath the soft, translucent skin of his throat. He looked over his shoulder at me and I grinned wickedly, teeth on full display. Although he didn't know what I was yet, it was still enough of a threat to make his heart pound in his chest. His eyes flickered between us nervously for a long moment before he snapped his attention back to the front and started the engine, pulling back out onto the road.

We drove around aimlessly for a long while, a tense silence filling the cab of the jeep. Derek grunted every now and then from the pain, and I got bored pretty quickly, pulling out a book from my bag and cracking it open, beginning to read. Derek's laboured breathing was distracting, though, and eventually Stiles tossed his phone back to me. I snatched it out of the air with ease, looking down at it apprehensively. “Send another text to Scott, tell him Derek's not looking so good.” He had apparently also noticed Derek was getting was only getting worse by the minute.

Again, it took me awhile, but I did as I was asked. “I'd give you some blood, if it wouldn't kill you,” I told Derek offhandedly, tossing Stiles' phone onto the seat beside me.

“Even if it wouldn't kill me, I wouldn't accept it anyway,” he retorted breathlessly, eyes clenched
tight as he fought through another wave of pain.

It was quiet for a moment before Stiles spoke up, tapping his thumbs against the steering wheel idly. “So, how do you two know each other, anyway?” he glanced at me in the mirror, brown eyes alight with curiosity. “Are you guys cousins or something?”

I blinked in surprise at the unexpected question. “We don't know each other,” I told him honestly, shrugging my shoulders and settling further into the back seat. The cab of the jeep smelt like mint gum and curly fries, an odd but not altogether terrible combination. “We met for the first time when you guys did.”

“What?” Stiles asked loudly, sounding stunned by the knowledge.

“It isn't a big deal,” I said, rolling my eyes and running a hand through my raven locks.

“Yes, actually, it is,” he bit back, flicking on his indicator as he made a right into a side street. “We've been operating under the assumption that the two of you have known each other and been working together this whole time.”

“Why would you talk to me then?” I couldn't help but ask, sitting up and shifting forwards, laying my arms on the seat dividing us to peer at the side of the boy’s face. “If you thought I was working with him, why would you trust me?”

He paused, frowning at the dark road in front of him like he wasn't sure how to answer. Finally, after a long deliberation that I got the feeling was out of character for him, he responded, “you know what they say; keep your friends close and your enemies closer.”

I sat back abruptly, crossing my arms and turning to glare out of the window. I didn't know why his answer bothered me so much, I had no idea what I'd expected him to say, and yet I couldn't help but feel somewhat disappointed. Maybe I'd been unconsciously fishing for compliments, and was just pouting that I'd gotten an insult instead.

I glanced up at the rising moon then at the large house we had just passed. “This is the fifth time we've driven past that house,” I told him sourly, refusing to meet his eyes in the mirror.

“Well, what else am I supposed to do other than circle the block?” he asked, his voice raised
I could feel him trying to catch my gaze, and couldn't help but think that if he knew what I was and what I could do, the last thing he'd want to do would be to meet my eyes. “You know what?” he said when he got no answer other than my stony silence and a pained grunt from Derek, “I'm ringing Scott again. Hand me my phone.”

I was about to snap that I didn't like being told what to do, but I knew it wouldn't help anything, so I kept my lips pressed shut as I handed him his phone back. He dialled his friend's number, holding the small cell up to his ear. I wondered distantly how exactly I'd gotten myself into this situation in the first place. It wasn't exactly how I'd been expecting to spend my evening.

“Scott!” Stiles shouted once his canine friend answered the call.

“Stiles, listen, you've gotta keep going a little longer, man,” I heard the teen wolf's voice say on the other end, and I scowled. He sure was taking his sweet time – wasn't like any of us had anything better to do with our time.

“What am I supposed to do with him?” hissed Stiles.

“Take him somewhere. Anywhere.”

“And by the way, he's starting to smell,” Stiles commented, throwing Derek a disgusted look. I sniffed tentatively, nearly gagging at the putrid scent that flooded my nose.

“Like what?” Scott asked curiously.

“Like death.”

“Huh,” Derek sniggered weakly, wincing as the movement hurt his arm but still taking the time to flicker his eyes to me. “That's ironic.”

“Hold your tongue before I rip it out, you mutt,” I hissed back at him, angered by his jab at my scent. Stiles' keen eyes flickered between the wolf and I, like he was trying to figure something out, like we'd just given him a clue to a puzzle.
“Okay, take him to the animal clinic,” Scott finally decided, voice hushed over the line.

“What about your boss?” Stiles asked, attention back on the conversation at hand.

“He's gone by now. There's a spare key in the box behind the dumpster.”

“You're not going to believe where he's telling me to take you,” he sighed, not seeming to realise we could hear every word as he handed the phone to Derek and pressed a hand to his head as though trying to rub away a headache.

“Did you find it?” Derek asked the moment the phone was pressed to his ear.

I ignored the rest of that conversation, tuning out the sound of their overlapping voices. I tried not to think about how Stiles' had so quickly labelled me as an enemy. I supposed, at the root of it all, I was still a vampire; no matter how I tried to dress it up, I would always be their enemy. It was just my cross to bear.

We reached a small building proclaiming to be the veterinary clinic, and the car had barely rolled to a complete stop before I was stepping out into the light mist of rain that had slowly fallen over Beacon Hills.

Out here Derek's putrid scent was easier to ignore, and I took a deep breath of the clean air.

Derek tumbled out onto the road after me, and with an irritated huff I appeared beside him, reluctantly hefting him up so he didn't crumple to the floor like an invalid. I may not have had any personal stake in Derek's wellbeing, but he was a supernatural creature, and despite being as opposite as night and day, I was going to help save him, if only to piss off the hunter that had done this to him.

Stiles turned off his jeep and rushed towards the dumpster, searching for the clinic's spare key. Once he'd found it, he shoved at the door and held it open while I dragged a sluggish Derek in after him. The wolf was barely able to stand on his own two feet, swaying where he stood. I wondered if he were going to lose consciousness.

He pushed away from me, shrugging off his top and casting it aside. I blinked as my eyes caught sight of his wound, black veins not unlike my own when my true face showed crept up his arm and
around his bicep, gruesome and familiar.

“You know that really doesn't look like anything a good night sleep couldn't take care of,” Stiles chimed awkwardly, smiling nervously and keeping his gaze away from the bloody wound.

“If the infection reaches my heart it'll kill me,” Derek panted, still swaying on his feet.

“Positivity just isn't in your vocabulary, is it?”

“If he doesn't get here with the bullet in time...last resort,” he breathed, pulling open drawers, clearly looking for something. I knew what he was talking about, sawing off the infected arm was the logical next step – but it was also the last thing I felt like doing. I didn't want to get blood on my hoodie.

“Which is?” Stiles asked cluelessly, not following the logic.

Derek finally found what he was looking for, holding up a small bone saw. “You're going to cut off my arm,” he told the human matter-of-factly.

Stiles froze, gaze flicking between the two of us as if trying to determine whether or not we were serious. “What?” he finally choked, blinking up at us, his face suddenly as pale and bloodless as mine. “Um, no,” he said, denial caking his tone.

“Oh my God,” Stiles gagged as he picked up the bone saw, eyeing it in distaste and clicking it on. It made a loud, mechanical whirr, and he hurried to drop it back onto the table in disgust. “What if you bleed to death?” he asked, desperate to find fault in the plan.
“It'll heal if it works,” Derek responded tightly, just as I finished tying the cord around his arm.

“Look, I don't know if I can do this,” murmured Stiles with an edge of panic.

“Why not?”

“Uh, the cutting of the flesh? The sawing of the bone? And the blood,” he gagged at the thought.

I let out one short laugh, pressing a hand to my mouth to cover the smile that spread across my lips.

“You faint at the sight of blood?” I asked in blatant amusement. He'd make such a bad vampire.

“No, but I might at the sight of a chopped off arm!” He glanced between us desperately, eyes wide and despairing, just praying that he wasn't going to have to do this. “Can't she do it? While I leave the room and save myself the trauma?” he asked hopefully, gaze flickering over to me.

I shook my head, stepping away from Derek and crossing my arms, keeping my eyes on Stiles, displeasure in them at being spoken to so crassly. “She has to hold him down,” I told him, voice layered with displeasure. “If I don't, he could smack you out of instinct and give you a concussion.”

“But – but…” Stiles desperately wanted to debate the issue, but he couldn't seem to come up with a worthy argument.

“How about this? Either you cut off my arm, or I'm gonna cut off your head,” Derek threatened the boy around a snarl. Despite how sick he looked, there was no doubt in either of our minds that it was a threat he could most certainly carry out, even in his weakened state.

“Okay, you know what? I'm so not buying your threats anymore—” before he could finished speaking, Derek reached across the table and grasped the front of Stiles's shirt, yanking him over the metal table, glare like steel, eyes like chips of ice. “Holy crap,” stuttered Stiles in a panic. “Okay, alright, fine. I'll do it.”

He jerked back suddenly when the wolf turned his head to the side, tipping his head over the end of the table and opening his mouth, a sticky black substance pouring from his lips and onto the ground. I jumped back, away from the mess, to make sure it didn't get on my shoes.
“Holy God, what the hell is that?” Stiles all but shrieked, cringing at the slimy black liquid now coating the floor.

“It's my body, it's trying to heal itself,” panted Derek.

“Well, it's not doing a very good job of it.”

“Now,” he panted, looking up at us pleadingly, his infected arm thrust forwards. “You've gotta do it now.”

“Look, honestly I don't think I can...”

“Just do it!”

I grasped hold of Derek's shoulders, pressing down with enough strength to keep him positioned on the table, but not so much that I cracked his bones. “Okay, here I go,” Stiles wheezed, picking up the bone saw and getting ready to hold it. It trembled in his hands, which wasn't particularly confidence inspiring. “I'm gonna do it,” he said bracingly.

“Stop announcing it, and just do it,” I snapped, still using all my supernatural strength to hold the werewolf in place. This was going to hurt like an absolute bitch, and for once I wasn't looking forward to the show.

“Stiles?” came a voice from the doorway. In the frenzy of it all, none of us had heard Scott arrive. He stood in the door now, a bemused frown on his face as he too in the barely-conscious Derek, me in a tank top, holding him firmly in place, and Stiles with a bone saw held out over his extended arm.

“Scott?” asked Stiles in surprise.

The younger wolf was panting from exertion, probably having rushed here to make it in time. “What the hell are you doing?!?” he demanded, seeming alarmed by what he'd walked in on.
“You just prevented a lifetime of nightmares,” Stiles chuckled, almost giddy, elated he wouldn’t be sawing off Derek's arm today.

“Did you get it?” Derek asked the pup quickly, his forehead pressed against the cool metal of the table below, probably trying to stave off the fever. Scott hurriedly dug into his pockets, fishing out a long, thin bullet and handing it over to the swaying werewolf.

“What are you going to do with it?” Stiles asked hesitantly, frowning at the small object, wondering how that would possibly be of any help now.

“I’m gonna—” Derek's words were cut off as his arms went slack and he fell, lifeless, to the floor.

I stepped back, giving him room to collapse. Scott and Stiles were gaping at his unconscious form in pure horror, thinking he was dead. But from inside his chest, his heart kept on beating. “He's alive,” I told them briskly. A relief, too, because I certainly didn’t feel like letting those dickhead hunters win on this night.

I also didn't wanna have to bury a body – it had been a long enough day as it was.

Scott scrambled after the bullet, which had fallen from Derek's slackened fingertips. “Come on Derek,” Stiles was muttering, dropping to his knees beside the collapsed wolf, shaking him violently. He sucked in a breath, preparing himself for something. “Please don't kill me for this.”

In a move that surprised nobody more than me, the human drew his arm back before thrusting it forwards, punching Derek Hale clean across the face. My eyes went wide and I let out a breathy laugh and the werewolf's eyes snapped open just as Scott scrambled back to him with the bullet in hand.

Derek coughed, pupils blown from the poison. I reached down, gripping the dying wolf by the hand and forcefully dragging him to his feet. He came without argument, swaying into the table once he was upright.

“Give it here,” he rasped, snatching the bullet from Scott's hand and twisting it open, tipping the dried wolfsbane out onto the table and then holding out his hand to me expectantly. Understanding what he needed, I fished my lighter from my pocket and handed it over to him, watching as he lit the small pile of wolfsbane on fire.
It lit up in flames for a moment, before they eventually died away. He brushed the ashes into his hand, then after taking a deep breath to steady himself, he pressed them against his wound. An agonised scream left his mouth and he held the ashes to the hole in his arm, collapsing to the ground for the second time that night.

We all watched as the ugly black veins climbing his arm like vines slowly began to fade, the bullet hole stitching itself back together, rather like magic. Everything was silent for a moment, all of us processing what had just happened.


“Are you okay?” Scott asked Derek in concern.

“Except for the agonising pain?” the wolf replied sarcastically, pushing himself into a sitting position, his signature grumpy scowl fixed into place.

“I’m guessing the ability to use sarcasm is a good sign of health,” murmured Stiles.

“We just saved your life!” Scott exclaimed suddenly, as if the words had been bubbling under the surface, just itching to explode out of him. “Which means you're going to leave us alone, you got that? And if you don't, I'm going to go back to Allison's dad and I'm going to tell him everything!”

Both Derek and I froze, glares setting on our faces like concrete. This wolf didn't understand our world at all – he didn't have the slightest clue what he was getting himself into. “You're gonna trust them?” Derek asked quietly, but thinly-veiled fury was clear in his expression. “You think they can help you?”

“Why not?! They're a lot freaking nicer than either of you are!” Scott cried back ardently.

Derek's lips twitched downwards into a frown, and he looked back at Scott, eyes utterly flat. “I can show you exactly how nice they are,” he promised darkly.

There was a beat. “What do you mean?” Scott asked cautiously.
“You have to come with me,” the older wolf said tersely, nodding to the door meaningfully.

“Don't do it Scott,” muttered Stiles, shooting a distrusting glare at Derek. Scott looked between the beta wolf and his best friend, seeming to be having a difficult time making his decision. I said nothing – this was the teen wolf’s choice to make, and honestly? I cared very little for the outcome.

Finally Scott turned to face Stiles, an apology in his eyes. “I have to find out what he knows, Stiles.” He tried to smile, but the expression fell flat. Stiles grimaced. “I'll see you tomorrow,” Scott said quietly, and Stiles’ shoulders slumped in defeat.

Derek led the way out, Scott trailing after him, casting one last weary glance over his shoulder. Stiles and I were silent, staring through the doorway after them long after the bell above the front door had chimed as they left. Eventually Stiles turned to me, shoving his hands in his pockets, looking awkward and uncomfortable. “Do you – do you want a ride home?” he stammered.

“I can walk,” I told him, cool and detached, brushing my hair off my face. I picked up the hoodie I'd abandoned on the far table, pulling it back on over my tank top, which thankfully remained unblemished by blood. I spun on my heel, heading for the door.

“What I mean,” Stiles said loudly, catching my attention and making me pause in the doorway, “is you don't have to. Walk, that is.”

I spun around, crossing my arms and fixing him with a suspicious look. “What do you want?” I asked confrontationally. He'd already told me I was the enemy; of course he wanted something from me. Somebody always wanted something. “Is it information you're after?” I pressed stubbornly.

“No,” he shot back defensively. “All I'm doing is offering you a ride. Geez.”

I narrowed my eyes at him, evaluating the look of innocence in his eyes and the steady beat of his heart. His sincerity didn't appear to be a farce. I didn't want to walk home, not with hunters roaming the town – it was risky, even for me – so I begrudgingly took him up on his offer. I nodded my head once, turning around and heading for the door, only to pause when he didn't follow me. “Well?” I asked impatiently over my shoulder. “Are you coming or what?”

Stiles blinked in surprise, giving a quick, sloppy nod and hurrying to rush to my side. We filed out
of the clinic, Stiles having the sense to lock the door and hide the key as we left. I climbed into his jeep, not bothering with the pretence of a seatbelt. The car rumbled to life beneath us and he edged it out of the parking lot and onto the main road.

“So,” Stiles began after a while, wisely keeping his eyes on the road. “If you didn't know Derek before you got to town, why did you come here? Were you looking for the alpha too?”

It could be perceived as fishing for information, but I knew that wasn't it. His heartbeat was steady, his tone sincere. He was only making innocent conversation.

I pursed my lips, briefly considering lying and telling him yes. But I decided the truth was easier; the more you told the truth, the less you had to remember. “No,” I admitted, turning in the passenger seat to glance at the side of his face. His heart picked up under my intense green stare, but he otherwise made no acknowledgement of my gaze. “I didn't come here for any specific reason. I just threw a dart at a map.”

“Huh,” he responded, and I realised he must have been cold as he moved his hand to the controls in the centre, turning on the heat. “Your parents just let you pick where to move to like that?”

I didn't tense up, I'd stopped doing that about a century ago. It didn't hurt as much anymore, though if I concentrated I could still feel the sting in my chest when I thought about them. “My parents are...long gone,” I told him distantly, peering out the window at the trees as they flew past.

“So, you live with like an aunt or something?” he assumed, taking a left into the industrial district to cut through the town, a shortcut to the part of town my suburb, and probably his, was located in.

“It's just me now,” I said dully, leaning forwards to press my forehead against the glass. I avoided taking a breath in, the boy's irresistible scent overwhelming me. It was easier to pretend I didn't want to kill him if I wasn't breathing.

“What, so you're like emancipated?” he asked, finally glancing over at me for a brief moment before returning his eyes to the road.

“Something like that,” I mumbled, my eyes flickering up to where the moon hung in the sky, glowing enchantingly.
I could practically hear the cogs turning in his brain, so I kept quiet and let him think. “How old are you?” he asked carefully after a long moment as he pulled into my street.

I was technically 203, physically 18, but legally – on my illegal documents – I was 16. I had to give him the most believable, and most untrue answer for the sake of my secret. “I'm 16,” I lied like it was second nature, and after all this time, it was.

“I don’t—” he began, but I wasn't interested in whatever he had to say, cutting him off as he rolled to a stop in front of my house, cracking open my door and jumping to the ground. I slipped a cigarette from my pocket, moving my little blue lighter up to light it. I took a drag, closing my eyes and letting the taste of smoke in my mouth distract me as I turned around, picking up my bag from the floor of his jeep. “See you at school,” Stiles said quietly.

I eyed him thoughtfully in the dark, his face lit up in the glow from his jeep's dash. “Okay,” I finally responded, the word curt and final, letting the door swing shut before making my way up my path to my porch steps. As I cracked open my unlocked door, I glanced over my shoulder at the boy in the car that still sat idle in front of my house. I frowned, in another life I might have thought it was sweet that he was waiting for me to get inside safely before leaving.

In another life.
I was late to school the next morning, but I hardly thought it mattered. By the time I reached the looming building I had missed most of chemistry, but if anything I considered that a bonus. I loathed Mr Harris more than I loathed any of the other teachers at this pathetic school. I figured I might as well skip the whole class, sneak in during the gap between classes and make my way to French. So I leant against the wall near the entrance, pulling out a cigarette from my bag and lighting it, taking a long, indulgent puff.

I was halfway through my stick, perfectly minding my own business, when secretive giggles came from the doorway behind me. I turned in time to watch as the werewolf-Scott and human-Allison hurried out of the school, hand-in-hand, grins on their faces like they were having the time of their lives.

“And just where are you two off to?” I asked loudly, tilting my head against the bricks and smiling in amusement as they flinched, spinning around the face me with guilty expressions, like two kids getting caught with their hands in the cookie jar.

“Juliet,” Scott greeted me awkwardly, rubbing the back of his neck with his free hand, sheepish and uncomfortable under the weight of my stare. “What're you doing out here?” he asked slowly.

“Smoking,” I responded flippantly, nonchalantly flicking the ash from the end of my cigarette.

They glanced at each other, deflating as they realised they'd been caught. “We were just heading back inside,” Allison sighed disappointedly, shooting me a smile that fell flat. They both turned to
head back into the building, heads hung in defeat.

I actually felt a surge of sympathy for the pair of them, and silently marvelled at the strange, alien sort of sensation. I wasn't used to experiencing such emotions – turning my humanity switch on had done more than I'd anticipated.

“Or you two could just, you know, sneak off to your car and go wherever it is you were planning to go,” I suggested with a smirk that gave away none of my inner turmoil. I took a slow, deliberate drag of smoke and blew it from my lips in rings that got bigger the further they floated further away.

“You won't tell?” Allison asked hopefully, her entire, gorgeous face lighting up in excitement.

“I won't tell,” I confirmed with another smirk, dropping what was left of my cigarette to the cement and stepping on it with the heel of my boot just as the bell rang from inside, signalling the change of period. “Now go, before someone with an actual, functioning moral compass spots you,” I shooed them away impatiently.

They both smiled at me gratefully, but I was uninterested in their gratitude, waving them off, and disappearing into the school. I wandered through the hallways until I got to my locker, and by the time I got there the bell had rung again and the halls were quickly emptying.

I keyed in the combination – my sister's birthday – and cracked it open, pulling my French textbook out and slipping it into my bag. Footsteps sounded behind me, and I detected a familiar, wet-dog scent that I now associated with strongly with a sense of irritation.

“Hello, Derek,” I drawled, letting my locker door slam shut and turning around to face him, shoving my hands into the pockets of my black coat, tilting my head and peering at him closely. He looked a far cry better from yesterday, when he'd stumbled into the school looking like death warmed up. He stared back at me, trademark scowl on his face. “Well?” I prompted impatiently when he didn't say anything, raising my eyebrows expectantly. “What do you want this time?”

He exhaled sharply through his nose, looking annoyed that he had to talk with me at all. I understood the feeling. “You have to compel Jackson Whittemore to tell us what he saw during the attack at the video store last night,” he told me flatly.

Wow; where to even begin?
“First of all, I don't have to do anything,” I reminded him, expression hardened into a ferocious glare. “Last I checked, I wasn't your trained monkey.” He exhaled sharply once more, crossing his arms to mirror my stance, scowling at me darkly, though it didn't so much as make me shiver. To a vampire as old as me, he just wasn't that scary. “Secondly, what attack at the video store?” I pressed, unbothered by his temper.

“The alpha, it killed a man at the video store last night,” Derek told me in a hiss that the humans loitering at the end of the corridor wouldn't be able to hear. “Don't you watch the news?”

“Not typically,” I murmured, brow furrowed as I considered what this meant. Either the alpha was getting reckless, desperate maybe, or he had a plan, one I couldn't even begin to understand.

“Well?” snapped Derek, and realising I'd been staring blankly into thin air, I looked up at him impassively.

“Well what?” I asked, blinking back innocently.

“Will you please,” he spat the word like it was a curse, “compel the boy for answers?”

I pursed my lips like I was considering his request, although really, I'd already made up my mind. “No,” I finally told him, hitching my bag up higher on my shoulder and heading down the corridor.

“What do you mean, no?” he asked with a confused frown, trailing after me reluctantly.

“I mean no,” I dead-panned back over my shoulder as I kept walking. He kept following me, and I got the feeling he was going to need a stronger argument than that if I wanted him to leave me alone. I rolled my eyes, wishing for patience as I slowed to a stop outside the library. “What?” I asked flatly.

“I thought you were going to help me find the alpha,” he said, trying very hard not to sound like he were whining.

“I am,” I assured him even as I let him see my irritated scowl. “But right now I have French class.”
He scoffed disparagingly. “You hardly seem like the type to care about that. What is this, your fortieth time going to high school?”

My eyes narrowed into tiny slits, but it wasn’t enough to make him back down. “It’s actually my first time at high school, believe it or not,” I told him sourly. That didn’t count my years at various colleges around the world. High school, however, was a new one for me. But I’d figured, the younger I pretended to be, the longer I could stick around. “So you can take your sanctimonious bullshit and leave now.”

His eyes tightened, but I remained unbothered, turning towards my class.

“I’d stop showing up here, too, by the way. It’s beginning to get a little bit creepy!” I added blithely over my shoulder. I heard his exhale of frustration, but happily ignored it, wandering down the empty hall in the direction of the French classroom.

French passed in a blur, and then maths, and then I was walking to History when Stiles jumped out in front of me, grasping my shoulders with his large hands and dragging me off to the side. I let him move me, not wanting to draw attention to myself by having him fall on his ass. I glared as he spoke.

“Have you seen Scott? I’ve been looking for him all day and I can’t find him anywhere. He also isn’t answering my texts, which isn’t like him at all…” He seemed to take note of my dangerous expression and glanced down at his hands, awkwardly lifting them off of my body and clenching them into fists as they dropped to his sides. “So, have you seen him?” he asked stiltedly.

“Yes,” I told him, pulling out yet another a cigarette from my bag and lighting it up. I expected him to comment on it, but he just rolled his eyes and surged forwards, more worried about his friend than my slew of bad habits.

“Well, where the hell is he?”

“He’s—” I began to say, but I got cut off by an unwelcome voice.

“Hey!” Mr Harris snapped from across the hall. I turned to him with a bored expression, watching as he stalked towards me, rage painted across his smarmy, ugly face. “You can’t smoke that in here!” he said in a rush, as though stunned at my gall. He snatched the cigarette from my fingertips,
holding it out of my reach as though I were a child from which he was confiscating a toy. “Detention after school, my classroom,” he barked like a fucking drill sergeant.

My lips twitched up in amusement, and he made the usually-fatal mistake of meeting my eyes. His expression fell flat, pupils dilating and his blinking coming to a stop. “I don't have to go to detention,” I told him, my voice as sweet and smooth as honey.

“You don't have to go to detention,” he repeated, voice dull and droning.

“Now,” I said, tilting my head and drawing him deeper into my trap, “give it back.” He handed the cigarette over without a word, and I took it from him, taking a deep drag without breaking eye contact. Finally I blinked, releasing him from my hold. He shook his head, glancing around the hall in confusion. I leaned back against the lockers, flicking the ash from the tip. “Go away,” I told him sternly, and with a befuddled frown he spun on his heel and headed down the hallway.

I watched him go, satisfied smirk on my lips, but my glee was interrupted by Stiles, who was gaping at me like I was the messiah, come back from the dead.

“That...was...amazing,” he gasped, looking between me and the teacher's retreating back as if he'd just watched a superhero take down their villain. “I didn't know you could do that. Though I suppose it makes sense, I have read lore that says...” he trailed off, eyes glassy as he stared off into the distance, thoughts somewhere else entirely.

“Yes?” I prompted, taking in another lungful of chemicals, curious about where that was going.

He blinked back to reality, heart thumping that little bit faster in his chest. “Nothing,” he said, shaking his head. “It doesn't matter.” I shrugged in response, deciding that I didn't care, adjusting the strap on my bag. “Can you do that to change my chemistry grade?” he pressed on eagerly.

“Yes.”

“Will you?”

“No.”
He deflated, scrunching his nose up at me childishly. I snorted, rolling my eyes and starting down the hall. He followed me, and to my surprise I didn't find myself all that irritated by his accompanying footsteps and minty/chocolatey scent.

“So you were going to tell me where Scott went?” he pressed as we walked.

“He ditched with Allison for the day,” I told him.

Stiles took a moment to scoff in exasperation. “Typical,” he said bitterly, and something about the way he said it made me smirk. “Hey, did you hear about the attack last night? The one on Lydia and Jackson?” he asked as we walked. I hummed affirmatively, holding my breath to keep the smoke in for an extra moment before releasing it through pinched lips. “D'you think it was the alpha?”

Well, that was a disappointingly stupid question. “I know it was,” I told him with a saintlike amount of patience as the bell rang overhead and students scurried to get into their classrooms on time. Neither Stiles nor I made any move to hurry to get to our own classes, strolling down the hall leisurely, like a day out in the park.

“How?” he pressed quickly.

I looked at him like he was an utter idiot. “Well, I know it wasn't me, or Scott, or Derek,” I said like I was talking to a pre-schooler. “So, by process of elimination, that only leaves...” I trailed off pointedly.

“But you don't think there could be another player?” he asked quickly, practically leaping on the theory.

“Player?” I echoed with a frown. “What do you think this is, a game?”

“I didn't mean it like that,” he hurried to backtrack, but I couldn't have possibly cared any less, looking away and puffing contentedly on my cigarette. Deciding to change the subject, Stiles tried a different tactic for conversation. “Have you seen Lydia today?” he asked, and I was admittedly made curious by the way his heart stuttered when he said the girl's name. “Jackson's here but she isn't.”
“Who the fuck is Lydia?” I asked.

“Who is—?” he cut himself off before he could finish, staring at me as though he couldn't imagine there was a single person on this earth who didn't know who this girl was. “Never mind,” he sighed, probably sensing that it was a dead end. “I think I’m gonna go to her house, check to see if she's okay,” he added thoughtfully.

“Be sure to send her my well-wishes,” I told him sarcastically, pasting a large, mockingly toothy grin onto my face.

Stiles smirked across at me in something like amusement, although I don't know what I said that was so funny. It was meant to sound scathing. I'd have to work on sounding meaner.

“This is my stop,” I told him offhandedly as we passed the world history classroom. “You can keep calling Scott if you want, but I'm pretty sure the most danger he's in is from getting some kind of an STD,” I said, and Stiles grimaced at the picture I'd painted, although he couldn't argue I was wrong.

“Great,” he muttered sarcastically. I clicked my tongue before turning around and stepping into my class, not even bothering with a farewell. As I moved over to a vacant seat, I listened to the sound of the human in the hall pause for a moment, heart stuttering, before he spun around and headed back down the corridor the way we'd come.

The rest of the day was pretty quiet – I barely paid attention in class, and actually decided to work on one of my assignments during lunch out of nothing but a sheer, consuming sense of boredom.

I'd happily thought I'd fulfilled my Stiles-quota for the day, so when he rang me shortly after school had ended, I was admittedly surprised. “Yes?” I answered the call, halfway through the forest on my long trek home.

“I need your help,” he said seriously, the sound of his voice anxious.

“I'm not compelling Mr Harris so he has good things to say at the parent-teacher conference tonight,” I told him firmly, stepping up over a fallen tree. “You got yourself in this mess, now you gotta grow a pair and face the music.”
“What? No,” he responded, sounding offended by my words, though I couldn't be sure why. “Listen, I found something on Lydia's phone.”

I paused mid-step, frowning suspiciously. “I swear to God, Stiles. If you're about to say something dirty—”

“She has footage of the alpha,” he said briskly, interrupting anything else I could have said.

I stopped dead, blinking at the trunk of the tree in front of me. “She what?” I asked, shrill with surprise.

“Listen, you weren't exactly my first choice of call, but Scott isn't answering his phone,” he admitted, and I sighed, bowing my head and pinching the skin between my eyebrows in exasperation. “Could you please just come over to me house and help me decide what to do about it?” he begged me, and I grit my teeth together tightly.

I hesitated. I didn't exactly feel like wandering into this kid's house, especially when I knew I'd be completely immersed in his delicious scent – not to mention the fact that once I'd been invited in, there was absolutely nothing stopping me from going back and killing him while he slept.

But despite all this, I knew this was important, and it wasn't like I had any plans other for the night than to watch some old free-to-air movie on the TV and drink some microwaved blood. I sighed, running a hand through my midnight locks, enjoying the tug at my scalp. “Where do you live?” I asked, then listened as he rattled off his address. “I'll be there in five.” I hung up before he could comment at all, turning no my heel and taking off back the way I'd come.

I had no idea where his street was, and my phone was so old that it didn't have those fancy GPS systems that everyone seemed to have these days, so I headed into a convenience store to ask for directions. I got to Stiles' house in just under five minutes, as promised, and I knocked on the front door loudly, unsure what his sad little human ears could and could not hear.

I heard clumsy, uneven steps practically run down the stairs inside, racing towards the door. Stiles pulled it open, relief spread across his face at the sight of me. Something in my stomach clenched, because it had been a long, long time since anyone had actually been relieved to see me. My presence usually evoked the complete opposite reaction.

“Hey,” he greeted me, pulling open the door wider and stepping back, waiting for me to pass
through. I paused, pressing my lips together awkwardly. I couldn't get in without an invitation, but if I told him that I'd have to admit to being a vampire, which I wasn't sure I was ready to do.

His brow furrowed with confusion as he watched me, eyes alight with curiosity. I could practically hear the cogs in his head spinning round and round as he fought to figure it all out. “Uh, can I...?” I trailed off, unsure how to ask the question without sounding like an idiot.

To my surprise, Stiles didn't seem confused. In fact he seemed to almost understand. He nodded his head, stepping back even further and deliberately saying, in no uncertain terms, “would you like to come inside, Juliet?”

I pressed my foot against the barrier, trying not to sag with relief when it pushed past the threshold with zero resistance. I stepped through the doorway, letting him close the door behind me before letting him lead me up to his room. On the way upstairs I peeked at the photos lining the walls, my lips twitching as I caught sight of what could only be a baby-Stiles. One in particular made me smile, Stiles sitting in one of those children's car rides at the mall, a large grin on his face showing his two front teeth missing.

I stepped into his room, pretending not to notice as he inconspicuously kicked a pile of dirty laundry under his bed. I looked around the room, taking in the organised chaos of his desk and the band posters strung around the room. I wasn't familiar with most of it. The only music I really enjoyed listening to was from the fifties.

He gestured for me to take a seat on the end of his bed and I did so hesitantly, trying to breathe through my mouth without being weird about it so I wouldn't get overwhelmed by his scent. I dropped my bag at my feet, taking the cell phone he offered me then staring at it in confusion. What was I supposed to do with it, exactly?

He laughed – although I couldn't help but notice the sound was tense and nervous – and took the phone back, clicking some buttons with practised ease and then handing it to me again. I watched the little screen as the video played; the lights flickered and then there was the shattering of glass before a large black shape leapt threateningly towards the camera, the only discernible features its glistening white fangs and its glowing red eyes.

“Hm,” I hummed, handing back the phone and folding my hands together, staring down at them thoughtfully.

“Well?” he asked, sounding desperate for my input. “What do we do?”
“Delete it,” I said immediately, staring up at him like he was an idiot. “Obviously.”

“Are, are you sure?”

I paused, was I sure? I scowled, I didn't like having to reevaluate my answer. “Well, yes...” I pressed my lips together, then shuffled backwards on the bed until my back hit the headboard, tapping my head against the wood. “I mean, what else are we going to do with it?” I asked.

“What if Lydia notices it missing?” he asked anxiously.

“Who cares?” I asked callously. “The longer you leave before deleting it, the more chance there is for somebody to find it. Then we're all in trouble,” I told him seriously, trying not to think about the serious threat the hunters posed to me.

One hunter? Two? Not a problem. But if the other week at the gas station was anything to go by, the Argents had brought some friends into town with them. Not to mention papa-Argent's psychopathic sister was in town.

Derek had warned me about her, although he hadn't said much more than she was ruthless and dangerous. I'd laughed when he'd told me, saying it wouldn't be a problem. Then again, the only real thing keeping me safe was that everyone in town was operating under the assumption I was a werewolf, if that changed, who knew which direction things could go?

“I'm calling Scott again,” Stiles announced after a long silence, tapping away at his phone then holding it up to his ear. “Hey, it's me again. Look, I found something and I don't know what to do, okay? So if you could turn your phone on, right now, that'd be great. Or else? I'll kill you. Do you understand me? I'm gonna kill you. And I'm too upset to come up with a witty description about how exactly I'm going to kill you, but I'm just gonna do it. Okay? Ugh. Goodbye,” he grunted into the phone.

I couldn't help the genuine laugh that bubbled up and spilled from my lips as I listened to his message. Hearing a human so young and harmless threatening somebody's life like that, well to a monster like me, it seemed downright hilarious. I tipped my head back, letting myself enjoy the amusing moment. When I focused my attention back on Stiles, he was staring at me with an odd expression on his face. “What?” I asked self-consciously, blinking back at him warily.
“I've just never seen you laugh like that before,” he said quietly. “Hell, I didn't even know you could laugh like that.”

I wanted to be irritated by his words, but something in my chest warmed with the way he was staring at me; like I wasn't a blood-sucking demon.

Footsteps sounded from down the hall as Stiles continued to watch me. I briefly considered compelling him to tell me what he was thinking, but ultimately decided against it when an older man – the one from the photos – peeked his head around the corner and knocked on the door. Stiles gasped, jumping in shock and holding a hand to his heart. I stared up at the man passively.

“Oh, hello,” he said in surprise, sticking his hands in the pockets of his pants and smiling warmly, although it held a hint of awkwardness I couldn't deny. “I wasn't expecting Stiles to have company.”

“Dad, this is Juliet,” the boy in question introduced us, collapsing in his desk chair and swinging on it to occupy himself. “She's a...friend from school,” he said, stumbling over the word 'friend'.

“Good afternoon, Sheriff,” I greeted him, bowing my head in respect and arranging my lips into an award-winning smile – the kind that frequently dazzled humans into giving me what I wanted, even without the use of compulsion.

“Please,” said the man with an easy grin, “When I'm not on duty, it's just John.”

“John,” I repeated, crossing my legs and sitting up straighter on Stiles' bed.

“Are you new to town?” he asked politely, leaning against the doorframe. “I haven't seen you around before. Who're your parents?”

I paused, pursing my lips, my eyes darting to Stiles as I remembered what he'd assumed the other week in the car. “Oh, I'm emancipated. I live on my own in the old Miller house,” I told him confidently.

“Wow, emancipated,” he echoed in understandable surprise, crossing his arms and frowning as he watched me, something like concern in his eyes. “Why is that?” he pressed.
“Gee dad, don't you think that's a little personal?” Stiles spoke up, and I felt a wave of gratitude. I hadn't been expecting to befriend anyone in town, so I hadn't concocted a backstory beyond the basic details. I was glad I didn't have to make one up now.

“You're right,” the sheriff said, smiling and ducking his head sheepishly before returning his attention to his son. “And you,” he said shortly, eyeing Stiles with trepidation, “please tell me I'm going to hear good news at this parent-teacher thing tonight.”

Stiles winced. “Depends on how you define good news.”

“I define it as you getting straight A's with no behavioural issues.”

“You might wanna rethink that definition,” Stiles replied, and I turned my head to the side, hiding a tiny smirk of amusement.

“Enough said,” John sighed, tapping his legs with a sense of finality. “It was nice to meet you Juliet,” he said politely as he turned to look at me. “Stay out of trouble.”

“Will do, John!” I gave him a wave as he left.

We waited until John's footsteps had faded and the front door had clicked shut before either of us spoke.

“I wish Scott would just answer his damn phone,” Stiles sighed, running a hand over his short hair. I leaned back, staring up at the roof and ignoring the flare of white hot heat in my throat as I breathed in his heavenly scent. I clenched my hands into fists, my sharp nails biting into the skin on my palms as I fought the urge to attack him, or at least do something I'd regret.

“We need to make a decision,” I said, mostly just to distract myself. I got to my feet, distancing myself from his bed; his scent was the worst amongst his pillows. “We can't keep wasting time.”

“You're right,” he groaned, pinching the bridge of his nose for a moment, squeezing his eyes shut tight. After a long, tense moment his arm shot out and he snatched the phone off the desk. I walked over so I stood behind him, watching over his shoulder as he clicked several buttons, until finally
the screen flashed with a single notification.

*Items deleted.*

I nodded my head despite knowing he couldn't see. “You made the right call.”

Stiles sighed, unsure. He seemed to make an internal decision to put it out of his mind, swinging around the face me, his expression curious.

“What?” I asked hesitantly, somehow knowing that I was about to be bombarded with questions. I hoped they were ones I could actually answer.

“I’ve been looking into something recently, and I could use your input,” he said, pushing himself to his feet and moving over to his bottom desk drawer, which he tugged open, pulling at the papers on top until he dug out a specific folder. He presented it to me, watching my reaction closely. I took it, walking backwards until my legs hit his bed and I let myself fall back onto it, glancing up at him with raised brows. “You've heard about the Hale fire, right?”

“Everyone in the supernatural community has,” I responded immediately, focusing on the feeling of the paper under my skin instead of the mouthwatering aroma coming from where he stood, only feet away from me. He turned and took a seat on the edge of the bed beside me, leaning over me to read the papers as I pulled them out.

“Oh?” he asked as I tugged out the top paper, my keen eyes reading it with a simple glance before I moved on to the next one.

“Yeah,” I nodded. “The Hale family was a huge deal back when they were still around. They were one of the most powerful packs in North America.” I looked away from the papers and up at him, blinking as I realised he was was close I could smell his minty breath. He flinched back when he realised it too. “Why are you so interested?”

“Well, I think the hunters were the ones who burnt the house down,” he said with a shrug. “But I can't know for sure. I figured you might see something I didn't.”

I didn't reply, continuing to read the report he'd no doubt stolen from his father. He leaned forwards again, his chest brushing my arm. I felt the heat of his body and the pulse of his heart through the
thin fabric and tensed, hunger surging through me. “I have to leave,” I announced suddenly, standing to my feet and dropping the file where I'd been sitting.

If I stayed any longer, there was no doubt that I'd kill him, and then all this dieting would be for nothing.

“What? Did you find something?” he asked eagerly.

“No, I just have a prior engagement,” I said stiffly.

“A prior engagement?” he asked with an exasperated frown. “Nobody actually speaks like that, you know?”

I picked up my bag, slung it over my shoulder and made a beeline for the door. “I just really need to leave, Stiles,” I said seriously, my voice leaving no room for argument. Couldn't he see I was trying to save his goddamn life? He opened his mouth, no doubt to try and argue some more, but I cut him off with a stern note of finality. “I'll see you tomorrow.”

He nodded his head reluctantly, eyes clouded with confusion, but I was gone before he could voice any more of the questions swimming in the tank of his brain.
Runaways

They won't catch us

In the dark

Roll like thunder
Burn like stars

Runaways – All Time Low

Stiles' dad was hit by a car.

I knew this because the day after it happened Stiles himself had cornered me at school and proceeded to rant about how it was all Scott's fault.

I hadn't really listened, I'd been sketching on my favourite notepad at the time, but I knew that he wasn't too badly hurt but that Stiles still held it against Scott for being too worried in fucking his new girlfriend to worry about anyone else.

I was paraphrasing, but the sentiment was still the same.

The few days after that were taxing as hell. Stiles wouldn't leave me alone. He stuck to me like a mosquito, constantly buzzing in my ear and using me as a way to avoid his best friend. No matter what rude names I called him, or how snappy and cruel I was, he wouldn't go away. Everything I said just seemed to roll off his back, like nothing affected him. It was annoying, but over the course of those few days I realised it was actually kind of nice to have company. People tended to give me a wide berth, because, in their words, I was mean, intimidating and scary.

So it was definitely a change to have somebody actually willingly sit with me at lunch.

It wasn't only Stiles that had taken a weird shining to me. Allison was also strangely kind, smiling at me in the halls and striking up conversations with me in the classes we shared together. She even approached Stiles and I at lunch one day, sitting down to chat with me for a moment. I didn't give her much to work with, keeping my answers short and clipped, hoping she'd take the hint and go
away.

Today, Stiles had found me outside, leaning against the side of the building and smoking a cigarette. “Hey,” he greeted me mildly, but I didn't bother to respond as I idly blew smoke rings from my mouth. “So, listen...I need a favour,” he began.

“No,” I said without so much as a beat, glancing up at the sun beating down on me, instinctively glancing to my daylight ring, the only thing standing between me and incineration.

“You don't even know what it is,” he complained, gesturing wildly with his arms like he so often did.

“And yet, my answer's still no.”

“Look,” he began, moving to stand in front of me. Before he could continue I blew a lungful of smoke directly into his face. He coughed and waved his hand in the air in front of him, cringing at the smell and the burning in his eyes. “Secondhand smoke kills, you know,” he whined.

My lips twitched up into a wicked smirk. “I'm counting on it.”

He glared as darkly as he could, which honestly wasn't very, and crossed his arms, beginning his pitch again. “Listen, all I need is for you to go do that hypnosis thing on Coach and get his phone off of him for me.”

“Why?” I asked suspiciously. He hesitated like he was reluctant to tell me. “Aw, come on,” I prodded him playfully. “We just spent the last four days bonding and now you're not gonna tell me why you wanna borrow my compulsive powers?”

“I'm teaching Scott how to control the shift,” he admitted, rubbing the spot on his chest that I'd poked.

I paused, raising an eyebrow at him. “What the hell makes you think you're qualified to do that?” I asked carefully, taking a long drag of smoke.
“Better me do it than Derek,” he snorted.

“What is this brilliant plan and why does it involve Coach's phone?” I asked, dropping the end of the cigarette on the ground and stamping on it with my shoe.

“I'm going to take one of the heart monitors the track team uses to monitor Scott's heart rate while I throw lacrosse balls at him, but the monitors are linked to Coach's phone.”

I appraised him quietly for a moment, secretly kind of impressed. He took what resources he had and came up with a slightly brilliant plan. Finally I nodded, pleased by the way his face lit up with glee. “I'll do it if,” I said, and he paused, raising an eyebrow, no doubt worried I was going to make him do something terrible. “If I get to throw lacrosse balls at Scott too.”

“Deal!” he agreed immediately, reaching out a hand for me to shake. I looked down at it like it was going to bite me, but he didn't back down, holding it out with a dopey grin. I sighed and slapped my hand into his, clenching lightly so I wouldn't crush his bones into dust and shaking for a moment before pulling away, trying not to think about how I could feel his blood pulsing under his skin.

He led me through the school towards Coach's office, pushing me into the room while he scurried off to look for the heart monitors. “Can I help you?” the older man with a receding hairline asked sassily.

I wasn't in the mood for games, so I simply stalked towards him, locking eyes and drawing him into my hold. “You're going to give me your phone without asking questions, then forget I was ever here. And you're not going to look for it,” I compelled him. He repeated my instructions back to me, and I blinked when I was satisfied it had worked. He wordlessly handed over his sleek black phone and I gave him a mock salute, spinning around and meeting Stiles at the locker room door.

We held up what we'd retrieved, smirking at one another's success. “That'll never not be cool,” he said with a nod in the direction of the Coach's office. My smirk widened into a grin, and we turned to make our way towards the lacrosse field where Stiles had said he was meeting Scott. “So, you've forgiven him then?” I asked, shoving the phone into my back pocket and sliding my hands into the large pocket on the front of my Harvard hoodie.

“No,” he answered me immediately, scowling at the mere thought. “It's going to take a lot more than a simple apology to get him back in my good graces,” he grumbled.
I nodded in agreement. “Make him work for it.”

“Exactly,” he grinned toothily. My lips twitched, something in me wanting to return the gesture. But I smothered it, fixing a cool stare on my face.

“Juliet,” Scott greeted, standing from the bench he was parked on and looking down at me in surprise. “I didn't know you were coming.”

“She's part of the plan,” Stiles told him without hesitation, leading the boy past the bleachers towards the field. “Now...put this on,” he instructed as he took a seat on one of the benches, holding up the monitor.

“Isn't this one of the heart rate monitors for the track team?” Scott asked dubiously.

“Yeah, I borrowed it,” Stiles replied with a shrug.

“Stole it?”

I threw one leg over the bench so that I was straddling it facing Stiles as I listened to their conversation. “Temporarily misappropriated,” he corrected irritably. “Coach uses it to monitor his heart rate with his phone while he jogs. And you're gonna wear it for the rest of the day.”

I slipped the phone from my pocket, holding it up in the light for him to see. “Isn't that coaches phone?” he asked, raising an eyebrow at us.

Stiles paused for a brief moment before pasting a proud grin on his face and proclaiming, “that, I stole.”

I frowned confusedly at the boy. I was expecting him to tell his friend that I'd compelled it off coach, and I opened my mouth to tell him so when a look from Stiles stopped me. I suddenly understood, Stiles hadn't told Scott he knew I could compel people. My brows furrowed in bewilderment as I tried to make sense of it all in my head. What did that mean? Why hadn't he told Scott?
“Why?” Scott asked, none the wiser.

“Well, your heart rate goes up when you go wolf, right?” he began steadily. “When you're playing lacrosse, when you're with Allison, whenever you get angry. Maybe learning to control it is tied to learning to control your heart rate.”

“Like the Incredible Hulk,” Scott said, a smile playing on his lips.

“Kinda like the Incredible Hulk,” Stiles allowed with a shrug.

“Nah, I'm like the Incredible Hulk,” Scott repeated, a full blown grin on his face.

“Just shut up and put the strap on.”

While he was attaching it to his body, the teen wolf looked down at me where I sat quietly straddling the bench. “Is he right? About the heart rate thing?”

I pursed my lips. “Well, I'm no expert, but it certainly makes sense,” I shrugged, wincing as the sun broke the clouds and hit me directly in the face, sending pain searing through my skull. I blinked, pressing my fingers to my temple as I winced. After a moment the sun disappeared back behind clouds again and the pain faded. I felt eyes on me and turned my gaze to Stiles, who was staring at me blatantly. When he saw me looking, he hurriedly turned away, busying himself with the equipment.

“How could you not be an expert?” Scott asked, frowning in confusion.

I snapped my eyes up to meet his with was I hoped was an irritated-looking glare. “It's not an exact science, Scott.”

“Ohkay,” he said in an effort to keep the peace. He tilted his head to the side and his eyes suddenly widened in alarm. He stared at me with something like terror in his gaze. I looked down at myself confusedly, wondering if I'd maybe spilt blood on my shirt during breakfast that morning or something.
“What?” I asked self-consciously, blinking at the clean, grey sweater with a frown.

“I-I left my drink bottle over by the bench, can you p-please go get it?” he stumbled over his words, staring at me like I was a fucking ghost or something.

“Why can't Stiles go get it?”

The boy in question seemed to see something I didn't, because he nodded hastily. “No, I've gotta duck-tape his arms. Just do it.” He paused, noticed my dangerous glare. “Please?”

I huffed but did as they asked, pushing myself to my feet and moving past the bleachers towards the bench Scott had been sitting on only minutes ago. I walked steadily away from them, but continued to listen to them talk as easily as if I were standing right there. They whispered between themselves, stupidly assuming I wasn't listening. “Dude,” Scott hissed in a panic. “Stiles, she has no heartbeat.”

The was a pause, then Stiles said without a hint of surprise, “I have a theory, but I have to research it more before I present it. Give me a few more days, then I'll talk to you and we can confront her.”

I picked up the small water bottle resting on the leg of the bench. It was just a cheap little thing, and it irritated me that they sent me to get it so they could whisper behind my back. As I walked back towards them I couldn't help but wonder what Stiles' theory was. Did he know what I was? I thought back to all the secret little looks he gave me, like he was slowly figuring me out. He didn't know for certain, so I clung to that hope that he wouldn't ever have it confirmed as I met them back on the field, setting down the bottle as I watched Stiles tape Scott's arms together behind his back, both acting like nothing had happened.

“This isn't exactly how I wanted to spend my free period,” he said pointedly, glancing over his shoulder at his friend.

“Alright, ready?”

“No.”

“Remember: don't get angry,” Stile warned, leaning down to tap away at Coach's phone, activating the monitor.
“I’m starting to think this is a really bad idea.”

Stiles tipped the little white balls out onto the field, picking up his crosse and scooping one into its little net. He tossed it unceremoniously at Scott, and it hit the boy in the leg. He cried out in pain, snatching up another one, this time hitting his face. “My turn,” I grinned wickedly, and he smirked, holding out the stick for me to take. “So, uh,” I began awkwardly, biting my lip and looking down at the crosse in my hands. “How exactly do I...you know...do this?”

He laughed lightly, but not in a mocking way, so luckily for him, he got to keep his voice box. He pressed his hand over my right one that was clenched around the stick, using it to guide me as he scooped up another one of the balls. He gave me a quick and simple run through of how to aim and shoot. I nodded and did as he instructed, frowning when the ball flew out of the net about ten feet away from Scott. I tried again, this time getting a little closer but still not landing a hit.

With a frustrated groan I dropped the stick, bending down to pick up one of the balls. I tossed it up and down for a moment, getting used to the weight. Scott's humoured expression fell from his face as he saw me tense, preparing to let it fly. “Not too hard!” he begged, but I didn't listen. I wasn't going to waste such a golden opportunity. I let it fly with some of my extra vampire strength, the ball practically disappearing it moved so fast. A split second later it connected with his chest and the boy fell back, yelping in pain. I smirked proudly, stepping aside and letting Stiles have another few throws.

We alternated between throws, chuckling at Scott's pain – Stiles, because he was angry at his friend for what happened to his father; me, because I was a sick, sick vampire who enjoyed inflicting pain on others – and after a long while Stiles turned to me, a mischievous grin on his face as he scooped up a ball, plucking it from the net and handing it to me. “As hard as you can.”

“As hard as I can?” I asked doubtfully, squeezing the ball in my grasp. “I'll break something,” I warned.

Stiles shrugged carelessly. “He'll heal.”

I smirked, who knew that Stiles could be so fun? I turned to face Scott, who was wincing already, tensing in preparation of my throw. I tossed it in the air, caught it then hurled it at Scott with every ounce of my strength. The ball disappeared, reappearing a split second later as it crashed into his chest. I heard the distinct cracking of bones and grinned, the expression melting into a frown when the wolf collapsed, groaning in pain, breathing heavily.
We watched as he ripped open his bindings, and Stiles ducked down to pick up the beeping phone. “Scott?” he asked tentatively as the boy’s back bent at what looked like a painful angle. I tensed, preparing for a fight. Then something utterly miraculous happened, he slowly but surely began to calm down, as if by the sheer power of will. “Scott? You started to change,” Stiles said worriedly, moving closer to his friend, who was panting on the ground.

“So it is anger then. Derek's right.”

“I can't be around Allison,” he said with a pained frown. I rolled my eyes, this kid needed to sort out his priorities.

“I can't be around Allison,” he said with a pained frown. I rolled my eyes, this kid needed to sort out his priorities.

“No, because she makes me weak.”

I strolled down the hall during my free period, on my way outside so I could have a cigarette without anyone telling me off. As I turned down a hallway, I picked up on the sound of a heartbeat racing in someone's chest. I looked down the hall, narrowing my eyes as I saw that Jackson kid leaning over Allison. “So,” he began, voice slow and deliberate and kind of creepy as Allison leaned away from him uncomfortably. “What are you reading?”

I was by their side in the blink of an eye, grasping the collar of Jackson's shirt and yanking him to his feet. “Hey,” I barked, slamming him against the lockers before letting him go, wiping his sweat off on my jeans. “Back off, creep,” I hissed, glancing down at a wide-eyed Allison.

“We were just talking,” he defended as Allison scrambled to her feet.

“Really Juliet, it's fine.”

Her heartbeat said otherwise, but I let it go, stepping back and frowning to myself. I had a thing
about dickhead boys leering over innocent girls, thinking they could do what they wanted, just because they appeared to have all the control. I'd been in the position of the innocent girl once before, and I never planned to again.

I turned to Jackson, letting my fangs elongate just the tiniest fraction. “Watch yourself,” I warned him through my evil grin. His heart stuttered at the dangerous gleam in my eyes, but otherwise he kept composed, showing no outward signs of fear.

I nodded politely at Allison, trying not to think about how scared she looked. I hadn't wanted to frighten her, I'd simply wanted to threaten Jackson and be on my way.

I pushed my way out into the sun, sliding down the wall around the corner from the door and pulling out a book and a cigarette. Lighting the latter and cracking open the former, I leant back against the bricks and lost myself in the words on the page.

It was peaceful for a long time as I read, not interested in being in class. There were a group of boys to my left standing around, making jokes and playfully shoving each other but I ignored them easily enough. It wasn't until I detected the familiar aroma of mint and chocolate that I snapped my head up, watching Stiles and Scott walk past where I sat without noticing me at all. “What are we doing?” Scott asked cautiously.

“You'll see, hold on,” Stiles told him quietly as I watched on with keen interest. “Okay, stand right there. Do you have your keys? Perfect, hold them up, like so...” The boy left his friend standing there, glancing over his shoulder. “Now, whatever happens just think about Allison. Try to find her voice like you did at the game. Got it?”

I closed my book, gently sliding it into my bag before pushing myself to my feet. My eyebrows shot up with amusement as the boy wandered over to a parked car casually, tugging out his own keys and pressing them to the paint, creating a long scratch on the metal. I laughed silently, crossing my arms and watching the events unfold with a cruel anticipation.

“Hey, hey, hey! Dude, what do you think you're doing to that truck, bro?!” Stiles suddenly yelled, loud and obvious as he could. I pressed my hand over my lips to keep my laughs from getting too loud.

“What the hell?” one of the members of the group to my left asked, outraged as he spied Scott standing with his keys in his hand. I watched as he landed a punch on the shocked wolf's face, sending him falling backwards into the dirt.
I wandered over to Stiles with a grin, the boy wincing in sympathy for his friend as he watched the group of humans beat him up. “Stay calm, stay calm,” he was breathing as he looked on, and I noticed he held the heart monitor in his hand, keeping an eye on Scott's pulse.

“Your ideas just keep getting better and better,” I said, voice coloured with my amusement. Stiles jumped violently, not having seen me approach. He rolled his eyes at me, both of us turning our attention to the boy being savagely beaten before us. It took awhile, but eventually the beeping of the monitor decreased along with Scott's heartbeat. Mr Harris came speed walking out of the doors, making a beeline for the boy who lay bleeding on the concrete.

Stiles fist-pumped the air in victory and I rolled my eyes, secretly kind of impressed. “What the hell do you idiots think you're doing??” he exclaimed, wheeling around to glare at Stiles and I accusingly. “With me, for detention. Now.” I rolled my eyes, nodding my head at Stiles and strolling passed the teacher, towards the boundary of the school. “Where do you think you're going?” he asked sharply.

I sighed, turning around and locking eyes with the rude, goblin of a man. “I'm going home, and you're not going to stop me.”

“I'm not going to stop you,” he repeated robotically, pupils dilating behind those pathetic glasses he wore.

“Hey!” Stiles called out to me indignantly. “What about us?”

“Not my problem!” I replied over my shoulder. I ignored the boy's irritated grunt, shifting the weight of my bag on my shoulder and turning the corner. I hadn't gotten far, maybe only a couple hundred yards when my phone lit up with a call. “Hello?” I answered it dully, pausing in my fishing for a cigarette.

“I need you to meet me at the animal clinic,” Derek Hale's smooth voice said over the line, not quite a statement, but also not quite a request.

I stopped in my tracks, scowling at a nearby fire hydrant like it was the one I was annoyed with. “How the hell did you get this number?” I asked him, the words layered with ice. The last thing I wanted was the Hale wolf to have my personal number; it was bad enough those two teenage nimrods from school had it, let alone someone with actual problems.
“I think I know who the alpha is,” was all Derek said in reply, knowing it was all I needed to hear.

My lip curled back, revealing my pearly, sharpened teeth, and I sneered at a passing pedestrian, whose pulse stuttered with terror at the bloody quality to my dark, angry eyes.

“I’ll be there in ten minutes,” I muttered, bitter and reluctant, to the wolf over the line before hanging up and shoving my phone roughly into my back pocket.

I went home first, dropping off my bag and pulling on a different pair of jeans, ones I would be able to fight in, as well as an old white T-shirt. I pulled my best set of daggers out from the box under my sink, strapping one to each ankle then shoving two into my belt. If I was going to be fighting an alpha tonight, I didn't plan to walk into the fight unarmed. If I did, I might just as well commit suicide then and there.

I shrugged on an old leather jacket I'd gotten off one of my victims in the 70's, one that hid my pretty knives from view, before leaving the house in under two minutes, scowling the whole way out. I took the route through the forest, where I could run at full speed without being seen by any humans.

I got to the clinic a little earlier than I anticipated, pushing open the door just as the sun was sinking down below the horizon. “Derek?” I asked loudly, frowning at the noise the little bell above the door made.

“In here,” his voice rumbled from the back room. I passed the front desk, stepping into the back room I'd been to only once before; when Derek had gotten hit by that bullet only a week or so ago. I blinked in surprise as I caught sight of who I could only assume was the veterinarian, tied to a chair, bound and beaten. I raised my eyebrows in surprise even as I cracked my knuckles, grinning slightly in anticipation of the evening.

Nothing quite made my day like a little bit of light torture.

“Well, well, what do we have here?” I asked with something of a predatory grin, starring down at the unconscious man curiously.

“It’s him,” Derek told me from where he was stood against the far wall, watching the dark skinned man for any signs of consciousness, waiting impatiently for him to awake. “I'm sure of it.”
“So, what's the plan, exactly?” I pressed, mirroring his stance. “Torture? Because, if so, you came to the right gal,” I told him with a wide, proud smirk. The bound man gave a small groan, only just beginning to come to. “I won't kill him, though. Not without irrefutable proof,” I added, feeling like it was better to be said. He had to know my limits.

But Derek snorted, his lips quirking upwards like what I'd cracked a joke. “That's not something you hear every day,” he mumbled, blue eyes focused on the man he was holding hostage. “A vampire who doesn't want to kill,” he said like it were the most ridiculous thing he'd ever heard.

“Hey,” I snapped, defensive. “I'm totally eager to kill. I just don't want to kill an innocent.”

“Every vampire I've met in the past hasn't had a problem with it,” he countered.

“Well I do,” I bit back, short fuse beginning to burn. Unthinking, I sniffed the air, the monster deep within me rearing its ugly head at the scent of fresh human blood. It was strong and potent, and my eyes immediately shot to the source – a deep gash on our hostage's face – and hunger surged through me like a bolt of lightning, throat suddenly alive with thirst. “I don't think he's the guy,” I told Derek reluctantly.

The wolf bristled, standing up straight. “What? Why?” he asked, brows pulling together in a frown.

“Because he smells appetising, and I've never met a single wolf whose scent hasn't made me want to vomit,” I told simply.

He opened his mouth to argue the point, but before he could a low groan travelled through the room, coming from the man we had tied up like a criminal before us. I wanted to lick my lips at the scent of his blood, which was coming faster now that his pulse was speeding up, but I held back.

Both the werewolf and I fell silent as the man before us slowly began to come to. His dark eyes blinked open, and something like horror passed through them. I was familiar with seeing that emotion in a human's eyes – I'd seen it countless times before in my victims, before I sucked them dry.

“Oh God,” he muttered, gulping in terror.
“Are you protecting someone?” Derek demanded, and I marvelled at his sheer lack of tact.

“The key to the drug locker is in my pocket,” the veterinarian told us desperately, eyes flickering between us as though he wasn't sure who was in charge. To be honest, neither was I.

“I don't want drugs, I wanna know why you're lying,” spat Derek venomously.

“I don't know what you're talking about.”

Derek gripped the man by the shoulders, lifting him into the air with an ease that would horrify any human. “Listen, Derek, I think we should take a beat and—” I tried to argue, but the wolf ignored me, shaking the man violently.

“What do you want?” whimpered the veterinarian. I hoped he wouldn't piss himself – I so hated it when they did that.

“I want to know who you are,” growled Derek, his canine fangs making a small appearance. “Or who you're protecting.”

“What are you doing?” Scott's voice shouted abruptly as he appeared in the doorway. I'd been so focused on the interrogation at hand that I hadn't heard him approach. I turned to look at him, one eyebrow cocked.

“Scott, get outta here!” the vet shouted to Scott in a panic. Derek dropped him, striking the human across the face, not bothering to hold back. The man's head snapped to the side, and he gasped in pain.

“Stop!” Scott cried, throwing himself between them, arms held out to protect his boss.

“When he's conscious he can keep himself from healing, but unconscious he can't,” snarled Derek. The bloke had a serious case of tunnel vision, didn't he?

“Are you out of your mind?!” Scott shouted. “What are you talking about?!”
“You wanna know what the spiral means, Scott?” Derek growled. “It's our sign for a vendetta. For revenge. It means he won't stop killing until he's satisfied!”

“You think he's the alpha?” Scott cried incredulously.

“We're about to find out.”

Scott caught Derek's hand before he could inflict any damage. We both stared in utter shock as Scott changed from boy to wolf so smoothly that I almost missed it. Derek took a step back and watched closely as the teen wolf looked down at his own claws. They slowly phased back into his regular fingernails, and the hair along his jaw vanished, eyes glowing a brilliant, piercing amber.

“Hit him again,” Scott warned us darkly, “then you'll see me get angry.”

You could ask me how we ended up going from there, to where we were now, but to be honest, it was all something of a blur.

“No,” Derek deadpanned as I moved to put my feet up on his dash. I pouted at him, but he just ignored me, steering his sleek black car into school parking lot, empty except for the Stiles kid's jeep. The vet was tied up on the backseat, mumbling into his bindings, probably begging for his life – but I genuinely couldn't have possibly cared any less.

I paid him no mind, eyes flickering through the darkness to meet Stiles' impatient stare as he toyed with the pair of bolt cutters in his hands. Derek's car rolled to a stop and I slid out, arms crossed over my chest, proud to be exuding an air of sheer indifference.

“Where's my boss?” Scott asked testily as Derek slid out after me.

His lip pulled back, and I found myself hoping for a fight. But the tension dispersed just as quickly, and Derek jerked his chin at the backseat of his car. “He's in the back,” he said gruffly.
The two young boys peeked their heads through the open back window, peering down at the unconscious veterinarian. “Aw, he looks comfortable,” Stiles said, utterly sarcastic. He shot me a pointed look, as though expecting me to feel some kind of shame at the comment. I ignored him with laughable ease, letting my eyes scan the area, keeping an eye out for any threats. The last thing I needed was for the alpha, or the hunters to show their faces. A fight sounded good – so long as I wasn't the person doing the swinging.

Scott nudged his human friend, gesturing up to the school we were stood in front of. As one, they both turned towards the looming building, starting up the stairs leading to the front door. “Hey, what are you doing?” Derek snapped, annoyance saturating his tone.

“You said I was linked with the alpha,” Scott said like it were obvious, as though his plan had been perfectly clear all along. “I'm gonna see if you're right,” he told us plainly.

They headed confidently into the darkened school, disappearing inside the building. I didn't care to audibly track them through the halls, letting myself disconnect from the low chatter they were making. It faded into nothing, and I leant back against the werewolf's car, pulling a cigarette from my pocket and slipping it between my teeth.

“Could you not smoke that while you're sitting on my car?” Derek might as well have whined the complaint for how stupid it sounded.

Without breaking eye contact, I lifted my lighter to the stick, lighting the end and pocketing the gadget. I inhaled deeply, then blew it out into the air, silently revelling in his ire. His eyes flashed that shiny blue, and my smirk widened.

“Relax,” I said flippantly. “It's not like I'm inside the thing. Buy an air freshener and grow up.”

I heard a quiet rumble in Derek's chest that I knew to be a growl, but I was unbothered, taking another drag of smoke.

“You know, they might trust you more if you didn't come across as so enigmatic and creepy,” I told him casually. “It's not exactly a winning combination.”

“You're one to talk,” the beta wolf muttered.
“Yeah,” I replied as I exhaled a puff of smoke, “but I don't actually care about earning these kids' trust.”

“Then why're you even here?” he countered smartly.

“I don't have cable.”

We faded back into quiet, which I was content to let stay. I knew we were waiting for something, but I wasn't sure what until it happened.

A loud sort of screech sounded through the school. It was rather like the scream of a banshee – if the banshee had just been gargling nails. “You've gotta be kidding me,” Derek muttered in the voice of an exasperated babysitter, dropping his head into his hands.

“I give him a month,” I muttered to Derek, not really expecting an answer as I looked down at the pavement, kicking idly at a loose pebble.

There was another pause and I tilted my head to try and catch the sounds of them wandering defeatedly back, only for a different sound entirely to catch my attention.

It was a low growl, a haunting kind of a howl that vibrated through my very soul. It echoed through the school's speaker, the sound of it sharp and attention grabbing. Both the wolf and I shot upright.

When a vampire heard a howl like that, our base instinct was to run in the opposite direction. I bristled, ears pricking at every sound, every atom in me screaming to run. It was like a fight-or-flight reaction. I shoved it down with only a little effort, focusing on what was happening in front of me and not the urge to run far, far away.

But my flight instincts weren't the problem. Something much, much worse was on its way. There wasn't a wolf within fifty miles who wouldn't have heard it.

The pair of idiotic boys strolled down the stairs, looking mighty pleased with themselves.

“I'm gonna kill both of you,” Derek snarled at them furiously as they approached. “What the hell
was that? What are you trying to do? Attract the entire state to the school?"

“Sorry, I didn't know it'd be that loud,” Scott muttered, rubbing the back of his neck awkwardly.

“Yeah, it was loud,” Stiles laughed unabashedly. “And it was awesome,” he sang, a large dopey grin on his innocent face. It annoyed me, made me want to break his nose just so he'd stop smiling.

“Are you out of your goddamn minds?” I snarled at him, taking a step closer, fire flickering in my dark eyes. “It's not just one alpha wolf in those trees that you've called to us,” I snapped, glancing to the tree line across the road.

At my warning, the teen boys suddenly looked wary.

“What, uh, like what?” stammered Stiles uncertainly.

When I smirked back, it was edge with the kind of darkness that was born of evil. “There are worse things hiding in the dark than you have any idea about—” I began in a hiss, and it was as much a threat as it was a warning.

“Shut up,” Derek snapped before I could finish the menacing words, and my spine went rigid. We were no longer alone. I felt the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end, and I reached down into my boot, sliding one of the two daggers I'd hidden there from its sheath.

“Don't be such a sour wolf — why the hell do you have a knife?!” Stiles shouted in a panic, jerking back as the silver of my blade glinted in the moonlight.

“It's a dagger,” I corrected him primly.

“It's a hazard.”

“What'd you do with him?” Scott asked suddenly, breaking Stiles and I away from our mindless bickering.
“What?” Derek asked sharply, and as one we spun around only to discover the vet was gone, the seat he’d been sitting on empty of life. When had that happened? “We didn't do anything,” Derek insisted, but we had bigger problems than the case of the missing veterinarian.

The sound of paws hitting the earth met my ears, much too close for comfort, and I dove out of the way just as the alpha attacked. When I spun back around to get a good look at it, it was to find Derek with a set of claws skewered through his chest. Blood spurted from his mouth, the scent surrounding me.

I knew I had to get away from the alpha – according to legend, one bite and I was all but dust – but just as I turned to run, I realised the two boys were still standing there, gaping up at the monster before them in horrified shock.

Part of me screamed to leave them to die – it was what I would have done before – but I knew in my cold, dead heart that I couldn't.

A new leaf was a new leaf, and I couldn't just leave these two idiots to die. Not when I could save them. And I knew, without my help, they weren't going to survive the next thirty seconds, let alone the rest of the night.

“Inside,” I shouted at them so abruptly that they flinched. All of this had happened in the span of roughly three seconds, and they were still recovering from the shock of the alpha's appearance.

They stared back at me dumbly, and I growled in frustration. Disappearing from their sight and reappearing near the doors to the school, I yanked the slab of wood open and impatiently waved them through.

Finally gathering their wits, they scrambled towards the entrance, falling over themselves in an attempt to get inside before they became dog food. The pair sprinted inside the relative safety of the school, and I slammed the doors shut after them. They creaked closed with a note of haunting finality, and I knew that they would only keep that monster out for so long before we were all in proper, serious danger.
“Lock it!” Scott yelled frantically, scrambling to hold the doors shut. “Lock it!”

“Do I look like I have a key?” Stiles snapped back. I rolled my eyes at their bickering, holding the door shut and peering out into the darkness for any hint of glowing red eyes.

“Grab something!”

“What?”

“Anything!”

“Hate to break it to you boys, but locking this door is pointless either way,” I hissed at them, my keen eyes staring out into the dark. The alpha was still nearby. I could feel him; could sense the prickle of his power in the air. “That mutt's getting through this door whether we lock it or not,” I added darkly. And if not this door, then one of the countless others filling the school building. But I didn't add that last bit – I didn't need these morons any more frightened than they already were.

Frightened people made mistakes. They were desperate, and clumsy. And annoying.

“It would make us feel a hell of a lot better than just leaving it unlocked,” Stiles all but shrieked, wincing when he took note of his volume. He suddenly paused, standing from his crouched position to peer through the smudged glass window at the something sitting on the pavement
Scott seemed to know his friend better than I did – no surprises there – and his face dropped in horror as he realised what was about to happen. “Stiles, no. Don't!” he cried.

I whipped around to find Stiles trying to prise open the doors in an effort to get outside. Wondering if the kid had some kind of death wish, I reached out without much effort and grasped the back of his shirt, tugging him back inside in one smooth sweep.

“Hey—what the hell?” he cried loudly, stumbling backwards as Scott slammed the door shut after him to be safe. If he was suicidal, fine, but there were plenty of better ways to die than getting mauled to death by a rabid alpha.

“You're crazy if you think you're going out there,” I told him sternly, tightening my hold on his clothes as I kept an eye out for the alpha. There was a tiny part of my brain, just a small, irritating part, that kept kept track of the feel of each of his heartbeats under her touch.

His heart was racing, hot blood coursing through his veins. I grit my teeth against the flare of hunger I felt. That was me, I supposed. Always thinking with my fangs.

“Do you have a better idea?” asked Stiles hotly.

I paused, weighing my options for one long, tense moment before shoving Stiles backwards and away from the doors. I would do it, and if I got bitten and began to die that infamously slow, agonising death, I would use my remaining time on earth to kill the human boy I'd done this for.

“Close the door after me,” I snarled, shifting my weight from foot to foot, nails digging into the flesh of my palms.

“What? No,” Stiles objected, but I paid him no mind. Scott seemed to agree with my plan, and I vaguely heard Stiles protesting as the teen wolf held him back, but my task was too important to let them distract me.

I ripped open the door before I could change my mind, slipping out into the night air. I didn't wait around to see where the alpha was, sprinting at full speed towards the bolt-cutters.
I scooped them off the ground just as the great beast crawled out from behind Stiles' jeep, drool leaking from its bared teeth. I sucked in a sharp breath as it roared, beginning to gallop towards me like some kind of hungry, radioactive horse. I was at the doors not a moment later, banging on them frantically.

For one split second I thought they might not open them, leaving me stuck out in the open with a murderous werewolf intent on using me to sharpen its teeth, but then they tugged them open, and I slipped through the gap, shoving the tool between the handles the second they were closed. I leant back against the door, holding my breath as I strived to hear the sound of the alpha outside.

The teen boys stared out through the little windows in the doors, searching for the alpha, who had disappeared during all the commotion. The night was suddenly eerily quiet, and I grit my teeth against the chill I felt rattle down my spine.

“That won't hold, will it?” Scott asked once he was sure we had a few moments reprieve, backing away from the doors. I didn't miss the way his hands still shook. I hoped the adrenaline wasn't going to be enough to make him turn. How ironic would it be if, by saving the teen wolf, I only succeeded in giving him the chance to bite me himself?

“Probably not,” Stiles replied shakily.

They turned around, facing the dark and looming school hallway, no doubt wondering what to do next. A howl pierced the silent night, and the boys jumped, scrambling to take cover somewhere safe. I followed them, body tensed, preparing for an attack at any moment. They darted into a classroom, rushing over to the teacher's desk and beginning to push it against the door, only to be stopped by Stiles.

“Stop,” he whispered, glancing over his shoulder at the empty doorway. “The door's not gonna keep it out.”

“I know.”

“It's your boss. Deaton? The alpha? Your boss.”

“No.”
“Yes. Murdering, psycho werewolf.”

“That can't be.”

“Oh, come on. He disappears and then that thing shows up ten seconds later to toss Derek twenty feet through the air?” Stiles argued. Though he had a point, I didn't agree with him. “That's not convenient timing?”

“It's not him.”

“He killed Derek.”

“Derek's not dead. He can't be dead.”

“Blood spurted out of his mouth, okay? That doesn't exactly qualify as a minor injury.” My lips twitched despite the situation, but I focused my concentration on keeping my senses on the lookout for the alpha. “He's dead, and we're next,” said Stiles grimly.

“Okay just … just, what do we do?” Scott asked distraughtly as I leaned out of the doorway, gaze flickering down each end of the corridor, checking for any hint of those glowing ruby eyes. I could feel my gums tingling, fangs edging their way free in response to the danger. But I grit my teeth until the sensation slowly began to recede.

“We get to my jeep,” Stiles said decisively after a long moment. “We get outta here. You seriously think about quitting your job.” He picked up the torch, both boys marching over to the windows, Scott beginning to pull at the latches desperately. “They don't open, the school's climate controlled.”

“Then we break it,” he tried, not sounding very confident in his own suggestion.

“It'll attract too much noise,” I told him from my spot at the door, glancing back out into the hall again cautiously. “If we're going to survive this, it's going to be with stealth. That's our best chance at getting out of this hellhole alive.”
They both paused, considering my words, although I knew they could only agree. “Stiles, what's wrong with the hood of your jeep?” Scott asked suddenly, his voice panicked as he stared at the car in question.

“What do you mean? Nothing's wrong.”

“It's bent.”

“Like dented?” Stiles asked frantically, leaping forward to get a better look at the jeep.

“No, no I mean bent.”

“...What the hell?”

Before anyone could say anything else the window to their left smashed. Thinking it was the alpha I shot to the boys' side, a threatening snarl bubbling up from my chest as the two of them dropped to the floor, covering their heads as glass flew all around them. We all relaxed a moment later as we discovered it wasn't a murderous alpha, but rather just a hunk of old metal that was obviously from the hood of Stiles' car. I realised I was in a defensive crouch and immediately straightened, brushing the little shards of glass from my top.

“That's my battery,” Stiles said after a beat, torch light shining on the hunk of metal and wires.

“We need to move,” I said sharply, reaching down and gripping the collar of Stiles' shirt, yanking him to his feet.

“No!” Scott argued, tugging his friend back down to his level, his heart beating so fast it was lucky he didn't turn.

Thankfully, Stiles seemed to understand that I was their best bet at getting out of this situation alive. “We have to move,” Stiles told Scott as calmly as he could, pushing himself back up to his feet.
“He could be right outside.”

“He is right outside.”

“We're wasting time;” I hissed at them, my eyes scanning the shadows outside for the wolf. He was there, I could smell him on the air, feeling his power hum within the shadows.

“Just let me take a look,” Scott insisted stubbornly, not waiting for a reply before getting to his knees so he could peer over the wall below the windows.

“Nothing?” Stiles asked impatiently, his eyes, too, scanning the horizon. “Can we go now?”

“We're too out in the open right here,” I whispered, shifting my weight from foot to foot, eager to get moving again.

Survival 101: never stop moving.

“We're leaving,” I said again when neither of them moved. I grasped them both by the front of their shirts and yanked them forwards. They tumbled out into the hall after me and I let them go, peering down the hall as my catlike eyesight adjusted, allowing me to see through the shadows as clearly as if it were day.

“This way,” Scott said, taking off down the hall in the opposite direction.

“No, no, no. Somewhere without windows,” Stiles replied softly, looking around as he considered his surroundings. My eyebrows raised, surprised that he wasn't a total idiot. Somewhere without windows was exactly the right kind of place to be.

“Every single room in this building has windows.”

“Somewhere with less windows.”

There was a pause as both boys thought. I didn't bother suggesting anything, they knew this school
better than I did. “The locker room,” Scott suddenly declared, and I realised he was right. The locker room had the least windows in the whole school.

Stiles nodded and turned to jog down the hall after his friend, keeping his steps as light as he could, minimising the sound of his shoes against the linoleum. “So, any tips?” he asked me as I kept pace with him, watching as Scott led the way through the darkened school.

“Excuse me?” I asked, trying both to listen to him and keep an eye out for the alpha at the same time.

“Well, I assume you have more experience with this sort of situation than we do,” he puffed, pressing a hand to his chest as we rounded a corner, heading down another long hallway. Scott jogged a few paces ahead of us, glancing over his shoulder every few moments. His heart was still racing, but there was no hint of claws, so he had control for now. I hoped it would last.

“This sort of situation?” I echoed Stiles with a tiny smirk of amusement. “Running from murderous werewolves, you mean?”

“Yeah,” the human panted, turning left down another hall when Scott did.

“I tend to keep my distance,” I muttered, losing concentration on the conversation as I heard the sound of paws hitting the ground when we passed by a bay of windows. I wasn't focused on the conversation at hand, and made a terrible mistake. “One bite and I'm dead anyway.”

I didn't have time to realise I'd said something wrong before Scott was shoving open a door to the right, slipping inside quickly. “Call your dad,” he instructed Stiles in a hiss, glancing around the shadowed room cautiously, like the alpha might appear from behind the bay of lockers and attack.

“And tell him what?” Stiles hissed back, his heart racing. The scent of his blood strengthened with his panic, and I grit my teeth against my own flare of hunger.

“Anything,” Scott responded. “A gas leak, a fire; anything. If that thing sees the parking lot full of cops, it'll take off.”

“What if it doesn't?” Stiles hissed back. “What if it goes completely terminator and kills every cop in sight? Including my dad?”
“They have guns.”

“Yeah, and Derek had to be shot with a wolfsbane laced bullet to even slow him down. Remember that?” Stiles retorted, not wanting to risk his father's life.

Something deep within me admired him, he was willing to risk his life to save that of those he loved. There was once a time I might have felt the same way. I tried to picture myself sacrificing myself for these boys tonight, letting myself get bitten to ensure their survival. I shook my head, no matter how much I wished I was the kind of person who could do that, I knew that the first opportunity I got I was likely to run away, and keep running until Beacon Hills was nothing more than a tiny, insignificant dot on the horizon. It was just in my nature.

“Juliet,” Stiles began, turning to face where I stood leaning against the lockers. My fingers were itching to pull out another cigarette, but there was no time to indulge. Lives were on the line. “What's the chance that this thing will just kill any cops that show up?” he asked me shortly.

“A high one,” I responded dryly, not meeting his eyes through the darkness.

“But he's a werewolf,” Scott muttered, something about the dilemma confusing him. “Surely he knows what he's doing.”

“Like you knew what you were doing that night on the bus?” I countered, raising a single eyebrow at him skeptically.

He dropped his head, acknowledging my point. “We have to find a way out and just run for it,” he decided after a long moment.

“Dude, there's nothing near the school for at least a mile,” Stiles argued in a hushed voice.

“What about Derek's car?”

“That could work,” Stiles nodded after a beat. “We'll go outside, get the keys off his body and then we take his car,” he said decisively.
“And him,” Scott insisted.

Both Stiles and I paused, turning to blink at Scott dubiously. Why should it matter if we took Derek's body with us? It was just a bloodied shell – and they weren't even friends. “Fine, whatever,” Stiles relented with a shrug, and we spun around, heading for the door.

“Stop,” I hissed at the same time as Scott grabbed hold of his friend's arm, pulling the human to a stop. I tilted my head to the side, listening to soft footsteps as they headed towards the locker room.

“What?” Stiles asked in confusion, eyes sliding between us both, gleaming with an edge of fear.

“I think I heard something,” said Scott in a whisper.

“Like what?”

Scott shushed him, narrowing his eyes at the door. “Hide,” he commanded, darting backwards and shoving himself into an empty locker.

I glanced over my shoulder, taking in the frozen form of Stiles who stared at the door in horror. I sighed and grabbed the collar of his shirt, tugging open a locker door and all but throwing him inside. He stared at me, shock and something else in his eyes, before I slammed the door in his face. I knew hiding would do me no good – my scent was too strong – so I stepped back into the shadows, hoping I would at least be able to maintain some kind of element of surprise.

The footsteps came closer and I felt the blood drain from my face, preparing to make a change of my own. But before I could fully transform, the door swung open and I slammed myself against the concrete of the wall, holding my breath as I watched the human enter the room.

That didn't make any sense. Why the hell would the alpha turn back into a man to come inside? Surely he knew he was much more likely to win against me as a wolf. I stayed in the shadows, recognising instantly that he couldn't have been the alpha. The alpha, for one, would have known I was there. He'd also have smelt like wet dog. This guy just smelt like disinfectant and aging cheese.
He walked straight passed me, not even glancing at me where I stood in the shadows. My head spun as I caught sight of his jugular pulsing under the thin skin of his neck. If I were to feed from him, I'd be stronger, and I'd have a better chance at getting all of us out of this alive. I wouldn't have to kill him, just a sip would be enough...

I hadn't realised my fangs were starting to descend until the man pulled open the locker Scott was hiding in, both men letting out a scream of fear. I rolled my eyes at how pathetic humans were, stepping out of the darkness and into the light after making sure my human mask was back in place.

Stiles fell out of his hiding place too, yelping along with them. They shushed him desperately, glancing around wildly. “What are you trying to do? Kill me?” the stranger asked, a hand pressed to his chest where his heart was trying to escape its confines. “Both of you – get out,” he barked.

“Will you just listen for half a second, okay?” hissed Stiles.

“Not okay. Get the hell out of here,” he snapped, shoving the boys towards the door. “Right now!”

“Just one second to explain—”

“Just shut up and go,” he cut Stiles off. I huffed as his mammoth hand wrapped around my shoulder as he threw me out the door. I growled at him but he took no notice, slamming the door shut in my face. I was about to pull it back open and give the guy a piece of my mind, but before I could so much as grab the handle he was slammed up against the frosted glass window, unmistakeable blood splatter spraying the door.

Both the boys behind me gasped, but I just stared at the scene stoically. I tried to conjure up some sympathy for the man, but like always found it impossible to do so; my vampirism and lack of humanity wouldn't let me. I stared unemotionally as the man's silhouette was thrown against the glass, his dying screams of agony echoing throughout the hall around us.

Scott leapt at the door, frantically trying to pry it open to save the man. Stiles moved with his friend, reaching around to pull him off the wall to safety. I saw he was struggling; Scott was one strong werewolf. I wrapped my arm around his bicep, heaving him away from the dying man and dragging him down the hall.

After a moment Scott seemed to get the idea, standing on his own two feet and following Stiles
and I, close on our heels as we heard the door get ripped off its hinges. The scent of the man's blood made its way to me and I fought the instinct to turn around and go back to lick it off his remains. Instead I pushed myself faster, rushing down the hall as fast as I dared, not wanting to leave the boys behind just yet. I could afford to stay a little longer. Just a a while, long enough to get them to safety. It was what Myra would want me to do.

The boys scrambled down the hall, Stiles practically falling over himself he was so clumsy. I followed, trying not to be annoyed by the slow pace. They reached the south entrance, Scott pushing on the door hastily only for it to jam, blocked by something on the other side. I tapped my foot impatiently, tensed in morbid anticipation for the inevitable arrival of the alpha. “It's a dumpster,” Scott muttered darkly.

“He pushed it in front of the door, to block us in,” Stiles said with a groan. He turned to me, an expectant and hopeful look on his face. “Can you push it away?”

“Probably not,” I admitted. The thing looked too heavy for even me to push out of the way. Werewolves were, by nature, stronger than vampires. If Scott couldn't get it to budge, I doubted I would.

“Stiles, stop!” Scott exclaimed when his friend began beating at the door, frantically trying to break through. I rolled my eyes. If I couldn't do it, there was no chance in hell that he could.

“I'm not dying here, I'm not dying here,” he was mumbling in a panic, wrapping his arms around himself as we turned to head back down the hallway. I wondered if this was going to turn into some kind of panic attack. I sincerely hoped not – it would only be one more inconvenient thing I'd have to deal with tonight. “I'm not dying at school,” he insisted strongly, as though he couldn't imagine anything worse.

“We're not going to die!” Scott assured him, but the words were weak, backed up with nothing but hope.

“What is it doing? What does it want?!” Stiles exclaimed, clutching the torch tightly, the light moving back and forth across the hallway.

“Me!” Scott replied nervously. “Derek said it's stronger with a pack.”

“Oh, great. A psychotic werewolf who's into team work. That's-that's beautiful.”
Me lips twitched upwards into a smirk, but I smothered the expression before either could see it. Stiles had this uncanny ability to make me laugh in the most dire of circumstances.

Scott stopped suddenly, throwing out an arm and stopping Stiles soccer-mom style. I blinked, pausing just before running into Stiles' back. I looked up to see Scott staring out the window. I followed his gaze, my eyes narrowing as I caught sight of glowing red eyes attached to a huge bear-like-wolf standing in the shadows on the roof. I curled my lip, about to throw a snarl at it for good measure, when it charged. It sped across the roof, heading directly for us. The boys spun on their heels and booked it down the hall, and I was quick to follow.

Glass shattered behind me as the monstrous alpha threw itself through the bay of windows, crashing into the wall for a moment before I heard it pick itself up and begin to race after us. All thoughts of saving Scott and Stiles flew from my head as I ran, overtaking the panicked boys with ease. I shoved open a door on the right, not caring where it took me.

I didn't bother with the stairs, merely jumping over the rail and landing flat on my feet before taking off again. My only thought was for my own survival – to put as much distance between myself and this wolf as possible.

But I could hear the sounds of the boys following me in the distance, their sloppy footfalls heavy on the stairs. Shame overtook me and I suddenly stopped dead.

What was I doing?

This town was meant to be a fresh start for me. One where I became a better person (if such a thing were possible). Leaving these boys to die – which they most certainly would without me – was a dick move, even I could see that. Heading back to that massacre went against every instinct I had. It went against my base DNA.

But it was when Myra's final words began echoing inside my head that I reluctantly spun around and darted back the way I'd come.

Every atom in me was screaming to leave, but for once I ignored my instincts, and I did the right fucking thing.

I followed the sounds of the boys' racing hearts, scowling to myself and already regretting my
decision as I found them on a lower floor, pressed up against some lockers, shaking like little girls. “Juliet!” Stiles exclaimed louder than he should have when I appeared in front of them. Hadn't I just been saying something about stealth? “I thought you'd left,” he hissed, eyes wide in surprise.

“I almost did,” I muttered, staring over my shoulder at the staircase, listening closely for any sign that the alpha was near.

“Glad you changed your mind,” he replied, but I ignored him, scanning the shadows, every cell on red alert. “Right, we have to do something,” he continued, glancing around in fear, unable to keep tabs on the beast in the same way that Scott and I could.

“Like what?” asked Scott in a whisper.

“I dunno,” he responded dully and I barely refrained from rolling my eyes. Why suggest a plan without first having a plan? “Kill it? Burn it? Put mental anguish on it? Something.”

There was a loud bang from down the hall and both boys practically jumped out of their skin. I pressed my fingers to my temple, trying not to snap at the idiots. They paused, Scott straining his neck to make sure it wasn't getting any closer and Stiles looked deep in thought, glancing around at the room we were at the mouth of.

I hissed at him quietly when he pulled his keys out from his pocket, but he paid me no mind. Suddenly he threw the keys into the room, ducking behind the door and pulling Scott and I with him. I tensed as the beast charged into the room, looking for blood, and Stiles slammed the door on it, locking it with surprisingly deft fingers then with Scott's help shoved a table in front of the door for good measure. They were panting, exhausted from the effort of moving the heavy table, and breathless with fear. I crossed my arms, stepping back and getting ready to move.

The werewolf roared, slamming uselessly against the door. The boys jumped violently at the noise. “Come on,” Stiles urged his friend. “Get across.”

Scott hesitated, glancing into the room wearily before rushing over the table, stumbling ungracefully into a tense Stiles. “What are you doing?” he hissed at his friend when he peered around the corner, trying to get a peek at the beast in the room.

“I just wanna get a look at it,” he said defensively.
“Are you crazy?”

“Look, it's trapped. Okay? It's not gonna get out.”

Stiles climbed onto the table, peering into the small window cautiously as he mumbled to himself. “Shut up,” Scott urged.

“I'm not scared of this thing,” he argued, only for it to slam against the door suddenly, making him jump a foot in the air, tumbling off the table and onto the hard ground. “I'm not scared of you!” he yelled once he'd put himself back on his feet. I rolled my eyes, listening to the sound of his heart racing in his chest. “Right? 'Cause you're in there and we're out here. You're not going anywh—”

A loud crash sounded from the room the alpha was trapped in and we all froze. The roof above us began creaking, the sound of something moving. I took off in the opposite direction, grabbing Stiles' shirt for good measure to tug him along. We raced through the halls, and all of my focus was on keeping tabs on the homicidal alpha. It was stalking us, I could feel it.

“Wait, do you hear that?” Scott said, stopping suddenly in the hall. I froze, tilting my head as I automatically searched for the sound he was talking about.

“Hear what?” Stiles asked in confusion. Tilting my head to the side, brow furrowed in concentration, I blink in surprise when I realised what the sound was.

“It's a phone,” I said, my fingers once again twitching to pull out a cigarette. I clenched my hands into fists, stopping the urge in its tracks. Smoking was a substitute habit for the usual bloodlust, and right now I needed some kind of vice to keep me cool, calm and centred.

“What?” Stiles hissed sharply.

“I know that ring!” Scott gasped. “It's Allison's phone.”

If I wasn't on such high alert, I would have dropped my head into my hands in sheer exasperation. Just what I needed, another heart to keep beating – as if I didn't have enough problems already. We were stuck in the dark, empty high school with a murderous werewolf, and now the hunter's daughter had stumbled into the fray. Could things get any worse?
Scott spun around, slapping his friend eagerly on the shoulder. “Give me your phone,” he barked, and Stiles blinked in surprise.

“What?”

“Because mine's still broken,” he replied impatiently. Stiles handed over his phone, and the teen wolf tapped away at it, holding it up to his ear and beginning to talk to his girlfriend in hushed whispers, as though the alpha might not be able to hear him if he lowered his voice. Idiot.

My eyes slid away from the panicking teen wolf to focus on Stiles. His heart was pounding at a mile a minute and he flinched at every creak the old building gave in the wind. “You're scared?” I asked before I could stop myself.

Stiles blinked, turning to stare at me with a dubious expression. “Of course I'm scared,” he told me, confusion lacing his voice at my strange question. I supposed, from his point of view, it was a rather stupid thing to say. “Aren't you?” he asked slowly.

A thoughtful frown tugged at my expression. Was I afraid? I hadn't really had time to assess how I felt. I was relatively new to the whole 'emotions' shtick, having had my humanity switch flicked off for so many decades. Every emotion was heightened, intense and almost overbearing. They all just sort of blurred together into one, pressing feeling; hunger.

It was hard to figure out if what I was feeling was fear. I couldn't sweat like humans, my heart couldn't race. There was an odd fluttering in my gut that felt somewhat foreign, and if I had to put it down to anything, fear would be the most logical assumption. “I think so,” I admitted with a grimace, biting my lip as I studied a scuff mark on the linoleum.

“You think so?” he repeated dubiously, raising his eyebrows at me, his heart rate picking up even more. “How can you not know if you're scared?”

I opened my mouth, though I was saved from having to come up with a lie as Scott hung up the phone, stepping closer to where we were hovering and speaking up. “Allison's going to meet us in the lobby,” he said, handing the device to Stiles and taking off without warning, causing his friend to groan in annoyance. I rolled my eyes at the young wolf, following after the two boys. Their footfalls weren't exactly soft as they charged through the school. Those two boys were going to get themselves killed if they weren't careful, I thought with another exasperated roll of my eyes.
“What are you doing here? Why did you come?” Scott asked the instant they noisily shoved their way into the lobby. I was close on their heels, shooting Allison an utterly unimpressed expression for her presence there.

Yet another child to keep from getting slaughtered. What the fuck did I look like to these kids, a supernatural babysitter?

“Because you asked me to,” Allison replied tersely.

“I asked you to?”

Allison frowned, pressing a button on her phone and holding up the small device, letting us read a text that appeared to be from Scott, asking her to meet him at the school. I frowned, eyes glancing upwards as the roof above us creaked. The sound was small, much smaller than anything I expected the alpha to make, so I assumed it was an opossum or something and focused back on the conversation at hand.

“Why do I get the feeling you didn't send this message?” Allison asked Scott carefully, heart now racing in her chest. I could smell her fear on the air, and I grit my teeth against the stench.

“Because I didn't,” Scott told her with a sinking kind of horror.

“Did you drive here?” Stiles asked her impatiently.

“Jackson did,” she told him.

“Jackson's here too?”

“And Lydia,” she told us, and I stifled a groan. Of course those idiots were here – just three more ignorant fucking humans I had to protect. “What's going on? Who sent this text?” Her phone began chiming again and with a sigh she answered it just as I heard footsteps echoing down a hall to our left. “Where are you?” Lydia and Jackson shoved their way into the room, irritated scowls on their pretty faces.
“Finally,” the queen-bee sighed, crossing her arms and jutting out her hip. “Can we go now?”

Another creak echoed from above us and everybody in the room froze. I detected the vibration of power in the air, and realised with a silent sigh that we were in some serious trouble. My entire body tensed as I prepared for a fight.

“Run,” Scott ordered the group, and nobody fought him on it. They all took off running up the stairs, most of them not really sure exactly what they were running from. I was close on their heels; I had the best chance at fighting it off.

I tried not to think about how seriously dead I would be if it managed to bite me, focusing instead on putting one foot in front of the other. We sprinted down the hallway, the massive beast only feet behind us. Scott crashed into the doors at the end of the hall, waiting just long enough for us to fall through before slamming them shut and beginning to shove desks and chairs at the entrance. “Help me get this stuff in front of the door!”

“Scott, wait. No,” Stiles protested, and I immediately spun around, blinking up at the huge wall of windows. A sinking feeling appeared in my stomach and I pressed a hand to it in hopes of lessoning the less-than-delightful feeling. Was this what having emotions felt like? I didn't like it.

“What was that? Scott, what was that?” Allison asked in a panic, pressing a hand to her forehead.

“Just help me!” he yelled, he and Jackson tugging a particularly large piece of furniture in front of the two doors.

“Guys,” Stiles tried again, “just wait a second.” I leant against the board, closing my eyes and wishing I was curled up in bed with a glass of A-positive and a mediocre book. “You guys, listen to me. Will you wait a second?” Stiles began to get more and more agitated as nobody listened. I crossed my arms, tipping my head back so my skull bumped against the board, breathing in deeply through my nose. It only agitated me further as the delicious scents of everyone – bar Scott, who smelt like wet dog on a good day – filled my senses. I clenched my jaw shut tight. “Hello?!” Stiles screamed suddenly. Everyone finally turned to stare at him, blinking in surprise at the frustration on his face. “Okay, nice work. Really beautiful job everyone,” he muttered sarcastically. “Now, what should we do about the twenty foot wall of windows?!” he hissed.

All the teenagers deflated, staring up at the wall of glass with frustrated and exhausted expressions.
“Somebody please explain to me what's going on, because I'm freaking out here,” Allison cried suddenly, gripping Scott's arm, pleading with him for answers. “Scott?” she pressed when he said nothing.

The teen wolf pulled away from the girl, marching over to one of the desks and collapsing onto it tiredly. I watched all this happen from my position by the board. “Somebody killed the janitor,” Stiles was the one to speak up, surprising all of them, as they'd been staring at Scott for answers.

“What?” Lydia squeaked, eyes wide with panic.

“Yeah, the janitor's dead,” said Stiles plainly.

“What's he talking about? Is this a joke?” Allison hissed at Scott, who still said nothing. The room began to reek with fear, and I grit my teeth against the stench.

“Who killed him?” the one called Jackson asked firmly.

“No, no, no, no. This was supposed to be over. The mountain lion—”

“Don't you get it?” Jackson cut her off sharply. “There wasn't a mountain lion.”

“Who was it?!” Allison demanded furiously. “What does he want? What's happening? Scott?”

“I don't know. I just—if we go out there, he's going to kill us,” said the teen wolf, awkward and hesitant, making me roll my eyes. He needed to learn to lie better than that if he was going to survive being an active member of the super-secret supernatural club.

“Us? He's going to kill us?” Allison asked shrilly, her human heart thudding wetly inside her chest. My mouth tingled and my insides suddenly felt dry. I looked away, turning my stare to the wall of windows, hoping to distract myself from the hunger.

“Who? Who is it?” demanded Lydia.
There was a pregnant pause, before Scott sprouted something completely surprising, and just slightly amusing. “It's Derek,” he said with a sudden confidence that made me blink. “It's Derek Hale.”

There was a beat of confused silence.

“Derek killed the janitor?” Jackson asked skeptically.

“Are you sure?” asked Allison carefully.

The humans all prattled on, arguing amongst themselves as humans often tended to. I pressed my fingers to my forehead, breathing through my mouth to try and make their scents less potent to me. In the back of my mind I was cruelly and painfully aware that, if I killed them all right here, right now, I could blame it on the alpha. Nobody would think it was me when Derek's body was already outside, when the janitor was dead in the locker room.

I had to forcefully change my thinking, gritting my teeth and beginning to recite my favourite Edgar Allen Poe poems over and over in my head, in an attempt to distract myself.

“Why does Derek want to kill us?” Allison asked loudly, her voice clear over the panicked muttering of the others. It snapped me out of my murderous thoughts and brought my focus back to the task at hand. “Why is he killing anyone?”

Everyone turned to stare at Scott expectantly. “Why is everyone looking at me?” he asked defensively.

“Is he the one that sent her that text?” Lydia pressed, a hysterical edge to her voice.

“No! I mean – I don't know,” he was stumbling over his words, growing frantic under their attention.

“Is he the one that called the police?”
“I don’t know!”

“Alright, why don’t we ease back on the throttle here, okay?” Stiles suggested calmly. He grabbed Scott by the shoulders and carefully steered him away from the rest of the group, lowering his voice so I was the only other person in the room able to hear. “Okay, first up, throwing Derek under the bus? Nicely done,” he muttered approvingly.

“I didn't know what to say. I had to say something,” Scott hissed back defensively. “And if he's dead, then it doesn't matter. Right? Except if he's not … Oh God, I totally just bit her head off,” he muttered, casting Allison a pathetically anxious look.

I rolled my eyes at the teen drama as Stiles steered the conversation on. “And she'll totally get over it. Bigger issues at hand here. How do we get out alive?”

“But we are alive. It could have killed us already. It's like it's cornering us or something.”

“So what? It wants to eat us all at the same time?”

“No. Derek said it wants revenge.”

“Okay!” Jackson shouted, interrupting their little talk, rather rudely in my opinion. I may have been a bitch, but at least I had manners. What a prick. “Stiles calls his useless dad and tells him to send someone with a gun and aim,” he snapped decisively. “Are we good with that?” he added, voice thick with condescension.

“He's right,” Scott said when Stiles hesitated. “Tell him the truth if you have to. Just call him.”

But Stiles didn't agree. “I'm not watching my dad get eaten alive,” he replied, voice holding a strength I hadn't expected.

“Alright,” Jackson hissed when Stiles didn't move to comply, surging forwards and grasping him by the arm. “Give me the phone,” he demanded, but to everyone's surprise – and no one's more than mine – Stiles suddenly spun around, arm flying almost too quick for even my eyes to see, his fist slamming into Jackson's face.
I gasped in delight, clapping my hands together, a grin spreading across my lips as I watched the asshole sag, holding his face in pain. Allison gasped for a whole different reason, crouching down to see if he was okay.

As everybody else stared at a recovering Jackson, Stiles' gaze slid over to me. I was surprised by the question his eyes held. I wasn't sure what he wanted, but deep in my gut I could tell it was probably some kind of reassurance. I was no good at that sort of thing, but I nodded anyway, hoping it helped the situation somehow. Stiles sighed, running a hand over his short hair before forcefully tugging his phone free of his pocket.

“Dad, hey. It's me,” he said defeatedly into the phone. “And it’s your voicemail...look I need you to call me back. Now. Like, right now.” A loud bang echoed around the room, and everybody jumped. Even I flinched, then scowled at the involuntary reaction. “We're at the school, dad. We're at the school,” he said as the banging continued, somebody (or something) trying to bang its way though the doors. I stepped away from the wall, moving closer to the door, hands curled into fists, prepared to fight for my life if it came down to it. Stiles hung up the phone, then glanced over to the door on the opposite end of the room. “The door out of the kitchen leads to the stairwell,” he told us quickly.

“It only goes up,” Scott argued.

“Up is better than here.”

Scott led us, making a dash for the door just as the ones behind us were bashed open. They darted for the stairwell, taking them two at a time in their rush to get to safety. Once we were on the next floor they began desperately jiggling handles, looking for an open door. Jackson found one, and we all spilled into the room. He shoved a chair under the handle, barricading us in. Everyone was silent as we waiting for something to happen. Slow, heavy footsteps passed the door, then disappeared down the hall, along with wet, heavy breathing.

“Jackson, how many people can fit in your car?” Scott asked as loudly as he dared.

“Five, if someone squeezes on someone’s lap,” he responded.

“Five?” Allison retorted. “I barely fit in the back.”

“It doesn't matter, there's no getting out without drawing attention,” Stiles murmured.
“Well what about this? This leads to the roof, we could go down the fire escape to the parking lot in like two seconds,” Scott suggested.

“That’s a deadbolt,” he responded with a tired blink.

Scott paused, looking down in defeat before brightening up. “The janitor has a key.”

“You mean his body has it.”

“I can get it. I can find it by scent. By blood,” he told us, barely glancing at me.

“Well gee, that sounds like an incredibly terrible idea. What else you got?” Stiles drawled, and I bit back a smirk.

“I’m getting the key,” Scott said, his tone leaving no room for argument.

He moved to step passed his friend, but I grabbed him by the arm. I shut my eyes, I couldn't believe I was even considering putting my life on the line for these insignificant morons.

Everyone else argued, saying he couldn't go out there weaponless. I'd have suggested using my daggers, but I didn't want them to know I'd come into this prepared for a fight. It would look too suspicious. Lydia surprised us all by suggesting a self igniting molotov cocktail. I raised my eyebrows at her, then at Jackson as he smashed the glass to the chemical cabinet and they began preparing the homemade weapon.

I leaned back against the board, watching them work disinterestedly. Stiles appeared beside me, and I looked up at him, my expression bored. He jerked his head, motioning for me to follow him. My eyebrows pulled together, but I could see in his eyes that whatever it was was important, so I pushed myself off the wall and followed him to the opposite corner of the room where we wouldn't be overheard by the rest of the humans.

“What?” I asked once we were there, crossing my arms again and leaning back against some shelves nonchalantly. He opened his mouth, pausing and then slamming it shut again, a pensive look on his face. “Spit it out,” I pressed impatiently, glancing over my shoulder at the group by the
teacher's desk, mixing together a molotov cocktail.

“I know,” he blurted, and when I looked back his face was scrunched, uncomfortable and maybe just a little afraid.

I blinked at him impassively. “You know what?”

He swallowed, his Adam's apple bobbing with the motion. “I know you're – that you're a ... vampire,” he whispered the last word like it were a curse.

My muscles tenses, and I briefly considered denying it, but I knew by now that he was too smart to fall for that. I'd seen the looks he'd given me, I'd known he was close to figuring it out. I thought I'd have more time to figure out how I'd react. I wasn't expecting him to discover me so soon. I took a deep breath, keeping my expression clear of any emotion as I stared at him through the dark.

He seemed to sense that I wasn't going to say anything, and chose to barrel on. “Is there anything you can do?” he asked, hope clinging to his voice.

Again I had to wonder exactly how far I was willing to go for these kids. “Not without risking my own life,” I finally said, the words short and terse.

Stiles frowned, glancing over at Jackson who was eyeing us suspiciously, as though we might have been forming some sort of alliance over here in this corner, planning to sacrifice him at the first opportunity. The thought made me smile, however small. Stiles turned his attention back to me, a saddened, panicked sort of look in his honey-like eyes. I pursed my lips, the expression making me uncomfortable. People didn't tend to ever really need me for anything. It was a strange sensation, to be needed.

“I'm fast,” I admitted, turning my gaze to the far wall so I wouldn't have to look into his overly-expressive eyes. “Faster than Scott. And certainly faster than the alpha.”

“That's something,” he said, hope colouring his voice. “Right?”

“One bite, Stiles,” I replied tensely, chancing a glimpse at him. His brows were drawn together, and his heart was pounding away in his chest. “One bite and it's game over for me.”
“It's the same for everyone though,” he whispered, taking a step closer to me. “We're all risking our lives.” I stared at him stonily, my teeth grinding together in my mouth. “Listen,” he began again, moving closer to me still. I leaned away from him, but he didn't seem to notice. “Out of everyone here, I'm betting you have the best chance at beating the thing.”

I narrowed my eyes at him, holding my breath to avoid taking in his scent. “What makes you think that?” I asked carefully.

He hesitated, scratching the back of his neck and considering his words carefully before speaking. “I think you're old,” he finally said, and I raised an eyebrow at him.

I may not have been human, but that wasn't something you ever really said to a woman's face, no matter the species.

In the darkness, Stiles' face went a blotchy pink. “What I mean is – I think you've been around a long time. Am I right?” he asked quickly. I didn't reply, biting my lip and continuing to stare at him blankly, my face giving nothing away. But he seemed to sense the answer I wasn't giving. “Which means, you have experience dealing with this sort of thing,” he said firmly.

He was right, in a way. I'd never been trapped inside of a high school with a bunch of kids trying to fend off a murderous alpha, but I had fought my fair share of werewolves in my time.

“So, given the opportunity, could you beat him?” Stiles asked me softly, frowning worriedly as his gaze flickered to the group working by the table.

I pressed my lips together tightly. “It's a toss of a coin, really,” I told him, glancing away and fixing my eyes onto the wall behind him, not wanting to look in his stupid, hopeful eyes as I spoke. “We're most likely pretty evenly matched, the outcome will come down to circumstance. Luck.”

He nodded as he considered my words. “You have to try, though.”

My lip curled as I snapped my gaze back to him, and his heart leapt at the fury in my expression. “I don't have to do anything.”
He blinked, apparently something about my words surprised him. Suddenly, a steely resolve lit up in his eyes and he took yet another step closer to me, this time so close I could feel his breath on my face. “You could have run away at any point tonight,” he hissed, staring down directly into my eyes, no hint of fear in his eyes. “You're still here. There has to be a reason why.”

This time I was the one surprised. Why had I stayed? I didn't care whether these children lived or died.

Did I?

“Lock it behind me,” said Scott suddenly.

“Wait,” I bit out before I could talk myself out of it, an annoyed scowl curling at my lips. Stiles looked down at me with wide eyes, and I pursed my lips before reluctantly speaking. “You can't go alone,” I said, crossing the space between us, meeting him at the door. My eyes flickered over the people in the room with barely concealed distain. “I'm coming with you,” I announced flatly.

“What?” he blinked in surprise.

“Trust me, it's better for everyone if you just go with it,” I muttered, still bitter about the situation I'd found myself in. “Now let's hurry up and leave before I change my mind.”

“You can't be serious,” Allison breathed, pressing a hand to her head as though to hold back her own panic. “Scott's one thing. But you? You can't weigh more than a hundred pounds! You don't stand a chance.”

Her lower lip quivered and she sniffled pathetically. I rolled my eyes, reaching behind me and pulling the two daggers from the waistband of my jeans out, twirling them in my hands, maybe showing off just a little. Lydia stepped back in shock at the sight of the weapons, and Jackson stared back at me, unimpressed.

“Why would you bring weapons if you didn't know this would happen?” Allison asked me suspiciously, a tear of terror sliding down her porcelain cheek.

“I always carry daggers,” I lied with a shrug, stepping forwards and shoving Scott along gently. He looked over his shoulder longingly at his girlfriend and I rolled my eyes, pushing him closer to the
door. He turned back around, unlocking the door and sliding out into the dark hall.

I slipped through the gap, turning around as I stepped out of the doorway and blinking in surprise as I saw Stiles was only inches from me, preparing to close the door after me. “Be careful,” he breathed so quietly I was sure only Scott and I could hear. “And whatever you do … don't get bitten.”

I bit back a sarcastic reply, merely nodding my head with one jerky motion and moving further into the hall, daggers held up in front of me as the door bumped shut and the lock clicked into place. I rolled my neck in a circle and it cracked, the sound echoing through the shadows of the hall. Scott opened his mouth to say something to me and I shook my head, pressing a finger to my lips. He nodded, moving forwards through the darkness, keen eyes searching for any hint of the alpha.

Again, I was hit with the knowledge that I could just run. The chances of the alpha catching up to me were slim to none, it was the only way I could be certain I wouldn't die in this fucking, godforsaken high school. But, unfortunately for me, Stiles was right. I could have run, and I hadn't yet. Obviously there was a reason why.

I crept behind Scott, my footsteps barely making a sound against the linoleum floor as we walked down the stairs, quietly pushing our way through the door to the first floor.

Scott's nose was better than mine, so I let the teen wolf lead, hovering close to his back. He padded into the gymnasium, slowly making his way under the seats, stepping over the metal supports and sniffing the air every few moments. I followed him silently, tensing up every time the seats creaked. I took a deep breath in to help relax me, but immediately froze.

Blood. I could smell it in the air.

My gums tingled, my eyes and throat burned and my muscles coiled. I hadn't realised how hungry I was until I caught the irresistible scent of the liquified life exposed to the air. Scott stopped dead ahead of me, slowly looking upwards. I copied the action, heat flaring through me as I caught sight of the janitor's bloodied corpse hanging from the supports. I shoved down the urge to feed, shifting my weight to the balls of my feet, prepared to at any moment fend off an attack.

The boy caught sight of the keys and set down the molotov cocktail, pulling himself up to reach them where they hang from the man's belt. Before he could grab them, the seats started to collapse in on themselves; somebody was clearly doing it on purpose. I grasped Scott by the arm and wrenched him from his spot on the supports. Luckily for us he'd gotten the keys, and he swooped down to grab the cocktail before hightailing it outta there. I made it to safety before him, knives
held up and ready to attack. He rolled out into the open, immediately leaping to his feet.

A deep growling from the other end of the building rumbled through the room, and we both spun around to face the source. I allowed my face to change, veins crawling up my cheeks and fangs sliding from my gums. I snarled in warning, Scott flinching at the feral sound before gathering himself and glaring determinately at the alpha. I idly spun the daggers in my hands, watching as the beast crawled towards us, saliva dripping from its clenched, bloodied muzzle.

“Come on,” Scott muttered, shifting his weight anxiously from foot to foot. “Come and get us.”

The thing charged towards us, but before it could get close enough to land any hits Scott threw the molotov cocktail at it. I was expecting it to blow up, so I was greatly disappointed when nothing happened other than the glass shattered and the liquid inside spilled everywhere.

“Shit,” I mumbled as the monster roared, undeterred as it moved towards us. It had no interest in me, reaching for Scott as he turned to run, tripping him and pulling him closer to him, the boy sliding hopelessly across the floor.

I hissed, my fangs biting into my lower lip as the beast reared around to face me. It swiped at me but I dodged the attack with ease, using the moment of confusion to my advantage by slicing it across the chest with one of the daggers in my hand. It growled, my cut nothing more than an irritation, and with one swipe of its paw shoved me out of the way. I scowled as I hit the floor, my head banging against the hard ground. Black spots danced in my vision as I pushed myself to my feet.

I was too late. It was already hovering over Scott, staring at him intelligently before letting out a mighty howl. I winced, slapping my hands over my ears as the sound vibrated through me. After a long, painful moment it stopped and leapt over a convulsing Scott. I knew what had happened; it had been a command, an order to shift. I knew Scott was no longer in control of himself, so staying around him wasn't an option for me. I turned, following the path the alpha had taken through the school, ignoring Scott's pained screams from behind me.

I was faster, and caught up to it with relative ease. I overtook it, sliding in front of it and blocking its path. “Hello, mutt.” I said as we both paused. It growled, dipping into a defensive crouch. I copied the action, ready to fight.

Without any warning it lunged at me. I slipped out of the way, appearing on its other side and stabbing it in the chest with a dagger. It groaned but recovered almost instantly, spinning around and opening its jaws wide, preparing to bite me. I dodged out of the way again, punching it in the
eye and jumping back. It snarled, and I snarled right back, flashing him my pearly white fangs. It made another move to bite me, and I ducked under its jaw. While I was distracted with trying to keep its teeth from sinking into my flesh, it managed to land a hit on my torso.

I was slammed back into the lockers, my head hitting the metal hard enough that I knew I'd have a concussion. I winced, falling to the ground. The alpha turned on its heel and ran, disappearing down the hall before I could stand and catch up. Clearly it didn't care enough to stick around and finish the job, but I wasn't about to complain.

I looked down at myself, frowning in confusion as I saw red seeping through my white t-shirt. The monstrous bastard had scratched me.

I moved to sit up, but almost immediately fell back down as a searing pain rocked through me. I bit my lip hard enough to draw blood, trying to muffle my screams. Scratches from an alpha werewolf were just as bad as bites in the pain department, the only difference being it probably wouldn't kill me – just hurt like a bitch and take forever to heal. I moved a shaky hand to the hem of my top, slowly pulling it up to view the damage.

I had three deep gashes running from just under my breast down diagonally across my stomach and ending at my hipbone. I hissed as I touched them, they felt like they were on fire, bleeding excessively. At this rate I was going to pass out from blood loss before I had a chance to get to safety.

I couldn't move if I wanted to, all I could do was press my hands to my stomach and pray my healing would kick in enough to stop the blood flow. It could have been hours, though it was probably only minutes later, when I heard the sound of hurried footsteps on the stairs to my right. I opened my eyes, frowning as I didn't remember shutting them, and looking up with fuzzy vision as the figure of a person ran towards me.

“Oh my God, oh my God,” the familiar voice of Stiles muttered, dropping to his knees and sliding the last few feet towards me, coming to rest at my side. “Are you okay?” At my weak glare he winced, nodding his head. “Right, stupid question.” His hands hovered above my body, like he wasn't sure what to do with them. “I'm gonna be sick,” he said as he looked down at his knees which were covered in blood from the puddle on the floor. “Are you gonna die?”

“No,” I grunted, grasping his arm with my hand, doing my best to ignore the beating of his human pulse beneath his pale skin. “Help me up,” I ordered him sharply.

“I really don't think you should stand—”
“Help. Me. Up.”

He swallowed, his Adam's apple bobbing as he scrambled to his feet, reaching down and
unsteadily pulling me upright. I wobbled, hissing at the flare of agony that ripped across my torso.
“Shouldn't you be healing?” he asked under his breath as he gently tugged me down the hallway,
towards where I could hear the sounds of the police beginning to sweep the building. “Wait, you
can heal, right? Because I read some lore that said you couldn't because technically you're dead—”

I wrenched myself out of his arms, a furious scowl on my lips. I pressed one hand to my bleeding
stomach, the other to the wall to help me balance.

“I have to go, nobody can see this blood, or they'll ask questions I can't answer.” I told him
hurriedly, freezing as I heard footsteps heading towards where we were standing.

“You can't leave,” he hissed, stepping closer to me but immediately shifting backwards under the
strength of my glare. “Lydia, Allison and Jackson have seen you, and they probably already told
the police.”

“Well, what the hell do you expect me to do?” I growled, blinking away the black spots from my
vision and focusing on him. I took a deep breath in, flinching at the pain rippling across my torso.
“Let the paramedics examine me and realise I don't have a heartbeat?”

Stiles looked contemplative for a long moment as I anxiously listened to the sound of footsteps
only a hall over from us. “I have a sweater in my locker,” he said suddenly, spinning around on his
heel and disappearing around a corner. I blanched, blinking at the empty air in front of me. That
little prick had just left me.

A door at the end of the hall pushed open and a deputy ran in, spotting me instantly and darting
over to help me. “Are you alright, miss?”

“Go to the other side of the school,” I commanded him, struggling to keep our eyes locked as I
performed my little party trick. “Forget you saw me here.”

“Yes ma'am,” he responded obediently, turning on his heel and marching back down the hall in
something of a daze.
I sagged, already exhausted. I was weak, and was only going to get weaker. One deputy? No problem. An entire crowd of police and paramedics? *Slight* problem.

“Hey,” Stiles said, reappearing in front of me. I blinked vacantly, not having noticed him approach. He held out a handful of black fabric, “I spilt coke on it the other day and left it in my locker to dry but forgot to get it after school.” I swayed on my feet, trying to make my lips move so I could tell him I didn't care. “Whoa, okay,” he mumbled, pressing his empty hand to my shoulder to steady me.

I shrugged him off, tentatively reaching for my shirt and slowly – and painfully – peeling it off my body. I hissed in pain as the fabric rubbed over my wounds but didn't stop until it was over my head. I handed it off to Stiles, who had gone bone white. I wasn't sure if it was the sight of my lacy white bra or the three deep gashes slicing across my body. Probably a combination of both.

I handed him the blood soaked shirt, taking the black sweater from him and hesitantly slipping my arms into the holes, zipping it up over my injuries carefully. “Toss it,” I told him quietly, shoving the feeling of the pain into the back of my mind, forcing myself to stand straight and confident, so hopefully nobody would be able to tell that I was hurt.

“What?” Stiles asked unintelligently.

I rolled my eyes. “The bloodied shirt, Stiles,” I said tightly, glancing down at the red stained fabric pointedly. “Toss it into the bottom of a trashcan where they won't find it.”

He nodded, hurrying over to the far wall and slipping the shirt into the bottom of the can. I took a deep breath in, immediately clenching my teeth together as I was once again surrounded by the boy's mouthwatering scent. Why did he have to smell so damn delicious?

We made our way towards the main entrance, but didn't get there before Stiles’ father – the Sheriff – appeared on front of us, pulling his son into a warm embrace. “Are you okay?” he asked worriedly, cupping his hands around the boy's shoulders and holding him away so he could look him over, checking for injury. “Are you hurt?”

“I'm fine, dad,” he told his father, who continued to eye him carefully, as though he wasn't sure he believed him.
Finally the Sheriff just nodded, pulling his son into another hug before letting him go, his eyes sliding over to me, as if only just noticing I was there. “Juliet, right?” he asked, also looking me over, assessing the damage. “Are you okay?”

“I'm fine, sir,” I lied with a nod.

He nodded back, shooting me a smile that didn't quite reach his eyes. “Come on,” he said, leading us out of the school. I glanced back up at the dark, looming building behind us.

In a way, I was proud of myself. I hadn't run. I'd done exactly what Myra would have wanted me to. I'd stayed, and I'd fought, and I'd done the right thing. I hoped, suddenly, that wherever Myra was, she was proud of me too.
Heroes

You're not a hero, you're a liar
You're not a saviour, you're a vampire
Sucking the life out of all the friends you've ever known

Heroes – All Time Low

Getting to Stiles’ house wasn't a problem. I slid through the trees and jumped onto the second storey, perching at his window, peering in through the darkness. He wasn't asleep, despite it nearly being daylight. I could hear his father's snores from down the hall. Stiles was sat at his desk, hand supporting his head as he stared down at an old textbook, lazily flipping the pages every few moments. I hesitated, unsure what I was even doing there. Was I there to threaten him? To yell at him? To kill him?

That last one seemed unlikely, but I was known for my unpredictability.

Despite my hesitancies, I tapped at the window, holding myself up with the awning and trying not to cringe at the pain that flared across my middle. Stiles gasped and spun around, a baseball bat all but appearing in his grasp. I supposed the events of the past twenty-four hours had a deeper impact than I had first assumed. He stared at me through the glass, shock and distrust on his face. After a tense moment he stood, although he kept a tight hold of the bat, and moved over to his windowsill. He unlatched the lock and I grasped the bottom, sliding it up and slipping through the gap, landing gracefully on the floor of his room. I was thankful I'd already received an invitation inside, pressing a hand to my painful injury and trying not to groan when it stung even more under my touch.

“Are you okay?” was the first thing he asked, staring at me with wide, sincerely worried eyes.

I paused, staring back at him evenly, considering how to reply. “I will be,” I decided to say, shifting my weight from foot to foot.

Stiles swallowed, glancing to the ground and running a hand over his short hair before asking, “Are you going to kill me?” I blinked. I hadn't been expecting that. He twisted his hands in front of him anxiously, watching me wearily.
Was I going to kill him? It would be easy to get rid of him, then there was no chance of finding out who and what I was, no chance of the hunters coming after me, no chance of me getting myself killed in this pathetic, unimportant little smear of a town. “I haven't decided yet,” I told him, letting go of my wounded stomach and crossing my arms over my chest.

His heart thudded in his chest, beating against his sternum like it was trying to break free of its cage. I knew the feeling.

“I'm not going to tell anyone,” he said quickly, just a touch of desperation to his voice. “I mean, I've already told Scott, but neither one of us will tell anyone, I swear it. Also, it would be stupid to kill me, because I'm the sheriff's son, and the last thing you'd want is anyone finding DNA evidence of you on my body.”

“Who says there'll be a body?” I countered, raising a single eyebrow at the nervous boy.

“Well—well I can help you,” he stuttered, clearly grasping at straws in an attempt to convince me to spare him. “Yeah,” he nodded, becoming more sure of himself as he went on. “Yeah, I'll help you. You need Scott, right? He's your way in to the hunters, and your way to getting the alpha. Anything happens to me, there's no chance in hell he'll help you. So, you see, I'm more valuable to you alive than—”

“How'd you figure it out?” I interrupted him, swiftly growing tired of his rambling.

He stopped, blinking at me stupidly for a moment before scratching his ear and beginning to ramble once again. “Well it was a lot of things really. Like when you came to my house you had to be invited in, and the fact you can compel people – which I know for a fact werewolves can't do – then there was also the time I caught you smuggling blood out of the hospital, the fact you lack a heartbeat, and the way you sometimes speak like you're from another era—”

“I get it,” I snapped, rolling my eyes and striding over to his bed, perching on the end and folding my legs under me. “I've been shitty at keeping it a secret.”

“Not necessarily,” he mumbled, tentatively sitting down in his desk chair, eyes never straying far from my face. “I mean, nobody else noticed. So I guess I'm just more observant than most people.”

We were silent, each of us staring at the other. It wasn't awkward, just a little tense; each
wondering what to say next.

“How old are you?” he asked suddenly, paling when my expression hardened into a glare. “Uh – I mean, unless that's too personal...” he trailed off unsurely.

“I'm 203.”

He looked floored by my admission, blinking those large, stupid brown eyes at me for a long moment. He seemed to be struggling to find words, but I wasn't in the mood to think of some for him, so I just watched him impassively. I could practically see the cogs turning in his head as he figured out what else to say.

“Garlic.”

I wasn't sure what I had been expecting, but that wasn't it. I had the feeling he had trouble concentrating on just one subject at a time. I didn't mind. To my surprise, I actually knew what he was on about. “Not a problem,” I answered him with a shrug, grimacing as pain vibrated through my body at the movement.

“Mirrors?”

“Myth.”

“Crucifixes?”

“False.”

“Coffins?”

“Not since the nineteenth century.”

“Huh,” he hummed, crossing his arms and staring at me with a considering expression. He looked like he wanted to know more, like he had a thousand more questions, which I'm sure he probably
did. I was having trouble focusing on the conversation at hand. Waves of nausea were rolling through me, and it hurt to breathe. “Are you okay?” he asked after a pregnant pause, the wheels of his chair squeaking as he cautiously rolled closer towards me.

I wondered how he could stand to be so close to me, now knowing what I was, but I didn't have the strength to ask.

“No,” I told him truthfully, letting my eyelids flutter closed as I took short breaths so the movement wouldn't hurt me as much. I burrowed deeper into his sweatshirt, which I had yet to take off. I opened my eyes, frowning as the world suddenly tipped forwards.

“Whoa,” Stiles mumbled quietly, shuffling forwards and catching my shoulders, propping me back into a sitting position. “Why'd you come here if you were so badly injured?” he asked, sounding annoyed. “This conversation could have waited until morning, you know?”

“Why won't you tell anyone?”

“Hm?” he said, popping his head back up to look at me through narrowed eyes.

I didn't have too much control over what I was saying. All I wanted to do was sleep, but I knew I had to get answers before I'd be able to get any sort of rest. “Before, you said you wouldn't tell anyone,” I told him, moving my hands up and placing them over his on my shoulders, ignoring how warm his skin was and focusing my attention on his coffee coloured eyes. “Why not? What are you getting out of this?”

“Why would I be getting anything out of it?” he asked, a crease of confusion forming between his brows.

I frowned back, my head tilting to the side as I examined him carefully. “Why else would you be so nice to me?” And then, as though he'd suddenly forgotten, I reminded him, “I'm a vampire.”

“Hey, none of that vampires-are-second-class-citizens crap,” he said jokingly, his pale lips twitching up into a smile.

I didn't indulge him with a smile of my own, frowning at him stoically. I was waiting for the other shoe to drop. What did he want from me exactly? Why did he care? There had to be an ulterior
motive. The amused expression on his face melted away, and he frowned in a way that I would almost describe as sad.

“Why are you so sure I have an ulterior motive?” he asked, practically reading my mind. I sagged, unable to hold myself up any longer. “Whoa,” he muttered, catching me again, this time standing up and gently pushing me onto my back. I lay on his bed, blinking dazedly up at his cream ceiling. “You need to sleep … Wait, do vampires sleep?”

“Of course we sleep,” I said sluggishly, my eyes stinging as I forgot to blink. I let them shut once more, sighing tiredly and nearly rolling onto my stomach before a flash of pain reminded me of my injuries. “I can leave,” I said softly, without opening my eyes.

“Don't be ridiculous,” he snapped, though not unkindly, moving away from me with his feet thudding against the carpet. He returned a moment later and I felt him lay something soft and warm over me. I sighed again, a content smile spreading across my lips.

“Am I bleeding?” I asked as I felt him sit down on the edge of his bed.

“You – you want me to…”

“Lift up my shirt and tell me if the bleeding's stopped,” I murmured softly, the words spoken without my usual bite. I heard him swallow loudly, and he peeled back the blanket, hands shaking as he grasped the hem of his sweatshirt. “I think I figured out your ulterior motive,” I said as he hesitated before slowly lifting the material. “You just wanted to get me into bed.”

He spluttered suddenly, letting go of the fabric and all but leaping back. “What?!” he squeaked. “You told me to lift up your shirt—”

“Stiles,” I said, my eyes opening just enough to peek at his panicked face. “I'm fucking with you.”

He froze and I smiled, letting my eyes slide shut again. I felt more than saw him shake his head, a huff leaving his lips. After a long moment he grasped the hem of his sweatshirt, pulling it up to the base of my breasts. He didn’t say anything for a long time, his breath unsteady as he stared down at my injury. Finally, I felt his hand touch the skin to the side of the gashes, and he gasped sharply, pulling away.
“Sorry,” I said with a grimace. “I know I'm cold.”

“Oh,” he uttered, swallowing again. “That's—that's not—”

“It's okay, Stiles,” I cut him off, frowning once more before I slowly and painfully pushed myself to my elbows, forcing my eyes open. “I'll let you get some sleep.”

“No!” he exclaimed suddenly, too loudly. I heard his father's snores pause for a moment in the room over, then resume at full force. I raised a single eyebrow at him, wincing in pain as the position I was holding myself in made my gashes burn. “I mean,” he began, shifting back slightly on the bed and looking anywhere but at me. “You don't have to go. It's been a rough, scary night, and—and your wounds could get worse or something. So—so I think it's better if you stay, just for a few more hours,” he stuttered in a way that a few days ago I would have called pathetic.

I got the feeling he was asking less for my benefit and more for his own. Surprisingly, I didn't mind.

I knew calling him out on it was a bad move, plus I didn't have the strength for an argument. So I nodded and let myself collapse back onto his bed. I couldn't blame the kid for not wanting to be alone after a night like the one we'd just had, to be completely honest, I didn't particularly want to go back to my empty house either. It was stupid, I knew logically that if the alpha were to attack again, Stiles would be more of a hindrance than a help. But, a small part of me felt better having him with me. The boy who made me smile.

I tapped the egg against the side of the pan a little too hard. Yolk splashed onto the stove top and I cringed. I usually had a good handle on the whole super-strength thing, but some things, like eggs, were kind of a guessing game. I cussed loudly, picking out another one and tapping it lightly against the rim of the pan. It cracked violently, but not too much that it fell out of my hand. I managed to angle it onto the hot face of the pan. I watched the yolk bubble for a few seconds before picking up a third egg and cracking it softly once more, this time landing perfectly in the pan.

I nodded to myself reassuringly, frowning considerably before picking up the bottle vegetable oil and upending it, letting it dribble out onto the eggs. I'd seen a celebrity chef do it once on television, but I didn't quite understand the mechanics behind it. Either way I put down the oil and picked up the fork, looking at it with focused frown before running it through the mixture in the pan. It mixed together, bubbling up and becoming an unappetising yellow colour. Did humans really eat this stuff?
“What are you doing?” a familiar voice asked amusedly from behind me, and I jumped violently, spinning around so quickly that my elbow knocked into the handle of the pan, flipping it over and causing the contents to spill down my arm.

“Fuck!” I cursed loudly once again as my skin got smeared with the boiling oil.

“Oh my God,” Stiles breathed, rushing forwards and picking up the pan, putting it back on the stove top and pushing my hand under the tap, which he turned on full blast, letting it douse my burnt arm. “Are you okay? Holy shit.”

“Stiles,” I said meekly, pulling out from his hold and picking up the towel I had set aside earlier. “It's okay.”

“Okay?” he asked dubiously, staring at me with wide, alarmed eyes. “You just spilt searing hot oil all over your arm!”

“Stiles,” I repeated calmly, holding out my reddened arm for him to see. Slowly, I dragged the towel down my injury, and he watched in morbid fascination as the burn disappeared with the path of the cloth. “See?” I said, glancing down at my unblemished skin. “All healed.”

He looked kind of pale, but I decided not to comment, moving back over to the pan and staring forlornly into its depths. “What were you trying to do?”

“Cook breakfast,” I admitted with a frown, pursing my lips and furrowing my brow.

“...Why?”

“Um, you let an injured, dangerous, volatile vampire sleep in your bed while you barely got any sleep on your desk chair?” I replied, turning my frown around on him. “I might be kind of new at this whole friendship thing, but it seemed like the right thing to do.”

Thankfully he said nothing about the casual admittance of considering him a friend. His gaze moved from me to the blackened mess in the pan. “When was the last time you cooked?” he asked hesitantly, lips curled like he wanted to smile again but was fighting the urge.
“1997,” I told him with a frown, lips twisting at his incredulous look. “I haven't recently had the occasion.”

He snorted, gently pushing me aside and taking my spot at the stove, picking up an egg and lightly cracking it into the pan. “So what've you done with your time then?” he asked casually, though I could sense his burning curiosity underneath it all. “How does one spend eternity?”

I considered lying, making it sound more glamorous than it actually was, but what was the point? I knew one thing for sure, I definitely wouldn't be telling him of my rebellious years, the years where I'd taken so much life, drunk so much blood it could fill a swimming pool. I wondered if my answer would satisfy him.

“I spent some of it in school,” I said as I slipped into a chair by the bench, idly picking at my nail polish as I talked.

“And by school, do you mean high school?”

“No way,” I said with an unexpected laugh, making him glance over at me with a confused frown. “College.”

“What'd you study?”

“A little bit of everything,” I told him, smiling as I recalled my college days. I might have still been bloodthirsty and violent, but there was nothing quite like a college campus to make you feel at home. Plus, frat-boys always made for an easy meal. “Music, medicine, art, psychology, biology, chemistry, law,” I listed off just a few.

He smiled a little, as though something I'd said had surprised him. “And what was your favourite?” he asked as he worked on the eggs.

I pressed my lips together. Telling him the truth felt dangerous, almost intimate, but I knew this was how friendships were meant to go. You were meant to share something about yourself, then get something about them in return. It was a balance. “Literature,” I confessed. “We might sleep, but we don't need nearly as much as you humans do, so I spent a lot of my nights reading.”
“What do you read?”

“Everything,” I said as I watched him pull bacon bits from the fridge and sprinkle them into the yellow sludge in the pan. “Biographies, Hemingway, Dickens, Emily Rodda, Edgar Allen Poe — Kurt Vonnegut is one of my absolute favourites. Not to mention good old J.K.”

“Harry Potter?” he asked incredulously, stopping what he was doing and wheeling around to fix me with a dubious look. “You're kidding.”

“No?” I responded in confusion, tilting my head at him curiously.

“A vampire that reads Harry Potter,” he said mostly to himself, a small, amused smirk resting on his pale pink lips. “Don't tell me you read Dracula too.”

“Are you going to kick me out if I tell you I read it every Halloween?” I asked with a matching smirk, and he laughed loudly, the sound bouncing off the walls, filling me with a strange sort of warmth.

“So why high school now?” he asked me after a long moment.

I considered my answer carefully. Telling him about Myra was far more intimate than I was ever going to go with this – or any – human. I couldn't talk about it, couldn't be honest about myself and my family in the way I wanted to.

“I just didn't want to have to move again so quickly,” I told him, lying only by omission. “I wanted to put down roots, make some friends, be somebody.”

“I bet you didn't factor a rouge alpha problem and a teen wolf into your plans when you picked Beacon Hills to move to,” he replied with a cheeky grin, bending to slide two plates out of the cupboard to his right. I didn't say anything about how I hadn't been planning to eat, keeping quiet instead. I didn't want to make him feel awkward, so I watched him load both plates up without saying anything, no matter how unappetising the food looked.

“I don't mind actually,” I admitted. “Keeps me from going stir crazy.”
He slid the plates onto the counter in front of us, dragging a chair across the tiles, the screeching sound making me wince. He handed me a fork as he took a seat on the bench opposite me, instantly digging into his breakfast.

“So what do you do about ID?” he asked curiously after a moment, barely noticing I’d yet to touch my food. “I mean, surely you need to enrol in school and stuff.”

“I know a guy on the east coast,” I told him with a shrug, not minding that I was telling all of this to the Sheriff’s son. I knew in my gut that he wouldn’t say anything. If he wasn’t going to dob me in for being one of the undead, I doubted a few broken laws was going to push him over the edge. “He does all my papers for me.”

“Can you get me a fake ID?” he asked immediately, eyes going wide, a piece of egg falling from his lips and onto the counter.

“Yes.”

“Will you?”

“No.”

He crinkled his nose at me, reminding me for a second of a bunny, before he dug back into his meal, apparently getting over it quickly. “You haven’t touched your food,” he said after a long pause, half his plate already eaten. I picked up the fork again, nudging the mess with it cautiously. “Don’t tell me you can’t eat.”

I shook my head. “I can. I just … don’t.”

“Don’t you like human food or something?” he asked curiously, tilting his head at me.

I shrugged, not really having an answer. “Some vampires eat all the time, I have friends who eat all three meals a day. We just don’t need it to survive, and we don’t crave it, so I don’t really see a point in eating it.”
“Well, you picked a good day to start,” he said with a grin. “Scrambled eggs and bacon happens to be my specialty.”

“Is that so?”

“Uh-huh,” he hummed, nodding his head enthusiastically. “Come on, just try it,” he said, blinking those large, stupid coffee eyes at me. “For me.”

“Fine,” I gave in reluctantly, making sure to send him a sour glare. “But not because you asked. Just because I'm curious about your cooking skills.”

“Whatever you say,” he said with another grin, pausing the inhaling of his food to stare at me unabashedly, waiting for my reaction.

With a cautious sigh I stuck the utensil into the pile on my plate, picking up what seemed like a decent amount and hesitating only a brief second before shoving it passed my lips. I chewed quickly, expecting it to be terrible. I was pleasantly surprised when it wasn't. The texture was kind of gross, sort of slimy and spongy, but the taste was actually rather good. “Bellissimo, Stiles,” I told him with my kindest smile, enjoying the way his face lit up at the praise.

“You speak...Italian, was it?” he asked after a pause, where only the scraping of our forks against our plates could be heard as we ate our food.

“I'd hope so, considering I lived in Italy for seven years,” I told him gently, my tone lacking its usual bite. Instead it was warm with reminiscence, and Stiles' lips twitched upwards.

“Oh wow,” he said, finishing the last of his eggs and putting down his fork, folding his arms on the counter and merely watched me eat. “Where else have you been?”

“Greece, Australia, Germany. Russia, Egypt, Cambodia. Spent some time in Alaska – I raised huskies. Those were a good few years,” I told him, and I realised as I was speaking that it was the most I'd told anyone about myself in a long, long time. “I was born in England, you know?”

His eyes widened in genuine surprise. “Really?”
“Yeah. I do miss it sometimes but I've come to really love the States,” I said in my natural English accent. It was like slipping on a hat, it was so easy to go between that and my American one. I'd had to speak in different accents over the years, as a way to survive. This country didn't always look too kindly on immigrants.

He clapped his hands like I was a fucking trained monkey, but I found I didn't really mind, the look of wonder on his face was enough to keep me from getting irritated. “Man, you've gotta show that to Scott.”

I snorted lightly, shovelling the last of my eggs into my mouth. “So what about you?” I asked casually once I'd finished my mouthful, and his face twisted in confusion.

“What about me?”

“You've had me talking about myself all morning,” I said. “It's your turn to spill.”

“Trust me,” he scoffed. “I'm really not that interesting.”

I shrugged, “I beg to differ.”

I stared at him until he got uncomfortable and started rambling. “Well, I mean, I was born here. Uh, my mom died a few years back, Scott's my best friend, my favourite food is curly fries and I watch the Nightmare Before Christmas every Halloween.”

I smiled at the reference to our earlier conversation, but then frowned as I remembered one other piece of information he'd left out. “And you've been in love with Lydia Martin for how long?”

“I—I...” He stuttered, red blotches appearing on his freckled skin. “Uh, how did you—?”

“It's not exactly hard to tell.” He looked down, something about what I'd said apparently making him feel bad. “I should go,” I said regretfully after a long silence. “You need some sleep in a proper bed, and I need to go take care of some things.”

“Wait,” he called as I slid to my feet, and I looked at him in surprise. “Uh, how's your stomach?”
I frowned, having almost forgotten I was injured. I reached down and lifted my shirt up slightly, just enough to expose the bottom of the scratches which were already starting to turn into what would be only temporary scars. “Nothing a little more blood won't fix,” I told him, cringing as I said the words. To my pleasant surprise he didn't grimace in disgust, merely nodding like I was talking about the weather. “Thanks again, Stiles,” I said quietly as I stepped away from the counter. “I'll see you later.”

“Yeah, see you later,” he echoed halfheartedly.

“For the record, Stiles,” I said, turning back around to look him in the eye. “I think you're too good for her anyway.”

With a final smile, I disappeared, out the back door and into the woods before he knew I was gone.
I nodded along to the music playing from the turntable in the lounge, humming under my breath as I took my books off the shelves, wiping a cloth along the dusty wood and putting them back on. It was a monotonous task, but it was nice in its simplicity.

A shrill, irritating ringing broke the calm of the atmosphere, and I scowled, pulling the phone from my back pocket and answering the call with only minimal difficulty.

“Hello?” I asked grumpily.

“Juliet!”

I blinked in surprise at the enthusiastic way I was greeted. “Stiles?” I asked, dropping the dirty rag to the floor and leaning against my bookshelves. “What do you want?”

“I'm—I'm trying to convince Scott that life goes on after you break up with your lady friend.”

I couldn't help but snort in blatant amusement, eyes focused on a stain in my carpet. “Did you just say 'lady friend'?” He snorted back through the line and I pulled the phone from my ear, closing my eyes and taking a deep breath before moving it back into place. “Are you drunk?”
“As a skunk!”

I rolled my eyes, torn between annoyance and amusement. “Why did you call me, Stiles?” I asked him in a low, stern sort of a voice.

“We were talking about girls,” he slurred back at me. “And I thought, 'hey, Juliet's a girl.'”

“How very astute of you.”

“Thank you,” he said, overflowing with sincerity.

I rolled my eyes again, running a hand through my loose raven hair, pushing it off my face. “Was there a point to this call, or did you just want to reaffirm my gender?”

“Yes!” he responded, and I could tell he was nodding his head. “Yes, so can you please tell Scott – who's listening in by the way – can you please tell him that there are other girls in the sea.”

“How would I know that?”

“Because you’ve been around for like a billion years,” he replied. I pursed my lips unhappily, glaring at the far wall even though he couldn't see. “So you have lots of experience,” he slurred.

“Is that so?” I asked, crossing one arm over my chest and tilting my head as I listened to his drunken ramblings.

“Yeah,” he mumbled, sounding distracted and thoughtful before finally he asked, “do you have a boyfriend?”

I looked at the ceiling, praying to every god I’d ever heard of and never believed in to grant me patience. “No, Stiles,” I said slowly, proud that I didn't snap. “I don't have a boyfriend.”
“Oh. A girlfriend?”

I snorted with a surprised amusement. “Nope. No girlfriend either.”

“Good.”

I blinked, fixing my eyes on the light in the centre of the room. “Good?”

“Yeah,” he confirmed, sounding much more confident yet also very blasé, “good.” He was quiet for a long moment, nothing but the sound of his breathing echoing across the line. I fell silent, waiting for him to speak. “I don't get why, though,” he began once again. “I mean, I get that you come off as a little rude and intimidating and, honestly, not very likeable at all.”

I clenched my teeth in irritation. “Is there a point to this?”

“But that's just first impressions,” he told me blithely. “I mean, once you get to know you, you're actually pretty cool, and tough, and still quite intimidating and mean – but very beautiful.”

“I'm a vampire, Stiles,” I drawled, sounding just as unimpressed as I felt. “We're all beautiful.”

“And you're confident,” he paused for a moment, and I could hear him thinking through the connection. “So is Lydia,” he said happily. I bit my tongue, forcing back another irritated growl. “And she's really pretty. And she doesn't eat people, which is always a plus.”

“I'm going now,” I said bluntly. The last thing I felt like doing was sitting there and listening to him prattle on about the shallow cow from school.

“No! No, wait—” Stiles tried to stop me.

But I didn't wait to see what he'd say next, ending the call and carelessly throwing my phone onto the couch behind me. My books were more important than that kid anyway.
The next day the school was open again, and part of me was relieved. I'd been going stir crazy locked away in my house. Allison, for some godforsaken reason, had called me numerous times over the time away from school. Mostly she just wanted to talk about Scott. I don't know why I was her first choice – why not Lydia, or someone else more approachable? – but she kept calling, wanting to chat and get together for coffee, or whatever the hell it was humans did in their spare time.

I knew I'd come here to start some kind of a life, but was Allison really a good friend to be making? She was the daughter of a hunter – hatred and bigotry were practically wired into her DNA. Only it didn't seem it. She spoke to me happily, utterly uncaring of my cold demeanour, chatting away like we were best friends since childhood.

I was hardly surprised, then, when Allison fell into step beside me as I made my way across the school's front lawn.

“What am I going to do when I see Scott?” she asked me anxiously, undeterred by my stormy glare. “How am I supposed to act?”

“You'll figure it out,” I told her tonelessly. Allison faltered for a moment before rolling her eyes like I'd made some sort of stupid joke.

“Come on,” she said, grasping on to the sleeve of my coat and tugging. “This is serious.”

I took a deep breath in, grinding my teeth together with irritation. “Ignore him,” I suggested, my voice stale and distant as I lifted one shoulder and then let it drop.

“And if he talks to me?” she pressed, hanging onto my arm like some kind of barnacle as I instinctively guided her around a small group of giggling freshmen.

“Tell him to leave you alone or Juliet will kick his ass,” I told her simply. We paused outside of the classroom our third period was held in. Her face brightened for a split second, again seeming to assume I'd just made some kind of a joke.

“That's something I'd pay to see,” she said with a small smile, looking me over like she knew there was no chance in hell I could beat the teen wolf in a fight. Instead of annoying me, I felt a flare of amusement, and I smirked back as I unwound our arms, heading for a seat at the back of the room.
I slid into the chair, crossing one leg over the other and staring stonily at the far wall, doing my best to hold my breath.

“Psst,” hissed a voice to my right, and I looked over at Stiles, raising a single eyebrow expectantly as I watched the jittery boy tap his pen against the wood of the desk. “Do you think you'll pass?” he whispered curiously, in some kind of attempt at conversation.

What was it with these humans and their constant need to talk all the time?

“Considering I've got two Bachelors and a Masters degree,” I began with a curled lip, keeping my voice just quiet enough not to be overheard by any prying ears, “I'd say it's pretty damn likely.”

His nose crinkled like I'd said something distasteful, and I grit my teeth at the stupid expression.

“Wanna impart some of your wisdom unto me?” he asked me hopefully, leaning further across the gap between our seats. I didn't dignify that with a response, instead levelling him with a flat, unimpressed stare. His expression fell and he grumbled unintelligently under his breath, moving back to sit properly in his seat, pouting like an immature child.

I caught a whiff of wet dog as Scott stepped into the room, and I glanced at Allison, listening to the sound of her heart when it began to race. “Allison,” the teen wolf said, pausing in front of her desk and staring at her with those heartbroken, puppy-dog eyes.

“Mr McCall,” Harris said loudly, leaning into his view. “Please take a seat.” Scott grit his teeth but complied, silently stepping up to his desk, the one in front of Stiles, and sliding into his seat, gently placing his bag on the floor. “You have forty-five minutes to complete the test,” the teacher said, standing behind his podium and staring at the small sea of students with blank eyes. “Twenty-five percent of your grade can be earned right now simply by writing your name on the cover of the blue book.”

There was a rustle of paper beside me and I glanced across the isle, my lips twitching up into an amused smirk as I watched Stiles eagerly scribble his name in blue biro. I moved to do the same, the smirk sitting comfortably on my lips as I slowly wrote my name in perfect, nineteenth-century calligraphy.

“Begin,” Harris said after a long moment of rambling about disappointment, clicking the start
button on his timer.

I opened the booklet, already bored with the whole thing. I sighed, my eyes flickering over the words and circling the correct answers after only a moment. I was on the second page a few moments later when I decided to slow down, the faster I went the sooner I'd be done, but if I was done too quickly I'd be stuck without anything to do.

“Is the answer to question three, 'A'?” Stiles asked, his voice barely carrying on his breath as he not-so-subtly side-eyed me. Clearly it was a question only myself, and maybe Scott, were meant to hear. Not in the mood, my hand shot out and slowly I lifted a single finger in the air for him to see. “I'll take that as a no,” he muttered.

Despite myself I smirked again, though the expression quickly melted when I heard the distinctive sound of a heart to my right begin to pick up speed. It wouldn't have concerned me if I hadn't known there was a young, volatile werewolf in the room with me. I frowned, my pen pausing where it was on the page mid-word.

I slid my gaze to Scott, watching as he glanced around wildly, heart slamming against his sternum. I had a few options here: I could let him work through it, maybe he'd get better and maybe he'd get worse, it was toss-up, really; or I could let him figure out he had to get out of here on his own; or, I could take matters into my own hands.

I knew which option I had to choose. My new-found humanity didn't give me a choice. Either I dealt with it now or people could potentially die. With an irritated sigh I dropped my pen, standing up somewhat violently, my chair scraping loudly against the floor. Every head in the room turned to look at me but I paid them zero mind, focusing on stalking the few steps over to Scott's desk and grasping him roughly by the collar. He barely fought me, allowing me to yank him to his feet and drag him from the room.

“Miss Cooper!” Harris called after me furiously as I yanked Scott through the door without looking back, “Mr McCall!” The was a beat of silence before he shouted, “Mr Stilinski!” I huffed in exasperation as I heard him call the last name, but didn't slow down to let the human catch up.

“Juliet—” Scott tried but I ignored him, dragging him further down the hall, away from any potential casualties. “Locker room,” he growled, and I knew what he meant. He was still in the right frame of mind to be able to tell me where he thought he'd be safest and least likely to hurt anyone. I didn't chance letting him go, however, pulling him by the collar down the hall and directly into the boy's locker room.
What to do from there was surprisingly obvious, and I threw him onto the floor of the showers, slipping closer to him to ensure he wouldn't escape and turning the knobs, cold water spilling out over both of us. I grit my teeth in irritation but didn't say anything, waiting for him to find his feet on his own.

“Scott?” Stiles' voice echoed through the empty halls. “Juliet?! Scott?!?”

There was a moment of silence and then Scott's phone began to ring from his rapidly soaking pocket. The sound bounced around the ceramic walls, and footsteps slowly began to make their way towards our position. I didn't move, standing over a panting Scott, my hands braced on the wall as I watched him carefully, looking for any small sign he was going to try and escape. He thrashed against the wet tile, all but ripping off his shirt, allowing the cold water to cool his heated skin.

“Stiles,” he gasped as his friend approached. Stiles stepped into the room, his shoes immediately getting soaked through, but he didn't seem to care. “I can't—” Scott struggled for each breath.

“What's wrong? Are you changing?” Stiles asked worriedly as I turned off the shower, the cool water dripping on me twice more before stopping completely.

“No,” Scott said, panting around his attack. “I can't breathe.”

“Here,” Stiles said, lifting up the bag I assumed to be Scott's and digging around in it, holding out an old puffer for the teen wolf to use. “Use this,” at his words the boy stared, perplexed by his suggestion. “Come on,” he prompted impatiently even as the wolf gasped for air. “Use it.”

Scott grabbed for the puffer, wrapping his lips around it and taking a deep breath in. My brow furrowed – werewolves didn't have anything as stupid and human as asthma.

There was a pregnant pause before the boy perked up, slowly sliding to his feet, his heart finally slowing. I stepped to the side, running a hand through my wet hair to push it out of my eyes. “I was having an asthma attack?” Scott asked in confusion.

“No,” Stiles answered, rocking forwards on his heels. “You were having a panic attack. But thinking you were having an asthma attack actually stopped the panic attack,” he revealed, hands gesturing wildly. “Irony,” he sang, and my scowl deepened.
“How did you know to do that?”

“I used to get them after my mom died,” Stiles said, and something deep within me twinged. I tried keep how it affected me from showing on my face, but I don't think I succeeded, because Stiles' gaze flickered to me before focusing back on his friend. “Not fun, huh?”

“I looked at her and it was like somebody hit me in the ribs with a hammer,” he admitted, breathing heavily and trying to make sense of it all in his head.

“Yeah, it's called heartbreak,” Stiles replied, brows lifting as he spoke. “About two billion songs written about it.”

“I can't stop thinking about her,” Scott said, and I leaned my weight against the wall, rolling my eyes, already wishing I was anywhere else.

“Well you could think about this: her dad's a werewolf hunter, and you're a werewolf, so … bound to become an issue,” he told him with a small laugh. Scott shot him a pained look and the boy grimaced, “that wasn't helpful … God. Dude, I mean yeah, you got dumped but it's supposed to suck.”

“No, that's not it. It was like I could feel everything in the room, I could feel everyone's emotions.”

“That would be the full moon,” I spoke up, reminding them that I was there. Scott looked up at me in vague surprise. “I mean, I may not know much about a werewolf's biochemistry,” I said casually, lifting one shoulder and letting it drop. “But I do know one thing. Full moon equals bad news.”

“So we'll lock you up in your room later just like we planned,” Stiles continued. “That way the alpha, who's your boss, can't get to you either.”

“I think we need to do a lot more than lock me in my room,” Scott responded darkly, frowning at the floor.

“What, you mean because if you get out you'll be caught by hunters?”
“No,” he shook his head. “Because if I get out, I think I might kill someone.”

Stiles didn't say anything for a long moment, considering his friend carefully. “Okay,” he nodded, taking the words in his stride and looking up at me, very obviously working hard to keep his eyes away from my see-through shirt. “Juliet can stay too.”

“I will?” I asked, arching a single eyebrow at him, my expression dangerous, although it did little to deter him.

“Yeah,” he said, nodding along to his own idea. “You can come to Scott's house tonight and guard him while he's under the spell of the moon.”

I snorted, crossing my arms over my chest and staring back at him incredulously. “Under the spell of the—?”

“That way if he escapes or anything, you'll be there to work damage control,” he said brightly, perking up as he divulged his brilliant idea.

“Who says I'll be willing to help?” I asked sourly, but Stiles only chortled like I'd made some kind of a joke. I glared, turning to Scott, who was still leant against the wall, exhausted from his panic attack. “Are you going to be okay?” I asked him as gently as I could, worried he was going to start hyperventilating again or something.

“Yeah,” he nodded, not sounding very confident in his answer.

I awkwardly raised my hand, going to pat him on the shoulder, but ultimately decided against it, letting it drop back to my side. “Call if you need anything,” I reluctantly told them, with an accompanying glare that warned them not to need anything.

I slipped past Stiles, probably looking very much like a drowned cat, my shoes squeaking loudly and embarrassingly as I stormed from the room, my wet footprints the only proof I was ever there.

I took in a deep drag of my cigarette, holding the smoke in my lungs for a good few seconds before
blowing it out of the corner of my mouth.

“Heading to watch practise?” a familiar voice asked, and I looked to my left to see Allison sitting on a bench near the road, her ankles crossed daintily, phone in hand.

“Home actually,” I told her, flicking the ash from the end of my cigarette and shifting the weight of the bag on my shoulder.

“Is Scott okay?”

I peered at her over the top of my sunglasses. She looked sheepish to be asking, but also like she couldn't help herself. Personally I didn't understand the appeal, but perhaps I was prejudice.

“He’ll be fine,” I said carefully, taking another deep inhale of the chemicals. She continued to stare up at me, practically emanating concern, a tiny little crease appearing between her carefully plucked brows. “Panic attack,” I elaborated lazily.

She slumped her shoulders, sucking her bottom lip into her mouth and gazing sorrowfully at the cracked concrete by her feet. I felt like I should say something, but I didn't have the slightest clue what. Why didn't they make manuals for vampires going cold turkey from being evil? It would make everything so much easier.

“Er,” I began awkwardly, peeking up at the sky to avoid her eyes, even though she couldn't tell through the tint of my sunglasses. “I would have done the same thing, in your situation,” I told her, not really meaning it, but it seemed like the thing to say.

She was quiet, and I took another drag, the chemicals calming me more than most things ever could.

“Why do I get the feeling you know exactly what really happened the other night?” Allison asked abruptly, and I glanced back at her, taking in her gloomy, sorry expression.

It was a fair enough question, and also completely correct. My lips twitched and I pressed them together to contain my bitter smile.
“Probably because I do know exactly what really happened the other night,” I told her honestly.

“Let me guess,” she began bitterly, a frown marring her pretty face, “you can't tell me.”

A part of me wanted to tell her the truth. She’d nearly died that night, maybe she deserved to know. But if I blabbed supernatural secrets to everyone I felt an inch of pity for, I'd have been dead long before now.

“Not my secret to tell,” I shrugged like it wasn't a big deal. I wondered what her reaction might be; was murderous werewolf even something she’d be able to believe? Or would the truth drive her to insanity, as it had so many others?

I figured I'd best move on before she started asking questions I really couldn't answer.

“I'll see you later, Allison,” I told her with a lazy wave, turning to leave.

“But, Juliet—” she tried to argue, but I was done with the conversation.

I headed down the path heading east, where I could take a shortcut through the woods to my house. I walked at a human pace, not caring enough to run, taking my time climbing over fallen trees and winding through the familiar labyrinth of ferns. I was only a few minutes away from my house when my phone began buzzing from my pocket.

It was an unknown number, but I didn't exactly have a lot of people programmed into the annoying piece of shit, so I answered it anyway. “Hello?” I said into the phone, stepping over a thick log, my boots sinking slightly into the soft, moist earth.

“Well, well,” the familiar voice on the other end of the call said. “I'm surprised to hear your voice, Adams. I didn't think you'd actually answer.”

“I'm a barrel of surprises today,” I dryly told the old friend on the end of the line. “What can I do for you?” I asked, my tone making it clear that I wasn't in the mood to handing out any favours today.
“You could come down to Virginia,” he replied, and I could hear that coy, cocky smirk in his voice. The one that made me want to slap him so hard I turned him back into a human. “I'm at a bar with a mutual old friend of ours, figured you might like to join.”

“Wish I could,” I said with the utmost sarcasm. “But, unfortunately, I'm on the West Coast at the moment, a tiny little town known as Beacon Hills,” I muttered the name with contempt, already resenting it.

“You mean Californian-central for all things supernatural?” he asked dubiously. “What the hell are you doing there?”

“This is a known supernatural hotspot?” I asked, my surprise leaking into my voice. His silence was deafening. “Shut up,” I bit back sharply in response to his silent sass, “I've been all but underground the last few decades. I can't help it if some of the community's gossip happened to escape my notice.”

I stepped from the line of trees that bordered my property, crossing the length of my backyard, the top of the tall grass brushing my thighs. I really needed to do some maintenance on the place. It was beginning to look abandoned, and the last thing I needed was some unlucky squatter trying to move in.

That was too much temptation for me to handle, these days.

“You expect me to believe you pointed to a map and randomly ended up in a hotspot?” he asked dryly.

“Threw a dart, actually,” I bit back, and he laughed. I made my way up the old wooden porch stairs, which creaked under my weight, and then across the porch to the backdoor, which I'd left unlocked. “I needed a change, and I figured it was as good a place as any,” I said simply, shrugging even though he couldn't see.

“Run into anything dangerous?” he asked me in a gossipy tone.

“As a matter of fact, we do have just a little bit of a murderous, psychotic alpha problem over here,” I said, slipping my bag off my shoulder and dropping it onto the dining room table. “Don't reckon you fancy coming over to lend a hand?”
“Sorry,” he responded, clearly not sorry in the slightest. “Got enough problems of our own over here in Mystic Falls.”

My lips twitched up in a ghost of a smirk. “Katherine still giving you trouble?”

“Please,” he scoffed through the line. “That bitch is all but harmless these days. I’m talking serious problems. As in Original problems, if you catch my drift.”

It took me a long moment to process what he meant, and by the time it’d sunk in I was practically glaring at the far wall. If I’d had a living heart, it would have been racing.

Before I could formulate a response, my attention snapped to the sound of the Jeep pulling into my drive. “I have to go,” I said sharply, secretly glad for the out. “But I’ll call back later and we’ll talk, yeah?”

“You got it, Princess.”

I growled in frustration, pulling the phone from my ear and ending the call before he could say anything else, tossing it onto a bench and stalking to the door. I took a deep breath, calming myself down before turning the handle, revealing a flustered Stiles, fist held up, ready to knock.

He looked surprised to see me there, which was odd, considering it was my house. “Yes?” I asked coolly, arching a single eyebrow in question.

“Uh, I’m here to pick you up?” he said, sounding completely unsure of himself. My jaw clicked in irritation. “You know, for the full moon tonight?” he said slowly.

I watched him closely, taking in his nervous, racing pulse, before glancing up at the sun, determining its position in the sky. “Shouldn't you still be at practise?” I asked, crossing my arms over my chest and leaning on the doorframe.

“Uh, that's another thing...” he trailed off, rubbing the back of his neck and shifting his weight from foot to foot.
The last thing I felt like doing in that moment was playing pack with a pair of teenaged idiots, babysitting a wolf that I didn't care about. But I was big enough to admit that I didn't really have anything better to do.

What would Myra do, I wondered?

Knowing the answer, I rolled my eyes, stepping back and gesturing for him to come through. “Come on,” I said, brisk and to the point, “I need to eat before we go anyway, and you might as well tell me while I do.”

He nodded once, a jerky movement, before slipping through the door, his sneakers squeaking against the polished wooden floor. I shut the door behind him, moving through the hall and into the kitchen. Stiles stared at everything in sight, drinking it all in. I pushed him in the direction of the barstools lined by the bench, and he stumbled into one as I wandered over to the fridge, pulling out a blood packet. Behind me, Stiles gagged.

“What?” I asked defensively, moving over to the microwave, putting the bag in the machine and turning it on, the inside lighting up, a soft humming noise filling the room. “I told you I was eating,” I said, suddenly wondering if this had been such a good idea. What if it was too much and he decided he could never look me in the eye again? Then where would I be?

“Yeah, I just thought you meant like, cold pizza or a burrito or something,” he mumbled. I gave an unamused chuckle, leaning back against the bench as I waited for him to speak. He took my cue, resting his forearms on the bench and launching into his story. “Scott completely attacked Danny at practise today.” He paused, apparently waiting for something, but I just stared back stonily. His nose crinkled with something like disapproval, and I got the strangest sense that I'd done something wrong. “He's fine, by the way,” said the human flatly.

Oh, right … compassion.

“Where's Scott now?” I asked, not sure what else to say. I didn't feel like faking a conscience now.

“We're meeting him at his house,” he said distractedly, a furious scowl appearing on his lips. “You know what else he did?” he barrelled on. “He kissed Lydia!”

“No!” I gasped melodramatically, as though I were in any way emotionally invested.
“Yes!” he responded loudly, oblivious to my sarcasm. “He told me he was going to find out if she liked me, then he totally made out with her.”

It was all so juvenile, and I looked away, doing my best to hold back a sigh. “What a dog!” I said as the microwave beeped. I pulled open the door and yanked free the warmed blood bag, tearing off the stopper and putting the tube to my lips.

“Yeah, he's totally—” he cut himself off, glaring at me suspiciously, suddenly understanding. “You don't actually care, do you?” he realised with a frown.

“Not in the slightest.”

He sighed, blinking rapidly as he caught sight of the blood travelling up the tube and to my lips, then grimacing in sharp disgust. Something about the expression made my stomach clench unpleasantly, but I ignored it, trying not to think about it and focusing on the feeling of contented bliss the warmed liquid gave me.

I continued to drink, ignoring how uncomfortable he seemed. “Who's that?” he asked after a moment, and I glanced up in surprise. For one horrible moment I thought he was asking the name of the person I was drinking, but then I realised he was staring at something on the far wall.

I followed his line of sight, my eyes finding the single framed picture hanging in the entryway.

“That's Myra,” I said, but then didn't elaborate.

“Who's Myra?” he pressed stubbornly.

My every instinct told me to lie, to change the subject, to keep the painful truth from surfacing. But that was how I'd gotten to this point, wasn't it? I'd been trusting the instincts of the evil inside of me, rather than what tiny shred of humanity remained.

“She's my last living descendant,” I told him quickly, like snapping a neck. When regret didn't immediately follow, I continued on. “Well, was my last living descendant, I suppose,” I added quietly.
He was silent for awhile, but I didn't look at him, keeping my eyes trained on the photograph. Myra was smiling for the camera, skin sagged and leathery, but eyes youthful, full of light and kindness.

“When did she pass?” Stiles eventually asked, his tone soft and quiet.

“Just under a year, now,” I told him, licking away a drop of blood that dripped from my lips. I figured I'd already gone that far. In for a penny, in for a pound, right? “She's the reason I don't kill anyone,” I revealed before I knew what I was doing. Stiles' eyes widened in surprise, but I found it felt good to tell someone, like the burden wasn't just mine to carry alone anymore. “She made me promise to be better. So I left my old life behind, moved here and started to steal from the hospital to get by,” I said with a note of finality.

For now, the subject was no longer up for discussion.

“Are there others?” he asked curiously. “Others like you?”

“Other vampires?” He nodded and I drank the last of my meal before rolling up the empty bag and shoving it in the trash under my sink. “Of course there are. There are hundreds of us all over the world. Thousands, even. We're much more common than werewolves, that's for sure.”

“Why?”

“Because a very long time ago a very old vampire killed them all off, until there were so few left that they became more legend than fact,” I told him succinctly. Memories of hungry, cerulean eyes and an English accent that sounded like pure sex flickered in the back of my mind, but I squashed them down and locked them away before they could do any damage.

Glancing at the grandfather clock in the corner, I noted the time before looking through the window at the sky. “That's enough of a supernatural history lesson for one night,” I told him, zipping up my leather jacket and picking up my things. “We should head to Scott's.”

“Yeah,” he nodded, but clearly his mind was on other things. I led him through the house and out the door, this time locking it behind me before joining him in the Jeep.

“I assume you have chains and handcuffs?” I said, shifting in my seat to face him, watching as he
glanced at his blind spot before turning down a side street.

“Of course,” he replied, gesturing with his thumb to the duffel bag sitting on the backseat. I reached back, pulling it open to glance inside. It was some good quality stuff, and I briefly considered asking where he got it, but ultimately decided I probably didn't want to know.

“Impressive,” I said, sitting back properly, facing the front.

“Just call me Mr BDSM.”

I let that comment sit for a long moment, watching from the corner of my eye as he slowly flushed a blotchy, appetising red.

“I don't know why I said that,” he said uncomfortably, shifting in the seat and we turned down another street. “Let's both pretend I didn't.” I chuckled quietly, rolling my eyes at him in a way that was not even slightly fond as he pulled up outside what I was sure was Scott's house. Apparently we didn't live far from one another. “Come on,” he said, the blotchy marks slowly fading from his pale skin.

I slid out of the car, shoving my hands in my pockets and following him up the drive. I heard movement from inside, but didn't question it, trusting the boy knew what he was doing as I watched him pull out a key and slide it into the lock.

“Scott?” a kind voice asked as he stepped inside, while I hung back, realising something Stiles hadn't.

“Stiles,” he chimed awkwardly as an older, pretty woman stepped around the corner.

“Plus one,” I added from over the threshold, waving at the lady politely. I may have been undead, but let it never be said that I didn't have any manners.

“Key,” said the woman after a moment, staring at the key in Stiles' hand.

“Yeah, I had one made…” he replied. I wondered if that was something humans tended to do; make
keys for each other's houses. I suppose it was just another human mystery I'd never understand.

“That doesn't surprise me,” said the woman slowly. “Scares me, but doesn't surprise me.”

Stiles smiled good-naturedly, letting the duffel slip from his grip and hit the floor with a thunk.

“What is that?” she asked, raising her delicate eyebrows.

“Oh, school project.”

“Oh huh,” she said, narrowing her eyes suspiciously before focusing on me standing awkwardly behind him, stuck standing out in the night, unable to enter. “And who is that?” she asked, clearly not recognising me.

Stiles spun around, eyeing me where I stood. He looked quickly between me and the threshold before smacking the heel of his hand to his forehead. “Oh man, I completely forgot!” he said loudly.

“Juliet Cooper, ma'am,” I introduced myself respectfully, ignoring how ridiculous Stiles was being, keeping my hands in my pockets as I knew I wouldn't be able to so much as lean through the barrier. “I'm a friend of Stiles and your son.”

“Please, call me Melissa,” the woman responded with a kind smile before looking between Stiles and I suspiciously.

“Uh, she's helping Scott and I with the project,” he supplied, getting his act together and focusing on the task at hand. He still looked uneasy about the whole barrier thing, but I was determined to carry on without bringing attention to it.

“May I?” I asked Melissa politely, gesturing to the inside of her home.

“Oh, of course,” she said, nodding me through. “Please, come in, don't stand out there in the cold.”
I smiled gratefully as she said those magic little words, glancing at Stiles with a smug smirk before cautiously pushing one leg through the barrier that was now completely gone. I stepped all the way inside, huddling into my jacket as though it were possible for me to get cold.

“Now that I think about it, I remember Scott mentioning a Juliet a few times before. Are you new to town?” asked Melissa curiously.

“Yes, I am,” I replied with a bow of my head. “I was just emancipated from my family a few months ago. I moved here for a fresh start.”

“Oh,” she said, taken aback by my statement. Her smile faltered with sympathy for a long moment before it was back in place. “Well, if you ever need anything...”

“Thank you,” I said, a smile of my own spreading across my lips.

I stepped out of her way, letting her shuffle past me, on her way to work judging by the nursing scrubs she was wearing. “Stiles, he's okay, right?” she asked quietly, pausing at the door while I moved over to the set of frames hung on the far wall, pretending as though I couldn't hear every word.


“He just doesn't talk to me that much anymore, not like he used to.”

“Well, he's had a bit of a rough week.”

“Yeah, yeah, I get it,” Melissa sighed, before perking up. “Okay. You know, be careful tonight. Both of you.”

I wandered back over, the conversation no longer private. “You too,” Stiles said, making reassuring finger pistols at her. I resisted the urge to bash my head against the nearest hard surface at the gesture.

“Full moon,” she added simply.
Both Stiles and I froze, staring back at her in shock. “What?” asked Stiles, lacking his earlier zest.

“There's a full moon tonight,” Melissa said innocently, giving a small, oblivious laugh. “You should see how the ER gets. It brings out all the nut-jobs.”

Stiles very obviously sagged with relief, while I was much more subtle, just my clenched fists relaxing. “Right,” he laughed weakly, playing it off.

“You know, it's actually where they came up with the word 'lunatic'.”

With a final welcoming smile to me and a pat on the back for Stiles she was out the door, pulling it shut behind her. I tilted my head to the side, listening to the sound of a heartbeat pumping steadily from upstairs. I followed the sound, silently padding up the stairs, rolling my eyes at how loud Stiles was in comparison. I slipped into the room, my eyes adjusting to the darkness easily as I watched Scott sit in a chair in the corner, staring steadily back.

“Hey, how’d you know which—?” a loud scream abruptly stopped his words as he flicked the light on and spotted Scott sitting in the corner. “Oh my God!” he huffed, and even though his reaction was hilarious, something about the look in Scott's eyes made it impossible for me to force a smile onto my lips. “Dude, you scared the hell out of me,” Stiles complained. He turned to me, nudging me in the shoulder with a scowl of annoyance. “A little warning would have been nice,” he looked back at the wolf, “we thought you weren't home yet?”

“I came in through the window.”

I may not have known Scott for long, or even very well at all, but even I could tell he wasn't acting like himself.

“Okay,” said Stiles in response to his friend's deadpan. “Well, let's get this stuff set up. Wait until you see what I've bought.”

“I'm fine,” said Scott, feeling absent from his voice. “I'm just going to lock the door and go to bed early tonight.”
“You sure about that?” Stiles asked, looking up from where he was crouched by the bag of chains. “Because you've got this kinda 'serial killer' look going on in your eyes, and I'm hoping it's the full moon taking effect because it's really starting to freak me out,” he admitted readily.

I leaned against the wall, trying not to blink so I didn't for a second take my eyes off of the dangerous teen wolf. There was nothing more unpredictable than a new wolf on the night of a full moon. I shouldn't have been there – it was risky, even for me.

“I'm fine,” Scott said darkly, a hollow glean to his usually-warm eyes. “You should both go now.”

Stiles looked over his shoulder at me, but I didn't look back, merely shaking my head in the negative. Stiles' heart began to race, his human instincts telling him to run far, far away, before the beast in front of him lost all semblance of control.

“Alright, I'll leave,” said Stiles, looking back at his friend evenly. “Look, would you at least look in the bag and see what I've bought?”

Scott slowly pushed himself from the armchair, moving over and kneeling by the duffel. “You think I'm going to let you put these on? Chain me up like a dog?” I bit back a smart remark about how he was a dog, figuring that would only inflame the situation further. The last thing I needed was a hungry wolf with a vendetta against me. I had enough of those already.

“Actually, no.”

Even I was surprised when the human boy leapt forwards, tugging the handcuffs free and quick as lightening cuffing Scott to the radiator beside him. I blinked, lips curling up in an impressed sort of grin.

“What the hell are you doing?!” Scott snarled at him furiously.

“Protecting you from yourself,” Stiles retorted, stepping out of the wolf's reach. “And giving you some payback for making out with Lydia.”

I rolled my eyes at the boy, cursing the fact that I'd gotten so involved with such juvenile theatrics. I was better than this.
“Stiles, let me out now,” growled Scott, pulling at the thin metal of the cuffs. They rattled but didn't give. “Come on, you know I'm not a danger to anyone. I don't deserve this,” he pleaded.

Stiles scoffed, turning on his heel and storming from the room. I stayed where I was, unwilling to look away from Scott for even a second. He was too dangerous to be left unattended. I know I said I didn't want to babysit him, but, look, someone had to. Right?

“Come on, Juliet,” Scott said, turning his attention desperately onto me. I kept my arms crossed tightly, glaring at him stonily, unwavering in my caution. “Please,” he said again, yanking at the cuffs, the jingling sound of metal on metal begin to grate at me. “You know this isn't right. You can let me out, can't you?”

I didn't answer, didn't even so much as twitch. I just stared back at him, cold and uncompromising. When I didn't move, the teen wolf's voice darkened along with his eyes.


Something in my chest squeezed painfully when his words hit home, but my expression gave nothing away.

“No one here is ever going to accept you, Juliet,” he said cruelly, eyes a glowing a warning amber. “Not me, not Allison, and certainly not Stiles.”

My jaw clenched as I fought back the urge to let my fangs show, every instinct in me screaming to attack. But I was too wise for that, I'd been around too long to let him get the better of me with petty words spoken out of desperation. It took more than that to break me.

Stiles reappeared, water bottle and dog bowl in hand. “I brought you some water,” he said, holding up the bowl with the werewolf's name written on the side and pouring the water in with a cocky smirk, completely oblivious to what had just happened while he was gone. I thought it might have been a little bit overkill, but I let him have his theatrical fun.

“I'm gonna kill you!” Scott snarled the second the human's back was turned, the bowl flying through the air on a collision course with his head. I stretched out a hand, plucking it from the air with ease, letting it drop harmlessly to my feet.
Stiles whirled back around on Scott, eyes practically red with his anger.

“You kissed her, Scott! Okay? You kissed *Lydia*!” he shouted, betrayed.

I rolled my eyes at where the conversation was going but otherwise didn't comment. I listened to them argue, listened to Stiles tell Scott what a shit friend he was, then as Scott goaded him, teasing him with a smirk.

Eventually the human boy had had enough, unable to take it any more he slipped from the room, his heart pounding violently against his chest. I looked between Scott and the doorway, ultimately deciding that it made more sense to check if Stiles was okay. I didn't want him to have a panic attack or something, and Scott wasn't going anywhere. With a sigh and a warning glare at Scott I rounded the corner, stopping dead as I saw Stiles curled up in a ball on the floor just outside the room.

I stared at him for a long moment, watching the way his arms curled tightly around his knees, taking deep, calming breaths. Hesitantly, I pressed myself to the wall and slowly slid down until I sat beside the boy. I let my legs spread out, leaning so close to him that I could feel his body warmth heating up my own stone cold flesh.

I stared at the far wall, counting the cracks in the paint as I listened to Stiles' heart slowly calm itself. I was glad that he hadn't had a panic attack – there were only so many of those I could handle in a day.

“Are you okay?” I asked him after at least a good ten minutes. He sighed, pressing his forehead to his knees before sitting up properly. I felt rather than saw his head turn towards me, feeling his eyes on the side of my face. I kept my stare on the wall, half my attention on the wet thumping of his heart. I was suddenly aware of exactly how hungry I was. Starving, actually, despite my meal earlier that evening.

It didn't matter. I was damned with ravenous hunger. As was the curse of a vampire.

Stiles watched me for a long time, and it wasn't until the hungry beast in my belly was back under control that he finally spoke. “I will be,” the human sighed, resting his chin on his arm and keeping his eyes on me. “Once this damn night is over, at least,” he muttered quietly.
“Yeah,” I agreed, huffing out a breath, the force blowing a piece of hair from my face, only for it to float back into place a moment later.

“Are you okay?” Stiles asked me softly. I looked at him in surprise. He ducked his head, suddenly sheepish. “I heard him yelling at you,” he explained. If it were possible, my face might have paled. “I couldn't make out what he was saying through the floorboards, I could just hear him yelling. I'm sure whatever he was saying weren't compliments on your hair.”

I didn't say anything. I didn't even know if I was okay. I was still new to this whole 'emotions' deal. Was what I was feeling, hurt? I didn't realise words could be so painful.

“I'm sure whatever it was, was a lie,” said Stiles surely from beside me.

“You didn't hear him,” I replied, surprising even myself. I certainly sounded sad to my own ears, but was that enough of a measure? “I don't think I've never heard anything so true,” I admitted weakly.

He shifted, his arm moving like he was going to put it around me, but he changed his mind at the last moment. I wasn't upset, I wouldn't want to put my arm around a dead girl either. I opened my mouth to say something else (though I wasn't sure what) when a scent caught my attention. A very strong, very irresistible scent. A gasp escaped my mouth, and every one of my muscles tensed.

“Juliet?” Stiles asked worriedly, noticing that I'd stopped breathing. He peered around the corner at Scott, eyes widening as he spotted the bloody wound that had appeared on his wrist from tugging at the cuffs. He snapped back into place, heart picking up once more, stressed.

I don't know what I was expecting him to do, but sliding his hand into mine certainly wasn't it. I tensed even more, but he didn't let go. While I would usually only feel hungrier when faced with the feeling of warm blood pumping under the skin, something about this offered me only comfort.

“You fed only an hour ago,” he reminded me, winding his fingers through mine and squeezing. It was a strange gesture. How many decades had it been since someone had held my hand? Just held it, with no ulterior motives? “Besides, it's werewolf blood, and last I heard, that was the most disgusting kinda blood there is.”

Despite myself, a spluttered laugh managed to escape. “It tastes bad, but smells good, if that makes sense,” I told him quietly.
“I’m no expert, but maybe take a few deep breaths? Like any scent, maybe you just have to get used to it?” he suggested, and I found it entirely sweet how he was trying so hard to help. Though I was sure it was a bad idea, I did as asked and slowly took a deep breath in. Considering I was so full of blood that my stomach felt sloshy, it was relatively easy to stop myself from giving over to the bloodlust. “You alright?” he asked softly after a long couple of minutes, squeezing my hand again.

“Yeah,” I nodded, taking another experimental breath in, letting the scent of the blood sit on my tongue for a moment before letting it out. I looked up at him, reluctant to say anything but feeling like I should. He looked back down at me, a soft, undeserved worry on his face. “Thank you.”

“All in a day's work,” he responded cheekily, and for a split second we forgot that there was a potentially homicidal werewolf cuffed to the radiator only a room over.

“Stiles, please let me out.”

All at once, any pleasant emotions drained from us, dread once again filling our expressions. I pasted an indifferent mask over my face, turning back to face the opposite wall, however my hand didn't for a moment slip from Stiles'.

“It's the full moon, I swear,” Scott panted from the other room. “You know I wouldn't do any of this on purpose. Please Stiles, let me out, it's starting to hurt. It's not like the first time. It's the full moon. It's Allison breaking up with me,” he continued. I rolled my eyes, tipping my head back until it thumped against the wall. “I know that it's not just 'taking a break'. She broke up with me, and it's killing me. I feel completely hopeless. Just please, let me out.”

Stiles' heartbeat picked up again, and he squeezed my hand so hard that if I were human something may have snapped. He glanced at me, and I could see the turmoil in his head. He pleaded with his eyes, begging me to help him. I squeezed his hand back, meeting his gaze and shaking my head softly.

“I can't,” he finally said, defeat in his gaze as he dropped his forehead to rest on my shoulder. I stared down at the boy with wide, shocked eyes. What did someone do in this sort of situation? Should I push him off? Awkwardly slide out from under him? Yell at him? After a long minute I decided that if this was somehow comforting to the boy, then there was no harm in letting him do it. He gave off so much heat, it was like someone was pressing an iron to my shoulder, I could feel the warmth even through my leather jacket.
In his bedroom, Scott began to scream. I felt Stiles wince as he clutched my hand tighter; I had no idea how he could stand the temperature of my dead flesh, but he didn't seem to mind, curling further in on himself, and therefore, me. If I had a heartbeat, it would have gone off the charts.

Scott continued to scream, and Stiles continued to freak out, and I continued to feel awkward but not entirely uncomfortable. Then I heard the faint sound of metal breaking apart, and footsteps on the ground outside. I shot up, shoving Stiles off of me as I disappeared, reappearing in Scott’s bedroom, staring in horror at the snapped cuffs and the pool of cooling blood beneath them.

“Scott?” Stiles called worriedly, rushing into the room behind me. “Oh my God,” he muttered, staring out the window, dread on his features.

“I'll follow him, keep him out of trouble,” I said, stepping over the blood and slipping one leg out the window.

“What if he bites you?” he asked, a severe frown on his lips. I shrugged; I didn't have a good answer. “Just...” he began, clenching his hands into fists like he didn't know what else to do with them. “Be careful.”

I took the time to look back, throwing the boy my brightest and hopefully most reassuring smile before I launched myself from the windowsill. I landed on my feet and took off running, following the scent of wet dog leading down the street. He'd taken off into the forest, but it was easier to track him there with his scent rubbed off on the logs and trees.

I still wasn't an expert on the town, so I had no idea where he was heading. I followed at a safe distance, I figured trying to keep him held down would only equal permanent death for me, so I stayed back, running behind him, making sure he didn't come across any campers or anyone else he could potentially harm.

He seemed like he was running with a purpose, so I wasn't too surprised when he darted from the forest and into a parking lot, leaping onto the top of a beat up old car and peering through the darkness at something. I could clearly see and hear Allison and Jackson in a car at the other end of the lot.

I sighed, mentally rolling up my sleeves and preparing to take a run at him. Out of nowhere, a figure leapt from the shadows, crashing into Scott and sending them both flying off the edge of the hill at the end of the lot. My eyes widened and darted after them, reappearing behind a tree only a few feet from where the two fought. Judging by the smell, it was Derek Hale, and my eyebrows raised as I watched the two wolves fight it out.
“A little help?” Derek growled at me as he took a swipe at the teen wolf. I stepped out into the open, fangs slipping from my gums, blood draining to my eyes. I met them in the middle, grabbing Scott by the scruff and holding him up for Derek to get a good punch in. I let him go as his fist connected with his face, allowing the force to throw him to the forest floor.

Derek immediately crouched down, snarling in Scott's face. Scott scrambled backwards, trying to put as much distance between he and the older wolf as he could. Derek stepped closer, his features melting away until he was left looking human once again.

“What's happening to me?” Scott asked, breathing heavily. I relaxed my hands. There was a slight sting as my fangs disappeared back up into my gums, and the blood left my eyes, the veins around them disappearing into nothing.

“Exactly what he wants to happen,” Derek said stonily, peering down at the boy through the darkness. Scott sagged, holding his head in his hands.

I shifted my weight, looking over at Derek with a smirk. “Congratulations on not being dead,” I told him cheekily.

“I'd say the same to you, but last time I checked...” he trailed off, I might have even called it playful if not for the severe look in his eyes.

I crinkled my nose at him but didn't take the bait, instead rolling my eyes and taking a step closer to a shaking Scott. I crouched down to his level, waiting impatiently for him to look up at me. He finally did, eyes round and innocent and so scared that I felt a rumble of pity in my gut. “Are you going to be okay with Derek?” I asked him softly, trying to be as gentle with the kid as I could. It wasn't his fault he was like this. “I should go find Stiles, I bet he's freaking out right about now,” I said, but Scott couldn't muster a smile. “Besides, I think this is wolf business,” I added in a whisper.

“Yeah,” he said, sounding choked, like there was a lump in his throat. “I'll be fine,” he assured me weakly.

I awkwardly reached out, patting him lightly on the shoulder. “Everything will work out, Scott,” I told him, a lot more conviction in my voice than I felt. “You'll see.”
“Because you're the eternal optimist,” he responded with sarcasm, taking a page from Stiles' book.

My lips twitched upwards in amusement. “At least something good came out of tonight,” I said playfully. “You gained a sense of humour.”

He looked like he was trying to grin back, but it came across as more of a grimace. I patted him on the shoulder one last time before sliding to my feet, shooting Derek a no-nonsense kind of look. “Take him straight home,” I ordered him sternly.

The beta wolf looked like he wanted to snap back, but after taking a look at the boy changed his mind, simply nodding at me before bending down to help Scott to his feet. I watched them for one more moment before turning around and melting back into the night. I had a human to check on.
“When you asked me to help you tonight, this wasn't what I had in mind,” I yelled over the sound of sirens, leaping over a fallen support beam with ease, grabbing ahold of Derek's jacket and yanking him faster across the uneven ground, his feet slipping and sliding on the loose gravel. “I was thinking help moving. Maybe putting together some IKEA furniture.”

“He darted into an abandoned industrial building, and I followed, sticking close to his side. Loud barking met my ears, the police dogs on our tail. I huffed, leaping up onto a crate and watching as Derek spun around, eyes glowing a brilliant blue and fangs exposed, snarling at them wildly. They scampered back to where they'd come from, whimpering with their tails between their legs.

“Cute trick,” I said dryly, stepping off the crate, dropping to the ground. “Come on,” I urged, motioning for him to follow me around the corner of a large machine. I froze halfway, Derek bumping into my back. “Someone's watching us,” I hissed, eyes scanning the shadows.
There was a flash of migraine-inducing light in front of us, and we both recoiled. My vision adjusted quickly, but Derek continued to stumble. I turned the full power of my glower to the source of the weapon, glaring at Argent from under the cover of my hood.

He broke eye contact, hurrying to reload his crossbow. I didn't stick around to see what he'd pull out next, I just shoved Derek back behind the machine, diving down beside him, my back pressed up against his side as I waited, ignoring the way he flinched away from the contact.

We didn't end up having to come up with another brilliant plan. Derek's car, driven by the other two members of our little ragtag rebellion gang, came sliding into the room, coming to a stop mere feet away from us.

“Get in!” Stiles yelled, cracking open the door before leaping over the backseat to give us room.

I didn't waste time. Knowing Derek could look after himself I darted to the car just as Argent pulled out a gun, beginning to fire at us. I felt a thump and an irritation in my bicep as I dove over the seat, slipping in beside Stiles just before Derek jumped into the passenger seat, slamming the door shut behind him.

“What part of laying low don't you understand?!” Scott asked furiously from the driver's seat, driving out of the warehouse and onto a badly lit backroad, the tyres screeching at the high speeds.

“Dammit, I had him!” Derek responded, utterly ignoring the teen wolf.

“Who, the alpha?” Stiles asked, leaning over the seat, unintentionally forcing me to lean back to avoid being pressed against him. After the chase we just had, I could do with a nice warm glass of blood, and I didn't need Stiles' tempting throat anywhere near my aching fangs.

“Yes!” shouted Derek crossly. “He was right in front of us and the fucking police show up!” he spat.

“Hey, they're just doing their jobs,” argued Stiles defensively.

Derek's head snapped around, a furious glare forming on his features, making the younger boy's heart stutter with fear. I rolled my eyes, reaching forwards and pressing a hand to Stiles' chest, shoving him back properly in the seat.
“Yeah, thanks to someone who decided to make me the most wanted fugitive in the entire state,” Derek continued grouchily, glowering at Scott who was torn between looking sheepishly at him and focusing on the road ahead.

“Can we seriously get past that?” Scott asked desperately, easing his foot off the gas as we sped around a corner. “I made a dumb-ass mistake, I get it.”

Derek opened his mouth to snap back, but I leaned forwards, putting an end to the squabble. “Okay, can we all just agree that everyone here's to blame except me?” I chirped, aiming for playful but not quite hitting the mark.

Stiles was the only one who seemed to see it for what it was: a distraction. He huffed a tired sort of laugh from beside me while Scott and Derek rolled their eyes in annoyance.

“How did you guys find him?” Stiles spoke up, leaning over the seat again, forcing us closer together. When Derek didn't respond I opened my mouth to tell them, but Derek cut me off with a sharp look. It was my turn to roll my eyes, deciding keeping the peace was worth keeping my mouth shut for the time being.

“Can you just try to trust us for at least half a second?” Scott demanded, torn between exasperated and angry.

“Yeah, both of us,” said Stiles eagerly. Derek turned around, the full force of his glare focused on the uncomfortable human. “Or just him,” he corrected, heart once again jumping in fear, “I'll be back here.”

I pursed my lips at the beta, reaching up to lightly pat Stiles on the back, an action that made his heart stutter again. I immediately lifted my hand, frowning.

“Look, the last time I talked to my sister, she was close to figuring something out,” Derek began slowly, and I listened carefully. He hadn't gone through this information with me, and I was annoyed I hadn't been told immediately. All he'd said was that he had a lead on where the alpha might be, and I'd been stupid enough not to ask questions. I wouldn't be making that mistake again. “She found two things. The first was a guy named Harris.”

Stiles all but leapt into the gap between their heads again, staring at Derek. “Our chemistry
teacher?” he asked incredulously, though I couldn't see the expression on his face from the way he was angled.

My lip curled at the mention of the horrid man I was forced to interact with on a daily basis, but I saved my scathing comments for a time when he would actually be around to hear them.

“Why him?” Scott asked from the driver’s seat.

“I don't know yet,” Derek responded evenly.

“What's the second?”

He dug in his pocket, pulling out a crumpled piece of paper with something drawn on it in pencil. “Some kind of symbol,” he told him, and by extension, us. Scott glanced away from the road to get a look at the picture, and he jerked back in surprise once he saw it, taking the car with him a few inches to the left.

Stiles' hand shot out and grasped my upper leg through the leather of my pants, and I looked from it to his face, which was slowly becoming a deep crimson. He awkwardly peeled his hand from the position, clearing his throat and making a show of putting his attention back on the conversation at hand.

“What?” Derek was asking Scott sharply. “Do you know what this is?”

“I've seen it on a necklace,” he admitted reluctantly as I leaned forwards, ignoring the way I could still feel the heat of Stiles' hand, and got a look at the picture. I'd seen it before too, and it wasn't too surprising where. Of course the Argents had something to do with this whole mess. What didn't they have their hand in? “Allison's necklace,” Scott confessed weakly.

There was a few beats of silence as Derek processed this information.

“You have to get it from her,” he finally replied, folding the paper halfheartedly before shoving it haphazardly into his back pocket.
Scott stared at Derek like he thought he might have been kidding. Derek stared back unwaveringly, and it was clear he wasn't. “Easier said than done,” Scott mumbled.

“Pull over,” Derek abruptly demanded.

“What?” Scott asked in surprise, blinking across the console at the man.

“Pull over,” he repeated. Scott did as asked, pulling off to the side of the road just on the edge of suburbia, I could see the lights from the first houses just beyond the trees. Derek shoved open the door and climbed out, stalking around to the drivers side where Scott sat, dumbfounded. “Out,” he said, ripping open the door and gesturing for the boy to get out of the car.

“How are we supposed to get home?” Scott asked, bewildered.

“Not my problem,” Derek said heartlessly, and with a sigh Scott climbed from the car. I followed, then Stiles after me. “I'll call you when I know the next step,” Derek said to me, making no move to keep the words hidden from the others. I gave a lazy salute in reply, watching as he slid behind the wheel of his car. With an unnecessary rev of the engine, he disappeared in a cloud of dust from the road.

“Prick,” I muttered, kicking a pebble on the ground, watching uninterestedly as it flew across the road, crashing into the tree with a loud crack that made Stiles flinch. I spun around, shoving my hands into the pockets of the hoodie I was wearing and stepping into the shadows.

“Where're you going?” Stiles asked loudly, and I paused before I hit the tree line.

“Home,” I said slowly, like he was an idiot.

“You—you're just going to leave us out here?” he asked, gesturing to the empty road and looming canopy, rays of moonlight just barely shining through, illuminating our faces. “You're going alone?”

I pursed my lips, my brow furrowing. “I figured you were big boys,” I told him, allowing my lips to quirk up in a small smirk. “Besides, Scott can watch your back.”
“I’m more worried about your back,” he admitted, and my hand drifted to my back pocket. I tugged a loose cigarette free, slipping it between my lips and bringing my lighter up to light it. I took a drag, listening to the steady pump of his heart.

“Would it make you feel better if I walked with you?” I asked meaning to sound condescending, but I didn't pull it off, judging by the sincere look on the human's face.

“It would actually,” he told me, calling my bluff.

I rolled my eyes, flicking the ash of the end of my stick and walking back towards them. I passed them and made it several paces down the road before I stopped and looked back, observing he and Scott, who had remained oddly silent thus far. “Well?” I asked impatiently.

They looked at each other, having one of their silent communications before they both turned and walked towards me. I didn't wait to them to catch up, turning back around and heading down the road. A moment later we were in suburbia, under the harsh fluorescents of the street lights. I didn't like them, they made me look even paler than I already was, but I put up with it for the boys.

“So, I was wondering something,” Stiles began suddenly. “Are there any other vampires in Beacon Hills?” he asked conversationally, speaking so loudly that a man walking his dog on the opposite side of the road turned to look at us through narrowed eyes.

I let my eyes slip closed for a moment, praying for patience from Zeus or Ra or whoever the fuck was listening, before I opened them again, taking in another lungful of chemicals. “No,” I answered, glancing up at the heavens, only just able to make out the Little Dipper with the lights from the area. “At least, not that I know of,” I blew out the smoke in a perfect ring, ducking under it and continuing forwards. “It's just me.”

It had sounded more sad than I'd meant to, but I didn't add anything further. “You must miss your own kind, huh?” Scott spoke up for the first time from where he walked closest to the road.

I decided there wasn't any harm in replying honestly, so I nodded. “Yeah, sometimes.”

“So, how do you become a vampire?” he asked, and it occurred to me that I hadn't really told either he or Stiles much about the process. The other boy listened on, appearing outwardly nonchalant, but I could tell how eager he was for answers.
“You don't want to know,” I said simply, grimacing at the thought.

“We really do,” Stiles replied, jumping forwards a few steps so we were walking beside each other. “So come on, what is it? How does it happen? A bite, like werewolves?”

I snorted, rolling my eyes again. “Nothing so tacky.”

I wasn’t sure what Scott’s response to that would be, but he still surprised me when he chuckled lightly. I decided it wouldn't hurt to tell them the truth. It wasn't like either of them were secretly wishing to be vampires, or like they could use the information against me in any way.

“You have to drink a vampire's blood, then die with it in your system. Once you wake up, you need to feed on human blood to complete the transformation,” I told them gravely. “It's a painful, complicated process.”

They were both quiet, taking in what I'd said with varying levels of grim disgust.

“This is my stop,” Scott spoke up, pausing in front of a familiar two storey house. “I guess I'll see you guys at school tomorrow,” he said, smiling slightly, thoughts clearly elsewhere. Before he could walk up his drive, he turned towards me, expression serious. “If anything happens before you guys are home … if the alpha…” he trailed off, glancing at his best friend with worry.

“Yeah,” I nodded, not in the mood to hear him plead. I got the idea. If it came down to it, I would protect the human boy. That was who I was now, someone who preserved life, instead of taking it. “You got it,” I said shortly.

Scott smiled again, reaching out to pat me one the shoulder amiably. I kept myself from flinching away, pushing my lips up into a small, perfunctory smile. He turned to Stiles, did some weird handshake thing that I didn't understand before clapping him on the shoulder too and wandering up to his front door. I waited until he was inside before turning and continuing down the road in the direction of Stiles' house. It meant I was walking in the opposite direction to my house, but Stiles didn't mention it, and I was happy to keep silent.

“Have you ever done it?” Stiles asked softly after a lengthy pause, glancing over at me, probably only just able to make me out as we moved out of the glow of the streetlights. “Turned someone, I mean?”
I didn't meet his gaze, staring forwards as I took a drag from my cigarette to put off answering for as long as I could. “Yes,” I finally said, expression stony and cold.

“Why?” he asked, the question probing but somehow also innocent.

It was an harmless enough question, but it didn't have such a simple answer. He wasn't scared of me yet, but there were things I could tell him now, things that could make his skin crawl, make him look at me with fear and loathing and disgust.

“Hey.”

I realised he'd stopped walking and turned around to face him, watching as he swatted away the bugs flying in circles around his head.

“Nothing you tell me is going to send me running,” he said seriously as I finished off my cigarette, dropping it to the ground and crushing it under the low heel of my boot. I avoided his eyes, my gaze going to my lapis lazuli daylight ring, fiddling with it idly. “Jules...”

I looked up, taken by surprise at the nickname.

He smiled, but it was careful, controlled in a way I didn't know he was capable of. “You did some fucked up things in your past, I get it,” he said understandingly, and I was momentarily taken aback by his colourful language, but it quickly gave way to an amused smirk. “I'm not going to judge you for it.”

I licked my lips, taking my time. “Some decades were more boring than others,” I said quietly, turning around and beginning to walk down the street, his footsteps hurriedly picked up behind me as he worked to keep pace. “Sometimes I was lonely and so I did what most vampires do when they get lonely and I ... made myself some friends,” I told him, my hands twisting in front of me. “Literally.”

He was quiet again, processing what I'd said. In a way it was amusing; it took a lot to leave Stiles Stilinski without words. “Where are they now?” he asked after a while, handing finding their way into his pockets.

“Some met people they liked more than me,” I shrugged as though it didn't still hurt. “Some went
off alone, preferring to live as nomads.” I paused, swallowing thickly, “Most are dead.” I stared into the distance, trying to force myself not to remember Hilary with her flaming red hair, or Bess with the bluest eyes to ever blue, Slater with the thirst for knowledge, or Nathan and Lynda who were the cutest couple I knew, or Marty and Peter, may they rest in peace. “I'm still in contact with a few of them,” I said offhandedly. “If you ever wanna see a vampire party in action I have this great friend over in Virginia who I think you'd like. I didn't turn him, I just met he and his brother a while back. You're both as sarcastic as each other,” I paused to smirk at him.

“Juliet Cooper: vampire pimp,” he joked, framing his hands across the sky like it was written on a billboard. I forced myself not to wince at the fake name, keeping the smirk pasted across my red lips.

“That's me,” I said with a light laugh, nudging him softly with my elbow. He chuckled, shaking his head and smiling at the ground. “Sleep well, Stiles,” I said, coming to a stop outside his house.

“What?” he asked in confusion, spinning around and catching sight of his home, shoulders slumping. “Oh.” I turned around, heading back the way we'd come. “Are you going to be okay?” he asked loudly, and I paused under the light of a street lamp, glancing back at him over the shoulder.

“Of course,” I told him, unsure whether or not it was a lie.

A wicked smirk crossed his face as he crossed his arms. “You're not afraid of the big bad wolf?” he asked, and I was thrown back to several weeks ago, when I'd first met he and Scott in the woods, and I'd said nearly the exact same thing to them.

Clearly he remembered it just as well as I did, and I couldn't help the grin that spread across my lips. “Never,” I replied, winking teasingly before spinning back around, wandering off into the night, trying not to think about how I could feel his eyes on me until I turned the corner.

“We have a problem,” Scott said the next day, grabbing my arm and tugging me from my locker, barely giving me time to hit it shut before we were halfway down the hall, Stiles in tow.

“Oh?” I said in confusion, ripping my arm from his grasp, readjusting the old army jacket I'd picked up when I was actually in the army, pushing the sleeves back up past my elbows. I held my books to my chest and nodded for him to lead the way.
“Jackson knows,” he said gravely, glancing at every corner like the guy would be standing there watching him.

“Knows what?” I asked with a frown, glancing back at Stiles. He looked just as stressed as his werewolf best friend, so I assumed this was as serious as they were saying it was.

“That I'm a … you know what?”

I shot him a deadpan expression, unamused by his words. “It's not a dirty word Scott,” I grumbled with an eye roll. “This is who you are now, might as well come to terms with the word werewolf.”

Stiles nodded enthusiastically, wholeheartedly agreeing with my point.

“Aren't you the least bit concerned?” Scott asked, brow furrowing.

“No,” I said with a shrug.

They looked at each other for a moment before looking back at me. “Why not?” Stiles asked carefully.

“Hello?” I said sarcastically, pointing to myself. “Vampire?” That didn't seem to clear things up for them. “I happen to possess the gift of compulsion.”

“You can make him forget he knows anything?” Scott asked hopefully, stepping closer so we wouldn't be overheard.

“Yeah,” I nodded. “And implant false memories, or make him to leave town, or even make him kill himself, if I so desire.”

Scott looked disturbed by what I said, but Stiles seemed to take it in his stride. “We'll keep that last one as plan C,” he said, lips twitching. “For now if you could just make him forget, that'd be great.”
He shot me a double thumbs-up which I hurried to copy with enthusiasm, a sarcastic grin on my lips. He scrunched his nose at me unhappily, but I paid him no mind. “All right,” I said. “I'll come find you when it's done.”

I didn't wait for a reply, merely blending into the crowd, on a hunt for Jackson. I only had to ask two people if they'd seen him before I found him entering the boy's toilet on the second floor. I tilted my head as I paused outside, carefully listening for anyone else in there with him. Once I'd determined that he was alone, I shoved my way into the room, locking the door behind me.

Jackson glanced up in surprise at the foreboding sound.

I set my books down on the counter, walking calmly towards him. A cocky smirk appeared on his lips as he held up his hands. “Listen, Juliet right?” He didn't wait for a reply. “Look, I'm flattered, really, I am, but the men's room? That's so freshman. Why don't we—?”

“Shut up,” I snapped as I approached him, slamming my forearm against his chest, forcing him into the wall beside the sink. His eyes widened in alarm and he struggled to push back, sucking in a sharp breath as he realised I was a lot stronger than he was. “You're going to forget everything—”

“What are you talking about?!” he exclaimed, trying to slip out from my hold.

I frowned when it didn't immediately work, grabbing his chin with my free hand and forcing him to look deep into my eyes as my pupils dilated over and over again, struggling to draw him under my control. “You're going to forget everything you know about Scott McCall—”

“Get off of me!” he yelled, and I impatiently clamped a hand over his mouth. It wasn't working. Why wasn't it working?

I shoved him back again, one hand over his mouth, the other running down his arms and chest, looking for something, but hoping I was wrong. I hissed in pain when my hand met a small disk of metal, the coating on it acid to my skin. “Where did you get this broach?” I asked roughly, letting go of my hold on his mouth to grasp both sides of his collar, pulling him forwards and slamming him back into the wall. It cracked just slightly under the assault, and Jackson winced in pain.

“I don't know—” he tried to say, but I wasn't interested in his vague answers.
“Where did you get it?” I repeated in a growl, glaring at him, trying not to breathe through my nose so I couldn't smell the blood pumping so very fast through his veins, just beneath the skin. It would be so easy to bite him now, just a taste.

But then he spoke, his voice pulling me from my stupor. “Allison gave it to me,” he told me angrily, still struggling against my hold. I gripped him tighter, material of his jacket tearing a little in my grip.

“Why?” I demanded.

“What do you mean, why?” he asked in confusion.

“I mean why would she give it to you?”

“She said her aunt gave them to her to give to her friends, something about being a symbol of protection. I don't know!” he insisted, wincing when my grip tightened again.

I glowered at him for a long moment, weighing my options before letting him go. He panted against the bathroom wall, pressing a hand to his chest where I'd held him. A bruise would probably form in the next day or so, but that was the least of my concerns.

“Tell anyone about this and I'll cut off your dick and lodge it in your oesophagus,” I warned him. He didn't reply, staring back at me with wide, shocked eyes. With a final glare I picked up my books, nonchalantly fixed my hair in the mirror then unlocked the door, sauntering out like I hadn’t just threatened the arrogant boy's life.

It took until lunch to meet up with the boys again, I found them at their usual table, whispering over their food.

“Did you find anything else out?” Stiles was asking as I approached.
“Just that I know nothing about girls, and that they're totally psychotic,” Scott replied, staring at his food. I silently slipped into the chair opposite them both.

“Ouch,” I said loudly, making them both jump in their seats, heads snapping around to stare at me. “I resent that,” I added playfully.

“I—I didn't mean you,” Scott stumbled over his words, trying to dig himself out of the hole he was in. I raised a single eyebrow, and he looked away awkwardly.

“Look, I came up with a plan B just incase anything like this happened,” Stiles said, turning back to Scott and effectively breaking the tension I'd created.

“What's plan B?” Scott asked, glad for the change of topic.

“Just steal the stupid thing.”

“Can't we try at least getting to Harris?”

“My dad put him on a twenty-four hour protective detail. The necklace is all we've got,” Stiles sighed, dropping a chip back onto his plate in defeat.

“While we're sharing news,” I said, reaching over to pick up one of his discarded chips, frowning at it before deciding it wouldn't kill me and popping it into my mouth. It was salty and not altogether unpleasant. “Jackson can't be compelled.”

There was a beat of silence before Stiles snapped back into action. “He what?” he asked furiously, sitting up straighter to peer at the boy at the other end of the room. “Why the hell not?”

“Your little girlfriend gave him vervain,” I muttered with a nod at Scott, lip curling in anger as I absentmindedly picked up another chip, just for something to do.

“What's vervain?” asked Stiles quickly.
“Wolfsbane for vampires,” I told him shortly.

“How is that possible?” Scott hissed, looking around the cafeteria in alarm. “She doesn't know anything. Does she?”

“I don't think so,” I shrugged, crossing one leg over the other and picking up Stiles' drink, unscrewing the lid and taking a sip before I'd even realised I'd moved. I frowned down at the bottle before capping it and sliding it back over to the boy, who just took it with a nod. “I managed to get Jackson to tell me that it was her aunt's idea, something about being a symbol of protection and handing them out to her friends.” I huffed, a strand of hair flying away from my face before floating back down to rest on my cheek. “Whatever, either way I can't touch it to get it off, it burns me every time I try, so one of you will somehow have to rip it off his shirt for me. It's a little broach in the shape of a tree—”

“Guys, he's watching us.”

I frowned at the uncharacteristically rude interruption, but when I followed his line of sight over my shoulder, I saw that he was indeed right. The little dick-potato was watching us with a creepy, intense look on his face, jaw clenched tight, clicking every few moments.

“Act normal,” Scott muttered, ducking his head, shoulders stiffening as he struggled to look anywhere but at the other boy. I rolled my eyes, leaning back in my chair, throwing one arm over the back and kicking my feet up on the empty chair beside me. I wore nonchalance like an armour.

“Scott.”

Scott tensed up as Jackson muttered his name. I shot him a warning glare, silently urging him to stay cool. “Don't react,” I whispered to him warningly, staring at a spot on the ceiling like it was the most fascinating thing in the room.

“Can you hear me?” whispered Jackson from the other end of the room. “You can, can't you? You and your little friend.”

Stiles frowned in confusion at the stonily looks on our faces. “What's wrong?” he asked quietly, taking care to keep his eyes on his friend.
“Jackson's talking to us, he knows we can hear him,” Scott told him under his breath. “Look at me,” he instructed when the boy looked away. “Just talk to me; act normal.”

“Are you trying to pretend not to hear me?” muttered Jackson, slimy amusement in his voice.

“Say something,” Scott hissed again when Stiles remained silent.

Stiles gestured wildly, at a loss, “I can't think of anything, my mind is completely blank.”

“Your mind's blank? You can't think of something to say?”

“Not under this kind of pressure.” He huffed, taking a chance and glancing where the boy was sitting. “FYI he's not even sitting with them anymore.” I looked up, brow furrowing as I took in the empty chair.

“Where the fuck...?” I trailed off, eyes narrowing as I searched the room.

“Looking for me? I'm right here.” I rolled my eyes, returning my gaze to the ceiling and tapping out a beat on the table with my nails. What a twat. “So what else can you two do? Can you see better? Are you stronger? More powerful? Now, I knew there was no way McCall suddenly got that good at lacrosse. Which means you're actually a cheater. Aren't you? Can you even play lacrosse?”

“Yes,” Scott muttered angrily.

“Don't rise to the bait, Scott,” I said softly, my fingers never pausing their tapping.

“I bet my new co-captain is gonna score a bunch of shots tonight, aren't you? And while you're pretending you're not a lying cheat, I'm going to ruin your life if you don't give me what I want. And you know what I'm going to start with? Her. I'm going to destroy any chance you have left with her. And when I'm done with that I'm gonna get her all alone then I'm gonna get my hands all over that tight little body.”

“Scott, come on, you can't let him do this, you can't let him have this kind of power over you,”
Stiles said, there for his friend even though he wasn't sure what the bastard was saying. Scott's hand clenched around the water bottle he was holding. The plastic creaked under his grip.

“I'm gonna do everything you never got the chance to do. Scott, she's going to beg for more. I'll bet she likes to get loud. Maybe she's even a screamer. How're you gonna feel Scott, when she's screaming my name?”

I didn't appreciate his blatant disrespect for Allison, who was such a sweet and kind soul. I reached forwards and picked up Stiles' apple, spinning around and launching it at Jackson's head. He grunted as it collided with his skull at the same time as Scott snapped his tray in half, making every head in the cafeteria turn to stare. I met their gazes with a cool stare of my own, and slowly they all turned away, made uncomfortable by the coldness in my eyes.

“Did you just throw my apple at Jackson's head?” Stiles asked after a moment, looking from the empty spot where his apple had been to where Jackson stood in the corner, glaring darkly, a red mark forming above his eyebrow.

I watched him as his jaw clicked a final time and he turned around, stalking from the room. The corner of my lips curved up into a light smirk. “Yes,” I responded cooly, my fingers resuming their dance on the table.

“Cool.”

I glanced at him, taking in his impressed smile and forcing down the warm glow it gave me in my gut.

“Listen,” he continued after a moment. “I have an idea about what we need to do next, to find the alpha.”

“And?” I prompted impatiently.

He opened his mouth to reply, but the bell rang from overhead, echoing throughout the room, bouncing off the shiny linoleum floor. “Meet me at my Jeep after school, you can come to mine and help. I'll explain on the way.”

I figured arguing would get me nowhere, so I shrugged. I was learning that when Stiles wanted
something, it wasn't often he didn't get it. Besides, it wasn't like I had anything better to do with my time.

That afternoon, he waited until we were halfway to his house, windows rolled down and some tacky pop song playing from the radio, to explain his plan to me.

“So, basically, we're somehow tracing who the original sender of the text to Allison's phone was?” I asked, my brain having some difficulty wrapping around the complicated techno-babble.

“Yeah,” he nodded, taking a left down a side street.

It was silent for a while, both of us enjoying the fresh air and quiet rumble of the engine before I decided to speak up. “Are you excited for the game tonight?” I asked him curiously, finding that I wasn't just going through the motions; I was actually interested in the answer to my question. I'd found that happening a lot over the recent weeks, wanting to know more about Stiles than I'd ever really wanted to know about anyone. I told myself it was because there was something different about him, something special.

Maybe it was just because he wanted to be my friend, even despite knowing what I truly was. There was something genuinely warming about it. Something that made me annoyingly fond of him for it.

“Yeah,” the human nodded, a smile spread across his lips.

“First line,” I said needlessly, watching from the corner of my eye as his grin brightened.

“Yeah,” he repeated giddily. “I still can't believe it.”

“You're going to be great,” I said somewhat stiltedly, hoping I came across as encouraging or supportive instead of just awkward. I didn't know how to make kindness seem natural; because, for me, it wasn't.

He glanced over at me, a tiny grin on his face. “You think?”
“I know,” I replied confidently as we pulled into his driveway. I cracked open my door, dropping to the ground and letting it swing shut behind me. I noticed his dad's cruiser parked to the right, meaning the man was home. Stiles led the way up the drive, stepping through the door and gesturing for me to follow. We didn't immediately run into his dad, but I could hear the man's heartbeat in the lounge. Stiles just moved up the stairs to his room, trusting me to follow him.

Before I stepped through the door I caught a whiff of a familiar scent, and as I entered the room I turned to look at Derek with a raised eyebrow. Stiles slid through the doorway obliviously, not sparing either of us a glance and moving straight to his desk chair to boot up his computer. I stepped back until the back of my knees touched the bed and sat down on it, keeping my eyes on the beta werewolf in front of me.

“Hey Stiles!” the Sheriff yelled to his son from the top of the stairs.

“Yo D—Derek?!” he spun around, gaping at the raven haired wolf standing in his bedroom. His eyes snapped to mine, looking for answers. I shrugged and with a wince he leapt from the chair, moving to the doorway and poking his head through so that his dad wouldn't get a look at Derek.

“What the hell are you doing here?” I hissed under my breath, so quietly only Derek's enhanced hearing could pick it up.

“None of your business,” he whispered back.

I rolled my eyes. “Mature,” I grumbled, half listening to the conversation on the other side of the door.

“Did I hear someone else come in with you?” John asked suspiciously, and I slid to my feet, flashing my teeth at Derek before pasting a small smile on my face and appearing in the gap in the doorway.

“Afternoon, Sheriff,” I greeted him politely, leaning against the wood.

“Juliet,” he replied kindly. “What're you doing here?”

“History project.” Stiles interjected, apparently worrying I wouldn't be able to lie. “She's my partner. Not—not my partner. I mean my partner in history. The class. At school.”
His dad shot him a bemused sort of look, not quite sure what he was on about. I just barely kept from rolling my eyes.

“She's a huge history buff, so she's helping me study,” he continued awkwardly. I nodded along fervently, as though it were all fact.

“Okay, well, I was just telling Stiles that I have to head out,” the Sheriff began, looking between us with cautious eyes. “Can I trust you two home alone?” he added carefully.

“Of course, sir,” I said, pasting on my most charming smile. He watched us for several more long seconds before nodding and turning around, shooting his one one final weird look over his shoulder at his son before he made his way down the stairs. I slipped back into the room, crossing my arms and waiting for Stiles to follow.

The moment he was inside Derek grabbed him by the collar of his shirt and slammed him none-too-gently up against the back of his closed door. The human jumped, glancing over at me with wide eyes, heart pounding in his chest. I didn't actually think Derek would harm Stiles, so I remained where I was, watching distantly. “If you say one word...” Derek began to threaten him.

“Like what? Hey dad, Derek Hale's in my room, bring your gun?” Stiles replied sarcastically, making Derek scowl. “Yeah, that's right. If I'm harbouring your fugitive ass, it's my house; my rules, buddy.”

I refused to be impressed by the guts he displayed, but couldn't help the amused smirk that found its way onto my face. Derek was silent for a beat before nodding reluctantly. He let go of the boy, stepping back and straightening his askew clothes. Stiles huffed a laugh, copying the action.

He moved to step around him, and Derek flinched forwards, making Stiles gasp and stumble back. “Oh my God,” the human grunted, hand held to his racing heart. I chuckled, moving back and standing beside the bed, considering for a moment beforeshrugging and letting myself fall back down onto the covers. I noticed for the first time how comfortable Stiles' bed was, way better than my old thing.

“Scott didn't get the necklace?” Derek asked, arms crossed, staring stonily at Stiles.

“No, he's still working on it. But there's something else we can try. The night we were trapped at
the school, Scott sent a text to Allison asking her to meet him there.”

“So?”

“So, it wasn't Scott.”

“Well, can you find out who sent it?”

“No, not me, but I think I know somebody who can,” Stiles said, and Derek turned around to look at me expectantly. Stiles followed his gaze before letting out a dry laugh. “Her? Please,” he chuckled, shaking his head, ignoring my frown. “She can barely turn a phone on, let alone trace a text. Seriously, for someone so old you'd think she'd be better with technology.”

“Technology has only been around for a fraction of the time I've existed,” I defended myself pettily. “I've spent more years writing letters than the entire time the phone has been around.”

Stiles threw a smirk at me over his shoulder, unfazed by my irritated and somewhat defensive tone.

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Danny was understandably confused. “You want me to do what?”

“Trace a text.”

“I came here to do lab work. That's what lab partners do.”

“And we will, once you trace the text.”

“And what makes you think I know how?”

“I looked up your arrest report,” Stiles admitted with minimal shame and my lips twitched from where I reclined on his bed, idly flipping through some old music magazine. I didn't know who
"I was thirteen," Danny defended himself, as if any of us cared. "They dropped the charges. No, we're doing lab work," he said, trying his hardest to sound decisive and stern.

"Oh my—" Stiles cussed under his breath, spinning around in his chair to stare at me expectantly. "Jules, would you please just … you know?" he whined.

I glanced up from the glossy pages of the magazine, fixing my cool stare on Danny. He met my eyes and I flattened my gaze in a way that should have immediately drawn him in. But he merely frowned in confusion and my eyes darted down to the familiar little broach pinned onto his jacket. "Cool broach, Danny," I said obviously, and Stiles groaned in defeat, realising what I was pointing out. "Allison give it to you?"

He looked down at the offending accessory. "Uh, yeah?"

"Cool," I said with a fake smile, immediately dropping it when I turned back to the magazine.

Danny looked completely confused as he sat down in the chair beside Stiles. "What's she doing here, exactly?" he whispered as though I wouldn't hear.

"Tutoring me in history," Stiles lied.

"Right," said Danny awkwardly, shooting me a skeptical look from the corner of his eye. "And, er, who is he, again?" he asked, looking back at Derek, who sat silently in the corner.

Stiles paused. "My cousin, Miguel."

"My boyfriend, Tanner."

There was an awkward silence after both Stiles and I had spoken at the exact same time. Danny's eyes narrowed suspiciously, flickering between us skeptically. Derek glanced up in annoyance. "Which one is it?" Danny asked, his strong brow furrowed.
“He—he's my cousin and Juliet's boyfriend,” Stiles said, a hint of desperation and something like disgust in his tone.

“But is his name Miguel or Tanner?” Danny asked, still unsure what to make of the whole thing.

“Miguel Tanner,” I supplied with an easy smile, turning to look at Derek with a smirk. “Isn't that right, baby?” I asked in a lovey, condescending tone. His glare intensified, and I got the feeling that he was trying to set me on fire with his mind.

“...Is that blood on his shirt?” Danny asked warily.

“Yeah, well he gets these horrible nose bleeds,” Stiles said, and I had to admit – it wasn't the worst excuse I'd ever heard. “Hey Miguel, I thought I told you you could borrow one of my shirts,” he added meaningfully.

Derek passive-aggressively slammed the encyclopaedia he was pretending to read shut, sliding to his feet. I watched, only half interested as the wolf slid his bloodstained shirt off. I couldn't help but watch the way the muscles in his back rippled under his skin as he searched for another shirt. He may have been a werewolf, and I may have been a vampire, but I was still a woman and he was still a man, and fuck if I wasn't going to look.

“I mean, so, anyway, we both know you have the skills to trace that text so…”

“Stiles,” Derek spoke up.

The human huffed, turning to look at him in annoyance. “Yes?”

“This no fit.”

“Then try something else on.”

He turned back to the chest of drawers, and I couldn't help myself as I rolled over onto my
stomach, getting closer to the shirtless wolf and his fine abs. I smirked, playfully kicking my feet into the air as I watched him root around in the drawers for another shirt.

“He isn't a piece of meat, you know,” Stiles snapped after a long moment, face twisted in disgust as he looked between the two of us. I didn't dignify that with a response, instead continuing to watch Derek, utterly shameless. “Hey, that one looks pretty good, huh?” he suddenly said enthusiastically, and I raised an eyebrow at his words, eyeing the hideous piece of fabric stretched over the wolf's muscles. “What do you think Danny?”

“Huh?”

“The shirt.”

“It's not really his colour,” Danny said awkwardly, and I instantly picked up on what Stiles was doing. Derek scowled but stripped off the ugly shirt anyway, sorting through the contents of the drawer for a more suitable one.

“You swing for a different team but you still play ball, don't you Danny-boy?”

“You're a horrible person.”

“I know it keeps me awake at night,” he muttered uncaringly, watching Danny with intense eyes. “Anyway, about that text...”

“Stiles,” Derek snapped angrily from his place in the corner. “None of these fit.”

We all looked at him, and a predatory smirk spread across my lips. “Might just be better for you to go without,” I said with a deep sigh, biting my lip at him teasingly. He shot me a disgusted look, muttering something about me being a 'walking corpse' under his breath. I didn't take offence, my pointed teeth showing in a hungry, wicked grin.

“I'll need the ISP, the phone number and the exact time of the text,” Danny spoke up, and Stiles pumped his fist in the air in celebration.
“Thank you man, seriously,” he said with a shit-eating grin as he handed over the necessary information.

“Yeah, yeah,” he mumbled back, reluctantly focused on the task we'd given him. “Are any of you going to tell me exactly why I'm doing this?”

There was a heavy silence as we all considered his question. How much was this kid allowed to know? If it were solely up to me, he'd probably already be dead. “I think it's in your best interests if you just don't ask any questions,” I spoke up, the queen of avoiding uncomfortable questions. Plus, I knew how much Stiles despised secrets. I didn't wanna have to make it harder on the kid – any more than it already was.

Danny let out a small, frustrated sigh but seemed to get the message that we weren't going to be telling him shit. “There, the text was sent from a computer,” he finally told us after a long few minutes of tense, stony silence. “This one,” he confirmed, pointing at the screen.

“Registered to that account name?” Derek asked incredulously, and I frowned, leaning around him to get a peek at the words displayed.

“No, no, no,” Stiles muttered anxiously. “That can't be right.”

There, in clear, red writing was one name. One none of us could have possibly predicted in a million years.

_Melissa McCall._

So, once we hurriedly ushered the cute latino boy from Stiles' house, it was silently and unanimously decided that we would all go to the hospital to check it out. If Scott's mom really was the culprit – well, I guess that was just a bridge we’d have to cross when the time came.

“Look, if you see my dad, can you tell him I'll be there, I'll just be a little bit late, okay?” Stiles was saying to Scott over the phone, heart thundering in his chest.
He was meant to be playing lacrosse tonight – his first night on first line. I knew it was a big deal for him to give that up, but I felt a strange sort of pride at the fact he was mature enough to see the point of the greater good.

On the other end of the line, Scott agreed and Stiles hung up, sighing heavily as he pocketed his phone, dropping his chin to his chest for just a few moments. “You're not gonna make it,” Derek deadpanned unhelpfully.

“I know,” the human groaned, rubbing his palms into his eyes.

“You didn't tell him about his mom, either.”

“Not until we find out the truth.”

It was a kind thing to do, so much so that it felt nearly alien to me. Personally, I wouldn't have thought twice about telling the boy what we'd found. But Stiles was always thinking about other people, having their best interests at heart – it was just who he was at a fundamental level.

“By the way, one more thing.” said Derek suddenly.

Stiles reluctantly looked up at the werewolf, brow furrowed. “Yeah?”

Derek abruptly grabbed the back of Stiles' head and slammed it into the steering wheel, making the boy yelp in shock and pain, grabbing at his aching head. I was surprised when I didn't find his pain immediately hilarious, instead an irritation churning in my gut at the werewolf, who wore a rather self-satisfied look on his stupid, wolfish face.

“What the hell was that?!” Stiles shouted, wincing as he pressed a hand against his skull, as though afraid the impact might cause his brain to fall out.

“You know what that was for,” Derek snapped.

Rolling my eyes at the stink of testosterone, I slid from the backseat only to reappear at Stiles’ door. I cracked it open, reaching in to grab the boy's arm, pulling him from the jeep.
“Don't screw up,” Derek grunted, and I flipped him off as I let the door slam shut. I let go of Stiles' arm, the hot press of his skin against mine too much for me to handle, the pump of his pulse too tempting. Instead I shoved my hands into the pockets of my trench coat, leading the way into the hospital.

The automatic doors slid open as I approached, and I waited just inside for Stiles to catch up. He was still rubbing his sore head, an agitated frown on his face. I turned around as he stepped over the threshold, pausing when I didn't see the room awash with nurses and patients. It was empty and silent, too still for everything to be fine.

“Something's wrong,” I said quietly, not wanting to break the eerie silence that covered the ward like a blanket. I stepped closer to Stiles, just a subtle shift of my posture that he didn't seem to notice, nodding for the human to follow me. “Stay close to me. Don't wander off.”

“You got it,” he replied just as softly, frowning at the empty front desk in concern.

We did a loop of the floor, but there wasn't a single person in sight. It might as well have been a ghost town. “Call Derek,” I ordered Stiles as we made out way back through the long-term care unit. He didn't question me, fishing out his phone and dialling the wolf waiting out in the Jeep.

“We can't find her,” he said the moment Derek answered.

“What?”

“I said we can't find her.”

“Look, ask for Jennifer. She's been looking after my uncle.”

“Yeah, well he's not here either,” Stiles said, stepping half into the room, cautiously checking it out. I kept my stare on the empty all, my skin prickling warningly as I expended my senses, trying to figure out what was wrong.

“What?”
“He's not here, he's gone.”

“Get out of there right now,” Derek shouted at us over the line. “It's him, he's the alpha. Get out!”

I felt eyes on the back of my head and whipped around so fast it would have given a human whiplash. A man was standing at the corner, an ugly smirk twisted across his scarred, burned face. I snapped a hand out like it were an instinct, grabbing ahold of Stiles' arm and yanking him from the room, forcing him behind me, angling my body so that if the alpha attacked, I'd be the first one he reached.

I didn't want Stiles' death on my conscience. There was already enough red in my ledger, I didn't need any more.

“You must be Stiles,” the stranger said quietly, his beady, intelligent eyes focused on what he could see of the boy positioned behind me. His eyes flickered across to me, a hint of playful hunger in them that made everything in me want to run. “Which would make you Juliet, correct?” he asked, voice like honey.

“Stiles,” I said carefully, not taking my eyes off the alpha for a second as I reached back, pushing my hand against the kid's chest. “Run,” I ordered him shortly.

Stiles hesitated a moment, freezing in place. I could practically hear his mind whirring from behind me, desperately trying to figure out what the right thing to do was. I prayed to whatever kind of fucked up god who would listen that he wasn't going to try and do something stupidly heroic.

But in the end his sense of self-preservation won out, and Stiles had barely turned around before another voice spoke up, accompanied by a wet, thudding pulse. “What are you doing here?” the newcomer – a woman – asked in a creepy, even tone. “Visiting hours are over.”

The alpha toed forwards, a predatory smirk on his unattractive face. “You—? And him—?” Stiles stuttered, heart racing in his chest, suddenly smelling strongly of fear. “You're the one who—and he's the...oh my God, I'm gonna die...” he whispered.

“Stiles, it's going to be okay,” I said steadily, more of an afterthought than anything. That's what people in charge did, wasn't it? Lied to the others to keep them calm?
I refused to let surprise flash on my face when I felt his fingers touch mine. I didn't move an inch, my eyes on the alpha but my attention on the human as Stiles' hand found mine. It wasn't long before he was clutching onto it like a lifeline.

I heard footsteps running towards us from a hall over and knew instinctively that it was Derek. A beta and a vampire against an alpha. We would have the advantage of numbers, but would it be enough?

My priority, though, was to get Stiles to safety. None of this mattered if the human died. Against my better judgement, he'd become something of a … friend.

Derek finally burst into the room, ramming his elbow into the nurse's face, sending her crashing to the floor. I grit my teeth against the enticing scent of blood as it poured from her nose in a steady stream. I stopped breathing all together, and now it was me clutching Stiles like he was all that stood between me and sweet, sweet murder.

“That's not nice,” the alpha crooned. “She's my nurse.”

“She's the psychotic bitch helping you kill people,” Derek snarled. He glared even more intently at his relative, barely looking away to say to Stiles, “get out of the way.”

“Oh man,” he moaned in despair, dropping to the floor and sliding out of the way. It wasn't until he got too far that I realised he'd yet to let go of my hand. He tugged me after him desperately, as though concerned for my safety, but instead I wrenched my hand from his grip, stepping once again so I was in front of him, a vampire shield.

“You think I killed Laura on purpose?” the alpha began, striding forwards, stepping around me like I wasn't even there – like I were nothing – focused solely on his nephew. “My own family?”

Derek's eyes glowed a brilliant blue, snarling back at him, leaping forward to attack. “Stiles, desk, now,” I hissed, reaching down to grab his arms, staring at him straight on, conveying how deadly serious I was.

“Not without you,” he said with wide eyes, and I didn't have it in me to find it sweet. Instead I growled and shoved him towards the safety of the desks, watching him slide across the floor. He was too far away to stop me as I moved forwards, landing a punch to the alpha's gut. He grunted
softly but otherwise didn't react. I'd forgotten how tough it was fighting an alpha – they had so much strength on me.

The alpha turned around, snapping out his wrist and slapping me clear across the face. The blow split my lip and I felt blood trickle down my chin as I slumped against the wall. I growled, wishing I'd fed recently. I was nowhere near at my strongest.

“My mind,” the alpha began again, grabbing Derek by the throat and dragging him down the hall as I recovered from the hit, my head still spinning, “my personality, were literally burned out of me. I was being driven by pure instinct.”

“You want forgiveness?” Derek asked once he'd let him go, leaping to his feet and slamming his fist into his uncle's cheek. I stood up straight, flitting to their side and making a fist, slamming it into his spine. It cracked under my assault, but this alpha had series power. He flinched, then turned around to look at me, eyes burning a furious red.

I barely got time to muttered a curse before he was landing another blow to my jaw. I took it like a champ, hissing as I recovered, kicking out my leg to land a kick to his side, but he grabbed my knee, using my own momentum to slam me into the hard floor. I heard something in my leg snap, then a sharp cracking noise as my skull hit the linoleum below.

My vision blurred and it suddenly sounded like I was hearing everything from under water. It continued for a moment, and I realised something must have happened to my spine, because I couldn't feel anything below my chest. Funnily enough, my last thought before blacking out wasn't that I hoped the alpha wouldn't finish me off while I was unconscious, but that more than anything I hoped Stiles would be okay; that he would survive this. Because if anybody deserved to, it was him.

When I came to the first thing I felt was someone squeezing my hand. It took quite a bit of effort, but eventually I got my eyelids to cooperate, blinking them open, staring at the harsh fluorescent light directly above me. It made my head ache.

“Juliet?” Stiles' familiar voice asked in my ear, and I looked to the side to see him kneeling over my head, worry and fear splashed across his face. “Juliet!”

“Stiles?” I croaked, wincing as I tried to sit up. He helped me up immediately, slipping an arm around my shoulders, taking most of my weight for me.
“Holy crap, Jules!” he gasped, squeezing me tightly, heart thumping wildly against his chest. “I thought you were dead.” I refrained from commenting that technically I was dead, and instead slid awkwardly to my feet. “You didn't have a heartbeat and you weren't breathing and I thought...”

I raised a hand to my aching neck, rolling it and frowning as I felt the last of the healing process work its magic. “Feed,” I grunted, grimacing as I realised I sounded like a fucking caveman. “I need to feed.”

“Yeah,” he said, not seeming fazed in the slightest by my words. “Where do they keep the A Positive around here?” he tried to joke. It fell flat, his heart still racing wildly, making him short of breath.

“I smell some,” I said quietly, turning around and walking down the hall. “This way.”

He followed me, hovering close to my back like he was sure I was going to collapse or something. I shoved open the doors to a treatment room, spotting a bag of blood hanging from the drip pole. I stumbled forwards, all but tearing it from the metal stand. I bit into it, spitting the mouthful of plastic to the ground. “Jules,” Stiles muttered from a few feet away. “Your eyes.”

I realised my composure had begun to slip, human facade giving way to my true form. Veins travelled up the length of my cheeks, eyes dark and flooded with crimson blood.

Self-conscious, I spun so my back was facing him, hiding my face as I eagerly emptied the contents of the bag into my mouth. I let out a small, blissful moan at the taste, sucking until every last drop was gone. Once I was content, I dropped the bag to the floor, running a hand over my lips to collect any spilt drops and waiting for my fangs to retreat before finally turning back around to look at Stiles meekly.

I felt ashamed in a way, that he'd seen me like that. It was borderline embarrassing. I brushed my hair back from my face, eyes on a scuff mark on the floor, unable to meet his gaze. “Derek left with Peter,” he said after a long moment of tense silence, hands shoved deep into his pockets.

Immediately I got over whatever the fuck was wrong with me, gaze snapping up to meet his. “He what?” I demanded shrilly.

If there was one thing this hellhole of a town was teaching me, it was to never trust a werewolf.
Hate To See Your Heart Break

For all the air that's in your lungs

For all the joy that is to come

For all the things that you're alive to feel

Just let the pain remind you hearts can heal

Hate To See Your Heart Break – Paramore

When Stiles rang to tell me we had to protect Jackson – of all people – I was understandably skeptical.

“Why can't we just let them kill him again?” I asked for the tenth time from my perch on the backseat, feet kicked up beside me as I watched the old buildings from the industrial district fly passed. Stiles was pushing the speed limit in his haste to get to Jackson, something I struggled to understand.

“Because we're the good guys,” Stiles said slowly like he was speaking to a child. I bit back a remark about how I was over ten times his age, something about the sudden realisation not sitting well in my gut.

“Jackson needs to be taken care of and the Argents need to believe they caught the other beta,” I reminded them cheerily. “Two birds, one stone,” I grinned wickedly at Stiles in the rearview mirror. “It's win-win.”

Stiles looked like he was seriously considering it for a moment, a small smirk on his face, and a pleasure filled me as for a brief moment, I pictured him as an immortal.

I could see it so clearly in my mind's eye. He was easy-going, fun-loving and he had a brilliantly sour attitude towards life, the kind a vampire needed to get through the world on top. The awesome thrill the image gave me faded when I realised he'd lose all the things I liked best about him; his clumsiness, his humanity, his heartbeat.
“Show time,” the boy occupying my thoughts chimed, turning up the music playing from the Jeep and hitting the gas before coming to an abrupt, jerky stop beside Jackson and Argent. “Yo!” he greeted the boy like they were old friends. I wanted no part in it all, sulking in the backseat, silently glowering out the window, upset that murder wasn't still on the table.

Yeah, I was trying to be better, but old habits die hard, right?

“Everything okay?” Scott asked Jackson brightly.

“Hey Scott,” Argent greeted him with a wide, too-perfect smile. “Your friend here was having car trouble. We're just taking a look,” he said, like he wasn't planning Jackson's death down to the brand of saw they'd use to cut him in half.

“There's a shop right down the street, I'm sure they have a tow truck,” said Scott cheerfully.

“Yeah, you want a ride?” Stiles asked with a smile that I could tell was forced. “Hey, come on Jackson,” he continued when the boy hesitated. “You're way too pretty to be out here all by yourself.”

Jackson nodded reluctantly, heading towards the Jeep. “Hey boys!” Argent called, and I rolled my eyes at his blatant show of ignoring me. He leaned down and turned the ignition, the car letting out a healthy rumble as it started without a problem. “I told you I knew a few things about cars,” he said with a sly smirk.

He swaggered back to his vehicle, sliding into the driver's seat and pulling away without a backwards glance.

“What, are you following me now?” Jackson hissed the second he was gone, glaring at Scott with as much fury as he could, which I honestly didn't find very intimidating.

“Yes, you stupid, freaking idiot. You almost gave away everything right there!”

It was interesting to see Scott blow up, he was usually so introverted. I unrolled the window face them, curling my legs under me on the seat of the Jeep and resting my arms on the windowsill, watching as Stiles joined the group, just as angry and irritated as his best friend.
“What are you talking about?” asked Jackson suspiciously.

“He thinks you’re the second beta!”

There was a pause. “What?”

“He thinks you're me!” Scott lashed out, slamming his hand against the door of the Jeep.

I sniggered at the blatant display of rage, and Stiles shot me a none-too-happy expression. “Dude, my Jeep,” he whined, wincing at the minimal damage.

“I can hear your heart beating from a mile away, literally,” Scott growled, and I rolled my eyes at the dramatics. “Now he thinks that there's something wrong and now I have to keep an eye on you so he doesn't kill you too!”

He roared loudly, swinging around to land another hit on the Jeep. “Okay, okay, how about we just step away from Stiles' Jeep,” the kid muttered, grabbing his friend's arms and pulling him away from his beloved car.

“This is your problem, not mine,” Jackson retorted furiously. “Okay, I didn't say anything which means you're the one that's going to get me killed. This is your fault.” He took a step forwards, shoving Scott into the Jeep. I dodged back as he slammed into the window I was leaning out of, making sure he didn't break a finger or something.

“Stop hitting my Jeep!” Stiles exclaimed exasperatedly, throwing his arms in the arm. I suppressed another snigger, schooling my features when he glanced my way. Jackson and Scott dove at each other. “Jules!” Stiles yelped, jumping back to avoid being in the middle of their squabble.

I was out of the car before he could blink, standing between the two boys, a hand on each chest, forcing them apart. “Settle down, boys,” I scolded them lightly, shoving them back another inch when they crept forwards. “Can you play nice or do I need to play chaperone?”

“When they come after you, I won't be able to protect you!” Scott yelled at Jackson, ignoring me all together, however still keeping his distance. I dropped my hands and slid back, moving so I
stood beside Stiles, watching the exchange wearily. “I can't protect anyone.”

His gaze slid to Stiles, who blinked in surprise. “Why are you looking at me?” he asked confusedly. He glanced to me, looking for answers. I shook my head, telling him this wasn't the time.

“You know what? Now you have to do it. Get me what I want and I will be fine protecting myself.”

I fought the urge to face palm at the ludicrousness of his statement. I hated the ignorant teenage boy, and suddenly murder was looking like a hell of a good time. “No, you won't,” Scott groaned. “Just trust me, all it does is make things worse!”

“Oh yeah really? Now you can you hear everything you want and run faster than humanly possible. Sounds like a real hardship, McCall.”

“Yeah, I can run really fast now. Except half the time, I'm running away from people trying to kill me!” He calmed down a tad, sighing. “And I can hear things like my girlfriend telling people that she doesn't trust me any more, right before breaking up with me. I'm not lying to you! It's ruins your life.”

“It ruined your life. You know, you had all the power in the world and you didn't know what to do with it. You know what it's actually like? It's like you turned sixteen and someone bought you a Porsche when they should have started you out with a nice little Honda. Me? I drive a Porsche.”

He turned around and stormed back into his precious Porsche (which I made a mental note to key next time I saw it in the school lot), sliding in and driving away with an unnecessary engine rev.

“What a douche-canoe,” I mumbled, turning around and slipping back into the car. When the boys didn't move I tapped the outside of the door. “Come on,” I prompted them. “I've got shit to get done.”

Scott got dropped off first, on the edge of the reserve. He was quiet most of the drive, mumbling a thanks to his best friend and tumbling out of the car, wandering almost aimlessly into the woods. I was curious, but I figured it was werewolf business or something, and didn't pry.
“Hey Stiles,” I said as he drove me back towards my house.

“Hey Jules,” he replied, and my brow furrowed for a brief moment. I wasn't sure when he started calling me that on a regular basis, or even when I'd decided I didn't really mind.

“What do you know about wireless internet?” I asked him, keeping my eyes on the passing scenery.

There was a pause. “You mean Wifi?” he asked, his tone amused.

“Yes, yes,” I muttered impatiently, crossing my arms. “Do you know how to fix it?”

“Well, depends what's wrong with it, really,” he said, and I saw him shrug from the corner of my eye.

I dug in my pocket, eventually pulling out a handful of crumpled bills. I took a moment to count it. “I'll give you seven dollars if you'll come into my house with me and take a look at my Wifi,” I told him, finally looking his way.

He snorted, sending me a look like he honestly wasn't sure whether or not I was being serious. “You don't have to bribe me, Jules,” he said with an amused grin. “We're friends, and friends help friends with their Wifi.”

I hesitated, but it was clear he wasn't taking the money, so I slipped it back into my pocket and chose to remain quiet for the rest of the trip. When we got to my modest little house I led the way up the drive, pulling out my keys and shoving the correct one into the lock.

“So what seems to be the problem?” Stiles asked with a smirk as I led the way over to the little machine sitting on the windowsill in my lounge room. I pointed to it, then to my old laptop sitting on the old oak desk in the corner. “Wow, how old is this thing? 203?” I shot him a dirty look at the dig about my age, but only to cover the smile threatening to break out, and he shot me a cheeky grin in response. He leaned forwards and booted it up. “I'm surprised you use a computer at all,” he said. “I thought you lived like one of the Amish.”

I rolled my eyes at him, moving to stand beside him as I watched him open up some sort of menu. “I have some friends in other countries that like to send emails, I guess they're 'hip' like that.”
Stiles chuckled, and I shot him a curious look. “You're so old,” he said, but it didn't sound mean or scathing. In fact it sounded sort of...fond.

Before I could comment his stomach rumbled, a sign I took to mean he was hungry. Because humans needed food to survive. Right. “Want something to eat?” I offered, moving away from the desk where he was working and towards my kitchen.

“That'd be awesome,” he responded distractedly. I moved into the other room, my shoes tapping against the tiles. I opened the fridge, staring into its depths. Covering two of my three shelves were assorted blood bags, on the other was an apple and a pack of gum, in the door was a can of lemonade and in the drawer at the bottom was an onion.

I frowned, pulling out the apple and can of lemonade. I may not have been a good cook, but I was one hell of an expert with a knife. I slid one out of its drawer and cut the apple into quarters, then I put it on a plate. I carried it out to Stiles, offering the food and can of drink to him.

He looked down at what I offered him with a raised eyebrow. “An apple?”

I shrugged sheepishly, biting my lip. “It was literally this or an onion.”

He laughed and took the food from me, immediately cracking open the can and taking a sip. “You know, if you're going to start making human friends, you should probably begin stocking your pantry a little better. Just because you don't eat, it doesn't mean the rest of us should starve.”

He said it jokingly, but he had a point, so I filed it away for later. He chewed on the apple slices as he worked, taking only another minute before he'd found the problem.

“You haven't updated your computer in awhile, have you?” I stared at him, not sure what he meant. “You know those messages that pop up, asking you to update?” he asked slowly, trying a different approach. “Do you press 'remind me later'?”

“Yes.”

“There's your problem,” he said with a grin, shoving another slice in his mouth. “I fixed it for you,”
he said, taking in my tense expression. “It's updating now. It might take a while. Do you want me to hang around until it finishes?”

“I think I can handle it,” I said, twisting my hands together in front of me. “I've got some stuff to do around town, so I'll just see you later?”

“Sure,” he smiled before lifting up the can of drink, “Can I take this home with me?”

“Yeah, not like I'll drink it,” I told him, leading him back out to the entryway. “Thanks, Stiles,” I said awkwardly, not really liking how small the words made me feel.

“Any time, Jules,” he said with a grin and a wave, ducking out the door and heading for his Jeep.

It was quiet for a long time after Stiles left. I found I didn't like it as much. I used to enjoy the quiet, but now I'd had a taste of Stiles' presence, I found that being by myself just didn't cut it anymore. I tried not to think about what that meant, focusing instead on reorganising my book collection while I waited for the update to finish.

My phone rang as I was finishing off some long-overdue emails to my friends in Montreal, and I glanced at the screen, raising a curious eyebrow when I saw Allison flashing in block letters.

“Yes?” I answered the phone abruptly, reaching across the desk and picking up a cigarette before wandering out onto the porch to smoke it. I didn't like smoking inside, the smell drove me crazy, made me crave it all the time.

“Juliet,” Allison said, her voice sounding shaky.

“Yes?” I repeated, not really in the mood to socialise.

“If I ask you a question, will you answer me with total honesty?”

I hesitated. The answer was, of course, no, but something told me that was the wrong thing to say. “Yes,” I said once more, frowning at how illiterate I sounded today.
“Do you think Scott and I should be together?”

It took me off guard, because how the hell was I supposed to answer that? Did I look like this town's fucking supernatural matchmaker? “Why don't you go to Lydia with this sort of thing?” I suggested, taking in another lungful of chemicals.

“Lydia's great, really,” she said. “It's just that she sort of...well, she made out with Scott in Coach's office.”

“Yeah,” I chuckled, remembering that night a few days ago on the full moon when Stiles had been whining about it to anyone who would listen. “I know. Stiles told me all about it.”

“Oh,” she sighed, and I got the feeling I'd said something wrong, even though I'd tried my hardest not to.

Did I think she and Scott should be together?

No.

He was a werewolf and she came from a family of hunters. It was doomed from the fucking start. One of them was going to end up dead – and not even I wanted that to happen. But I had to remind myself to be gentle and not so blunt for once. Not everyone had skin as thick as mine.

“I think that the only person who gets to decide whether you should be together is you and him.”

Was that good advice? It sounded solid enough.

“Yeah, I guess you're right,” she sighed.

“Maybe you should take a day off from worrying,” I suggested in my lightest tone, flicking the ash from the end of my cigarette and halfheartedly waving back at my elderly neighbour who was gardening in her front yard. “Enjoy a smoothie, draw a bubble bath, read an old paperback, listen to
your favourite record. It'll do you wonders.”

She giggled over the phone line, and I felt proud that I'd finally said something at least a little right. “They don't call them 'records' anymore Juliet,” she said in amusement.

I smirked to myself, glancing up at the cloudy sky, wishing it would just rain already. “I guess I'm what they call an old soul.”

“Born in the wrong generation?” she asked with another laugh.

“Something like that,” I replied with a bitter smirk. “Listen, I've got to go,” I told her, I really did have things to do in town. “And look, about the Scott thing, I will say this: he's a good guy,” I said, cringing even as I said it at how cliché it sounded. Maybe they were doomed, but if I had to hear either of them whining any more about their lover's quarrels, I'd jump off a building just to give them something else to whine about. “He fucked up, but I think he's worth a second chance.” I said, and despite it all, this was true. “But like I said, it's your decision.”

There was a pause.

“Thanks Juliet,” she said, a smile in her voice. “You actually really helped.”

“Don't get used to it,” I told her coldly, hanging up immediately after for good measure.

I stared at the shelf of cereals. Why the bloody hell were there so many options? Through a process of elimination I'd narrowed it down to two potential candidates. One was called Fruity Pebbles, the other Lucky Charms. I contemplated which one Stiles would like best, then after reading the ingredients, decided he seemed like a marshmallows-for-breakfast kind of guy.

I tossed the Lucky Charms into the cart, moving further down the isle. I didn't have a list, I just showed up and figured I'd buy what seemed like must-haves for any kitchen. I reasoned with myself that if anyone came through my house and saw it empty of food, they'd ask questions I didn't want to have to answer, so it was really in my best interest to stock the place with food. It was absolutely not just solely for Stiles' benefit.
Pasta was next. I wondered what kind regular people bought. Should I just get every kind? What kind would Stiles like best?

And as though I'd conjured him with my thoughts, a bewildered Stiles appeared in front of me, bag of carrots in one hand, a can of shaving cream in the other.

“Juliet?”

“Stiles?”

We stared at each other for a moment. “What are you doing?” he asked cautiously, looking at me through suspicious, narrowed eyes.

“Shopping,” I said defensively, my grip tightening on the handle of my cart. “Is that a crime?”

“No,” I replied too quickly, immediately wincing as I heard myself. A cheeky smirk worked its way onto his face and I rolled my eyes. “Don't flatter yourself,” I said, my tone scathing. “You just made me realise it looked suspicious not to have any food in the house. That's all.”

“Uh-huh,” he nodded, that shit-eating grin of his still intact, clearly not believing a word coming out of my mouth. I bit back a sarcastic remark, turning back to the shelf full of pasta and frowning at the many options. How was I supposed to know which one to get? Which kind went better with the sauce I'd gotten? What kind had the best nutrition?

“But I guess, since you're here, you could pick out the basics for me,” I said casually, keeping my eyes on the colourful boxes in front of me.

I could hear the smile in his voice as he spoke. “You mean help you?”

“I mean assist me,” I corrected coolly.
He chortled but otherwise didn't respond, his hand snapping out in front of me and picking out a small assortment of options, surveying them for a moment before dropping them in the cart. “I've been thinking,” he said, shoving his purchases under one arm before falling into step with me, making our way to the end of the isle.

“Alert the media.”

So much for no sarcastic comments.

“I've been thinking,” he began again, completely ignoring my unnecessary input. “How do you go out in the sun?”

I was silent as we made our way through the confectionary isle, Stiles picking out the odd packet of chocolate or marshmallows as we walked.

“I mean, so far, there's been some truth to most legends, and it's the most well known fact about your kind. Werewolves change on a full moon, and vampires can't go out in the sun,” he recited, clearly speaking directly from his research.

I wondered whether I should tell him, watching as he pulled out two little bottles of salt and pepper out once we were in the next isle, slipping them into the cart before muttering something about spices. It couldn't hurt, I reasoned. I couldn't imagine telling Stiles would ever actually come back to bite me in the ass.

I stopped dead in the isle, causing Stiles to kick his toe on the wheel of the cart. He cursed, frowning as he looked up at me expectantly. I held up my hand, one single finger raised in the air. “Are you seriously flipping me off right now? That's not an answer to my question.”

I let a smirk slide across my lips. “I'm doing both,” I said with a goading grin. “Multitasking.” He shot me a sour look, so I rolled my eyes and held my hand out palm down, showing him the array of rings littered over my fingers. I let go of the cart with my other hand, using my index finger to point to the large, old ring that sat on the middle finger of my left hand. “See this ring?” I asked, and his eyes flickered between it and me confusedly. “This is what keeps me from turning to dust in the sun.”
“So you do burn up in the sun!” he exclaimed brightly.

I rolled my eyes, forcing myself not to flinch when he grasped my hand, pulling it closer to his face in order to get a better look at the piece of jewellery.

“How does it work?”

“I don't know,” I admitted, ignoring how warm and smooth his skin was. “Something to do with the stone, I think. It has to be a lapis lazuli. All I know is a witch spelled it for me centuries ago. I don't for a second pretend to know how that mumbo-jumbo works.”

His hands dropped mine like I'd burned him, and he stared up at me, something like glee spread upon his face. “Witches exist?” he asked in a hushed tone, thrilled by the information.

“Vampires, werewolves,” I shrugged, sliding both hands back on to the handle of the cart and pushing it further down the aisle. “It's not such a huge jump.”

“Do you know any?” he questioned eagerly, absentmindedly throwing an arm out and picking up a can of whipped cream, placing it gently in the cart. “Do you have witch friends?”

“I know plenty,” I said with a small grin. “Don't know if I could call any of them friends...”

“None of them like you?”

“Hey,” I cried indignantly, pretending to be hurt by the assumption. “How do you know it's not me who doesn't like them?”

“Um, because I've met you?” he responded dryly, a mischievous smirk on his lips. “And we may not have known each other for long, but I can tell making friends isn't your strong suit.”

“I'm friends with you, aren't I?”
“Yeah, but I’m easy,” he replied, tripping over air as he realised how that sounded. He cleared his throat and rubbed at the back of his neck, red blotches appearing on his face.

I rolled my eyes, not bothering to hide my own smirk. “Witches aren’t known for their love of...” I paused as an elderly couple wandered passed, shooting them my warmest smile – so, just on the right side of cool. “My kind,” I muttered under my breath so nobody overheard. “We tolerate each other.”

“Are there any in town?” he asked just as quietly, picking up a packet of cookies, considering them for a moment before nodding to himself and dropping them in with everything else.

“Not that I know of. They’re not like wolves, they don’t have a scent, so they’re harder to pick out.”

“Then how do you know if you’ve met one?”

“There’s this...crackle in the air,” I tried to explain. “Kind of like static. You can only feel it when they’re close by and doing something...witchy. Plus, if they know who we are, they usually seek us out to set down ground rules. Judgy little things, witches.”

“Man, I’d love to meet one,” he said as another colourful packet was tossed into the cart.

“Stick with me kid,” I said with a smirk and a Brooklyn accent. “I can show you the world.”

He spun around and gaped at me for a full ten seconds. “You have a sense of humour?” he finally asked, and I rolled my eyes.

“I’m not a robot,” I responded, doing my best to frown, forcing away the smile dancing at the corners of my mouth.

“Is that like a vampire thing, then?” he inquired seriously after a long pause as we made our way into the frozen foods isle. “The emotions, or lack thereof?”

I watched him pull open of the glass doors, grasping onto a bucket of ice cream, putting it in the cart and rubbing his hands on his jeans to warm them up. “I’ll tell you what *is* a vampire thing,” I
said, very obviously changing the subject, but I didn't care. “We don't get cold.”

“Really?” he asked, thankfully not bringing attention to my avoidance of the topic. “Like, ever? You wear jackets all the time though.”

“To keep up appearances,” I responded lightly. “It wouldn't be smart to wear a t-shirt in a snow storm, it'd draw too much attention. So I got used to putting on a coat whenever it looks cold.” My eyebrows pulled together as he tugged a bottle of chocolate milk off the shelf. “Besides, lessens the chances of somebody feeling how unnaturally cold my skin is and getting grossed out.”

“I don't think it's gross.”

My smooth steps didn't falter as I glanced over at him with sharp eyes, considering his words carefully.

Those familiar red blotches appeared on his freckled cheeks and he cleared his throat, pretending to be focused on the label of a tub of butter. I watched him for another long moment before finally turning away and gazing unseeingly at the shelf of chilled dairy goods.

Every time the kid opened his mouth he surprised me in the best possible way, and I didn't think I'd ever get used to it.
“Are you going to the dance?”

I looked up from my book, pulling the cigarette from between my lips and looking up at Stiles with a raised eyebrow. “No,” I said, flicking the ash from the tip before looking back down at the words on the page.

“Why not?” he asked me, sliding down the brick wall I was leaning against until he was sitting beside me, his bag next to him.

“Because I don't care?”

“Is that your answer for everything? That's not a very good attitude to have towards life.”

“I don't care.”

He groaned in annoyance, and I could feel him roll his eyes. “What if I told you I needed you to go to that dance?”

I slipped the bookmark back between the pages of my novel, snapping it shut and shoving it into my bag, taking another drag before looking over at him with a frown. “Please tell me this isn't you asking to be my date.”
He cringed immediately, practically recoiling at the thought. I was kidding, but his reaction stung a little bit, not that I would ever admit it. “Of course not,” he said. “Listen, Scott needs to get into that dance, and I figure if he runs into any trouble then having compulsion-capable vampire on hand would make things run a bit smoother.”

I considered his words as I blew smoke rings. It wasn't like I actually had any plans for that night, and it wouldn't be the end of the world if I did go. I might even end up enjoying myself. (I doubted it, but stranger things had happened.)

“Fine,” I said, crushing the butt of my cigarette in my hand, singeing my skin before I dropped it to the ground, the minor wound healing instantly.

“Great!” he chirped happily, looking like he was holding himself back from fist pumping the air. “Okay, so I already bought you a ticket,” he said, digging in his bag for a moment before pulling out a small piece of paper.

I took it with a frown. “How'd you know I'd say yes?”

“I have some faith in you, you know?” he replied with a smirk, clapping his hands together. “Now, next on the agenda. A date.”

“No.”

“What?”

“No.”

“Yes.”

“No.”

“Jules—yes!” he whined.
I didn't reply, I knew that if I did we'd just end up going round in circles. I glared at him, but it didn't seem to put him off. He turned to scan the quad, searching for a potential candidate.

“Look, you can't show up alone, it's pathetic,” he said flippantly.

“You're pathetic,” I grumbled sourly, but he didn't take it to heart.

“Would you just pick someone? I'd do it for you, but the only person I know of that doesn't have a date yet is Greenburg,” he said, still searching the crowd.

“I'd rather carve my eyes out with a butter knife.”

“Thought so,” he hummed before gesturing for me to move forwards. “Would you just go ask someone already? Worse comes to worst you could just compel yourself a date.”

I looked at him, affronted by the suggestion. “I don't need to compel anyone to get a date,” I hissed in annoyance.

“Prove it,” he said with a smug grin, and I knew he was baiting me, playing me like a fiddle. But I found I didn't really mind. I shoved my bag into his arms, sliding to my feet and marching across the quad. I paused in the centre, my eyes scanning the gathered humans, looking for a victim.

Mostly everyone was in groups, giggling amongst themselves or shoving each other playfully. I didn't feel like approaching any of the clusters, so when I spotted a boy sitting on a bench off to the side with his head in a book, I jumped at the opportunity.

“Hello,” I said, appearing in the spot next to him. He jumped a mile high, a high pitched yelp escaping his lips as he dropped his book, it landing with a thud to the cement. I reached down and scooped it up, brushing the dirt off of it before handing it back, listening to the sound of his heart slamming against his sternum.

“Uh, h-hello,” he stuttered awkwardly, looking incredibly confused as to why I'd approached him. And maybe just a tiny bit scared.
I decided to just get it over with. “Do you want to go to the dance with me?” I asked him casually, lips curving up as his heartbeat sped up even further at my words.

“Do I—what?” he stammered in pure confusion.

“Want to go? To the dance? With me?” I said again, slowly in case he wasn't all there in the head. He seemed intelligent enough, however, and I hated to make assumptions.

He was silent for a long time, watching me. “Do you even know my name?” he asked finally, brow furrowed.

“No,” I admitted easily. I stuck out my hand, knowing it was the polite thing to do. “I'm Juliet.”

“I—I know,” he said, slipping his hand into mine. His skin was warm and smooth against my own, and he made no comment about the temperature. “I'm Isaac. Isaac Lahey.” I shot him my sweetest smile, and he returned it with a shaky one of his own. He was actually quite attractive once I noticed it. He had curly ash blonde hair and a jawline that could cut glass. His eyes were an astonishing baby blue, and I got the feeling he was sort of a loner. Maybe he wasn't such a bad choice then, after all. ’Birds of a feather’, and all that. “Is this some sort of joke?” he added hesitantly.

I tilted my head, letting go of his hand and crossing my arms. “No,” I said honestly. “Why would it be a joke?”

“Because well – why would you ask me?” he said like it were glaringly obvious.

“I need a date, and you were the most appealing option in the quad,” I admitted, seeing no point in lying. I didn't care about impressions, or his feelings. Either he'd say yes or he wouldn't, and I couldn't have been bothered either way.

“I appreciate your honesty,” Isaac said with slightly more of a comfortable smile, seeming to warm up to me – which was ironic in and of itself.

“So will you?” I asked, and he tilted his head curiously. I tried not to roll my eyes. “Go to the dance
“Oh, um,” he mumbled, frowning at his shoes for a long moment before speaking up again, voice small and a little shy. “Yeah. Yeah, I will,” he agreed quietly.

“Great,” I said with a smile that came easier than I expected. I realised suddenly that this meant we would have to make some kind of arrangements. “Uh, maybe next lunch I could...” I trailed off, wondering where to go from there.

“We have English together,” he said awkwardly, scratching a spot behind his ear, cheeks flushing a soft pink that made me lick my lips with hunger. It wasn't the same blotchy blush that appeared on Stiles' face whenever he was embarrassed, but it was still nice. Appetising. “And Chemistry,” he added gently.

“Oh,” I replied, blinking back at him in surprise. “Right. Well, I'll see you in one of those and we can go over the details?” I offered, just a little stilted.

“Sounds good,” he nodded, a small smile once again growing on his pale lips.

“Great.” I smiled, forcing it to light up my eyes. Humans tended to get freaked out whenever I didn't let the smile meet my eyes. I'd learned over the years how to manipulate them into trusting me. “See you, Isaac,” I said with a final nod.

He raised a hand in farewell, but I was already sliding from the bench, striding back towards Stiles, whose eyes followed my every move.

“One date; no compulsion,” I told him smugly, slipping back into my previously vacated seat and moving my bag back to my lap. Stiles had a sour scowl twisted across his face, and he stared at me with distracted eyes, like I posed some kind of frustrating riddle. One he desperately wanted to figure out. “Who pissed in your cereal while I was gone?” I asked, one eyebrow cocked in question.

All at once the expression cleared and he rolled his eyes, back to his usual self. He leant back against the wall and smiling slightly, but I couldn't help the instinct that told me it was hollow. “Okay, step two: completed. Step three: a dress,” he said quickly.

“I'll just wear something from home,” I waved off his words.
“Jules, come on,” he whined. “Look, Allison wants me to meet her at the mall after school, she said she has something to tell me. Why don't you come with me and we'll pick out a dress?”

“We?” I asked dubiously, raising an eyebrow at him.

That blotchy red blush appeared on his freckle splattered cheeks, and I licked my lips again, hunger roaring in my gut. Stiles cleared his throat, and I realised I was staring at him a little more intently than was comfortable. “I mean, you can pick one out and I'll just be there for … for moral support,” he told me awkwardly.

I laughed quietly at his expense, tipping my head back to bump against the bricks behind us. “Whatever you say Stiles,” I said, pulling free another cigarette, hoping it would help curb the hunger pangs in my stomach. But somehow, I knew it wouldn't.

Stiles looked incredibly out of place in the women's section in the shop we were in, standing with his arms crossed as I sifted through the racks, looking for something that wasn't totally repulsive. I picked out a white cotton dress, holding it up against me and raising a curious eyebrow at him. He frowned and shook his head.

“You're too pale to wear white,” he said. I crinkled my nose at him but didn't disagree, slipping it back into place and moving on to the next rack. “Is that like a vampire thing? The paleness?”

He spoke loudly, and a woman a row over shot him a suspicious look. I rolled my eyes at his lack of tact. “Say it louder, I don't think the cashier heard you,” I told him sarcastically and he winced in apology. “But yes, it is a trait of vampirism to be extraordinarily pale.”

I pulled out another dress, this one dark blue and ankle-length. I appraised it for a long moment before shaking my head, not even bothering to get Stiles' opinion before putting it back and moving on. “Check this out,” I heard from behind me, and I turned around to look at Stiles who held up a bright pink poodle skirt that looked straight out of something from an old movie. “Did you ever wear this sort of thing, you know, 'back in the day'?”

I wanted to say no, but I didn't want to lie. I sighed, rubbing the back of my neck for a moment before replying. “Yeah,” I admitted, forcing my lips up into a smile. Stiles' face lit up excitedly.
“You have pictures, right?” he asked eagerly and before I could stop myself I nodded. He threw his fist into the air in celebration. “Oh man, I can't wait to see them.”

I rolled my eyes, but no longer was I forcing my smile. Instead it came naturally, stunning me with its ease.

“You ever meet Elvis?” he asked after a beat as I tugged a lilac dress from the rack. I held it up against myself, then moved and held it up against him. He rolled his eyes but struck a pose anyway, and I smirked before putting it back.

“If I say no, will this conversation end?” I asked him scathingly, though it lacked any real bite.

I might as well have been beating a dead horse, for all the good it did.

“So you have?” he asked excitedly, practically bouncing on his toes.

“Yeah,” I shrugged, grinning over at him. “I compelled my way backstage at one of his Vegas gigs, it was pretty cool.”

“You've been to Vegas?”

“Many times.”

“Man, I'd love to go there. Gotta wait until I'm twenty-one though, otherwise there's really no point in going … that is unless someone hooked me up with a realistic fake ID—”

“No.”

He humphed, but knew to stop pushing. I smirked at him, watching as he picked up a women's fedora sitting on a shelf and tossing it onto his head. He paused, going cross-eyed as he looked up to see it. I snorted into my hand at the sight.
“Uh-uh,” I shook my head negatively, wiggling my fingers for him to put it back. “Nope, never put a hat on ever again.”

“What?” he asked dubiously, placing a hand to the hat protectively.

“It makes you look like a douche,” I told him honestly, and he grimaced before taking it off and setting it back down where he found it.

“How about James Dean?” he asked again after a moment as I eyed a magenta dress.

It wasn't hard to see he was continuing our previous topic, and I winked at him over my shoulder. “Oh yeah.”

“Really?” he questioned giddily.


“Where?”

“She came and gave a talk at the college I was in at the time,” I shrugged. “She wasn't really famous then though, so I didn't think it was a big deal until years later.”

“Who else?” he asked eagerly.

“Hung out with Prince at a party once. That was a good night. Billy Crystal is a total dog, and don't even get me started on David Bowie.”

“You have literally the coolest life,” he gushed, picking out a black dress and holding it up for me to see. I shook my head at it and he slid it back into place.

“Yeah, being one of the undead and a complete social pariah is a real score,” I replied sardonically and he tutted quietly, rolling his eyes at my dramatics.
We were quiet for a long time, me sifting through dress options and Stiles waiting patiently, until I'd finally narrowed it down to two dresses. I slipped into the changing room without telling him, not wanting to make a big deal of it.

I put on the green strapless one first. On the rack it looked gorgeous, but on it made me look like I was wrapped in seaweed. I swapped it for the red one, and after a full minute of staring I decided it was acceptable; tight around the bodice, made with delicate lace with long, loose sleeves and a short hemline. “Jules?” Stiles asked loudly from outside, and reluctantly I slipped from the changing room, standing in front of the curtain, my hands curled together awkwardly in front of me, my eyes on my shoes. “Huh,” he hummed as he stopped in front of me, and I felt his eyes rake my body.

I realised I was being ridiculous and looked up, meeting his coffee coloured eyes.

He was smiling. “It's not terrible,” he said casually, and for his sake I ignored the way his heart was racing. I nodded and went back behind the curtain, pulling it off and tugging on my old ripped jeans and comfortable baggy sweatshirt.

Stiles' text alert went off as I slipped my feet back into my worn combat boots.

“Allison's says to meet her and Lydia at the perfume counter,” he told me when I stepped out, red dress thrown over my arm.

Great, Lydia was tagging along – just what I needed. Still, I nodded without complaint, moving over to the counter, placing my items on it and pulling out my wallet.

“That'll be $245.59,” the cashier told me, and Stiles sucked in a breath from behind me.

“Jules, are you kidding? Get something cheaper, you don't even want to go to this stupid thing...”

“Stiles, relax,” I said, throwing him a reassuring smile over my shoulder.

“No way, seriously,” he began, reaching forwards to move the dress off the counter. I slapped his hand away, glaring at him warningly before he could continue.
I handed the confused looking lady my card before leaning back to whisper to him, “I have over a hundred years of interest in my bank account, Stiles. Trust me when I say this won't even put a dent in my hoard.”

His face scrunched up as the lady handed me the receipt to sign. I scribbled my signature, taking my bag from her with a nod. “Then why do you live in such a dump?”

“Just because I have money doesn't mean I particularly like spending it,” I told him with a shrug. “Come on, perfume counter's this way.”

“I thought you didn't know your way around the mall yet?”

“I can smell it,” I admitted with a wince.

“Oh,” he muttered before brightening. “Cool.”

We ended up leaning against the counter, people watching as we waited for the girls to show up. “So why's Allison meeting you anyway?”

He lit up at my words. “You'll never believe what she's doing for me.” I stared at him expectantly, waiting for him to tell me what it was. “She's getting Lydia to go to the formal with me.”

My brow touched my hairline for a moment in surprise, before I nodded at the eager boy, smiling unenthusiastically for him. “Great,” I said flatly, and his expression dropped.

“Why don't you like her?”

“Because she's shallow and vapid and just generally boring,” I said shamelessly, turning around and picking up a small bottle of floral perfume, sniffing the lid curiously before spraying it onto my wrists.

“You're wrong,” he said like it was an obvious fact, and I put down the glass bottle, watching him
as he struggled to put together the right words. “She's actually really smart. I mean, really smart. She knows more than I probably ever will. And she's kind, underneath the whole 'popular girl' persona. I think she just acts shallow because that's what people expect of her. Kind of like how you act like an uncaring, unfeeling bitch because that's what people expect from you.”

He had a point, though the last thing I wanted to do was admit it.

“Would you just give her a chance?”

Then he looked at me with those big, sad, eyes and I couldn't find it in me to say no.

“Sure,” I muttered, nose crinkled like I smelled something putrid.

His pleading expression gave way to a satisfied grin and I rolled my eyes again. He picked up a bottle of his own, sniffing it before accidentally pressing the trigger, making it spray in his face. He coughed, dropping the bottle. I picked it from the air, catching it before it could hit the ground and laying it gently on the counter, much to the relief of the worker behind the counter.

“Hey guys,” Allison greeted us with a bright smile, waving happily, a scowling Lydia reluctantly on her tail.

“Hey Allison!” Stiles chirped, standing up straighter, shooting them a dopey grin. “Hey Lydia.”

The queen bee didn't stop for a moment, not acknowledging that he'd even spoken as she brushed past him, heading straight for the dress section we’d just come from. “What do you think about teal, Allison?” she asked her friend, already intent on searching for an outfit.

“I think it's a great colour, it'll really make your eyes pop,” the older girl responded dutifully.

Lydia nodded and pulled a dress off the rack, throwing it over onto a surprised Stiles. “What's in the bag?” Allison asked me quietly as we trailed along behind the pair, the boy's arms quickly being piled with more clothing.

“My dress for the formal,” I told her.
“Who are you taking?” she asked, leaning closer like I was about to share a piece of scolding hot gossip. Before I could answer, horror suddenly flooded her face, her hands shooting up to cover her glossy lips. “Oh my God,” she whispered, “you didn't want to take Stiles, did you?!?”

I jerked backwards at her words. “What? No,” I said immediately, cringing at the very thought. It was bad enough that I was going with any human at all – the last thing I needed was to add someone like Stiles into the equation. “Of course not,” I said flatly, putting as much authority into my voice as I could.

“So, you guys are just friends?” she confirmed, looking for some reason troubled.

“Barely even that,” I shrugged carelessly, but she sent me a knowing sort of look nonetheless.

Okay, so that was a blatant lie; Stiles had the potential to be the best friend I'd had in decades. But that didn't mean I felt comfortable admitting my pathetic, inconvenient affection for the sarcastic little blighter.

“Ah, okay, so are you just gonna try these on right now?” Stiles was asking Lydia from ahead of us. “All of them?”

Lydia didn't have the decency to answer, sticking her nose in the air and strutting off towards the changing rooms. I rolled my eyes but refrained from commenting in an effort to keep my word to Stiles.

“These are pretty,” Allison spoke up again, running her hands over the material of the dresses on the rack.

Before I could answer, the hair on the back of my neck stood on end, my fingertips began to tingle and my mouth went dry. The store was suddenly flooded with power, and I knew it could only come from one source. The alpha was here.

“That's not your colour,” a voice behind us said, and I spun around instantly, pressing my lips together so nobody would see my exposed fangs. Peter was standing beside Allison, looking between her and the dress she held with a critical eye. “Sorry if that was intrusive but considering your skin tone, I'd go lighter.”
“Sorry if this is intrusive, but how about you fuck off?” I snapped, voice bitterly cold.

Allison looked embarrassed by my blatant hostility. “It’s fine, Juliet,” she said, looking over her shoulder at me with a small, uncomfortable smile. “It’s because I’m pale?” she asked the alpha, staring up at him, no clue of the serious danger she was in. I rocked onto my toes, tips of my fangs biting into my lower lip. If I had a heart, it would have been racing.

“Allison giggled, awkward and uncomfortable.

“Fair,” the alpha corrected her sweetly. “I mean, you can’t call skin like yours ‘pale’. Not skin that perfect.”

My hands curled into fists of stone, my nails digging into the skin, though not hard enough to draw blood. “Okay,” Allison giggled, awkward and uncomfortable.

“Trust me, I have a unique perspective on the subject,” he said, twisting around to pick up a new dress. My jaw clicked, and I glanced back to where Stiles stood just out of sight. He was safe, for now. I wished we weren't in a crowded store with security cameras watching our every move. If this meeting had been set in a secluded place it would be going very differently. “Do you mind?” he asked, not waiting for an answer before grabbing her hand and pulling it to him, pressing it to the fabric of the new dress. “See? Much better.”

He put it back where he found it, turning back around to smile at her, completely ignoring me. I got the feeling his ignorance was intended to goad me. I hated that it was working.

“You’re not here alone, are you?” he asked Allison lightly. “Shopping for dresses with friends?” I stepped forwards, hesitating only a brief moment before slipping my hand into Allison's. If she noticed my cooler than average skin she didn't show it, squeezing my hand back gratefully while a scared and vulnerable expression appeared on her pretty face. “High school dance,” he said like he was only just figuring it out.

“Formal,” she replied softly, and I bit down on my tongue with my fangs to keep from snapped my jaw at him like the animal I was. I might not be willing to risk exposure, but who knew what this psychopathic bastard would be willing to do? I got the feeling he wasn't as opposed to exposure as I was, making him about a thousand times more dangerous than I'd have liked.

The alpha continued, that smarmy smile fixed into place. “I, for one, think that the light pink dress would do wonders for your-”
“That's enough,” I snapped, unable to restrain myself any longer. I squeezed Allison's hand tighter, reassuring her that I was there, trying to calm her as her pulse picked up with fear. “You need to leave,” I warned the alpha darkly.

“I'm sorry, am I making you...uncomfortable?” he asked, feigning concern. I stepped forwards so Allison couldn't see my face, glaring up at the alpha, unconcerned by our height difference. The blood drained to my eyes, which quickly turned a bloody crimson. His smirk only widened, and Allison desperately tugged at my hand, trying to get me to move away from the creepy man. I got the feeling she was scared for my safety, and if tensions weren't so high, I might have laughed.

“Attention shoppers, the owner of a blue Honda licence number: 2IKPL3, your car is being towed.”

“Oh crap, that's my car,” Allison swore, dropping my hand and moving to dig around in her bag. She turned to go, but suddenly paused and looked back at me warily. “Aren't you coming?” she asked slowly.

“You go. I'll wait for Stiles,” I told her, my eyes never leaving the alpha. I didn't intend to let him leave my sight.

Allison hesitated. “Are you sure?” she asked steadily. She didn't want me alone with Peter, and her concern was endearing.

I glanced away from the alpha to flash her a reassuring smile, fangs hidden back within my gums. “Go, quickly,” I told her, and with a final frown she nodded, turning away and rushing down the aisle towards the exit.

“I continue to be impressed with your ingenuity Scott, but remember: you can't be everywhere all the time,” Peter said, and I blinked, not having realised Scott was with us. For the first time since seeing him I extended my bubble of awareness out, my senses picking up the scent of Scott nearby. “And as for you,” the alpha continued, shifting his piercing gaze down to meet my own. “What's a little vampire like yourself doing in Beacon Hills? Surely you know this is werewolf territory. Wouldn't it be more convenient for you somewhere further east? Say, for instance…Mystic Falls?”

“Convenient, yes,” I replied, a wicked smirk on my face, showing him how unconcerned I was by his thinly veiled threats. “But not nearly as fun. I like giving idiotic pups a run for their money,” I sneered. “Must be my sense of adventure.”
He stepped closer, eyes flashing red for just a split second. I responded in kind. “I'm stronger than you,” he reminded me, the words casual and easy, but hiding a storm of fury.

“And I'm faster,” I countered, unbothered. I stared up at him, the look in my eyes cold as ice. “So I'd say the winner of a wrestling match would be solely up to chance, and are you really willing to take that risk, Peter?” I asked in a trilling, saccharine fort of voice.

The alpha smiled, taking what I'd said with but a grain of salt. “I'm sure we'll find out soon enough, Leach,” he said keenly.

I grinned wickedly, showing off my pearly, razor sharp teeth. “I can barely wait, Mutt.”

With a final, wolfish grin, the alpha disappeared around the corner. There was a beat, and then Scott came tumbling out from his hiding place, his heart beating wildly from within his chest. “Are you okay?” he asked me worriedly.

I blinked in surprise at the unexpected question. “Of course I'm okay,” I said around a frown. “Why're you still here? You should be keeping an eye on Allison.”

Scott seemed surprised by the reply. “I had to make sure you'd be alright,” he told me, like it were obvious.

For just a split second I found myself almost...touched. Then common sense clicked back into place and I rolled my eyes, gently pushing him back the way Allison had gone. “Go find Allison,” I told him shortly. “I'll watch Stiles and the little Barbie doll.”

Convinced, Scott nodded, turning and walking as fast as he could without drawing attention to himself. I watched him go, then once he was out of sight, I turned back to the unlikely pair across the store, resigning myself to another few hours of cosmetic Hell.

The night of the stupid dance crept up on me, and before I knew it it was here, taunting me with its ridiculousness and convention.
I hadn't been looking forward to it, and now that it was upon me, I was, if possible, even less enthusiastic about the whole thing. I leant against the entrance, cigarette in hand as I scanned the crowd for the boy I'd secured as my date. Neither of us had a car, and he'd said something about how walking to each other's houses would be too far out of our way. Either way, we hadn't arrived together, so now I was just waiting for him to show up.

I tapped the heel of my boot on the ground to the beat of the music coming from inside. I didn't know the song so I couldn't hum along, I just nodded my head and took long, relaxing drags of smoke.

“That'll kill you, you know?” a vaguely familiar voice asked, and I looked up at my date.

He looked good, apart from the split lip and slight limp he was sporting. His suit was a few sizes too big and his shoes squeaked as he walked. “Who kicked your ass?” I asked him teasingly, not expecting the question to make him wince like he was in even more pain. “You clean up nice,” I tried again, and this time he smiled shyly, hands twisting in front of him.

“You too.”

I raised a disbelieving eyebrow at him, referring to my minimal makeup and third-day hair.

He smiled wider. “Seriously, you do.”

That was just the hormones and my unnatural vampiric pull talking, but I let it be, dropping my half finished cigarette to the ground and stomping it out with the toe of my boot. “Shall we?” I asked, inclining my head towards the entrance. He nodded, eager but still shy, and didn't move until I did first, having me lead the way.

The music was louder once we were inside, but I still didn't recognise the song. I walked over to the punch bowl, hoping somebody had spiked it already. I poured a cup, took a long sip and grinned when it had the bite that came with tequila.

“Want some spiked punch?” I called to Isaac over to music, and he nodded, looking a little nervous and red, as though his tie was choking him. I handed one over anyway, something in the back of my mind telling me that it should have been part of my new code of conduct not to supply minors with alcohol, but I couldn't find it in me to care. “Do you want to dance?” I asked after a beat, both
of us pressed up against the far wall.

“Uh,” he hesitated, glancing down at his leg with a frustrated look. “I-I don't think I should...”

And I felt relief fill me. I didn't want to dance with him, and this was the perfect out. This whole charade was putting me on edge, but I was full of A-positive and the spiked punch was already working wonders, so I was mostly optimistic that it would keep me from murdering anyone tonight.

“That's fine,” I replied, glad my relief didn't completely leak into my voice. I reached out and grabbed his elbow, tugging him away from the wall and over to the bleachers. It was the furthest away from the source of the music, but I could still feel the bass vibrating in my bones.

We sat down somewhere towards the top, overlooking the sizeable crowd. “So, where're you from?” Isaac asked me, sipping his drink, trying to hide his wince at the taste.

Great, I thought, he wants to make smalltalk.

“New York,” I lied, sticking with the same story I'd been using as a staple in this Godforsaken town. “You?”

“Beacon Hills, born and raised,” he said with a slightly sour smile.

I got the feeling it was the part of the conversation where I was suppose to say something, and I struggling to think of something for a few moments, wondering what the etiquette for this sort of thing was. What was an appropriate question? What were safe topics of conversation for humans?

“Any siblings?” I finally settled on asking, but apparently I'd said the wrong thing. Isaac cringed like I'd just kicked him in the kidney.

He turned his gaze down to the half-empty cup in his hand. “I had a brother,” he told me reluctantly.

*Had* being the optimum word.
I was quiet for a time, considering how to reply. Eventually I bumped his shoulder lightly with mine and he looked down at me hesitant, probably concerned I'd stammer my way through an awkward apology.

“I had a sister,” I told him, surprised to find myself speaking the truth.

His expression had been sombre, but his eyes changed when I spoke. Was he glad I could empathise, perhaps? I didn't pretend to understand the mind of a human. Control, yes; but understand?

“McCall!” Coach's familiar voice yelled through the hall, bouncing off the walls and clearly audible over the music. Isaac jumped, but I merely looked across the room, eyes locking onto Scott pushing his way through the crowd in a desperate attempt to escape Coach.

I snorted when the teen wolf darted into Danny's arms, making it impossible for Coach to yell at him without seeming like a giant homophobe. All eyes turned to them, the music stopping and everything went silent, leaving the Coach to awkwardly back-peddle out of there with all the grace of a newborn goat.

Isaac was chuckling beside me, quiet and soft. It was a nice change of pace from Stiles' constant fifth-gear presence, and I found myself not having to force my smile. “So, what's the deal with you and Stilinski?” Isaac asked after a few moments of easy quiet.

“We're friends,” I shrugged, finding it easier to admit now. It wasn't such a bad thing; having friends. It made me feel almost normal. “He's a good guy,” I added with a nod.

“Yeah,” Isaac agreed. “I haven't talked to him much, even though we've been on the team together all year.”

I drained the last of the spiked punch from my cup before throwing him a surprised look. “You're on the lacrosse team?”

“Yeah,” he nodded, cracking a small smile. “I don't have many friends, so I kind of go unnoticed. I'm not surprised you didn't know.”
It was quiet for another moment as both of us watched everyone dance below us.

“Did you know that Coach lost a testicle to exposure a few years back?”

I started, turning to look at him in surprise. This kid had a knack for keeping me on my toes. “He what?” I asked, blinking as I processed this information.

“Yeah, he talks about it all the time,” Isaac laughed, the sound more free and relaxed than anything I'd heard from him yet.

“So, he only has one-?”

Yeah.”

I threw my head back and laughed loudly. I elbowed Isaac gently, making sure not to break his brittle human skeleton, with the other arm running a hand through my dark hair to keep it off my face. I was about to ask for more details when I felt the heavy weight of eyes on me. I sat up straighter, eyes narrowing as I stared out into the crowd, searching for any hint of the alpha.

I couldn't see the older werewolf anywhere, so I put it down to one of the creepier students and turned back to my conversation with Isaac.

Soon enough the music slowed, and I looked to my date with mischievous eyes. “Can we dance now?” I asked, fluttering my eyelashes dramatically, mostly for the joke of it all. “We could get away with standing still and swaying for a few songs,” I grinned winningly.

Isaac looked like he desperately wanted to say no, but he changed his mind at the last second. “Sure,” he said, standing to his feet, wobbling only minimally, and holding out his arm for me to take. I did so with a smile, leading him down the stairs, careful not to take a suspicious amount of his weight.

We made our way to the edge of the dance floor. He was more than a head taller than me, so the angle I had to tilt myself to probably looked amusing, but I didn't care about the opinion of a bunch of hormonal, promiscuous teenagers.
Isaac surprised me by leaning down to speak into my ear. “Check out the crime scene on Lindsey Farrowfield’s neck,” he murmured. I didn't know who that was, and my pointed look said as much. He laughed again. “The one in the pink floral dress, six-o'clock.”

I gently spun us around, pushing myself to my toes to look over his shoulder at the girl. She had several red hickeys spread across the pale skin of her neck, and the guy she was dancing with had a large handful of her ass. I snorted into Isaac's shoulder, feeling him rumble as he laughed at the sight. It was strangely easy, and I found myself … dare I say it? … enjoying myself.

“You know,” I began, tightening my arms around his neck. “You turned out not to be such a bad date, Isaac.”

The boy didn't answer, he just ducked his head and smiled. We danced for a long time, so long I was sure his hurt leg was starting to ache, but he didn't complain once, happy to continue dancing with me. I felt content in the fact that I seemed to have made another friend in this Godforsaken, werewolf-ridden hellhole.

I hoped Myra would be proud.

Isaac pulled back, opening his mouth to say something, only to be cut off by a hand slamming down on my shoulder. I stepped back from the boy, turning to look instead at Jackson, irritated and expectant. “What?” I asked, voice like ice.

“They're here for Scott,” the other human said, breathless, eyes glancing to Isaac before focusing back on me. “Stiles needs you outside.”

He'd had to speak in code with Isaac was listening in, but I got the message loud and clear. The hunters were here for Scott, and something was wrong with Stiles. I pulled away from Isaac, frowning in a way that I hoped looked apologetic. “Sorry, I need to go,” I told him quickly. “I'll see you later.”

I didn't wait for his reply, but it didn't really matter. I took off at the fastest pace a human could get away with, my small heels clicking against the gymnasium floor. As soon as I was out of the gym I pushed myself faster, disappearing to the human eye as I sped through the halls. I all but fell out of the front doors, looking around wildly for my human friend and his stupid, vapid, reluctant date.

“Stiles?!” I shouted, anxiety creeping through my dead veins. It was strange, I hadn't been worried
for someone else in what felt like a small eternity. I took a sniff of the cool night air, biting my
tongue when I picked up a scent that stood out from all the rest. Blood.

I booked it, rounding the school, dashing onto the field where two figures were kneeling over an
unconscious form. I seemed to materialise at their side, but there was no time to assess the damage.
The alpha was there, sneering down at the bloodied form, smug and hungry.

I didn't hesitate in my attack. My fist slammed into Peter's jaw, sending him flying back several
feet, sprawled across the grass, rather undignified. I knew I'd gotten a lucky hit, having had the
element of surprise on my side. I doubted it would be happening a second time. The alpha climbed
back to his feet after only a split second, canine teeth bared, a threat and a promise.

I allowed my fangs to slip free. Blood filled my eyes, white turning red, and I let out a purely
animalistic snarl, crouching defensively in front of Stiles and Lydia. Peter ran at me, but I dodged
out of the way, landing a powerful kick to his abdomen. He grunted but swung around, slamming
his own fist into my jaw. My head snapped to the side as the sound of fist connecting with bone
made a loud, echoing crack.

There was a beat of silence before I spat out the blood that had collected on my tongue. In a move
too quick for Stiles' weak eyes to track, I made to kick the alpha between the legs, but he wasn't as
slow as a human and he caught my ankle, using my own momentum against me to slam me into
the earth. My head cracked against the ground and spots danced in my vision.

Next thing I knew, I was being manhandled by the throat, my feet leaving the ground and dangling
in thin air. I couldn't breathe, but at least I knew that wouldn't kill me. My feet kicked, searching
for any sort of traction, any hint of earth to connect to. But there was nothing, only the tightening
of an unforgiving fist.

“Asshole,” I choked out around his grip, my nails tearing at the exposed skin of his hand. I might as
well have been a mosquito for all the good it did.

“That's what I hate about vampires,” the alpha tutted haughtily, “always so mouthy.” He sighed,
turning to face Stiles as he brought me to his chest, hand still wrapped tightly around my windpipe.
I was glad to find my feet back on the ground though; silver lining, I suppose. “Since the threat of
the human's life wasn't enough to make you cooperate, maybe the life of this vampire's will be...”
he trailed off smugly.

I looked at Stiles, listening to the sound of his heart slamming away in his chest. If I'd been able to
breathe, I know I would have been able to smell the fear on him. As it was, I could see the panic
glittering in his coffee coloured eyes.

“Do you know what a werewolf bite does to a vampire, Stiles?” Peter asked him, watching the boy as he shook, glaring back at him with as much hate as his little human body could muster.

He was so angry that his eyes were watering, and if anything I just felt bad for making him upset.

“It kills them, yes. But not instantly. No, it's a slow and painful death,” he tutted as though it were really a shame, something to be pitied. The thought of holding this wolf's pity made me want to throw up in his face. “First are the shakes, then the sweats. It's like having the flu, I suppose,” he sneered. I could hear the smirk in his sick, smarmy voice. “Then come the hallucinations. Vivid, vivid hallucinations. Then the psychosis, oh, now that's the worst part.” There was a pause, and a tear slipped down Stiles' cheek. “Need I continue?” asked the alpha smugly. He might as well have just said ‘checkmate’. “Give me what I want, and I won't bite your little undead girlfriend.”

“Don't do it Sti-” I tried to warn him, but the alpha he me off, tightening his grip on my throat until my voice was all but useless.

“Look,” Stiles began, eyes sliding away from me and over to the alpha. I shut my own eyes in defeat. “I think he knew...” he trailed off shakily.

“Knew what?” Peter prompted him impatiently.

“Derek, I think he knew he was going to get caught.”

“By the Argents? And?”

“And when they were shot, he and Scott ... I think he took Scott's phone.”

“Why?”

“Stiles-” I tried again, but Peter shook me like a ragdoll and growled in my ear.
“Say another word and I'll snap your cold little neck,” he warned me, and I glared at him with every ounce of hate I could muster. Which was a whole lot more than the kid ever could. He wasn't born with hate in his bones; not like I was.

“All phones have GPS now,” Stiles said quickly, as if to pull the focus away from me. “So, if he still has it and if it's still on, you can find him.”

The alpha was silent for a long time, considering the human's words. He finally relaxed his hold on my neck, but still held tight enough that I couldn't move, but could at least breathe. He leant forwards, lips brushing my ear as he spoke, making me shiver in pure disgust. “If you run, he dies,” he murmured to me, squeezing in warning one final time before letting me go.

And I didn't run.

Of course I didn't run. As if I could leave Stiles alone with this creep?

I stepped to his side and the kid's hand instantly wrapped around mine, tugging me behind him like that would in any way protect me. It was strangely heroic for a human, but I gave it no thought, glancing down at the unconscious girl on the ground. She was coated in her own blood, and without thinking, I found myself licking my lips, hunger rearing its ugly head deep in my gut.

“You're coming with me,” the alpha said suddenly. “Both of you.”

“But you don't need Juliet,” Stiles spoke up immediately, stepping even further in front of me in some kind of noble gesture. “Just take me.”

Despite it all, it still took great effort not to roll my eyes. “But you see, Stiles, having a vampire on my side could be very beneficial,” drawled Peter keenly.

“She'd never help you,” Stiles spat vehemently.

Peter only smirked. “I think she will. Especially when it's your fragile human life that hangs in the balance.”
Stiles' heart picked up again, and I squeezed his hand, letting him know I was still there. Peter was a dick, but he was right about one thing – I wasn't going to let anything happen to Stiles. Because I didn't want that added to my guilt, yes, but also because, despite all the odds, he was my friend.

A thought occurred to me suddenly. “What's to say I don't just take him and run?” I asked, my tone deceivingly light, holding back a torrent of fury and hunger. The scent of Lydia's blood still hung in the air, taunting me with its flavour.

“Then I'll come back the next day. And the next, and the next, and the next,” the alpha tilted his head to the side, peering at me through those evil, beady little eyes. “You can't protect him forever.”

He pulled a handkerchief from his pocket, raising it to his lips and dabbing at the blood there, completely aware of the sinking dread in my gut. He was right; eventually I'd slip up and he'd get to Stiles. If we ran, who knew how long it could go on for? Our best bet was to ride this through now, maybe I'd get a chance to catch the alpha unawares, get a chance to end this once and for all.

“Come along, children,” he said condescendingly, and I cringed, biting back a quip about how many years I had over him.

“No, I'm not just letting you leave her here,” Stiles protested, hand slipping from mine as he knelt down by a barely-breathing Lydia.

“You don't have a choice, Stiles. You're coming with me,” Peter replied calmly. But Stiles was uncompromising, and Peter frowned down at the girl for a long moment before seeming to come to a sort of conclusion, nodding to himself. “Okay, fine, call your friend. Tell the Jackson boy to come and get her.”

Stiles complied, taking a step away as he called the jock in question. I peered down at the girl with a frown. Either she'd die, or she'd wake up with a new set of canines. Either way, I still didn't like her. As it was, it was just a miracle I wasn't chewing on her neck right now.

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