You Gotta Roll with the Punches

by quicksylver28

Summary

Stiles always thought that he was pretty well adjusted for a kid. When his best friend Scott had an asthma attack when he was six, Stiles said 'ok' and held his hand through it. When his mother dies when he was nine, and his Father's soul mark crumbled off his skin like ash, he said 'ok' and picked up the broken pieces of their lives. When his soul mark blossomed on the skin just above his heart and he realizes that his true loves first words would be "FUCK OFF", he said 'ok' and braced himself for having his heart kicked in the ass.
His blood sang in his veins, his pulse racing with the thrill of the hunt. He could feel the others nearby, their hearts beating in rhythm with his, only the rustling of fallen leaves marking their passage. The sun was setting, painting the sky brilliant oranges and purples that he could see in flashes through the treetops. He ducked quickly under a low swinging branch as his eyes adjusted to that hazy veil that twilight threw over the world as it blurred passed, his pace never slowing for a moment.

His quarry was just up ahead. He could hear them crashing madly though the woods, stumbling, snarling and cursing, leaving a wide trail of clawed tree trunks and broken branches even a blind man could follow. Not to mention the steady trail of blood that was left behind in their flight.

Beads of sweat rolled down his face, into his collar and down his back but he paid them no mind as he kept pace with his prey, his entire being tuned to the chase, the exquisite hunt. The woods were eerily silent but for the his own steady breathing and the whispered footfalls of his pack, their unique pattern of running letting him know where each of them were, reassuring him that they had his six.

He could hear shouting up ahead and grinned. They had done their part well, his pack, herding the prey into the snare, making sure that their quarry went where they wanted them to go. He let out a soft yip, knowing his pack was close enough to hear and felt a rush of satisfaction thrum through him when he heard the responding calls, slowing to a walk as they came upon the designated clearing.

At the edge of the wood he reached up and tapped his radio ear piece twice and grunted softly at the murmured reply. A few quick hand signals had his people moving in slowly, weapons drawn and safeties off. Stepping out of the tree line was like stepping into a daydream. The clearing was idyllic with lush grasses and gentle breeze. The flowers, which would have been a riot of colour in daylight were closed in with the last of twilight fading as if hiding from the coming of the night.

One side of the clearing was flush up against a cliff, sharp and jagged, a dead end. Another was blocked by the trunk of a gigantic fallen tree, old and covered in moss vines and even smaller trees. It was up against the mammoth trunk that their quarry stood, snarling and snapping at her captors, one hand pressed against a stomach wound that seeped blackish blood sluggishly through her clenched fingers. Her eyes flashed brilliant crimson as he and his pack stepped from cover, guns raised and trained on her, coming to a halt near to others who were gathered, armed and blocking her escape.

He took the time to study her as she cursed and spat blood at them, her eyes darting desperately about. They had been chasing her for upwards of two weeks, she being the longest hold out in a group they'd been hunting for past three months after the massacre at Red Hills. She was the last one to be found, that last one to be brought down. The last of the Alpha Pack.

"Kali" he said, taking a small step forward.

He could feel the rest of his pack step with him, their pack bonds brushing against his, and he felt bolstered by their presence. The alpha swung to face him with a loud snarl and he raised a skeptic eyebrow. He'd seen better… from worse foes. Compared to others the last alpha was small potatoes.

"Well well well..." she sneered, her bloodied mouth flashing wicked sharp bloodied teeth. "… if it isn't the little engine that could. Isn't it passed your bedtime little boy?"
She coughed and spat red, her hand pressing harder against her wound. More blood seeped, more black than red this time.

Faking a pout, he looked around at those gathered.

"Hey, why does everyone treat me like some wet behind the ears kid? Is it because of my baby face good looks? my flawless skin… or the fact I can't grow a beard to save my life? Let me tell you that this is all genetics you know… my daddy said so"

As he hammered it up for the crowd, cutting through the stifling tension and relaxing trigger fingers, he could see the alpha getting more and more agitated with every titter and snicker at his antics.

"… and I'll have you know that I've been told …" he turned to face Kali with a mocking grin, "… that I'm very mature for my age. In fact, what was it that the big fucker said … the one with all the muscles? What was his name again?" he snapped his fingers irritably.

"Ennis" one of the men who stood nearby with a double barrel shotgun volunteered.

"Ah yes… Ennis. Thank you Hector. " he smiled magnanimously as Hector nodded with a smirk. "In fact, the first time he saw me he called me a 'diaper baby'. Granted my feelings were a bit hurt but I tried not to hold it against him because I can guarantee that the last time he saw me, his opinion of me had definitely changed. Not that he actually said the words mind you but it was more the surprised look on his face when he died that said it all."

Kali snarled and lunged forward weakly, collapsing to her knees as the claws of her free hand drug into the earth beneath her, her face frozen in a rictus of hatred and rage.

"I will rip you to shreds human…. I am Kali of the Alpha Pack. I am an alpha werewolf and I am so beyond your puny existence. I am stronger, I am faster, I am better than you in every way. I am the fucking master of my domain. Who the fuck do you think you are to…?"

"Who am I?" his sharp words cut through the chill night air. "I am the fucking US Government and the whole god damned country is my motherfucking domain. You may be stronger and you may be faster but you sure as hell are not smarter. Where is your exalted pack now? Dead. That's where they are. And look at where you are…. It isn't at the top of the fucking food chain that's for damn sure. But enough chit chat…"

The wind dropped as the pleasant expression fell off his face. His solemn voice the only sound in the silence of the night.

"By the authority of the US Department of the Interior and the US Fish and Wildlife Service; you, Kali Aniruddha Chaturvedi , are hereby under arrest for Murder in the First Degree, Conspiracy to Commit Murder, False Imprisonment, Kidnapping, Transportation of a kidnap victim across state lines, felony arson, felony larceny, fraud, conspiracy to commit Fraud, Robbery, breaking and entering and tax evasion."

The wounded werewolf scoffed "Tax evasion? Really?"

He glanced over his shoulder at his team and, getting a nod of confirmation, turned back. "Really. So we can do this the easy way or the hard way. The warrant says dead or alive. The choice is yours."

Kali laughed weakly, a sickly wet sound. "Was that the same choice you gave the others? Or did you just put them down like dogs?"

"They all got the same ultimatum you just got… handcuffs or a body bag. The government respects
the rights of every sentient being that lives on its land and in its seas and skies. Even monsters like you."

"You talk of monsters as you know what that means." the werewolf sneered, gesturing to the others standing around, guns in hand. "you align yourself with monsters. These 'hunters' you work with, these cowardly worms. They are the monsters. They kill werewolves and other magical folk for no reason than being alive. They are the ones you should be after. The Alpha pack has served in this world for centuries. Ours is a divine purpose."

A ragged scream from the edge of the clearing breaks Kali's momentum. A young girl with ash blonde hair and haunted eyes that aged her more that her teenage years is being held back by gentle hands, her eyes flashing crimson and claws extended.

"A divine purpose?" she cries, her voice rough and breaking, "was it divine purpose to slaughter my entire pack? To kill my entire family for what?… for power? We welcomed you into our territory … into our den because we needed you fair judgment… your wisdom. " she sagged against the arms holding her. "You are NOTHING like what a true alpha pack should be. You've corrupted the very heart of it. You are an abomination against nature… I hope you burn in hell."

She collapsed into the arms of an older woman, sobs wracking her slender frame. The cornered alpha looked on in disgust.

"You would ally yourself with the humans? .... with those who would hunt you? Kill you for no reason than existing? Even now they plan to put you down …"

An older werewolf stepped forward, his hand giving the girl's shoulder a squeeze. His eyes flashed crimson with a slow burning anger.

"if it means getting rid of the likes of you then we would work with the devil himself." he shrugged at the hunters who stood nearby, "no offense."

A broad shouldered, full bearded bear of a man, who stood at least a head above the other hunters, twitched a corner of his mouth.

"None taken."

"Enough of this" Kali struggles to her feet. She was pale with ugly black veins crawling across her clammy skin. "The Red Hills Pack was weak. Their alpha a spineless worm. We must cut out the rot for there to be new growth. The loss was negligible."

The agent could feel the hot rush of anger from his pack and the low growling coming from the wolf contingent at her careless words , even the more hard core hunters looked disgusted at her utter disregard for life.

"Okay you so need to shut up now" he shook his head to clear the tension in the air, lowering his gun slightly. "In fact , you have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you as evidence in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney, if you cannot affor…"

His words cut off with a jerk as Kali lunged for him once more, teeth and claws out and aiming for his throat in a last ditch effort to kill the worm who had brought her pack low. She let out a wordless scream of rage, her head jerking back as a gunshot rang out, blowing out the back of her skull. She fell back against the grass, teeth and claws slowly receding and blood and grey matter, staining the lush grass below her.

Shaking off his surprise, he squatted close to the body, easily dodging a half hearted swipe. Her eyes
now brown, still shone with hatred.

"Jesus, she's still alive" He breathed.

"Alpha's are a bitch to take down. " the Bear Hunter walked closer, tucking his double aught in the crook of his elbow. He shrugged at the older male alpha. "No offense"

"We are a bitch to take down. " The alpha nodded with a smirk. "This one though…" he pointed a chin at the fallen alpha, "… this one was just a bitch. I hope this cub killer rots in hell. 'Cut the rot my furry ass.'"

There is a smatter of laughter from the others until they realized that they are essentially laughing over a corpse. The ensuing silence was thick with awkwardness and a bit of guilt.

"no… cubs…." came a hiss from the body, startling the hell out of all gathered and making them all back up a step involuntarily.

"Holy shit. She's still alive" someone hissed. "What the fuck is she saying?"

The agent holds up a hand for silence. Holstering his gun and getting up from where he'd fallen on his ass in surprise. He waves off his pack's concern and amusement and crouched low to the dying alpha, knowing they would make sure that they would make sure the others stayed quiet.

"you're a tough one aren't you?" he murmurs, "you must be hanging on with your hatred alone. I'm sure you would have been a formidable alpha if you weren't so psychotic. So what is it that you clawed back from hell's gates to say huh? Lay it on me."

"no… cubs… at red hi…" blood gurgled from her mouth but her eyes still burned hot. " … no kill …cubs"

"LIAR" the sole survivor of the Red Hills clan screamed, eyes burning red as she strained once more against the arms holding her. "You killed them all and you burned my home you cunt. You took my family from me, you took my baby brother and you burned him."

Kali laughed, the sound of it horrible and bone chilling. "cubs… alive…"

He reached a hand to grasp her shoulder. "Where are they Kali? Where are the cubs?"

"…taken…"

"Taken by whom? Who took them? Answer me Damn it"

He shook her shoulder gently, then harder as she gave another gurgling laugh, the life fading from her eyes.

"choo.. choo… little engine…"

Then she was gone. He checked her pulse with a frown. Dead. For real this time.

"Fuck"
Chapter Two

Supervisory Special Agent Stiles Stillinski watched as the local coroner takes the body. Kali would register as fully human to the standard medical examinations. Then the wolves will claim it from the morgue. As evil as she was, in the end she was still a werewolf and the supernatural preferred to deal with their own, the federal side of it ending with the autopsy report and his own mountain of paperwork.

The hunters from Clan MacGregor linger at the edge of the clearing, their leader Seamus, the Bear Hunter, watching everything with a sharp, beady eyes.

The last Red Hills alpha stands among the other Weres, staring wordlessly as the medical examiner secures the body for transport, her ash blonde hair pulled into a sloppy bun, kept away from her pale young face and puffy eyes as she hugged herself against the chill of the moonless night, like a lost child. The other Weres huddled around her, watching the hunters and agents both with a gimlet eye.

He signals to Seamus MacGregor and the Older Alpha known only as Brian and they pow wow near the cliff. It is a delicate balance, this truce between the were, the hunters and the law. It had taken him a lot of time, effort, his sharp and sarcastic wit and the patience of Job himself to get the two sides to come together without bloodshed when he'd first proposed the joint operation with Fish and Wildlife.

But their need had been dire. The Alpha Pack had been slaughtering entire packs for close to a decade across the United states, and Canada. With werefolk and hunters living on the fringes of society, insular from each other; clues to their violent clashes and mercurial behaviour only cropping up on the occasional police report, it was not until the slaughter of the Red Hills pack and its Lupa, the bittnvulf son of the local Governor, who had kept close ties with his family even after he was bitten, that the attention of the law had been drawn. After that, it was simple to trace the bloody swath the alpha pack had cut across North America.

In 1993, in a closed Senate, a bill had been passed deeming any supernatural activity would be handled by the Secretary of the Interior, specifically the Department of Fish and Wildlife. Every incoming Secretary would be read into the Ultra Secret Special Branch, a roving task force that would deal with the things that go bump in the night. Before then, cases like this would have been handled by the FBI but after too many X-files jokes the bald Director of the FBI had thrown a hissy fit when the latest White House memo had accidentally addressed him as Director Skinner. Since then, Fish and Wildlife got tossed the supernatural cases and Homeland Security and the INS got the alien ones, well the alien 'sightings' anyway.

He'd inherited special branch back when it was just a refurbished stock room and a dusty boxes of micro fiches in the basement. It had taken years to build his team and his reputation more than just lip service. A strong team that would see the law upheld, not only for the for humans, but for all sentient beings, magical or mundane.

After breaking from the team leader huddle, he made his way around to the others, thanking them for their efforts and fostering goodwill. Seamus and his boys would head back to their base, promising to keep in touch and keep an eye on the nearby Red Hills territory for any small packs trying to pull a claim jump. Brian and the wolves would take the young blonde under their wing until she would
rebuild her pack or dissolve it altogether and let the territory be absorbed or claimed by another.

A hand grabs his wrist as he turns to leave. It’s the blonde alpha.

"She was lying wasn't she? About the cubs.", about her little brother whose death she still mourned.

He squeezed her hand warmly. "She may have said just to fuck with out heads…"

"But if she wasn't…. If he's really…?"

"if he's alive. I will find him"

He says and watches for a while as she disappears into the woods with the other weres.

The coroner has packed and gone by the time he makes it back to his team. He feels a rush of affection at the sight of them and they turn as one to face him. He good naturedly endures a touch inspection and scenting from his 2IC and shares a grin with the rest of the team.

Jim Longworth had been his first recruit and was a rare case in itself. The bonvulf son of werewolf/human parentage that could not shift. He'd lived as a human for years until a bullet in the back on his wedding day had kick started his shift. Life as he knew it had not survived the change. Between learning to control his wolf and finding out who tried to kill him, he had looked up one day to realize that his fiancé had left him, taking her son with her to Atlanta.

With the devastating loss of his wolf's mate and pack, Jim had taken all of his accumulated leave, gone deep into alligator territory and was existing one step above omega, determined to see if a werewolf could die from alcohol poisoning if they tried hard enough. While Callie had not been his soul mate, the tell tale tattoo never blossoming to life on his skin, he had loved her and her son dearly and his wolf had bonded with them. Having those bonds ripped away had been utterly devastating.

Special Branch, which in those early days had consisted only Stiles and his Mentor Archelaus 'Bert' Kranz had needed a guide through the glades, on the trail of a murderous Loveland Frog (insert eyeroll here) and Jim had been recommended by the local pack. Several Hunter wannabes, desperate to make a name for themselves and stupid enough not to look up any information on the subject, had tried to trap the four foot tall amphi-humanoid and had gotten the business end of it's poison secretions.

Normally Stiles would called it natural selection and let it go but the killings had been near enough to a local school that the higher-up had sent in team. Bert had taken one look at the whiskey soaked wolf and had called in a favour to get him assigned as their local LEO since he was technically still on the force. Jim had balked and threatened to quit then and there, Bert scrambling him by his collar and dunking him in a water trough behind the local bar with a gruff "you don't waste good". In the end he hadn't quit. He'd stayed with them for the next case, and the next. And when Bert died taking down a warlock in Tennessee, Jim stood at Stiles' side as his beta and second.

They'd picked up their Technical Analyst Taiki Kita in New York on the trail of a Rakshasa killing the tenants of Taiki's Building. Kita had been the strange introvert neighbor and the local LEO's number one suspect. But after meeting the six foot five albino with model good looks, genius IQ and a bank of computers that looked like it came straight out of the matrix and not to mention a solid alibi, they scratched him off the list.

It took them five days to find and stops the killer and by the time they had gotten back to their offices at HQ, Kita was already there, setting up what looked like the entire stock of an Apple Store and lamenting about the saggy boxes of microfiche. Having hacked his way into Agency's computers
and hired himself, he then proceeded to drag special branch kicking and screaming into the twenty first century, giving Stiles and Jim no choice but to follow. When asked why he would help them like this, he replied simply.

"You believed me"

Now Taiki, or TK as he was called by the team, was the honey voice in Stiles’ earpiece and a constant comfort. One night after eating their cumulative weight in spicy thai food and Sam Adams Winter Lager, TK told them about his origins in soft heavily accented english, lapsing into the occasional japanese word or phrase as he was wont to do when he drank.

He was a Kitsune, a fox Spirit by birth called Kurama from a realm called the Makai. He'd been powerful and immortal and utterly bored and lonely, having out lived all of his friend's from his previous life. So he decided to take human form once again and was soon born to a Japanese American couple whose baby had died in the womb, his magic sublimating the fetus' very DNA until his surprised mother held a perfect baby boy in her arms with eyes like glass and skin and hair as pale as driven snow instead of the girl the ultrasound said she would have.

With his skin condition that not even magic could cure, TK had forgone all childhood outdoor activities because of his sensitive skin and had made computers his full blown obsession, gaining all of his skills from experience rather than college and the like, living on the fringe of society, his only true connection to the world being when he visited his parents once a year in Nevada. He'd been living in New York for five years before Special Branch had knocked on his door.

Now he was the central nervous system of their department, working his Tech Fu to make sure the team was at the top of their game, the knowledge of the magical and the mundane at his fingertips. Even now he could hear TK ribbing another member of the team good naturedly through their radios.

"You've been spending too much time with Garcia from the BAU man." Gordon 'Coz' Cozier laughed, "every time you call me Dark Chocolate or Dark Roast and suggest that we could make delicious Café Con Leche together, Carol from HR gives me the hairy eyeball, even though she's met by bond mate several times."

Cozier had been a criminal in his past life, a master thief or a 'taker' as he'd called himself before everything had changed. One bad job and he'd found himself severely wounded, without a crew and escaping to the Caribbean with his addict sister Naomi and surviving partner and bond mate John Rahway. They'd been free long enough to get Naomi settled when the law had caught up with them. Normally, they would have both gone straight to prison but the FBI had been keeping an eye on Gordon for a long time and quickly stepped in to aggressively recruit them into working for the government, using their remarkable skills into catching other bad guys and putting them away. It was not an easy transition and it was only the threat of the government freezing all of his funds and leaving his sister destitute so far away that kept him in line, barely.

So when Special Branch needed his particular skill set, Gordon's supervisor practically tossed him into their laps. It was a good fit right from the beginning. Stiles easy leadership style did not chafe and Jim and TK's easy camaraderie and snark were a welcome change from the FBI rigid control and the increasingly difficult to survive or extremely boring and unnecessary assignments.

After the case was over Stiles was happy to offer Gordon a spot in Special Branch. When Stiles heard about how they were keeping Gordon and John separated as a sort of control tactic, he'd just about lost his shit. One angry call about bond interference and incompetent douche nozzles who didn't know how to 'waste the good', to the Director of the Interior; who still raved over Special
Branch's success rate and the progress they'd made with the supernatural elements under his jurisdiction; and by the end of the week, Cozier and Rahway were working for Fish and Wildlife. Gordon taking a spot in Special Branch while John worked with another Department as per their original probation arrangement.

They had been settling once again into the new team dynamic when Clem had waltzed into their lives. And by waltzed, he meant blew in to their lives like a force of nature.

He takes the time to look at her, standing with the others, a half smile on her lips and a sparkle in her haze/grey1 eyes at how Coz and TK had ganged up and were teasing Jim about the massive crush that Glen from the mailroom seemed to have on him, reaching out to cuff the back of Coz's head when he let loose a zinger about Glen handling Jim's package, causing them all to laugh. He was glad that they could laugh together like this after such a long and difficult case.

Unlike the others, Dr. Clementine Shausser had already worked at Fish and Wildlife when she met Stiles. The first time they'd met had been on the Baxter Case. It had been a horrible and soul crushing case, Stiles' first with Bert and she'd been part of the search party. He had been drawn to her stunning beauty and her grace and calm under pressure and had even tried to flirt with her (insert embarrassing teenaged babbling and flailing) only to be shut down gently but firmly. They had parted on good terms. Yet Bert had been wary of her and had often cautioned Stiles to do the same.

Years later, they met again while hunting a lamia though Colorado,(I mean come on, a fucking lamia, who fucking buys a baby lamia on the black market and tries to keep it as a pet snake? An idiot, that's who. A dead idiot now.) By the time the owner's remains had been found; the lamia had eaten, digested and excreted his bones (ok eww); Nagini ( really?... Really? sigh.) had escaped and was on the run, well… on the slither.

So there they were, running through the down town warehouse district in the wee hours of the morning because unlike every other lamia who craved nature and the large forests of Colorado, this particular lamia had been brought up on greasy pizza and beef jerky and house music. They had just cornered the being when it whipped out its tail and batted Jim through the massive window of a nearby warehouse, turning its wicked sharp, whip like tail on Coz and Stiles.

He fell back, losing his weapon in the progress. He had been reaching for his secondary one with the lamia was above him, poised to strike when its body jerked, a loud crackling sound filling the air. It was Clementine with what looked like a jury rigged industrial strength tazer gun. After the lamia was knocked out and restrained. Stiles had invited her out for a drink to catch up on old times.

After a night of drinking too much damn tequila and a morning after of feeling like hell on toast, he'd offered her a place with special branch, that she'd fit in well with the team. That she could be part of something greater instead of going it alone. She'd looked at him for a long time, long enough for him to start to fidget.

"I was part of something greater once before..." she said haltingly. "It didn't end well for me"

With those words, she got into her car and drove away. One month later her request for transfer comes in.

Shausser was such a mystery to Stiles, even with his ability to read people, he could never seem to get past the calm, deep waters. She was loyal, bordering on fanatical at times. She had a brother in the army whose picture she kept on her fridge yet never called. She had both a deep hatred and deep love for the church, using faith based rituals in many cases yet loathed to set foot on sacred ground.

He often caught her absently playing with the rosary beads she kept around her wrist, or catch her
whispering "May God have mercy on your soul" over the dead or murmuring verses from lamentation under her breath as she wrote up reports.

Stiles knew that there was more to her, to all of them. But he was patient man, well not really with most other things but he was patient in this. He could wait as they learned to trust each other more, could wait as their dynamic evolved and grew into what he always knew Special Branch could become. They were unique individuals , good agents and an excellent team. He was lucky to have them. They were pack. His pack.

"Hey now… don’t tease." He slung an arm over Jim's shoulder. " We all know that Shelly from over in Parks has dibs on Jim's fine ass. Ever since the Picnic last year. Don't let her hear you talking smack about her man TK. She'll cut a bitch."

The others laughed as he ducked away from Jim's half hearted swipe as they headed back to the vehicles, leaving the local LEO's to secure the scene.

Stiles let the voices of his pack wash over him as he replayed the last few minutes of Kali’s life in his head. If she had been telling the truth, by the smallest of chances, then as much as five werewolf children could be out there now in the hands of who knows. A cold stone settled in his stomach. And what of the other packs? Most times the bodies could not be identified, the alphas likes to use fire to cleanse the scene. What if there were other cubs out there thought dead?

“TK, I gonna need you to do a search for other suspected alpha pack cases, focus on body identification and if there were any members not accounted for, even if you have to reach out to your technomage friends. I need to know if there’s anything to back up Kali’s claim or if she was just jerking us around ok?”

No response, he exchanged a frown with Jim. “Taiki?... Buddy? Talk to me.”

“Stiles” TK’s honey voice was soft and breathy. This worried him.

“Hey Foxy, what’s going on with you?” Coz ventured. “Talk to us.”

“Stiles…” the warm honey voice seemed hesitant. “ I just got a flag from the Beacon Hills Police.”

The world seemed to slow as he swallowed hard. “My dad?” not caring if his voice broke on the second word or that he was crushing Jim’s hand in his own.

“I’m sorry Stiles… he’s been shot.”
It's dark and raining when the plane lands. The halls of the hospital seem colder than he remembered, darker. Melissa McCall is on duty at the nurses station and does a double take when she sees him. He wonders if it's because he looks like hell warmed over or because she hasn't seen him in person in over ten years. She looks older than he remembers her, smaller and she looks up at him when she speaks, her hand resting gently on his arm. He can see the other nurses glancing at them and talking in whispers out of the corner of his eye but he pays them no mind. She takes him to the room at the end of the hall. His feet seem to drag along the linoleum floor.

There is a Deputy there, standing guard. Stiles watches him warily- he's new, somebody Stiles does not know. Melissa, however, greets the officer warmly and he relaxes a bit. He hesitates at the door, staring at the darkened room beyond the doorway for a long while. It is only when Melissa takes his cold hand in hers that he realizes that he's been trembling. He wants to puke and it's difficult to swallow around the hard lump in his throat.

His father looks small against the metal frame of the hospital bed, wires running from under the sheets to numerous machines, beeping and whooshing like music to his ears. He waves Melissa away from the lights and soon he is alone. He's not ready for harsh reality or facts or facing this like a grown up. All he wants to do is snuggle close with his dad in the dark like he used to do as a child when he was scared. He wasn't ready to do anything but let the whirlwind of hurt and pain and fear, that had held him in a chokehold since first hearing the news, run its course and dissipate before he could think and understand clearly what was happening.

His father's skin is clammy to the touch. There is a chair next to the bed, comfortable, not the usual hospital fare. Stolen from the nurses station, he presumed. With gentleness and a kind of calm that comes from being numb, his fingertips feather over the skin of his father's arms and face, grazing hesitantly over the padded gauze that covered the bullet wounds in his chest. Stiles let out a pained whimper, his voice rough with trying to hold back tears.

"I thought I told you to take care of yourself, old man" he whispers, lacing their fingers together in a desperate clasp.

He sank into the chair, his knees unable to hold him any longer, a few traitorous tears crawling his cheeks. Being a sheriff, even of a small town had its hazards and he had always known that his father's work had it's own danger. Being a fellow officer of the law, he knew that sometimes people didn't come home again, that if just one thing went wrong, one crazy with a weapon, one unlucky arrest or ill fated road side pullover could bring down even the most experienced of cops.

He'd thought that it would have been better after this father retired, that he could breathe easier, even if Beacon Hills was a hotbed for the supernatural, at least his father would be relatively safe from the everyday hazards. And he was for a while, at least until retirement grew too boring and he'd started tackling the back log of cold cases and unsolved murders for the county as a consultant. Stiles grimaced as he recalled the heated argument they'd had over the phone about it.

He'd felt an utter heel about it and had apologized after, even sending an edible bouquet for trying to dictate his father's life choices. The man had accepted his apology with a joke about getting steaks in the mail being a sign of true remorse which led to the old tug of war they played about healthy eating habits and heart conditions.

It's just that he'd always seen his father as a hero, not the untouchable kind on a pedestal but as an honest man whose word was his bond and faced his fears with courage and grace that Stiles still tried
to emulate to this day.

This man who had soothed Stiles' nightmares after his mother withered away, even though the pain of losing his own soul mate was crushing. Who explained in his own wobbly voice why the vibrant tattoo of cursive that had been wrapped around his bicep had flakes away like ash, leaving faint white scars. It had been a quote from his mother's favourite author and had been the first words she'd said to him that sunny day in their sophomore year of college. His answering quote from the same author had scrolled across her stomach and had never faded, even as cancer ate her body.

This was the man who held his son close and whispered reassurances into his hair when his body was wracked with panic attacks after his own soul mark blossomed on his chest, just above his heart, a harsh and jagged 'FUCK OFF'. The same man who agreed to let his one and only child move across the entire country to save his life after Stiles' first meeting with his soul mate hit their lives live a atom bomb, leaving utter disaster in its wake. The man who could break his son's bad mood with a well timed phone call and the lamest of jokes and who saved up his vacation time faithfully so that he could visit with his son every thanksgiving, his mother's favourite holiday.

He was crying in earnest now, full wracking sobs that he tried to muffle in the bedding. He clutched at the comforter, fists clenching in the pale blue material as his lungs tried to burst from his chest, uncaring whether or not the deputy standing guard could hear him as long as they stayed outside while he broke completely apart.

It was sunrise the next morning when awareness returned, the pale light slanting across the room in streaks. His eyes are dry and gritty, his mouth feels like a grave. He's been in the same clothes for close to two days and he's getting a bit rank. He ducks into the bathroom and cleans up as much as he can, pulling a change of clean clothes from the go-bag Jim had pressed into his hand at the tarmac. The clothes were Jim's but they were clean and fit just about the same and the fact that they were saturated in his beta's scent were a comfort to him. He felt safe, surrounded by pack.

After checking on his father once more and checking in with the deputy on guard, he approached the nurse's station with trepidation. Melissa had just come off shift but she still pulled him aside, a familiar face at his side while he spoke with the doctor. A tall lanky man with laugh lines at the corners of his eyes and a solemn demeanor. His competence and forthrightness raised Stiles' opinion of him immediately and the way he refused to sugar coat the situation only made Stiles trust him more. He needed honesty right now, not meaningless platitudes.

His father had been shot three times in the chest at close range. Penetrating Chest Trauma the doctor called it. The clinical coldness of the words made Stiles sick to his already empty stomach. His clavicle had been shattered and one lung had collapsed. He'd had to be intubated and put on oxygen and trying to stop his internal bleeding had been touch and go for a while. They'd has to replace all the blood in his body twice while in surgery but he was resting comfortably now, sedated and on pain killers, the only major worry now being infection.

Stiles swayed a little where he stood, blood draining from his face. Melissa led him over to a bank of waiting room chairs as the doctor went off to make his rounds, promising to be available when Stiles was ready to talk once again. She gently pressed her hand against the back of his neck until his head was between his knees and his breathing steadied.

As he concentrated on his breathing, she told him about his father had been coming out of the local 24 hour grocery just after midnight, no doubt buying some unhealthy snack foods. He had a tendency to stay up late nights, going over the cold case files in his study and always had a stash of snacks with him to munch on. It was one of the habits Stiles had inherited from him.

The clerk had heard the shots and called the police, the boy almost dismissing them as fireworks. It
was the flash of the muzzle that drew his gaze to the parking lot where his father had lay bleeding. There was no solid description of the shooter and surveillance videos only showed a figure garbed in an oversized hooded winter coat, masking all distinguishing characteristics. As far as she knew there were no suspects so far, no obvious reason why someone would want to kill the former sheriff.

The public place of the attempted killing made it even more disturbing. The shooter had to have been watching for some time, waiting for the right moment. There were no signs of robbery, his wallet and keys were next to the body, the car had been left open. That only left premeditated murder. Stiles was baffled. What had his father gotten into to draw that kind of heat? He wondered, repeating the question out loud to Melissa. They both jumped as a voice he'd prayed he never hear again said behind him:

"That's what I'd like to know."
The house seems silent, empty as he slides the key into the lock and steps inside. The sun is out and high in the sky by the time he leaves the hospital but the house is dark and cool and a bit untidy as he drops the go-bag near the door. He traces his finger tips along the walls, touching on the knick-knacks and picture frames. They come away dusty and he smiles softly at his father's attempts to keep the place tidy. The house is the same as he'd left it, the same as his mother had left it. it was like stepping back into a past where all was still right in the world where his mother and father were both happy and healthy and he still believed in happy endings.

He flops wearily into his dad's worn and extremely comfy recliner and inhales deeply, His father's life unraveling before him in that breath. Whispers of hungry man dinners and beer, old take out containers, homemade tacos (probably from Melissa) burger grease, (probably from their favourite diner), male sweat, wet dog, cordite and gun oil and the raw, natural musk that made up Janek 'John' Stillinski - retired lawman, proud husband and father and all around hero to his only child.

Stiles ran his hand along the afghan he woven the summer of his sixteenth birthday when his ADD had him searching for something, anything to do with his hands. It was brown and yellow and ugly as hell with tons of dropped stitches and snagged on his rough nails but the look of pride on his dad's face when Stiles had showed it too him that thanksgiving still made his eye sting whenever he thought about it. He slung it over his shoulders and pulled it tight around him like hug from his dad, too wired to sleep again so soon, too tired to get up and do the million things he really should be doing.

Seeing Derek in the flesh like that at the hospital after so many years had been like a punch in the gut. Damn, the man looked good in the khakis and badge. Standing there in the bright lights of the ward like he'd just stepped out of a law enforcement issue of GQ magazine. The mantle of Sheriff of Beacon Hills lay comfortably on his broad shoulders, the weight of his father's legacy tempering the raw power of his wolf writhing just below the surface. His mere presence exuding the sheer authority of his title. But then again, Derek Hale had always been breathtakingly beautiful with his kaleidoscope eyes and oh-so lickable jawline and Stiles had never been immune to his feral charm. It was his fucking attitude that had burned Stiles out so many years ago and it seemed like nothing had changed.

His handsome face was pinched for the entirety of their short, stilted conversation; Melissa looking back and forth between them in obvious discomfort as Derek would switch between talking to him like the victim's family and talking to him like a federal officer. Every so often Hale seemed to catch himself leaning into Stiles' space, his voice becoming softer and his stance relaxing. Then, as if doused with ice water, he would jerk back, his voice growing harsher as those eyebrows did an angry dance.

By the end of it Stiles just couldn’t rally enough energy to care what the fuck Hale's problem was and he let Melissa bundle him off to the house to get a shower and forty winks. She promised to send some food over and Hale promised to let him know of any leads that came up. He thought about protesting, demanding to be read in on the investigation immediately but after coming down off the Alpha hunt and everything with his father, he knew he needed some time to decompress.

Still, being that close to Derek had pure torture and he lauded himself for keeping himself together enough not climb the man like a mother fucking tree. The only thing stopping him was the memory of that night, that night when everything that he'd had inside of him had been ripped out viciously. He'd been hollowed out completely, left empty and alone and shattered into so many pieces. It had
taken more than ten years and three thousand miles to put his broken pieces together and he still wasn't whole, would never really be whole again.

It was something that he'd taken years to come to terms with and learned to live with and he'd be damned he'd let being close enough to the beta wolf to feel his delicious body heat derail everything he'd worked for for over a decade. Even if he did want to rip off all of the man's clothes and lick melted caramel off his body, to run his fingers through that full head of thick soft hair. Werewolves always ran hotter than normal, he knew that first hand and touching his tanned skin would be glorious. Touching his cock would be...

The doorbell brought him out of his thoughts with a jerk. It was Scott. He was frowning.

"Dude, you look like shit."

Stiles ran his fingers through his hair, having given up on it being anything but wild bed head.

"Thanks Asshole. This from the guy with a dog in his purse." he smirked.

Scott looked down at the trembling Chihuahua in the carry bag slung across his shoulder, shrugged and pushed his way past Stiles into the house, leaving no choice but to follow him. In the kitchen, he popped the lid of the tupper ware container he held in his other hand and stuck it in the microwave on nuke then hefted the dog gently out of the bag and set it on the floor and set out a bowl of kibble that it sniffed nervously at then started eating, it's claws scrabbling against the linoleum floors.

Stiles leaned a hip against the kitchen counter and watched his friend. Scott was taller, something he never realized from Skype and from Facebook pictures. He hadn't seen his friend, his brother in the flesh in more than five years. Scott hadn't been able to afford the trips out, especially through college and saving enough money to buy Deaton's Vet Clinic when he retired and nothing else on earth would have made Stiles set foot on the Hills of his own volition. So they'd been cyber Bros for the longest time.

Scott finished filling the small water bowl and manhandled the hot container out onto the kitchen table. Then, without skipping a beat he stepped into Stiles space and gathered him in a warm octopus hug, not moving as Stiles hugged him back, got fidgety, tried to pull away gently, tried to laugh the awkwardness off, then finally sagged in his friends arms. Then Scott hugged him even tighter, ignoring the damp spot on his shoulder when he finally pulled away. He pushed a spoon into Stiles' hand and nudged him into a chair, watching calmly as he decimated a bowl of thick and hearty beef stew watching silently as he ate. Not realizing until now how starved he was, it was only when the Stiles spoon hit the bottom of the bowl that Scott spoke again.

"Better?"

Stiles considered shrugging it off, saying he was fine but with being so far from home, so far from his pack, he felt alone and afraid. He felt a wriggling near his ankle, heard the scritch scratch of tiny claws. He bent, scooping up the tiny dog and holding it close to his chest for warmth and comfort.

"Hey Tabasco" he cooed softly, "Guess you miss Dad too huh little guy?"

Tabasco, or 'Basco' as his father called him, was a rescue dog that Scott had blackmailed John into 'fostering' nearly a year ago. Scott had used his puppy eyes to con everyone he knew into 'fostering' a pet, knowing full well that half of the pets would be adopted by the time the fostering period was over.

Stiles had teased him mercilessly about using his superpowers for evil but not as much as he'd teased
his father about owning a teacup dog. He'd secretly thanked Scott afterwards because his dad had been freshly retired and had been looking sad in their weekly video chats.

Basco was shy around strangers but soon grew curious and friendly within minutes. Already he was licking Stiles' chin and wriggling his small body around to find a better spot on his chest to lay down. He was loud and fiercely protective of John and for that he could do no wrong in Stiles' eyes.

Scott had been near tears with laughter as he told Stiles on Skype about how Tabasco had been named. The former sheriff had refused to divulge the story, even in the face of endless needling from his only child. Scott was easier to convince, on the condition that Stiles would tease his father too much about it.

Apparently the retired sheriff had been sneaking some fatty foods from the local food fair passed both Melissa and Scott, Stiles' eyes and ears in Beacon Hills and had brought home a heaping serving of Lavabomb hot wings and a six pack of beer. He'd made it home without running into anyone who would tattle on him and had just set up in front of the TV with the game about to start when the doorbell rang.

Grumbling he'd jumped up to answer it and spent the next few minute fielding close heavily innuendoed questions about volunteering at the community garden from the thrice widowed Nell from four houses down. By the time he'd extracted himself from becoming her fourth late husband, the newly fostered Chihuahua had somehow hopped up on the recliner, downed five of the pepper doused chicken wings and was convulsing on the floor with its eyes bugged out.

The next few minutes were a panicky blur as John called Scott, yelling at him to get over to the house right now, wringing his hands and hovering as the vet checked the whimpering dog with utmost care. It turned out that the dog was not sick or dying, merely reacting to the heat of the sauce. Under Scott's direction, John had hand fed the dog small pieces of milk soaked bread, even cleaning up when it came back up.

By the time Scott had let himself out the front door, Tabasco had been given his name and both dog and owner were conked out on the recliner. it was safe to say that Hilltop's famous Lavabomb wings never graced the Stillinski residence again.

He felt a hand on his shoulder and he blinked up at his brother's concerned face. Scott soon had him bundled up the stairs and into the shower, guiding him with nudges as he did the needful and flopped face first into his old bed. he groaned at the feel of cool freshly changed sheets, flailing his hand feebly as his friend scooped up the dog and backed out of the room, saying Melissa's be by later and that he's keep Basco at the clinic until John was back on his feet.

Sleep ruled him.

-----------------------------------------------------------------

After checking in with his dad at the hospital, making a call to his team his team and making a stop at the car rental he found himself sitting in front of the Sheriff's office, hands clenched against the steering wheel as he stared at the glass doors, trying to gather up enough courage to go inside.

John hadn't woken as yet but doctors were making pleased noises about his healing and the infection being not such a risk to his fragile system. After raiding the vending machine for cola, he'd spent the next couple hours typing reports on his laptop and sweet talking the old ladies in the room across the hall whenever he got up for a stretch. After stuffing his face full of slightly stale cookies, getting his cheeks pinched and even his ass pinched, he would check in with the nurses' station and the deputy on duty at his dad's door and head back to the reports.
He’d called his team from the room, getting through to Jim almost immediately. The team was fine, tying up loose ends of the Alpha hunt and wrapping up all the paperwork and chasing down any leads to what Kali had uttered before she died. Jim had passed the phone to Coz then Clem with TK hacking the call and chiming in. It was hell on his minutes but touching base with his pack left him feeling buoyed and ready to handle what was to come.

The second call was more difficult. His first call had been just before he'd boarded the plane and he'd promised to call again when things had settled. He knew that waiting this long was pushing it but he hadn't been ready to rip the band aid off just yet. He pressed 2 on his speed dial.

"Floros Flowers...when you think of flowers, think of ours. What can I arrange for you today?"

He chuckled, slouching into the chair at the sound of her voice. "You still trying out slogans yaiyia?"

He had to hold the phone against his chest to quiet her joyous scream, chuckling as her heard her call across her flower shop, yelling for his babci to ‘get off her duff and come to the phone now, it’s Stiles, what do you mean Stiles who? your grandson you fishwife, the koutavi you raised from a babe, and yes I called you a fishwife you fishwife, just be grateful that's all I called you, you know I don't like to curse in front of the boy!’

CzesŁawa Benedykta Floros, Benny to her friends, Babcia to her only grandson was a silver haired, foul mouthed, editor of a small Art Magazine and head of the strongest Coven in Bonita Springs, Florida. She had come to America from the old country with a single change of clothes and a baby in her belly. She'd married as a young girl, on the order of her family and her coven mother, to the drunken heir to an old Polish Magical family to solidify the ties between the two great magical clans.

She'd been the last daughter of a last daughter and had basically been seen as an afterthought, a thing to be sold or traded by her family. Her husband, a second son of a first daughter had been a petty man, cruel when drunk and her life had been hell for the few years that she’d been with him. There were many nights when she would cry herself to sleep, lightly touching the English words sloped across her side. For a long time she'd never understood what they'd meant, secretly teaching herself English until the words "Holy Shit are you okay?" became her only joy.

It wasn't until the day she'd been hanging out the laundry, swollen with child that everything had come to a head. Her husband had returned from the pub, filled with drink and the idea that she'd trapped him in a loveless marriage because of her siren blood. One blow too close to her unborn child and she showed him exactly how much supernatural blood ran through her veins. Two months later she stepped unto American shores, newly divorced and just about due when she met her soul mate by tripping over her one day in Central Park.

The other line picks up with a click " Wnuk?"

"Hey Grams" he sighs

"What's wrong wnuk?, you don't sound right. Is it your father?, How is he? What did the doctors say?"

He tells them the stone cold truth, they hate sugar coating as much as he does.

"We'll have the coven say a prayer to Artemis for him."

"And light a candle for him at St. Cecelia's"

"As long as we don't run into Father O'Malley, the Irish bastard, he hates us cause we're lesbians."
"He doesn't hate us cause we're lesbians, he hates us because you won the grand prize at the bottle stall at the church fair last year."

"really?... that douchenozzle has been giving me the hairy eyeball at the farmer's market since forever for a bottle of hooch?"

"That was a bottle of 50 year old Glenfiddich Single Malt woman."

"Yes yes, now I remember. That was a lovely sippa. Hmmm, that was the night of the winter solstice and we got high as kites after the ceremony for Morag's 70th birthday bash and kept toasting to all the girls in the coven's health and then we snuck off to have sex in the ...

"Yiayia Tiny!" Stiles laughs, sinking into his chair with a squeak, "oh my God T M I ok?"

Stiles' Yiayia Tiny or Elpida Elisavet Photine Floros was the American born daughter of Greek immigrants, a natural floral elemental and a dedicated acolyte of Artemis. Although usually sweet tempered with a tiny gold finch at her spirit animal, the Greek blood ran hot in her veins. She was fierce in protecting those she loved and, standing at an amazonian six foot two, never backed down from a good brawl.

The day the words "I think my water just broke" in hesitant block letters blossomed on the back of her neck she'd been beside herself with joy. Her parents had been concerned that her soul mate was a woman and a pregnant woman at that but Tiny had been too happy to care. Artemis had smiled upon her and found her worthy.

Her life since then had been dedicated to making herself the best person she could be for her future mate and child and yes, she would love the child as her own, and no it did not matter that a large percent of soul mates never met or that there was an off chance that it could be a one sided bond. She knew the Goddess would never put her through that pain, and that her true mate was out there somewhere waiting, yearning for her just as she yearned for them.

She'd been sunning herself in the Park during a College road trip to New York when fate appeared and hit her in the side of the head with a soft worn sandal and a panicked yelp. Both women had found their missing half that day. That was also the day Stiles mother had been born Beata Ksenia, a remarkable young woman and a powerful witch destined for great things and who would one day meet her soul mate in one Janek Stilinski, a skinny kid from of the Detroit with big dreams of the New York Police Academy and not one drop of supernatural blood in his body.

It had not been happily ever after though. When Beata decided to marry Janek and start a family right away instead of going to college it had driven a wedge between mothers and daughter. Words were said and lines were drawn and many regrets were drowned in alcohol, each side too prideful to capitulate.

It had taken Beata's grim diagnosis to get her to make contact with her mothers again but by then it had been too late to do any more than cling to whatever time they'd had left. After her death, their steadily helped young Stiles and his father put their shattered lives back together. It had been touch and go for a while though, they'd pushed to get Stiles to come back with them to Florida for the same training his mother'd had, arguing that if he wasn't trained to control his gift then he could lose control and harm someone or himself.

But Stillinski wouldn't budge, even going as far as to threaten them with court proceeding if they didn't back down. His wife had chosen this life for them, training their son from an early age to tap into his gift and to control it. It was her dying wish that Stiles stay with his father and he was going to be damned if he'd let someone take his son away from him.
Too heartsick to argue, filled with such sorrow at the wasted years they could have spent with their daughter the two women had agreed and returned to Florida soon after, only seeing their grandson during brief visits and long phone calls, never letting him see the underlying tension and stretched between them and his father. It was only years later when bitter desperation and fear for his son’s life would force Janek to do the one thing that both he and late wife never thought they would. With one arm clutching his sobbing son to him, the other gripping the phone tight enough to crack the casing, he asked them to come and take his child.

Now, sitting in his rental car in front of the Sheriff’s office, he wished his grandmother's were here to give him a swift kick in the pants. They'd listened back at the hospital when he'd babbled on about what it was like to be back in Beacon Hills, to be back so close to Derek. It’d been hard to articulate over the phone and he’d felt stupid after a few tries. It had been Benny who'd patiently pulled the words out of him as Tiny hummed in his ears, soothing his jagged nerves.

He could just hear them now. Be Brave Engonós in Yiayia's gentle contralto or Do or Do not, there is No Try, in Babcia's amused and accented almost musical lilt.

"Ok little engine", he took a deep breath, opening the car door and stepping out "time to go."
Stepping into the Beacon Hills County Sheriff's office was like coming home again. Funny how It felt more familiar to him than his own home. But then again his house was basically a time capsule to his mother and had not seen much in the way of changes since her death. The sheriff's office on the other hand was his father's domain and here was where he'd spent most of his formative years, sitting in the corner of his father's office doing homework as his dad worked on his cases, a familiar and comfortable silence settling between them.

When he got too fidgety he would roam the bullpen, chatting up the deputies, asking questions about fingerprinting and car searches and soaking up information like a sponge or raiding the vending machine for Little Debbie's (for him) and granola bars (for his dad) and or peeping in on interrogations. Well trying to anyway, his father had always possessed a sixth sense when it came to Stiles doing what he shouldn't.

A push of the glass double doors and it's like stepping back in time. The smell of gun oil, starched khakis and stale coffee, donut glaze and fingerprint ink pull him under, to a underlaying layer of sweat and desperation, old lipstick and stale alcohol.

There is a blonde at the counter, her eyes flash gold in the harsh lighting at the sight of him. Werewolf. Beta. Her hair was pulled in a tight bun and her lips were blood red. Her khakis were pressed to perfection with seams that could cut. Her badge and brass were polished to a high shine, the name Reyes in dark relief.

He remembered a Reyes from Elementary School, a pale little girl with wild blonde locks. Erica, if he remembered correctly. She spent a lot of time out of school because she'd been sick, spent what time she had time in school ghosting through the halls. He remembered the day she'd had a seizure in school, one of the last days before he'd left. He remembered how scared he was when the school nurse yelled at him and Scott to hold the girl's flailing legs while a teacher forced a spoon in her mouth.

After that ambulance had come and gone, the two boys had been sitting on the bench in front of the principal's office, exhausted when the sheriff had arrived. He'd hugged both boys to him, whispering how proud he was of them for helping out. kissing the tops of their heads as they sagged against him. Erica had been home schooled for the rest of the year and when they'd gone to visit her, her parents had told them coldly that she wasn't well enough for visitors. But as he and Scott pedaled away from the house, he'd glanced over his shoulder and saw her at the upstairs window, pale and sad against the white curtains.

She was different now, vibrant and savagery barely contained, as if her skin seemed to fit in her better. He'd seen others like her before, those who took to their wolf so completely that it was hard to determine one from the other. He'd rarely seen it in bittnvulfs though, they often still fought the wolf instincts for years after they were bitten, that slight shifting under the skin as if in discomfort. Bonvulfs like the Hales, who were born and grew up as weres, were often closer to and more accepting of their wolf selves than their bitten counterparts.

She gives his federal badge and his body a slow once over, her red lips quirked up in one corner and waved him through to the back where the Sheriff's office was. Derek was turned away, leaning over surveillance photos spread across a table with a dark skinned deputy, the muscles in his broad back flexing under the uniform, drawing the eye to where down to his perfect ass in those pants made Stiles just want to fall to his knees in worship. Sweet Merciful Ancestors dat ass. He could feel a heated blush crawling up his neck and tried to force it back down by strength of will alone.
He kept his knees locked right where they were (thank you very much) and cleared his throat, manfully ignoring the blonde wolf snickering at his back. Derek's head whipped around at the sound and their eyes caught. Warmth blossomed just inside of his ribcage as the werewolf's gaze raked his face and down his neck like the dull scratch of trimmed nails. It was a physical heat that seemed to slow time until it was just the two of them that mattered in the whole universe. His heart quickened in his chest and brought up a hand to rub the spot, pulling in deep breaths of that delicious caramel and sex that was rolled up in Derek fucking Hale.

Derek's eyes were slightly glazed, dilated to the point where they seemed almost black, the bright blue of his Beta wolf flashing like a ring of flame around the edge. His chest heaved, taking in a deep breath as if he could devour Stiles then and there, taking a half step towards him and ... sneezed violently, shaking his head like a dog and bringing them back to the present in an instant.

When Derek looked up again, his eyes were cold and his face marred by a deep frown as he folded his arms across his chest. The room seemed to drop by several degrees and the deputies shifted uncomfortably. Stiles felt thrown by the sudden shift. Dude... what the fuck had just happened?

Conversation is stilted as Hale shows him the surveillance footage from the parking lot the night his father was shot. The other deputy, introduced as Vernon Boyd is their Tech Analyst who, in his quiet yet dry way, explained how he'd been able to clean up the crappy footage somewhat.

Forty two seconds. Forty two seconds from when his father left the grocery, whistling a catchy tune (according to the store clerk) and searching for his keys to when three shots from a stranger's gun left him bleeding out on the asphalt. Forty two seconds. Less than a minute. The answer to ultimate question of life, the universe and everything. Forty two seconds.

Stiles makes them watch it again. Then again. they watch it at half speed, then quarter. Then frame by frame, his whiskey eyes soaking in every detail, every nuance and shadow. He watches the victim (he can't think of this as his father and watch for what he needs to see) and he watches the gunman. Every time is the same. His father, no, the victim fumbles for his keys and looks up as a figure, just a blob in the footage approaches. An arm is raised, three muzzle flashes and the victim is down, grocery bag ripped, spilling jerky and peeps over the tarmac.

"Again" he's grateful his voice is steady. The victim falls. Jerky and peeps.

"Again" the gunman walks calmly away, to the west, maybe. The victim falls. Jerky and peeps.

"Again" not enough footage, not a wide enough angle of the lens. The victim falls. Jerky and peeps.

"Again" can't tell if it's a man or a woman. Over sized winter coat, black hood up, maybe navy blue. no discernible limp or deformity. The victim falls. Jerky and peeps.


"Ag- " a hand on his arm.

He tears his eyes away from the screen and looks to Derek. Hale looks blurry, why is Hale blurry? He blinks rapidly and feels the tears on his cheeks. Boyd is checking something on the computer and Reyes is shuffling photos. He wipes at his eyes quickly with his sleeve and nods at Hale. Derek nods and turns back to the photos.

Stiles mind ticks as Hale and Reyes murmur over the surveillance photos, their voices washing over his senses as his mind races. It's not a mugging, nothing was stolen. Not a car jacking, the vehicle left
behind also. No attempts to steal it from the impound lot either. Can't rule out random psychopath but all clues point to this being a hit and that meant …

"Surveillance."

Derek and Reyes look up. She gestures to the photos. "This was the only camera we could get of the scene."

Stiles shook his head "No, the shooter, had to know when my da… when the time was right. They had to have been watching, waiting. That time of night the place is pretty deserted, everywhere else would have been to busy or too bright. They couldn't shoot him at home, the neighbors would see, would hear. They couldn't get him at the station or at Melissa's or at the dog park even."

"Too many people, too much daylight" Derek murmurs.

"Too many potential witnesses" Boyd agrees.

An idea pops into his head. "That's the grocery on McGillvery Street right? The one across from Panda Panda?"

Derek left eyebrow does a mesmerizing dance that utterly derails Stile's train of though for a nano second. He rallies though and continues.

"Panda Panda has the best fucking Chim Chum in the state and my dad and I always went there on the last Sunday of the month just for that, well and because the Manager was a sweet lady who thought I was cute and would always give us a free serving of Khanom Tako. It was also the only place Dad would eat vegetables without acting as if he was being made to walk the plank."

"As cute as that walk down memory lane is Jefe Federale... " Erica rolls her eyes "...what does that have to with the shooting?"

"Patience Padawan. All things are good for who those wait to come."

He continued as she flushed and choked on a laugh, smiling at Derek's angry dancing brows.

"...and the moral of this story kiddies is that I remember my father stopping at the ATM before every meal there because Panda Panda only took cash. The ATM was located right next to the restaurant. The restaurant across the street from the crime scene. And as we all know from watching too much CSI, Las Vegas and Miami, that ATM cameras take pictures every fifteen seconds and they are never erased or recorded over."

"Shit" Boyd chuffs "He found us a second camera. By the way Stiles, I'm partial to New York myself. Big Gary Sinise fan"

Stiles barks a laugh and flips out his phone.

"Who are you calling?" Derek's voice is gruff and Stiles has to curl his toes in his shoes not to show what that does to him.

"I know a guy" he smiles, not bothering to step away because he knows they'll eavesdrop shamelessly. The phone connects on the first ring

"Give it to me"

"Hey TK, I need you."
"Anything you need Little Red"

He gives him the needful and Boyd forwards him the footage to see if the federal computers can clear up the images any further.

Within a minute TK's worked his Tech Fu and is forwarding the ATM footage and both Erica and Derek look on in surprise as Boyd gives a full on smile.

"I think you've made a fan of Deputy Boyd" Stiles teases good naturedly. TK chuckles.

"oh, really? He is quite the looker from his academy file. You know I like my coffee strong, black and sweet..." he drawls. "…but I love my whiskey neat."

That warm honey voice breaks the ice that had been building deep in Stiles' chest. God, he misses his pack something awful and the other's must hear it in his voice because Hale all but hisses his next breath.

"You know you're my favourite, Don't front" Stiles laughs softly, ending the call.

Its awkward after that, they crowd around Boyd's display, close but not touching. Watching screen capture after capture in the days before and after the shooting. He can feel Hale's breath on the side of his neck. He knows that if he just turns to the side and up, he could just capture the other man's mouth with his. Or he could just lean back and Derek's neck would be right there, begging for a tongue to lick its pulse point or run just the edge of his teeth over his adam's apple. To see if that heady caramel and sex smell translated to taste as well and if touching skin to skin would still send a quickening along his nerves the same way it had done so many years ago.

"There"

Erica's voice, sharp and triumphant. There on the screen, the victims van pulling into the parking lot, several frames go by, no change then the victim exiting the store, a dark blob of the gunman to the corner of the shot, the next frame shows the victims slumped to the ground, the gunman walking away, bringing an arm up to their chest.

"Wait, go back" Stiles says. "is that the gun they're holding?"

"No. the gun is in their right hand, that's the left." Derek grunts, "Boyd, can you clear it up any?"

Boyd shakes his head, "this is the best we can do here"

Stiles tilts his head to the side slightly, missing completely the way Derek stares at his neck, snarls and looks away. Stiles mimes the action the shooter is making, his mind racing.

"A phone" he shouts, flailing a little "they're making a call!"

His phone rings and he puts it on speaker phone. "TK… they made a call."

"I'm already on it boss. I already checked the phone towers in the vicinity and only one pinged within minutes of the shooting. The call was three seconds, heading east. It bounced a few times, still heading east until it stopped at the high school of all places. One more call is made and the signal cuts off there."

They all slump at the dead end.

"Good thing I don't let things like loss of signal stop me isn't it?"
A grin breaks over Stiles face. "How could I ever doubt you Tai-Chan? We kneel at the master's feet."

The warm honey voice hums in fond exasperation. "You'd better. Fortunately for you, the school installed motion sensors and cameras for security this summer."

Derek nods "Vandalism. Some school property was destroyed."

Then Hale smiles that feral grin and Stiles is glad he's already sitting because it's like looking directly into the sun. He barely stops himself from belting out phantom of the opera put your hands at the level of your eyes…. hands at the level

"You got them didn't you" Derek growls and Stiles is half hard in seconds. Thankfully, the three frikkin' werewolves he's in close quarters with don't seem to notice. Well two if the way Erica's smirking at him is any indication. Now Boyd's glancing at him out of the corner of his eyes, then glancing behind him to where Hale is standing.

Well fuck.

Before Stiles could wrack his brain for a spell, any spell that would allow the earth to swallow him whole, a file appears on Boyd's computer. It's a picture file and it opens in seconds. He recognizes the back of the school from when he and his parents had gone to lacrosse games when he'd been little, his mother had been a huge fan of the game.

There's a figure, caught under the security light, stuffing a small package behind some water pipes, same black coat, same dark hoodie. This time though the hoodie had been swept back, revealing a head of pinned up curls. A few strands float down to frame a pretty face. It's a face that stiles knows all to well.

"Is that….? It can't be" Stiles gasps, turning to Derek.

Derek is staring at the screen, his eyes ablaze with blue fire. His fangs have dropped and his claws are digging into the flesh of his palms, blood dripping down his fists unto the floor. His face is as white as Stiles imagines his own to be.

He starts feeling a little light-headed as his eyes are drawn back to the face on the screen, smug with self satisfaction. He can't seem to look away. This was the shooter. This was the person who tried to kill his father in cold blood. Who left his Dad gasping for life on the cold, hard tarmac. Flung away like the jerky and peeps.

"Who is that?" Erica asks softly, clearly not wanting to provoke Derek who looked ready to rip out someone's throat, with his teeth. Stiles opens his mouth but the words get stuck in his throat so Hale answers, his voice almost a wolf's snarl.

"Her name is Argent, Kate Argent."
Chapter 6

They'd never made it to the movie that night.

Stiles had been waiting for weeks for opening night. His favourite comic book was being made into an equally awesome movie and he'd been chomping at the bit for weeks in order to go. He'd already re-read all of the comics in anticipation, watched the trailer ten million times, had hours long debates about origin stories and parallel universes until they were blue in the face and Scott had to scramble for his inhaler and waited with in line for hours after school for tickets to go on sale. Unfortunately Scott and his mother had planned to visit Scott's Abuela for the summer and he'd been seeing the movie there so Stiles had begged his dad to go with him, even so far as putting together a twenty three slide power point presentation on the matter.

Janek had watched at his son closely as he clicked from slide to slide, babbling on about timelines and reboots, practically vibrating out of his skin in excitement and had caved completely by slide seventeen. He hadn't seen his only child this happy or excited in years. And it would also be a great way to have some special father son bonding time.

As the newly elected Sheriff, Janek Stillinski had been working long hours trying to pull the department up by its bootstraps. The previous Sheriff had been slow and lax with policies and equipment maintenance and fast and loose with fund appropriations. The department had been ready to collapse upon itself when Janek took office and In the few months since his appointment, there'd been slow but steady improvements.

So he would juggled his shifts and treat his son to a night on the town a la Stilinski. Chim Chum at Panda Panda then a barrel of buttered popcorn, juju bees, red vines and soda sold by the gallon at the theatre after which they would head to Baskin Robbins where Stiles would try to stuff his face with at least five of the thirty one flavours and describe the entire movie to his dad as if the man hadn't been in the cinema with him.

Panda Panda had been excellent as always, Mrs. Ang split her time between complaining about her no-good couch potato husband and doting on Stiles while he blushed and giggled at the way she would say "chair turnip" or "sofa onion". They would share a wink over the boy's head as he tried to teach her the correct phrase which she would never get right and he'd would giggle again.

They were walking across the vast parking lot in good spirits and full bellies. The Sheriff had parked at the cinema earlier and Stiles had the tickets secure in his pocket so there was no hurry and the night was warm and he ruffled his son's hair, resting his hand on Stiles' shoulder. Stiles is explaining a complex side story that is so very integral to understanding the movie's subplot when he flails his little packet of Khanom Dok Jok right out of his hand.

John rolls his eyes and Stiles all but wails, running off in search of the fried flower cookies Mrs. Ang and pressed into their hands as the left. He's back within seconds, cookies in hand and shocked expression on his face. It takes the Sheriff a minute or so to get the embarrassed Stiles to tell him what's wrong. Finally, biting his lip, Stiles silently points to a car just a few meters away.

It's a dark sedan, nondescript but its windows are fogged and it seemed to be rocking a steady beat. Janek looks down at his wide eyed son and sighs. On one hand he's off duty but on the other hand this was a public place with a lot of family traffic. Whoever was in the car was going to have to take their' business' elsewhere, like to a Hotel.

He motions his son to stay there and makes his way towards the car gingerly. He'll let them go with a
warning this time. No need to get official about this. He pulls out his trusty penlight and taps against the misted glass. The rocking stops and he knocks again.

'Sheriff's Department, open up."

There is a shuffling inside the car, hushed voices, and soon the window rolls down a bit and he can see flashes of skin, of clothing hastily thrown on. He flashes the light in and the light catches on green eyes flashing gold.

"Derek… Derek Hale?" he blinks in surprise.

Janek recognizes him as a lacrosse player from Beacon Hills High School. Stiles had picked up his late mother’s obsession with the game and often dragged him out to the home games. In the back of his mind he can hear Stiles’ seemingly nonchalant tap dance at the mention of Derek’s name. He’d been a fan of the older boy ever since he’d made first line last year.

"He’s my favourite" Stiles would tell him everyday, many times a day, before during and after the games.

"Uh… hey Sheriff" Derek greets nervously, trying to look relaxed but failing utterly. He is flushed and breathing hard, his shirt is on inside out and a trail of hickeys adorn his neck. Janek shines the beams on Derek’s companion but she ducks her head shyly, her hair blocks her face. "… uh… is there a problem? If there is, uh, I mean… we were just parked for a while. Coming from a movie and all with my girl Katie here. Yeah, we just came from a movie and were just hanging out you know. Heheh, we could leave if you want, in fact we were just leaving, like right now"

Out of the corner of his eye can see Stiles trying not to bust a gut laughing at his Lacrosse idol babbling like an idiot and decides to put the boy out of his misery. He motions for Hale to stop talking, intending to just let them off with a warning when he catches a glimpse of the ‘girlfriends’ face. She older looking, early twenties and his gut gives a twist. The look she gives him, just a glance of cold calculation, puts him on alert. There's wrong about this, he's just not sure what.

He motions them out of the car, pinning a squirming, slowly advancing Stiles back to his spot with a quick glare. They stumble out of the car, Derek red in the face and fumbling with his zipper, the girl straightening her pencil skirt. She flips her blonde hair away from her face with a smile that seems almost wicked.

"I hope we're not in too much trouble Officer" her voice his husky, the word 'officer' dripping with sex far beyond her supposed years. He narrows his eyes at them both. Just hen his son squeaks out.

"Miss Sterling?" his whiskey coloured eyes are wide and luminous in the street light as she glances from her to his father.

"That Ms. Sterling from school. She teaches Girl's Gym and the Archery Club while Ms. Wallace is on Maternity Leave."

Derek seems confused. "Her name is Silverson, Katie Silverson and she works at Bean There, Cone That"

"Are you sure son?" janek asks. Stiles nodded.

"Dude, she's been at the school for upwards of three months. Half the boys in school have the biggest crush on her, some of the girls too. That's Ms. Sterling for sure."

Janek frowns, raising an eyebrow at the female in question. Derek’s face goes from embarrassed to
"Three months? That's when we… I don't understand. Katie, what is he talking about?"

"That's a good question Miss…? Janek agreed, "Identification please If you don't mind."

'Katie' stilts, taking them all in with a tight smile. Slowly, she reaches into the car as if to pick up her purse and suddenly swings, clipping the sheriff to the side of the head and he crumples to the ground.

To Stiles it seems like slow motion, seeing his father fall to the ground. His mind can't register anything but the thought that his father is hurt and could be dead like how his mother is dead and that he would be an orphan and put into a home far away and by the time Scott came back from his Abuela's Stiles would be gone and this was the instant that he lost his whole entire world.

All he can see is Kate yelling at Derek to let go from the solid hold he has on her wrist, slapping him across the face, scrapping his cheek with her ring. All he can see is the woman who took his world away. The woman who hurt his dad, the only person he had left.

With a wordless scream he flies at her, taking her to the ground with a full body tackle, hitting her about the head and chest as he straddles her, screaming at her for killing his dad. Its all a red haze until strong arms circle him and pull him gently away, a familiar voice murmuring into his hair. It was his father, he was alive. Stiles burst into relieved tears as he is pulled off of the prone woman and can only watch and cry as Janek quickly flips his substitute teacher over and secures her hands with a belt in lieu of handcuffs.

It's a circus after that with sirens and ambulances and people coming out of the theatre to rubberneck. Stiles is sipping on some water and watching as an EMT tends to the nasty scratch on Derek's cheek. The older boy looks lost, sitting on the back of the ambulance, wrapped in a silver shock blanket. Stiles had overheard snatches of conversation from the other officers, words like assault and statutory rape muttered in low voices.

He felt bad for Derek, he didn't look anything like the cool sports hero he would see on the lacrosse field. He looked scared and lonely. Stiles knew what that felt like. It wasn't anything he ever wish on another person. He sidled up to the older boy's side just as the EMT patted him on the back and announced him clear.

"What a trip huh? I mean like you leave your house one day hella sure that this or that is going to happen today and a whole 'nother thing happens that you never expected and you're like Say What?. My mom used to say that it was a whole 'nother kettle of fish but I could never understand what that was all about I mean why would you have a kettle of fish, do you get a kettle and fill it with fish or do the fish come with the kettle? Think about it, who would want a kettle full of fish anyway? What if they wanted to make tea? They'd have like… boiled fish water, totally gross y'know?"

He paused in his epic babble at the look on the other boy's face. Derek's face was white as he scrambled to tear off the leather cuff he had around his left wrist. Underneath, swirled on the slightly paler and surprisingly graceful wrist lay the very same words, scrawled into Stiles' neat and careful script.

Stiles at first blushed and averted his gaze, never seeing another's soul mark except for his father's faded scars and Scott's flowery 'Thanks' located on his hip. But his eyes were soon drawn back to the naked wrist and seeing his words took the very breath from his lungs. He dragged his gaze up to meet Derek's, a series of emotions running riot on the older boy's face.

Realization, disbelief and sorrow warred, morphing finally into anger and then blinding rage. With a
snarl, he leapt to his feet, blanket falling forgotten off his broad shoulders. He pushed at Stiles, sending him stumbling back a few steps before spinning on his heel to stalk away, snarling over his shoulder the words that made Stiles heart sink into his shoes.

"FUCK OFF"

It takes at least a half an hour for them to get through to somebody in the Governor's Office who can make heads or tails of the situation. Another twenty minutes for that person to call the jail that Kate had been sentenced too. She'd gotten fifteen years for her crimes and had gotten another two slapped on for trying to escape her first year. As far as Stiles was concerned the bitch could rot in a dungeon for the rest of her life for what she'd done.

Derek prowls the large conference room like the wolf he is, having been banned from the phone by Reyes after the third moron from the Governor's office. Boyd is conferencing with TK, tracing Kate's movements backwards. Stiles leans a hip against the far table, observing the others in stony silence. Behind his sharp eyes his mind is a riot of emotions, half birthed fears and rage that this woman, this monster could be out on the streets of California and no one had been informed. He knew for certain that at least three databases would have pinged her release. One of his first directives as leader of Special Branch was to be informed of any and all changed to Argents incarcerated status. His father had done the same thing through the Sheriffs Department and he was sure that Hale would have kept it up.

But there had been no word. Not one. Something was rotten in Denmark and it pissed Stiles off something awful. A commotion at the door draws his attention. The Hales have arrived, headed by Derek's Alpha, an extremely pissed off Laura Hale, accompanied by her enforcers, her uncle Peter and younger sister Cora.

Stiles remembers Peter from the Kate's trial, his handsome face cold and solemn at the back of the courtroom as he watched Kate try to charm the Jury, shedding crocodile tears on the stand. She'd almost succeeded with getting off with a reduced sentence until Derek had been somehow convinced to testify, his genuine love for this woman and the breathless betrayal that left him raw. That had left all who witnessed his riveting testimony raw and cringing. Stiles had looked back at the older man during Derek's halting speech and stumbling words and had seen him clenching his nails into his thighs, puncturing his thick black slacks and drawing blood, his eyes solid gold under hooded lids the only signs of any outward emotion.

Now, as he stand next to his alpha, his eyes flash blue and Stiles wonders what trauma had caused that shift in eye colour. As if feeling his gaze, Peter turns his head to look at Stiles. A second ticks by and recognitions then realization blooms in those irises and he quickly looks between Stiles and Derek, his eyebrows raising in surprise. A broad grin flashes across his face and then he's back to being concerned beta wolf enforcer.

Before Derek can fill them in on their progress, there are new comers at the door. A tall man, handsome with a trimmed beard and a severe and beautiful woman step into the room. Laura all but growls, stepping forward.

"What do you think you are doing here Argent?"
That throws Stiles for a loop. Argent? Oh yes, he remembers him now. Chris Argent, Kate's brother had been at the sentencing with their father, the now late Gerard (may his soul not rest in peace, the bloody bastard *ptui ptui*) He'd been clean shaven then, a sullen and angry young man caught in his father's shadow. He looked less sullen and more grim as he stared the Hale alpha down. It was the woman that spoke though. She showed no family resemblance to the Argents. Wife maybe. Matching wedding bands confirm it.

"Katlyn is still family Alpha Hale and we are concerned that she may be out in the world alone and in need of our help. Surely your kind can understand that blood runs thicker?" Like butter couldn't melt in her fucking mouth.

"My Kind? Why you…” the Hale Alpha all but growls, eyes flashing red "if I didn't know better I would say that you don't seem to surprised to hear that Kate's roaming the streets once again. I bet you're ecstatic to have you're old hunting buddy back aren't you. Have a big ol' Psycho family reunion."

"I admit that Katlyn may have been a bit misguided…”

"A BIT MISGUIDED?" Laura Hale steps up to the wife, a bit of fang dropping. Derek grabs for his alpha's arm, Chris stepping closer to his missus. The other Hale Betas are dropping claws and the deputies are inching towards their holsters. The room is thick and heavy with anger and the stench of it tickles Stiles nose. Less than a minute in the same room together and they're already at each others throats.

Stiles has reached his limit. He's really seen…

"ENOUGH" he roars, all heads snap to him.

Fuck. He hates using his Alpha Voice. He rarely uses it, even within his own pack. It's a heady rush of power that he could get used to too quickly and he's learned the hard way that when he's riding high on power that he dabbles in being a raging asshole. His grams and their entire coven as well as Eugene the Unicorn had given him the silent treatment for over a month the last time and he'd sworn off power trips of any kind.

"That's enough" he repeats in a soft and deadly voice now that he's got their undivided attention. "There is a killer out there and we don't have time for this bullshit. First thing's first, we need to know where Kate Argent is. TK? I don't want bureaucratic platitudes. I need physical eyes on the target. Is she there or not?"

His head whips to where Boyd has TK on speakerphone.

"it's just been confirmed boss. Argent is MIA. Faked a sickness and got herself transferred to a medical facility, reduced security because of good behaviour (collective eye roll). Reported missing two weeks ago. The Warden is 'aggressively looking into' the failure in communications."

Two weeks. Good God.

"Put out an APB on her and make a list of all known accomplices, any one she would go to. You can help with that Argent. She had to have had help to get this far and the last thing we need is for this Bitch to have back up. Boyd, keep working with TK on tracing Kate's steps backward. Sheriff, we need to get Kate's Face out to the public and set up a hotline for people to call if the see her, we also need to stress that she is extremely armed and dangerous and should not be approached for any reason.
We're gonna need a press conference for that. Reyes, you need to get your forensics guy out there and retrieve whatever Kate stashed behind those pipes. Hopefully it's still there and that it's the gun and we can get something anything off of it. After you get the package, you and the Hales can try to track her scent, which of you is the best at tracking by scent?"

Peter raises a hand.

"Ok then, you go with them. take some other wolves with you. Remember, do not approach the bitch. If you find anything call Boyd and he'll relay new orders. Alpha Hale, we're going to need you to contact the surrounding packs and the supernatural community that Kate's is out there and she's serious trouble."

The Hale Alpha has her teeth bared at his audacity. "And just who the hell do you think you are? You can't just come in here and tell us what to do? Giving orders to my pack, to Derek's deputies, what gives you the right..."

Mrs. Argent puts in his two cents "My sister -in-law hasn't killed anybody…"

He pushes off from his lean and shoves his hand into his pocket, flipping out his federal badge for the room to see.

"This gives me the authority Alpha Hale. Kate Argent's escape from incarceration makes this a Federal Case and my position as Special Supervisory Agent of Fish and Wildlife Special Branch makes the supernatural element, which includes the werewolves, the hunters and even the motherfucking water horse living out at Beacon Lake my motherfucking business.

Oh, also that fact that the man that Katie Dearest shot THREE TIMES in the chest at point blank isn't technically dead doesn't make a fucking difference as she certainly intended for him to die there like a dog in the fucking street. By the way, that same guy who she tried her very darndest to mow down, the retired Sheriff and a well respected pillar of this community who she tried to snuff out in a seven eleven parking lot? Yeah, he's my dad. Special Agent Stiles Stilinski at your service so if there's anything any of you have to say about me trying to put this bitch back into the cage she belongs without any more loss of life, now is the goddamned time."

Silence.

"I didn't think so."
Chapter 7

They make it work because they have to.

Kate has all but disappeared. They get glimpses of her in cameras around town but too few and far in between. They get a shot of her vehicle, a black SUV hunter trademark with fake plates that looked like the thousand other black SUVs in Beacon hill county because everyone's brother and Uncle had one.

The scent trail was a dead end too. The wolves had been able to track her from the school to a small dirt road at the edge of the preserve but had lost her in a fog of some strange spicy scent that left the wolfs confused and sneezing and very, very unhappy. Peter, the best at tracking scent had been able to trace her steps from the school back to the scene as well, his experience and ability allowing him to differentiate Kate's scent from the spicy deterrent and pick out a weak trail.

They'd had much better luck with the package Kate had left behind. Erica had been in her element, donning the stark white jumpsuit of the forensics unit, which basically consisted of her and another deputy and slowly and carefully they had photographed and catalogued the scene, collecting of prints and samples for analysis.

Wrapped in newsprint and plastic and stuffed tightly between the pipes is the gun used in the shooting. A .38 revolver complete with three shell casings still in the cylinder. It rushed to the lab as the first wolves start reporting that their getting turned around trying to track Kate.

Meanwhile, Stiles and Derek are getting the word out to the public without causing a panic about Kate, keeping track of their assets in the field and trying not to let Laura Hale and Victoria Argent Scratch each others eyes out every five minutes. Chris Argent had exited stage soon after, saying something about checking out any hunter buddies Kate might had run to but after some time fending off the lash of Victoria Argent's viper's tongue, Stiles had seen through that flimsy excuse.

As tense as it was, Stiles and Derek made a great team, often thinking along the same lines and anticipating each others needs. It's almost an easy camaraderie in the office then Derek would suddenly jerk out of it and fall back into cool professionalism.

Day's end found stiles tiredly stirring sugar into a paper cup filled with break room coffee. It was an ok blend, better than some of the concoctions he'd drunk on location for a case. At least it had caffeine in it. He'd spent the last couple of hours holed up in the small office his dad used to work on the cold files. It was more of a filing room with a desk and chair stuffed in it but had been his oasis against all of the drama of the day.

Alpha Hale and the Argent Huntress had degenerated to ill-disguised sniping and in turn, the Deputies were getting antsy and less productive. Sheriff Hale had been spending more and more time playing peacekeeper between the two women and as a result, he found every negative report and dead end more and more intolerable. He'd taken to snapping at unsuspecting bystanders, Stiles included, but while he apologized to any others he may have offended, he merely ignored Stiles affront.

By the time the last of the wolves had checked in and Erica had reported back with the preliminary ballistic on the gun, Stiles had retreated to the cold case room lest he flipped his lid and said something he would definitely regret. Besides, it was a good a time as any to read up on whatever his father had been working on to see if he could get some insight on the matter.
It was only after Argent had come to pick up his wife, swearing to report any contact from Kate (scoff yeah, sure) and Laura headed off to pick up her daughter from the sitters that Stiles ventured out into the bullpen for caffeine and sugar before facing Derek once again. He was just contemplating the age of the milk and if he really wanted to risk it when a voice behind him tense.

"And just when I'd given up all hope on my nephew, look who waltzes back into town. Little Stiles Stillinski, all grown up."

Peter is leaning against the door to the break room. He looks good in his v-neck cashmere and snug jeans. That pretty smirk on his face you either love or hate. Either want to slap it off or kiss it off that naughty mouth. Stiles chuckles, it’s a bit bitter.

"Don't get ahead of yourself Hale, nothing had changed on that front. And as for being back in the Hills, I can't say there was any dancing on my part."

"Au Contraire mon ami. That night at the house, Derek saw you as but a boy, a human child, practically a babe in arms. but now…"

Stiles rolls his eyes as the older wolf steps closer, running his gaze up Stiles' legs over his torso to stare at his face.

"Now you are back, filled out in all the right places, with a confidence and swagger that let's everyone know that you can not only talk the talk but walk the walk. It's as if you've grown into yourself. You've certainly grown into a lot of things. "

He's closer now. Stiles can smell the forest on him. Citrus and fine Cognac. The heat coming off the man is amazing. Stiles breathes deeply, appreciating the tease for what it is. He smirks as the wolf’s eyes are drawn to his lips with a raised brow.

"I've always been told that my mouth likes to write checks that my ass can't cash." he murmurs and sees the wolf's chest swell as he pulls in a hissed breath.

Peter tilts his head and angles his gaze downward. "Mmm, I can see that you've grown in that quite nicely as well."

Stiles' delighted laughter startles them both. He needed this bit of flirting to cut the heavy tension of the day. Peter's smug grin just sets him off again and he tips his head back, closing his eyes and relaxing into his slouch against the counter. He lets his head rest back, leaving his throat exposed to the older wolf, willing the headache he'd been nursing away. He doesn’t see the harm in it. He trusts this mansomehow and they both know who his soul mate is anyway.

There is a low growl at the door. Derek is standing their, his face a thunderstorm. Stiles can practically see the lighting crackling behind his eyes. Peter turns his head to face the younger wolf with a smile. Derek crosses his arms across his solid chest and pins them with a laser glare.

"Am I interrupting something?"

Unf. Its that low growling that does things to Stiles whenever he hears it. He swallows thickly and Derek's gaze zeroes in on his adam's apple as it bobs. Peter smiles and claps his hands together.

"Oh my dearest nephew, Stiles and I were just talking about the true worth of a thing and who some never realize what treasure they’d held in their grasp until they'd let it slip though their fingers."

He lets out a small oof and affects a fake out as Stiles elbows him in the gut. Heavy handed much, geez. Peter's answering smile is unrepentant and Derek's face almost turns itself inside out he's
frowning so hard. Stiles finds them both equal parts hilarious and ridiculous and turns back to his
now tepid coffee with a sigh.

He dumps the coffee and brushes past the younger Hale, leaving the two wolves to a somewhat
heated conversation of Derek's angry hisses and Peter's smarmy comebacks. Stiles is perched on the
corner of Erica's desk, reading through the preliminary ballistics report when they emerge from the
break room, Peter smiling that Used Car Salesman smile and Derek with a thoughtful look on his
face. Before Stiles can even try to wrap his tired mind about THAT can of worms, a call comes in to
dispatch.

His father is awake.

Janek Stilinski looks like hell warmed over but his eyes are bright and aware as he jokes weakly with
the Doctors. Stiles sags against the door frame and Melissa has to manhandle him into the bedside
chair before his knees give out. He shudders into the bedding as the weight of his father's hand
ruffling his hair breaks the stone he'd built around his heart.

Voices murmur above him, the doctor's medical jargon, Melissa's gentle scolding, Derek's warm
respect, they flow over him as he trembles under his father's touch. He'd been on razor's edge for so
long, convinced himself that his father would soon wake and not slip into a coma and out of Stiles'
life like his mother had done.

He felt his father's hand tighten in his hair when the identity of his shooter was revealed, coming to
rub at the back of his neck as Janek answered Derek's questions about the case he'd been working on
recently. As he lays out the fresh lead he'd gotten from one of the witness statement's Stiles mind is
drawn back to the first case he'd ever worked with his mentor Bert.

Funnily enough, he'd been a civilian that first case. A case of wrong place, wrong time. By the end
of it, stiles had known that his future was with special branch and most of the supernatural
community had heard of 'Little Red'. If this case had anything to do with that one then this went
deeper than they'd ever imagined.

Stiles lifted his head, kissing his father's paper skin as he wiped the tear tracks from Stiles cheeks. He
pressed another to Janek's head and quickly excused himself. He needed to call TK. He walked a
ways down the hall to make the call, stopping at a picture window near the emergency staircase. A
quick call had TK digging up connections between the cases and another had his Grams updated
about his dad's condition.

He stopped by the nurses' station on his way back to talk to Melissa about having Scott bring
Tabasco around to visit when his father was in a more stable condition. She agreed with a bright
smile and whipped out her phone to text her son. He stopped by the vending machine to stock up on
sugar and caffeine with a Code Red when his Derek's voice drifted down the silent hallway. With
some concentration, he could just make out his father's steady tone mixing with Derek's deeper
velvet.

He steps closer, concerned as the voices start to raise a little. But he needn't have been because even
in a sick bed, Papa Stilinski is a total bad ass in Stiles' eyes and his voice is calm and he speaks to the
werewolf standing at his bead.

"Derek, you know that I respect you very much as a man and as an officer of the law and I can even
put aside the actions of your youth..."
"But…” Derek starts but Janek was not finished.

"But soul bonded or not, I will never forget what you did to my son, and neither will he."

Stiles breath catches in his throat. He glances around the door frame into the room beyond.

"We Stilinskis…” his father continued as he tapped a fingers against his temple weakly. "we forgive… but we never forget"

Stiles’ shoe squeaks against the tile and Derek’s eyes whip up at the sound. Their eyes meet and it's like a concussive blast. He clenches the bottle in his hand and falls into Derek Hale's eyes like he'd been born for it. His heart flutters like a bird against his chest and for a second he thinks it's going to burst free and fly away. There's a voice calling his name but it sounds far away, as if he's under water somehow. He hears his name again and he's stricken as Derek's gaze falters away from the intense heat and chills as he looks over Stiles' shoulder. His heart falls into his gut with a dull thud and the loss of that exquisite heat leaves him feeling bereft and utterly exhausted.

"Stiles" There's a warm hand on his shoulder. With one last lingering look at Derek's darkening face he turns to face it's owner.

"Jim?"

Not just Jim but Coz and Clem too, standing in the hallway outside his father's room as if they'd stepped out of his fondest wish. Speechless, he lets himself be pulled into a hug that he sinks into without thought. His team is here, his pack. God how he missed them like breathing. He quickly pulls Coz and Clem in, starved of their touch and smell. They stand there for a minute, lending him their strength to that he could be weak, if only for a while.

Janek greets them heartily as they pile into the room, preening as Coz and he compare stories and talk about the sex appeal of scars. Clem shakes her head at them and Stiles can't help but smile in relief and they share a laugh. Jim's hand is warm against his back, a comfort he dearly needs.

"You sounded like you needed back up on that last call" his second in command murmurs into his ear. Stiles smiles in thanks as a duffel is pressed into his hand. "Besides..." the man continues with a grin, "We had to bring you some of your things. Can't have you running around your hometown in my stuff. Look at you. You're practically swimming in that shirt."

"Oh, please" Coz scoffs, "We all know that Stiles has way better fashion sense than you. It's probably been torture for him walking around in public wearing your old navy rejects. Did you buy that shirt in a twenty pack at Costco or do you just have it bulk shipped in?"

"That's not it" Janek laughs "He bought stock in a t-shirt factory and this is how they pay out dividends."

Stiles has to lean against Jim, he laughing so hard and the last of the tight bands around his chest loosen. He's stronger with his pack here. He can do this.

"Wait… you're wearing his clothes" Derek choke out. "That's why you keep smelling like…”

He cuts himself off with a strangled snarl. His eyebrows are doing their angry dance again.

Stiles had almost forgotten that the other werewolf was there. He feels Jim tense beside him and rests a calming hand on his arm. Derek is staring now, a soft growl rumbling from his firm chest, his lip curling with disgust at where their skin touches. Jim steps closer to Stiles with an answering growl, low in his belly.
Time seems frozen as they all stand there, the sudden tension leaving the room heavy.

"Well..." Clem murmurs as she looks from a adorably bewildered Stiles, with a protective Jim all but plastered to his side, to scowling Derek who stands like a human shaped thunder cloud on the other side of the room and back to Stiles again. "... this is interesting."

"We're talking about my son here." Janek scoffs from the bed. "... and baby, he's just born that way."

"Oh come on dad... Gaga?" Stiles all but wails, slapping his palm to his forehead in embarrassment. Janek's laughter can be heard from down the hall.
Chapter 8

The water is as hot as he can take it, the thin edge of scalding. Both hands braced against the wall as the water pounds the back of his head and neck, leeching the tension from his muscles. His pack is here with him. In Beacon Hills. In his father's house. In his childhood home, lounging in his living room, close enough to hear his call. He's hit with an intense urge to see them, to touch them, to leave the shower, naked and soaking wet and run downstairs and mark them, mark them with his bite and with his scent so all would know that they were his. His pack.

He clamps down on the urge so hard it's feels like a vice in his chest that his heart slaps against furiously. His fingers curl against the cool tile and he tries to breathe slowly through his nose, emotion he can't identify raising within him like a tide swell. With the Red Hills Case and the Alpha Hunt then everything in with his father, he'd been going non stop for months without time to process. To let himself think, feel. Now with being this close to Derek Hale and being back in Beacon Hills where he'd known so much joy and so much devastation, he felt overwhelmed. This was the place where he'd loved and lost his mother, his soul mate and his sense of self for a long time.

He bit back a pained whimper and clamped a shaky hand over his mouth, taking deep and halting breaths through his nose. Even under the hot water he felt chilled through. The bathroom door opens and is closed softly. The figure is blurry through the Rango as sheriff shower curtain he'd sent his dad as a gag gift. There's sound of boots hitting the floor and pants being unzipped. The curtain twitches and soon there is a warm body against his back.

"Alpha"

Jim is a solid weight against his back, the quiet strength of a man's body pressed against his, salty skin over flexing and bunching muscle. The steady support of a beta, arms snaking around Stiles' waist to pull their bodies flush against each other. Lips against his neck, murmuring comfort against his alpha's skin, a quick tongue like a brand against his shoulder.

Stiles leans his head back unto his beta's shoulder, letting the werewolf support his weight. The heat of the water against his front and the heat of the werewolf at his back finally thaws this chill in his chest. Jim's cock is hot and half hard against his ass and arousal plumes deep in his belly. He brings his hand up to bury his fingers in Jim's hair, tightening to grip, turning Jim's face to his for a kiss.

It is chaste, close mouthed, just lips crushed and the kisses feather slowly up his cheek and jaw line. Calloused hands gently wander his body, his chest and waist, sluicing water unto his thighs and cock but the initial heat of arousal has come and gone, leaving him hollow. He turns his face into the werewolf's neck with a helpless noise as the man palms his flaccid penis, gently stroking the flesh into erection until Stiles is grunting softly and thrusting his hips helplessly.

He places one hand against the wall to brace himself, the other buried in Jim's hair and widens his stance so that the beta can reach down and brush the tips of his fingers against his tight hole, gently pushing against the clenching muscle, teasing, but never going in. Jim presses stiles' hands against the wall and goes to his knees, nipping against his alpha's firm ass, palming his butt cheeks and spreading them to run his tongue between them. Stiles presses his forehead to the cool tile with a whimper that seems ripped from throat. Jim's tongue dances along that intimate place, searing heat into erection until Stiles is grunting softly and thrusting his hips helplessly.

He fists himself clumsily, working his cock as the Beta hums into his asshole, spreading his cheeks wider and pushing his face closer, so much closer. He feels like an exposed nerve, every lick and quest of the tongue scorching along his sensitive skin. He pumps his fist harder, faster, growling
deeply as his breathing quickens, heat building in his belly. A bit of fang against his heated flesh, the scrape of teeth against that secret place and he's gone, shuddering through orgasm that whites out his vision.

When he aware of the world again, Jim has his alpha pressed up against the shower wall, the tile both hot and cool against his back. The beta is pressing open mouthed kisses to his face and chest, flicking his nipples with that clever tongue. He leans his head back against the tile, his hands roaming the expanse of broad back, Jim's erection scorching against his thigh. Jim presses a slow kiss against the jagged scars of his soul mark and pain lances through him, the sharp bite of a paper cut. His fingers clench into Jim's shoulders as the beta kisses an apology onto his lips. His eyes sting as Jim's warm hand covers the vibrant scars over his heart and the other hooks behind his knee, pulling his leg up to hook around Jim's waist.

Stiles presses sloppy kisses to the side of Jim's head, murmuring whispered encouragements, one arm wrapped around the beta's shoulder as the other slipped down to capture hard flesh, pumping quickly as Jim stiffened against him with a soft cry. They wash each other off in comfortable silence, steady hands soaping and rinsing bodies in the cooling water. There is in an intimacy between them that fills that hollow place within him.

They'd never been lovers, true lovers. He and Jim. They'd tried though, a couple times, both before and after Stiles became Alpha. After a bad case or tough ordeal they would tumble into bed together for comfort and release. But they could never be what the other needed in the long run. Stiles could not replace the emotional support of Jim's mate and child and the mere thought of letting anyone inside him but his soul mate made Stiles physically ill. So they would find comfort in what they could, never taking it further.

He's warmed through and pliable as Jim guides him out of the shower unto the thick bathroom mat. Gentle hands dry his skin and braces him as he steps into a pair of his dad's old sweats. The smell reminds him of home and the familiar weight of his father's hand on his head, ruffling his hair. He allows himself to be guided downstairs and folded onto the couch. Coz is a solid warmth at his side, dark wood and warm spice, Clem tucked up against his other, smoky cinnamon and wild flowers, with Jim lounging at his feet, smelling like sandalwood and Irish spring soap and Stiles cum.

He nuzzles Coz's neck gently, tasting the salt of his chocolate skin and turns and does the same to Clem, his fingers tangled in Jim's wet hair. They let him mark them without a word, simply baring their necks to him in silence. They understand that what he needs. Sometimes more than he does himself. There is something colourful and loud on the TV but Stiles is too exhausted to watch. The world slips away and he feels safe in the knowledge that his pack will catch him as he falls.

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They've been summoned to the Hale House. Fucking summoned by the Hale Alpha. Stiles almost told her to fuck off but for the fact that Jim had come into the territory without forewarning. Usually they had time to warn the local alphas or let them know after the fact in cases where circumstances didn't allow but in this case, Jim wasn't here on federal business nor was he passing through in pursuit of a suspect. So Stiles had to go make nice with the Hales.

He knows the way to the house even though it's been years since he'd trekked the distance by road and by forest. Countless times in those last days before he'd left. The great house was still impressive in its design and the way it called him to its loving embrace. Come Home, it would whisper in the winds through the trees and his feet would be pulled to it from wherever he stood.
Derek is waiting on the porch, leaning against the rail with his forearms, dressed in worn jeans and a faded green Henley, looking even more sexy than he did in his sheriff's uniform. Stiles cursed and barely refrained from banging his head against the steering wheel while Jim chuckled in the passenger seat. By the time his team is out of the car and at the porch, Peter has joined Derek in watching. The difference is that he is smiling.

He introduces Peter to the rest of his team as Laura and the rest of the Pack come out unto the veranda. Cora, Derek's younger sister and Laura Hale scowl at them with twin expressions. A smiling blonde man with a pretty toddler against his hip steps out behind her, smiling at them from the doorway. He is introduced as Laura's husband Greyson and their daughter is Serena.

the toddler is wearing the cutest little sailor moon onesie that makes Stiles' heart melts out of his eyeballs and drip down his face, his smile easy and wide as he introduces himself to the giggling little girl. He looks up from cooing at the child to see an almost puzzled expression on Derek's face. Before he can make heads or tails of it though, Laura steps forward.

"You would bring an omega unannounced unto Hale territory?"

Here words are blunt, her tone bordering on rude. Jim tenses and Stiles touches his back briefly. He has to look up at the Hale Pack, having not been invited further or even welcomed in the customary ways between packs. He smiles cordially at the other Alpha, pushing his ire down.

"Rest assured that Agent Longworth is no lone omega Alpha Hale. He is a strong Beta wolf and second in command of my team." he pats Jim on the back. "As for not giving notice prior to his arrival, let me remind you of amendment 781 of the magical migration treaties that lets allows a federally employed magical being special dispensation on traversing through territories. I believe that we are still well within the window of time considered acceptable."

He gestures to his team and then to the wolves upon the veranda. "Why don't we all take this inside so we can get the packs formally introduced and maybe have a cup of tea. There's nothing like a nice cuppa to take the chill off any situation."

Laura bristles at his words because as the host Alpha it was her duty to offer hospitality and diplomacy and she's only come across as ungracious with her behaviour. She could see Peter frowning out of the corner of her eye. Even Greyson looked discomforted. She wished she had her mother's grace and aplomb for situations like this but with most of the family abroad on vacation, she only had Peter to look to as a revered elder. She scoffed internally- What a waste of time that was. He was all sarcasm and sass and she was more of a shoot from the hip type of person.

She snarls as Stiles takes a step toward the house.

"Stop right there Stilinski. My mother wouldn't let you into the house all those years ago and neither will I."

A sharp sense of satisfaction lances through her at the look on his face. It's there for a split second and then replaced by a blank calm. She remembers that day when he wore that expression so openly, his cheeks wet with tears as he stumbled into the forest. Heartbreak.

She can see the vague motion of Peter shaking his head. Cora comes to stand at her shoulder and Greyson hitches their daughter higher on his hips, frowning now. Derek is frozen against the rail, his eyes glued to Stilinski's face.

The faces of Stile's team harden and blank totally and he can feel their anger at the blatant disrespect for their Alpha but all Stiles can think of is the cold and utter rejection he feels at being denied entry
into Hale House once again. So close to that warm embrace and once again he is turned away, found unworthy, found wanting. Something brittle cracks within him as he blinks rapidly, trying to keep it together so that the wolves cannot smell his misery.

Laura’s eyes glint smugly, flashing crimson. She’d found a chink in his armour and scratched at it. First blood to the Hale alpha. He quickly shellacs on a thick layer of charm and diplomacy and forges ahead.

"Well, your mother is not the alpha anymore isn't she? You are the Hale Alpha now, not Talia. What would the Packs say if they knew you were treating a fellow alpha with such disrespect?"

"Fellow Alpha?" she scoffs, crossing her arms. "You are not an alpha. And you will never be my equal. You and your humans run around playing pretend at being a pack. Just because you have a wolf with you doesn't make you a pack. Doesn't make you an alpha Agent Stilinski. Doesn't make you anything but a hunter with a badge. You are nothing to me. "

"I am your brother's soul bonded."

"You are an abomination and will have no ties to this pack." Laura snarls "and even if Derek hadn't decided to reject your soul bond outright, my mother would have had still your bond severed anyway. Your kind was never welcome here."

Wait… what?

All sounds dull and there is a rushing sound in his ears. Stiles can feel a pressure building in his chest, stealing his breath. He brings a hand up to touch his soul mark. Words, questions and screams scramble to come out and get stuck in his throat. Before he could open his mouth to let it out though…

"Wh...What are you saying Laura?" Derek is pale and shaking. His claws half dug into the wood of the railing. His eyes flash blue and distressed. "I don't understand"

Laura reaches out to touch her brother but stops when he stares at her outstretched hand as if it would burn him. She jerks back, clutching the hand to her stomach.

"She had druids cut the bond between you." Laura turns to face Stiles. "She knew what your mother was, what your grandmother was. A monster… A skin walker, one who steals the pelt of animals and takes them as their own. Who kills for power. Our Mother would rather die than have her child bound to something like that so she had the bond severed. It was for the best."

"The best?" Stiles laughs a bit hysterically "She thought it was best?"

Jim's and Coz's arms are the only thing keeping him from either sinking to the ground or flinging himself at the hale Alpha. There is a storm inside of him of rage and sorrow and utter hatred for those who though it best to reach into his very soul and rip half of it away.

He reaches up and rips his crisp white button down shirt open, popping buttons and revealing his chest. The scars of his soul mark are angry and raised red and look painful to the touch. Peter hisses a breath and Derek makes a mournful sound that belongs in no human throat.

Stiles voice breaks as he strains against the arms holding him.

"Severed?" he bares his teeth to Laura "No... she had it savaged. She had them reach inside me and rip the bond to shreds. I almost died. It hurts like nothing you can ever imagine and still hurts even now. They ripped me apart because they thought it was fucking best. I was just thirteen you bitch.
They broke me into pieces and I was just a child."

"You would not be a child forever. " Laura coldly. "Your own mother choose to die rather than be what she was. We could not let my brother tie himself to you."

A loud crack echoes in the following silence. Derek's nails have cracked the solid oak railing clean through. It's little but splinters in his fists. Stiles eyes swing and catch on his and for a moment or an eternity they can see nothing but each other.

Slowly, Derek's gaze drags down to where his first words to Stiles are branded into pale flesh and he seems to crumple on himself. With a pained cry, he flings himself off the porch and is into the forest in seconds.

Stiles bites back on the wail that wants to choke him and he buries his face in Coz's neck. He can feel the touch of his pack as they stand around him protectively, lending him their strength. Fuck werewolf protocol, he thinks. Fuck all this shit.

He swiftly wipes the tear tracks from his face and turns to the Hale Alpha.

"Fuck this. We're staying, get over it. I seriously don't have any fucks left to give so you can shove protocol up your alpha ass. If you have a problem with us being here then write a letter to the Secretary of the Interior and frankly, the man loves me so if that doesn't work out for you then you are welcome to go above his head and contact his boss. I believe that you know the President of the fucking United States? Yeah so… good luck with that.

He throws his keys to Clem and stalks to the car. "Oh… Alpha Hale?" He waits until he has her full attention.

"Speak about my mother again like that and I'll rip that forked tongue right out of your skull you mangy bitch."

Clem carves a jagged donut in the perfect lawn on their way out and it makes Stiles feel better. Just a little.

They gun it on the old country road for a few minutes until Stiles can't take anymore. The car barely comes to a halt and he is scrambling out of it and into the forest. He runs, stumbling and tripping because his eyes are blurry with tears. The pack run with him, not coming close or trying to stop him. They run with him until he trips and falls to his knees, his body wracked with deep sobs.

He'd never known what had happened to him that last day or why. All he'd known is that he'd gone to Hale house like he'd done everyday since he'd first met Derek. He would stand in the tree line and watch the house, knowing that his soul mate was in there. He'd been so happy to have found his other half. Just like his parents had done. Yes, he was sad that Derek had been hurt by Kate Argent and that he'd needed time to deal with that but Stiles was patient. Well not really with a lot of things but with this yes. He could wait. They would have the rest of their lives together.

He'd been standing at the edge of the woods for while when the sound of a ruckus came from the house and he looked up to see Derek burst from the house and run towards him. Before he could even 'eep' in surprise the older boy was in his face, yelling about creepy stalkers and restraining orders and ripping out throats with teeth.

They managed to argue they way back to the house with Derek telling Stiles to go away and Stiles telling Derek why they should be friends. They tumbled up unto the porch only to be bought short by a scowling Talia Hale. Even Derek was pulled up short by his mother's chilly countenance
towards the boy who lived to annoy him it seemed.

It quickly degenerated from there with Derek swiping at Stiles with his claws and screaming that soul mates were bullshit, that he didn't want a soul mate, that he'd never wanted a soul mate and if it wasn't for Stiles, he would still be happy with his true love Katie. That he hated Stiles, hated him and wished that he never been born.

"I'd rather never bond at all than bond with you" he yelled, grabbing Stiles by the shirt and pushing him, sending him stumbling down the short step and into the grass while the Hale Alpha looked on coldly.

Stiles had walked home in a daze that day, holding the wrist he sprained in the fall close to his chest. He had just dragged himself home and greeted his father softly when a pinching sensation started just under his bond mark, growing stronger and more painful by the second.

He vaguely remembers his dad shouting his name and the sound of breaking glass as he descended into the darkest of hells for what seemed like an eternity were demons flayed him alive and broke every part of him until nothing in him felt whole.

It was sunrise of the next day when he came too, keening brokenly in his father's arm as Janek sobbed in relief into his son's hair. The whole ground floor of the house was trashed. Every piece of furniture, every piece of glass and every bit of food lay scattered and smeared around them in utter devastation.

The very next day Janek Stillinski boarded a plane with his son.

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There are fingers carding through his hair. Clementine smiles down at his head in her lap. He blinks tiredly and looks down to see Coz dozing, his head propped on Stiles' stomach. His mouth is dry and he smacks it loudly.

"Where's Jim?" his voice is hoarse and his throat hurts from the harsh crying.

"Gone back to the car for water and to check in with TK. No cell reception around here."

Stiles flushes and smiles sheepishly. "led you guys on a merry chase didn't I? Some Alpha huh?"

"Hey" Clem smacks his forehead. "You are our Alpha and you're the alpha we need. You think anyone else can bring together and hold a team like hours. We don't work well with others on paper. No one wanted a bunch of freaks and throw aways. We were all steps away from dying in the field or being shackled to a desk. You may an unconventional leader but we are an unconventional team. Who thought we could come together like this, fit together so well. Who knew we could become pack? You did Alpha, you found us and you kept us."

"Yeah" Stiles smile is a little watery this time. He clears his throat. "we're a real island of misfit toys aren't we?"

Clem flicks his ear and he jerks up with a yowl, waking Coz from his doze. They laugh and get to their feet, stretching and joking when they hear Jim in the distance. Stiles enough time to scent his pack before Jim bursts into their small clearing at a run. He tosses two water bottles at the others and steps into Stiles space, burying his nose in his Alpha's neck.
Stiles laughs and brings his arms up to hug his beta when he realizes that Jim is tense and hasn't said a word.

"Hey buddy. What's wrong? Talk to me?" he asks, raising Jim's chin up to face him.

"I got a call at the car" Jim's voice is a notch above growling. "Kate sent your father a present"

Janek Stillinski had to be sedated. This is what Stiles is told as he strides into the hospital by Melissa. Her face is tear streaked and she's trembling. She smells of fear and rage alternately. They were afraid that Janek would re-open his wounds with the state he'd been in.

There are still doctors around his father when he gets to the room so he has to stand outside and watch as they carefully check for any pulls or torn stitches. There is a blossom of blood in the urinary drainage bag attached to the bed and as he watches, another one forms. Stiles can't speak. The sight of his father like this utterly defeats him.

Suddenly Scott is there, gathering Stiles into that octopus hug, crying into Stiles' neck, sorry tumbling from his lips over and over. That brings Stiles back to the present. He grips Scott's shoulders.

"Scott?"

The taller boy seems beside himself. "I'd just worked a double shift and I was so tired Stiles. I was so so tired. I didn't think anything would happen. I just thought it would be quicker. I'm so sorry."

Stiles shakes him a little. "Scott, calm down and tell me what happened. Ok?"

Scott seems to pull himself together and nods. He leads him down the hall to where Erica is waiting in the doorway of a vacant office. She is grim faced and wearing the bright teal gloves of the hospital.

"With my vet exams coming up soon everything going on, I'd been staying at the clinic more and more. With mom being here most times and me spending most nights on a cot in the back of the clinic, I thought it would be easier for every one you know…?"

In the vacant office, there is a box on the desk. It's a delivery box, the tapes been cut open but the flaps are closed in. there's no writing or marking on the box. That means hand delivered. Kate or someone who works with her got close enough to his father to hand deliver this.

"And there's this girl, Tracy, we've know her since forever and she volunteers at the clinic all the time you know? Small things like feeding the animals and such and sometimes she takes some of the pets outside to have a bit of a run and we keep telling her to lock the gate again when she's done because Deaton's security systems has a blind spot there but she forgets and I usually check but I was so running so late for class and she promised that she wouldn't forget this time…." 

Erica silently hands him a glove. He steps toward the box, gingerly tipping the flap open with the glove.

"But she forgot…. She forgot and left it unlocked. And someone came…someone came in and…"

The smell of blood hit Stiles first. The cloying smell of blood and organs and shit and pain and death. Scott's footsteps leave the room at a run. Stiles forces his mind to push away all emotion. He needs data. He needs to know what sent his father into such a reaction that he needed to be sedated. This man who faced so much in his life including getting shot in the chest three fucking times. Stiles
needed to know what was in the box.

The bottom of the box is lined with plastic and the same strange spice associated with Kate. It would have blocked the scent of the blood from sensitive noses until the box had been opened. Inside is a mass of red flesh and white bone, stripped of all skin and hair. He holds his breath as he looks closer at the blood soaked lump and makes out a silver circle.

He leans in a bit closer, just able to make out the letters. There's a T and a B and an SCO at the end.

Oh God.

Tabasco.

Oh God.

He barely makes it to the bin in the corner before he throws up everything he'd had that day.
Times like this Stiles wished that he was a drinker or a smoker.

Anything to keep his mind altered and his hands busy while he slouched on a park bench in front of the hospital, the very image of desolate. He'd sent Jim and Coz back to the Sheriff's department to look over the case with fresh eyes. Clem was in with his father who had yet to awaken from his sedation. He could only sit in the cold and still room for so long before he'd started to fidget, biting his lip, picking at his nails and shaking his leg so much he almost vibrated off the chair.

The training with his grandmothers had calmed his ADD but in times of emotional stress, it resurfaced and he found it difficult to concentrate, to keep track of details. Soon enough Clem had pushed him out of the room and told him that she had this, and to go make himself useful. Just do something to burn off this excess energy.

He'd seen a shell shocked Scott off home with Melissa, had raided the vending machine for a sugar fix, hit the cafeteria for a cardboard and ash sandwich and even hit the gift shop, bypassing all of the cute stuffed animals with an averted gaze and finally settling on fuzzy slippers with the words "Hello Nurse" stitched into their bottoms that his dad could wear in bed. His walkabout then led him outside to the loneliest bench on the planet next to a broken water fountain and an empty planter.

He had nothing to keep him busy except his thoughts. Facts and theories whipped and flashed about his mind like angry bees, slipping out of his focus before he could study them further. The hits had been coming in low and fast since the day his father was shot. Kate had been keeping them on their toes, always a step or two ahead, leading them (by the nose in some cases) on a merry chase. Never letting them have the time to rest and regroup.

What he just could not understand was Kate's end game. What the hell was she really trying to do? Was this about revenge? Against who? She'd already shot his father. If that was it then she wouldn't have stuck around in Beacon Hills. Was she after the Hales? She was a hunter and they were the wolves that had put her in jail. But most of the family was out of the country. If Kate had been keeping tabs on her prey as Stiles thinks she was, she would have known that only a skeleton crew remained of the Pack.

Was she after Derek? Acid burned in Stiles' chest at the thought. There were plenty of times when she could have ambushed the werewolf back when she'd had the element of surprise. Why would she wait until they knew about her to make a next move. And what about that fucked up get well gift for his dad? That was some sick shit. Why would she got to all that trouble to get that hand delivered to his father and not just make another attempt on his life? Didn't she just want him dead? What was up with the fucking mind games? What was this bitches deal anyway?

Stiles sighed and ran his fingers though his hair, resting his head in his hands. His brain was tired. Running in circles around itself, trying to avoid the fuchsia pink elephant with angry eyebrows sitting under spotlight in the middle of his brain. He'd spent so long putting himself back together that he didn't want to admit that he'd tucked everything about Derek and Beacon Hills into a lock box and had adopted Tony Stark's Way of Dealing With Heavy Emotional Crap. That was to AVOID AVOID AVOID until it went away for itself or died of starvation.

Yiayia had warned about his method during his training but he seriously thought that he'd at least have a few more years before the soulmate issue cropped up again. He'd had lovers, he had friends, he'd had Jim and his pack and for a while he'd lied to himself that this was all he'd needed. That this was all he'd ever be allowed. But being back here, being so close to Derek was like reopening an old
wound and letting it bleed all over his life, staining everything it touched.

There is a shadow blocking his sun, the smell of caramel and sex that he knows in an instant.

"What can I do for you Sheriff?"

"Don't …. Don't do that" the voice is soft and a bit rough. "Don't call me Sheriff."

Stiles looks up to see Derek in his clothes from earlier. There are rips and streaks of dirt on his clothes and skin. His hair is wild, as if someone had pulled him backwards though a hedge. His eyes are red and a little puffy and he slumps as he shoves his hands into his pocket. He looks haggard, exhausted and he can't look at Stiles in the eye for more than a few seconds at a time.

"I take it that you aren't here in your official capacity then. Alright, what can I do for you Beta Hale?"

The formal title makes Hale cringe once more.

Stiles' eyes roam the werewolf's body before he can control it and he catalogs every still healing scratch and bruise gained by Derek's impromptu run in the woods. Whiskey eyes snag on Derek's wrist. Derek's pale bare wrist. The one that had been covered by a leather gauntlet ever since the night they met. The one swirled with Stiles first words to his soul mate.

The breath whooshed out of him with a high pitched wheeze as Derek takes his hand slowly out of the pockets and turns his wrist from side to side in the sunlight. The words are white against the already pale skin. He knows it's rude but Stiles can't seem to tear his eyes away.

" I thought you'd d...died. " Derek's voice break on the last word and he clears his throat roughly. "the night you ran from the house. The night the bond was cut."

Stiles snorts in spite of himself " Cut… more like ripped apart by some two bit hacks who…"

"...The night the bond died." Derek cuts across. "the words just faded away and it hurt so much. I thought you were dead and no one would tell me what was going on. My mother refused to say a thing, your dad upped and disappeared for weeks and when he came back it was as if you'd never existed. I even tried to talk to your friend Scott but he threw his inhaler at me and ran away crying…"

Stiles snorted again at the mental image. Scott's plastic inhaler bouncing off of teen Derek's acrobatic brows.

"All I could think was that I had acted like an asshole to a kid and now he was dead. It wasn't until Peter sat me down and told me what the fading of the mark really meant that I realized what I'd lost. I'd been so wrapped up in everything with Kate and my own selfishness and ego. That my head had been so twisted around that I'd lost… no... I'd pushed away my one chance at finding happiness in my life."

He slumped unto the bench next to Stiles, pressing his palms against his eyes tiredly.

"It wasn't until I joined the department that I heard anything about you. Your dad kept his cards close to his chest for years, only a few deputies knew about you. Where you were, what you were doing. He didn't want to tell me anything at first either, not that he went out of his way to wall me out but it took time for him to trust me enough to talk to me about you."

Derek looks out unto the deserted parking lot and absently picks at a scab on his palm, flaking it
away to reveal fresh unblemished skin underneath.

"That night at the hospital, when you came in whole and alive and smelling like another wolf, it
drove me crazy. It was like having the bond cut had freed you. I know... I know it wasn't like that for
you but for me it was like showing a dying man water and telling him he'd never have it again ever.
It was just so fucking unfair that you could be so happy when I was miserable.

Then I realized that I was being unfair to you. How could I ask you to want me when I'm the one
who pushed you away in the first place. How could you ever want to be with me when I'm the one
who killed our bond."

Kaleidoscope eyes shine with unshed tears and get caught in thick black eyelashes when he blinks.
Stiles grips the edge of the bench to keep from kissing those droplets away but he knows he has to
keep quiet and let this play out.

"Today at the House …" Derek's voice wobbles as he continues. "… when Laura revealed what my
mother had done, what pain my family put you through, I couldn't help but wonder How you could
even bear to look at me? I thought- This is it, I've lost any chance I may have had. Even when she
told us why they'd done it, about y… your bloodline, all I could think was that I didn't care. I didn't
care if you killed random hitchhikers or wore skunk pelts and declared yourself the grand Pumbah of
the Beacon Hills Shopping Mall, I wouldn't stand another day without you.

"I've waited and hoped for so long…" the werewolf sighs and slouches lower into the bench, "I
thought that you would hate me because of my family"

They sit in the bright sunlight for a while, watching the occasional passerby as they hurried to and
from their cars. Stiles studies Derek's profile in silence. He's never been able to just look before. To
soak in the smaller details of Derek's face without them both being uncomfortable.

"So…" Stiles drags the word out. "… so if I were to actually declare myself Grand Pumbah of the
Beacon Hills Shopping Mall, you would fan me and feed me grapes like a good little cabana boy?"

He grins as Hale rolls his eyes with a chuff of laughter. "I'd be more like your bodyguard. Keeping
you safe… watching your back."

His eyes burn with barely restrained desire. Stiles has to look away. It's too much… too fast. He rubs
the back of his head sheepishly.

"Really? I was picturing more of a loin cloth and a smile myself," he grins as that gets him a smile
from the older man. "in fact, how are your grave digging skills? We're gonna need a lot of shallow
graves for all the hitchhikers I kill."

Derek's face goes serious. "I… all I can promise is to look the other way. But I can't …. I can't help
you with that"

Stiles frowns at Derek's solemn face. His incredibly handsome, solemn, HONEST face.

"Holy shit, you're serious aren't you. About the killing and stuff. Oh my God Derek. I wasn't serious.
I'm a federal agent you jackass. I don't roam the highways killing people for their skin. I'm sure as
hell not Buffalo Bill. There's no fucking skin suit in my basement. What the fuck do you think I am?
Sweet Jesus on a jelly donut. God. You think my father would have stood aside all these years and
let me and my mother just kill people?"

"I would" Derek murmurs, stopping Stiles tirade in it's tracks. "if he loved you and your mother as
much as I'm sure he does. He would have found a way to reconcile that with himself."
Holy Shit.

Holy.

Fucking Shit.

"I… he…. You…." Stiles words jumble themselves upon his tongue. "We don't kill people, our kind."

He fiddles nervously with the cuff of his shirt. He'd never told anyone but his Mentor Bert this before.

"My babcia came from a family of skin walkers. But not the kind your sister says we are though. Way back in the day when eastern Europe was still snow and woods and teeth and claws. They'd been nomads for a long time, finally settling near a huge forest, which in those days was like the second forest to the left. Anyway, one of their hunters found a pregnant doe, wounded and about to die and instead of killing her and eating the meat, the chieftain's daughter cared for her and she and the baby deer lived.

What they didn't know was that the forest Goddess Samovila, who was a great protector of animals and a shape shifter herself had seen what they did. In return, she taught the first settlers how to use the pelts they'd gathered to turn into animals them selves. It's passed along through the daughters of the line and my grandmother brought it with her when she came to America pregnant with my mother.

We don't kill for power or anything, but we do have to hunt and kill ourselves the animal that we seek to shift into. It's a coming of age thing that only happens once in a lifetime. We're not evil as most who force the method for their own gain. My mother passed the gift to me but I can't pass it on myself. What she was had nothing to do with why she died though. Cancer is cancer and magic cannot make war against itself which is basically what cancer is…the body at war with itself."

They fall into silence once again. It’s a comfortable one, more contemplative. Stiles doesn't have a clue where to go from here. He shifts a little to the right, skooching his butt closer to Derek until their shoulders touched. The werewolf tensed and then relaxed into it and soon their sides had all but melted into each other, creating a line of warmth from his shoulder straight down to his knee, soon spreading throughout his body, bleeding the tension out of them both.

Stiles' fingers tap out a staccato beat against his thigh until Derek reaches over with a huff and grasps it gently in his, threading their fingers together. He runs his thumb the faded words twined around the werewolf's bared wrist, eliciting a shiver from the older man. Derek's pulse jumps under his fingertips and he touched his nose to Stiles' shoulder, taking in his scent.

"What do we do now?" soft lips brushed against Stiles' shoulder. Warm breath against his skin.

That was a good question.

Stiles shrugged one shoulder, mindful of where the werewolf was sniffing his way up his neck. They still felt the pull of the bond, shredded as it was, the yearning for each other when in close proximity, never able to form that deep connection with anyone else. They were like two broken halves, trying to fit together to make something whole but always falling short. There was a hollow between them, filled with cold howling winds that cut deep.

He would have to call his Grams. There were magic users in Beacon Hills that could probably help
them but seeing as the local druids played a major part in ripping them apart in the past, he'd be
fucked if they went to any of them for advice, much less let any of them get close enough to examine
the bond remnants.

There was also everything with Kate and his father, the shit bomb that was the situation with the
Hales, and trying to get his team and local law enforcement to get along without bloodshed. There
was also the potential cluster fuck of getting Derek and Jim in the same room without a dick
measuring contest. Not that Stiles would be opposed to that honestly but he figured the two wolves
would not appreciate his reasons for wanting them to drop trou.

All of that would be dealt with eventually but for right now, all he could cared about now was warm
sweet breath against his neck.
Janek Stilinski came back to wakefulness to see Stiles perched at the foot of his bed, his face buried in a file folder. The rest of his team lounged around the hospital room, boxes and files covering pilfered chairs and tables. He lay blinking for a few seconds, silently cataloguing his aches, grunting as something pulled in his chest. Stiles was off the bed and next to him in a flash.

"Hey there Daddy-o" he said softly, fussing with the bedding and the IV tubing. "… how are you feeling?"

"Like something chewed me up and spit me out. What happened?" his throat felt like sandpaper.

Stiles gave him a sip of water through a bendy straw, holding it steady while his father drank. He frowned.

"You don't remember?"

He could see the exact moment the memories hit, Janek's face crumpling as he pressed it into his pillow and breathed hard though his nose. He let his father squeeze his hand to point of breaking without a word, pressing a kiss to his knuckles once Janek had calmed.

The doctors come and go like a multi-limbed mass of melted bodies and voices and afterwards, Melissa brings in a tray and teases a smile unto Janek's face about the fluffy slippers his son had purchased while Stiles steals his jello. Janek teases back about Melissa being 'lime green jelly' over his slippers and Stiles almost falls from the bed with laughter that his dad could actually quote from Jennifer's Body with a straight face.

They spend the next hour going through the cold case files, mindful of how quickly Janek grew tired. There was something that had been niggling at the back of Stiles' mind for days. He quickly tells TK to dig into Kate's old cell mates and one name pops out from among the others.

Constance Melder Brightman.

Stiles knows that name. He knows that name because the stories Bert told him of his early years as a federal agent. He knows that name from spending hours looking through the old, dusty micro fiche from their first basement office. He knows it because he's gets insane about research and just digs and digs and digs.

Constance Melder Brightman is a name not many people know and most who do know it are dead or dying. It's a name left behind on a lonely dying farm in Minnesota. A lonely dying name left behind for a new one.

Connie Bright.

As in one half of Connie and Eugene Bright, the supernatural world's Bonnie and Clyde and all around seriously bad news.

With Eugene's High IQ and Connie's uncanny business savvy, the 100% human couple who had grown up in the North Star State, first popped up on the Government's radar in the late 1960s with a string of kidnappings for ransom. They'd served their time and had gone to ground upon release from prison.

From then on they were rumored to be behind or have loose ties in at least 80% percent of
supernatural crime in the med west. Five years ago they'd snagged Connie in a tax evasion racket (hey, it worked for Al Capone) and she did two years in prison before her attorneys got it thrown out on appeal. Much of that time was spent as cell mate to Kate Argent.

To say that Connie was a bad seed was an understatement. The woman was a shark, with a head for business and a ruthless streak miles wise. With Eugene's arrogance and complete disdain for all other life in the universe and his genius IQ, they were the worst kind of criminal. The smart kind.

TK pulls up the last clear pictures of the couple, their old mug shots and Coz whistles.

"Are you sure their not both dead by now? They'd both be in their nineties by now at least."

"You'd think that…" Stiles laughs mirthlessly "… but considering the last time I saw Connie Bright she looked just like this, they may not be as human as we thought."

"So you wanna tell me why you smell like Hale?"

Jim tucks the last box into the back of the rental and meets Stiles' gaze. Coz and Clem were back in Janek's room, chasing down leads with TK and keeping his father company. Not that Stiles didn't trust the deputies but someone had still gotten close enough to his father to deliver that package and it was his own piece of mind that someone from his team stay with the man at all times.

Stiles outs his hand for Jim to toss him the keys and the drive to a nearby diner to get lunch. The curly fries there tasted the same as they did so many years ago and Stiles dug in with gusto.

"We talked." he said, sipping on his soda. "it was… I don't know what it was really…it's.."

"Complicated" Jim finished, stealing a fry for Stiles' plate. "… but complicated is better than 'over' any day. Over is simple, yeah but there's no where to go from there, no second chance or appeal. Not like me and Callie and Jeff. With us...It's just… done."

Bitter sorrow fills the beta wolf's eyes and Stiles reaches over the grasp Jim's hand, giving it a squeeze.

"it's just that with everything with the Hales and the damage done to the bond… I mean, he's based here and I'm in Washington. We both have jobs… lives. We're part of different packs and they've already made it clear how they feel about me. I just don't know what to do."

Jim places his glass down with a thunk, startling his Alpha a little.

"What do you do? You fight for your man, that's what you do. Life has given you second chance with Hale. You need to hold onto it and never let go. If I had another chance with Callie they would have to pry it from my cold dead hands and even then they'd have trouble. Fuck the Hales, fuck everything else.

You hate beacon Hills? Fine, Beacon Falls is an hour away, Sacramento two hours. We can set up an office anywhere. You know TK's been wanting out of the basement for a while. Hale can even come and work in Washington, you know any other the agencies would snap him up. fact is… you have options. You don't have to decide what you are going to do right now but you have to decide what it is that you really you want. "

Jim pushes his plate aside and looks him dead in the eyes.
"So, what do you want?"

Stiles doesn't hesitate. "I want Derek."

Neither does Jim. "Then go get him."

As Jim lugs the boxes into the Sheriff's department, Stiles slips over to the nearby coffee shop to grab some coffee and donuts for the deputies as a peace offering. While he is waiting on his order, he slips outside to call his grandmothers.

Yiayia Tiny squeals at the news, yelling at his Babcia to put them on speaker phone. Chaos ensues and he somehow ends up on Facetime with half the coven, who were in the middle of having tea. They all coo and tease him that he and Derek had yet to share true love's first kiss (their words not his) and sigh and curse at Kate for killing Tabasco and hurting Poor Janek.

He's hesitant to broach the subject but Benny tells him to stop fucking around and talk to them. He chuckles and softly tells them about what the Hale Alpha had done to their bond and pulls the phone away quickly, bracing himself for the yelling and cursing that was sure to come. When he hears nothing he checks to see if the call had been cut short but that is not the case.

"Babcia? Yiayia?" he sees them all sitting silently, tea and cakes forgotten. "say something guys. You're scaring me."

"Wojciech Bozydar Stilinski" Babcia's voice is deadly calm, "that bonwolf bitch did what to my daughter's only child? A son born of my line? Elizavet, pack a bag. We are going to find the Druids who did this and rip them apart. I may not be a teeth and claws but I know how to gut a man from stem to stern, just ask my ex husband. He can tell you, if they ever replace his voice box that is."

It takes Stiles ten solid minutes to convince the whole coven not to catch the next plane to Beacon Hills and unleash holy hell upon Pack Hale. And then another few minutes near tears as the ladies discuss ways to repair a shredded bond. They promise to make some calls and see what they can find.

His coffee and donuts are cold by the times he's paid for them but he knows the department would appreciate it anyway as, even cold, it was better than anything they had at the station.

Derek looks sexy as hell in a fresh uniform and Stiles wants to do nothing more than rip it off him.

Jim and Derek seem to be keeping a civil tongue around the station and Stiles is glad that they'd talked before. Jim always knew how to kick some sense into his head and was the only one Stiles trusted enough to be truly honest with. Derek may be his soulmate but Jim was a trusted friend and Beta and both were precious to Stiles.

He sees Derek give him a scorching look and duck into the filing room that was Janek's part time office. Curious, he follows and is soon pressed up against the closed door, hot werewolf pressed close against him. Large warm hands slip under his shirt to wander his skin and a nose is buried in his neck.

"Hello to you too" he chuckles, running his hands up and down his mate's broad back.

They stay like this for a few moments, just enjoying the feel of each other. Reveling in the feeling of a firm warm body against another, nothing and no one between them. Derek smells divine. Warm caramel and soap, forest and wolf and the pure sex of a man.
He pushes Derek back until he's sitting against the rooms single desk, stepping in between spread knees. Strong thighs bunch and flex under his wandering hands as he gently nuzzles the other man's cheek. Warm hands resume their quest, rucking up his shirt. Stiles presses a slow open mouthed kiss against a stubbled cheek, Derek's breath is hot and fast against his neck.

Fingertips brush against his soul mark and he jumps back with a small cry. Derek looks stricken.

"Oh shit Stiles… I'm sorry"

Slowly, he guides Derek's hand back up to his chest and places his palm directly on the scarred flesh. Derek looks awed, as if he'd been given a great honour. Stiles is a bit breathless himself. Less than five people had ever touched his marks before, Jim being the only one in years to even see it fully. It's a very intimate thing and just having Derek touch him there is breath taking.

The most amazing thing is that the touch doesn't hurt. Stiles has lived with a constant stabbing pain since that night, his magical training only going so far in dulling the pain. But with Derek's touch seeming to steal away the hurt, Stiles feels a bit light headed and giddy. Before he found himself giggling like a school girl, he leans in and crushes his mouth to Derek's with a sigh.

Brilliant

Radiant

Incandescent

Red Hot like the fucking centre of the earth.

Derek get over his surprise and quests entry with his tongue. Stiles opens like a flower and sinks into the kiss. Strong arms bring Stiles in even closer and his fingers dive into Derek's hair. Its as soft and full as his lips are soft and full. Stiles nibbles on Derek's lower lip, drawing a toe curling noise from the werewolf.

They break apart, breathless as Stiles ducks back in time and time again, stealing butterfly soft kisses from Derek's bruised and swollen lips. He feels a deep thrum of possession as he takes in the debauched look on the beta's face. Proud that he put that there and wondering how Derek would look once he got him into his bed.

The a growl he tightens the grip on Derek's hair, tugging the werewolf's head back, baring his throat. Derek tips his head back even further, eyes closing with a shiver as the Alpha snakes his tongue up his neck from his collar bone to the sharp edge of his jaw.

He wants to bite down, to mark this wolf as his but Derek is still a Hale and he doesn't want outright war.

Yet.

So he presses a kiss to Derek's pulse and his jaw before claiming that mouth once again. He laughs into the kiss when a hand slides down to grab his ass, growling and nipping harder at the beta's lips.

Just then a howl rips through the station. Angry and distraught.

They start and jump away from each other.
Derek's eye flash blue and he bolts from the office, Stiles on his heels. They race into the bullpen to see Laura Hale standing just inside the doors, panting hard as if she'd just raced a long distance. She's crying and covered in blood but doesn't seem to be wounded in anyway.

Erica slams open the door leading back to the forensics lab, skidding to stand next to Boyd, their eyes flashing gold. A second later, Peter slams into the station, fangs and nails out.

"Alpha?" he growls, his fangs receding. "Laura..? What happened? Whose blood is this"

He reaches out to touch her shoulder and that seems to break the spell of her silence.

"It's Greyson's blood " she sobs "they went to get ice cream … we thought it would be safe"

"What happened?"

"They took my baby…” She turns her eyes, flashing crimson to Derek. "They took Serena"

______________________________________________________________

Wojciech -Solace, Comfort, Joy
Bozydar - Divine Gift
Chapter 11

It's a set up. Stiles knows it. Derek knows it. in the back of her mind he's sure that Laura knows it but that she just doesn't care. Her child is gone, taken. Her mate near bled out from the attack, his werewolf healing barely keeping him alive. It's all Peter and Derek can do to keep her from running into the night after Kate.

Stiles calls Coz and Clem from the hospital, doubling the security detail on his father. TK has already harvested the video feeds from where Serena was taken. They are just going through the information when Chris Argent arrives sans his goodly wife. One of his leads has come through. Rumors of hunters based at the old Beacon Hills Train Station.

Stiles snorts in his head. Of course, the old Beacon Hills Train Station, long deserted and spooky as all hell, right out of Scooby fucking Doo. All they needed now was old Man Johnson to be behind it all.

The deputies were arming themselves for war, swarming like kevlar coated ants. Derek was pouring over a map of the area around the station with Erica, Coz, Peter and a fuming Laura. Stiles watched them through half lidded eyes. He hates this whole situation and for good reason. He'd nearly gotten his head bitten off by the Hale Alpha when he'd put a kebosh on going after them immediately.

She called him a cowardly son of a bitch and that he'd just let Kate kill her baby. He'd replied that if they went in unprepared, it would be as if they'd killed her themselves. It takes Peter and Boyd both to stop her from lunging at Stiles, Derek sending them to opposite corners, dragging a hand down his face.

He doesn't like what this is doing to Derek, putting him in the middle of the factions because of his position as Sheriff as well as a Hale Beta. Derek was fighting his loyalty to his Alpha and his loyalty to his Office, Laura and Cora were bristling like cats, riling up the wolves with a mix of rage and fear. Peter seemed to be the only voice of reason within the pack. The humans at the station can feel the tension, it's so strong.

Argent was a storm cloud in the other corner, his desire to be somewhere else, anywhere else plain on his face. He'd confessed to Stiles earlier that he was here on behalf of the Argent Clan to see justice done. He'd lost his sister long ago, the woman walking around with her name was no better than a stranger to him.

Derek and Peter break the huddle and they join Stiles as he's making his fourth cup of coffee for the day. It's tar but then he needs something jacked with caffeine so he's not picky.

"I don't like this at all" he murmurs when the two older wolves get close enough.

Peter snorts. "What's to like? We don't have nearly as much information as we should. We're basically walking in blind. Who knows what good old Katie Silverson has in store for us?"

Derek flinches at Kate's old pseudonym and Stiles wants nothing more than to place a warm hand on the back of his neck in comfort. The alpha within him paces restlessly, wanting to lay claim to the Beta then and there, propriety be damned but he soothes it with a promise. Soon, he whispers, soon the wolf will be ours.

"What I don't understand is Kate's end game. What does she really want in the end? She broke out of prison, so she can't be looking to back to her old life. She tried to kill my father and when she
discovers she failed, tries to fuck with his head by skinning his dog, which is totally not her M.O. then, she kidnaps a werewolf cub but leaves the father alive. Either she's got something else in mind or she's a sloppy killer…"

"She good at killing" Chris Argent says from behind Peter's back, smirking a little when said werewolf startled. "One thing she learned from my father is how to be a better killer."

"That can mean two things. Either she learned a lot in prison…" Stiles throws the dregs of his coffee away.

"… or there's someone else pulling the strings."

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The old train station smells of spray paint, cigarette ash, stale booze and teenage sex. Broken glass glitters along the side streets as if the kids had taken to breaking them along the rusted walls for fun. Stiles checks his weapon one more time and toggles his ear piece. He's in an alley across from the back entrance, the second prong of a two pronged assault they'd managed to put together.

Derek and the wolves would go in from the front, Stiles and the other deputies, come in from the back, cutting off all escape. Peter Hale and Chris Argent take the high ground with a pair of sniper rifles. Argent had also volunteered some of his hunters for the mission but frankly no one trusted them at their backs.

It stings to be shunted to the 'back' like this. Technically, he ranked higher that Derek in matters like this but this was Derek's town and he had a better chance of keeping the Hales in check. He also respects Derek as a police officer and knows when to defer. He also knows that Derek will listen to him if it was important and even though his gut churned something awful, there was no solid reason to abort.

There is a loud bang of the old doors going down and the shouts and growls echo through the deserted street. Coz raises a heavy boot and the door stands no chance. They swiftly swarm the entryway, his pack orbiting like satellites, slipping and ghosting through to the inner chambers. The human deputies tramp like giants behind them, their movements as a team jerky like a spindly bird.

Kate stands on an upper balcony, holding a strangely docile Serena to her chest. There is a gun pressed against the blonde head, the child barely wincing at the metal digging into her skull. Kate looks cornered and slightly surprised. Stiles feels a cold stone drop into the pit of his stomach. This isn't right.

Kate's henchmen are dead or dying, the wolves are healing from normal gunshots or harvesting wolfbane bullets to burn. Laura and derek have jumped up to the landing on either side of Kate and are baring their fangs, wanting nothing more than to rip her apart.

Derek has lost his kevlar somewhere along the way and Laura is once again covered in blood.

Stiles toggles his ear piece "Anybody got a bead on Kate?"

"Negative" Argent grunts from his rooftop. Peter agrees. "No go"

None of the deputies can get a clear shot, his team no different.

Coz is their best shooter. "The kid is too close. Shit"

Stiles side steps closer to the landing, trying to get a better line of sight. Derek's voice is rough as he
demands that she let go of the girl. Kate's laugh is a little hysterical.

"Oh boo hoo, Little DerBear lost his pretty dolly. I'll give her to you if you ask nicely, baby. Why don't you come over here and give your Katie a little sugar. I remember just how you like it. Not much else to think about in prison that sweet, sweet ass. Come on and show me how big you've grown."

She whips around to see Laura trying to sneak up behind her.

"uh uh uh Alpha." she shakes her head, looking back and forth between them.

She presses further against the half broken stained glass window that had been a real sight back in the day.

"You need to be careful Hale... These are special bullets. Brand new… prototypes even. With a new kind of wolfsbane blend. This one can't be countered. Guaranteed kill. Soon every hunter will have these and where will you be? You'll be put down like the dogs you are, every last one of you. Yes, won't they sweetie… yes they will"

She croons to the child in her arms. Serena just blinks dazedly.

"This is new too, keeps the wolves docile… like big sleepy puppies. They don't even feel pain… and believe me, I tried. Oh, you know better than that Laura Darling, not too close now. How’s the hubby? Still clinging to life, cursing my name? I hope he liked that face full of scent blocker. I must admit, I kinda overdid it a bit with applying it directly to his skin and all but it really does drives your noses wild."

Argent's voice whispers in Stiles' ear. He had repositioned himself and has a shot.

"Wait." Stiles murmurs. "Just a little longer… keep her talking. I want to know who's behind this"

"We need to take her out now" Peter's harsh whisper. "She could shoot Serena"

"If we kill her now, the real boss can always come back and catch us unawares. Let her talk. If it gets too hairy, take her out."

"Roger" Argent signs off.

A red bead appears on the glass above Kate's head, inching it way towards her skull. Derek tries to reason with her once again, keeping her talking. The bead flares red on the edge of broken glass and Kate catches on to their game.

"Trying to take me out from behind are you? That's a bit beyond you wolves, you're more up close and personal. That means you have hunter help and considering you can't be sure that they won't shoot you in the back that can only mean one thing… Christopher! Christopher! I hope you burn in hell you little shit"

Argent's voice echoes from the roof beyond "You first baby sister"

Kate laughs and the sound of it makes Stiles' finger tighten on the trigger. He's tense like a bow pulled taut. He must have twitched because Kate's eyes are drawn to him. She almost squeals with joy, jumping up and down like a little girl with a new toy. It's terrifying to behold.

"Oh lookie lookie it's little Stiles Stilinski all growed up and back in his home town. I heard you made it big up as a lawman up in Washington Deeee Ceee, leaving poor Derek to rot away all by
his lonesome in this fylspeck of a town. Awww… so sad. You were gagging for some of that wolf meat that night though, I could see the hunger in your eyes even then. The anger in your eyes that I had picked that fruit from the vine first, the fist to lick and touch and taste. That no matter what you did after…. that I would always be his first.”

The alpha in Stiles chest beats itself against his ribs, its howl of rage almost deafening. He wants nothing more than to rip the woman to pieces to burn her and salt the ashes. He forces himself to still. He has to wait until the time is right.

"I bumped into your father the other day" she simpers "how's he doing these days? Is he well? I heard someone killed his dog? Oh my God who would do such a thing? I tell you, you come across all kinds don't you? I mean, when I heard you were back in town, I wondered to myself- what would bring make little red set foot in his old stomping grounds once again? If he won't come back for his soul mate what would he come back for? Then I realized… if anything were to happen to Papa Stilinski then Stiles would have to some back wouldn't he? That would be the only way to get Red Jack back in town."

"Red Jack?" Stiles starts, "only two people ever called me that Kate, and you're neither"

"ooopsie" she grimaces "wasn't supposed to say that. My bad. Well, I guess in for a penny… in for a pou….."

The top of her head explodes as a single shot rings out. Blood and glass rain down to the level below and Stiles raises and arm to block the falling shards.

"Fuck” he shouts, seeing Derek and Laura rush to catch Serena as Kate's lifeless body tips dangerously toward the railing. Peter and Chris are shouting in his ear. Neither of them had taken the shot. Census is taken among the deputies, no shots fired there. Laura jumps from the platform, hugging her daughter's limp body to her. She is unresponsive to any attempts to revive her and Boyd rushes them in a squad car to Deaton's clinic.

Stiles looks up to where Kate's brain is dripping from the gaping hole in her skull. His eye skip to Derek who is looking down at her, an unreadable look on his face. He's beautiful in the scattered coloured light of the stained glass and Stiles' drinks the sight of his mate, like an angel descending from heaven.

Suddenly Derek jerks as another shot rings out. Time stops. Sound Stops. He can't breathe.

The force of the bullet takes Derek over the railing and Stiles darts forward with a cry, barely catching Derek before he hits the ground. They go down in a tangle of limbs as his team rushes towards them. The bullet bites deep into Derek's left side, he rips the shirt up to see the wound rapidly turning black, hideous black veins snaking out in a wild and ragged pattern.

Stiles can't think. Jim pulls him back as Coz and Clem lay Derek to reach the wound better. Erica approaches but Stiles' growl had her cowering away. Jim convinces him some how to let her close but it's touch and go. Peter and Argent burst into the station. Peter sinks to his knees next to Derek, examining the wound as Erica explains what happened in the last few minutes. Peter shoulders Stiles more to the side, surprising everyone when Stiles shifts to accommodate him. The Alpha in Stiles knows Peter is Kin, he may be a Hale but there's no mistake in his love for his nephew.

"I've never seen wolfsbane work so fast” Argent exclaims.

"Kate said they had a new type…. guaranteed kill” Clem recalls.
The words sit in the shadow of Stiles' mind like lit neon.

Guaranteed Kill.

Guaranteed death to all it touches.

Guaranteed.

No.

"No" Stiles whispers fiercely. "I've waited a fucking decade for your ass to get a clue. You don't get to back out now Hale."

He shrugs off Jim's hold and kneels at Derek's side, placing a hand on Derek's heart. He picks up Derek's hand and places it against his soulmark, his fingers deftly ridding the werewolf of his wrist cuff. He wraps a hand around the faded words on his mate's wrist and sinks within himself.

"You don't get to leave me. Not now."

The wild magic of his Grandmother's family went back for centuries, straight back to the first peoples blessed by the ancient goddess herself. Steeped in tradition and tied to the very heart of the forest and nature itself, it was powerful and heady to call. The ancestral magic of the Urdur bloodline could be traced back to its Icelandic roots and the great nomads of the tundra's.

His grandmother had taught his mother how to tap into this ancient power. His mother had taught him what she could, his being born a male kept her from teaching him the rites and ritual accessible to only the women of the line. He'd only been able to complete his training with his grandmothers, making sure that episodes like what had happened at his house that day never happened again.

Accidentally that is.

He could feel the magic surge within as he chanted the ancient call, calling upon his ancestors to find his cause worthy and lend their aid. A multitude of voices raise within him like a wave, almost deafening him.

Wojciech, son of Beata, daughter of Benedykta, daughter of Magnus, Child of the Urdur, we hear you.

He asks them to save him soul mate, his other half. Please, he begs them, he is my heart.

Hearts can be broken. What would you give in return, a price must be paid. A price must always be paid.

Anything.

Would you give your life?

Yes

Would you give your Alpha Magic? The very core of you.

He pauses, then… yes.

Very good young alpha. What is given away without thought is worth nothing, what is this soul mate worth to you?
Everything. Will you help me? I can't lose him now, not after all that we've been through. Not when I've just found him again.

Very well young Wojciech, son of Beata, we will help you.

Thank you. Thank you so much. Before I go though...What will you take? y'know so I can be prepared and all.

Cheeky Thing, Young Wojciech.

Well I try

The multitude of voices makes a noise that sounds like an exasperated snort.

It is a small thing, our price. Do not worry Child of Urdur. You seem a resourceful one.

Stiles is shoved back into reality without warning. He looks down at Derek as he catches his breath. The black jagged veins have receded, leaving only the ugly wound.

"What the hell did you do Stilinski?" Peter gasps.

"I gave us a fighting chance" Stiles gulps air, the vice around his chest loosening, "it's not a sure kill anymore. If we find the wolfbane and burn it, it will cure him."

"Holy fuck" Erica gapes "How are we gonna get the same wolfsbane?"

Stiles rips off his federal badge and gives it to Jim.

"I'm going to find whoever took that shot and rip the bullets from their cold dead hands."

With those words Stiles took off at a run and from one breath to the next a large Golden Jackal is sprinting along the empty street.

He plucks her scent out of the air with ease as he runs, twisting through alleys and around abandoned buildings. It's an old familiar scent from years ago that he would never forget for as long as he lives. The scent on honeysuckle and the sharp tang of copper that is Connie Bright.

He's only met her once, so many years ago. On the same day he met Bert, the same day he stumbled into the world of supernatural crime and got the reputation of Little Red because of the red hoodie he'd been wearing that day. But only one person had ever called him 'Red Jack' in that dry husky voice of hers.

There are random bursts of the spicy scent killer on the trail but he powers through them, snatching miniscule whiffs of his quarry. Light footed steps echo behind him. Clem has his back, keeping pace with her Alpha's powerful lope.

Within moments they are at and empty warehouse and Stiles doesn't even break stride, bursting through the double doors with a loud clang. Connie is there, alone, speaking on a cell phone which tumbles from her hand as she scrambles for her gun. Stiles is on her before she can even get a shot off, tearing into her shoulder as he tackles her to the ground.

She falls with a cry and they are a tangle of claws and teeth and blood flying. She manages to palm a woven pendant with her bloody hand and a pulse of old magic flings them apart. Stiles shakes the chill off as he staggers to his feet. That magic was cold, it felt decrepit, like something rotting. A choking, cloying smell.
He looks around for Connie but she is gone. Probably transported via talisman. She'll need immediate medical attention wherever she ends up, of that he is sure. He likes the blood off his snout in smug satisfaction. He'd gotten her pretty good in the shoulder, maybe even nipped an artery. She would bleed out if she didn't get help soon.

"Stiles" Clem's voice is sharp and distressed.

He lets go of the shift and is soon in human form again. He pockets a box of custom rifle bullets and hurries to where his pack mate is standing. She' squats down a little, raising a heavy burlap cloth to reveal a heavy rusted cage. The breath seems punched out of stiles' chest.

There, in the squat rusted cage, lay three werewolf cub, sprawled against each other, that same dazed look in their eyes that he'd seen with Serena.

"Jesus" he breathes finally "… Red Hills?"

Clem nods solemnly.

"Ok…” Stiles bites his lips "…Ok.”

He pushes himself to his feet and presses the box of Bullets into Clem's hands. She shakes her head and pushes him toward the door. They need to get this wolfs bane back to Derek ASAP. She will stay with the cubs until back up arrives. He hesitates, not wanting to leave her alone but she pins him with the stare of her that always made him feel like a moth pinned to a display.

He nods and turns on his heel and is ripping through the street in mere moments.

"I'm coming for you Derek. Just hold on. I'm coming for you."
Chapter 12

As Frankie Vallie and the Four Seasons belts out "Sherry" on the old kitchen radio, Stiles dances across the linoleum floor of his father's Kitchen, the spatula his microphone. Wiggling his hips to the music, he sings along to the music as he flips flapjacks on the stove top griddle.

"Come and get it while it's hot" he yells into the living room, slipping the last of the flapjacks onto a platter.

His pack piles into the kitchen. Jim and Coz still dressed in sweats and tees, are arguing good naturedly about a movie they'd been watching on his father's TIVO. Clem is the only one fully dressed, heading out to the hospital after the meal to check on Janek, who has gotten well enough to start bitching about hospital food and attempting to bribe anyone to bring him 'real' food. She would also make a stop by Deaton's as well to check on the Cubs found caged at the warehouse.

Unlike Serena, for whom the drug had worn off within hours of administration, the Red Hills Cubs had been exposed to the new drug for much longer and were still under observation at the Clinic as they had yet to shift back to human form. The wounds from the chains with which they were held were healing at a good enough pace for the vet to be optimistic in his own vague way.

Stiles had been loathed to set foot into Alan Deaton's Office, him being current Emissary of the Hale Pack and a working Druid. It was not a far reach that Deaton had been one of the Druids that had shredded the his and Derek's bond at Talia's behest and he hadn't been able to look at the man without wanting to bathe in his blood. He'd thus far been satisfied in letting Scott and Clem acting as the go-betweens, even now Clem was the only one so far of the pack that could stand spending any length of time in the man's presence while checking on the Cubs.

He cracks a couple of eggs onto the griddle next to some sizzling bacon, laying down some killer dance moves as the song switches to 'Please Mr. Postman' by the Marvelettes, much to the amusement of his pack mates.

The Red Hills Alpha had been contacted, with much crying and thanking them over the phone, and was currently in negotiations with Laura for entry into Hale Territory. Greyson was out of the hospital, healed except for the scarring around his eyes where Kate had sprayed the scent blocker directly into his face. Serena was mostly unharmed, just bruised from the rough handling by Kate and the other kidnappers.

Deaton had expressed a frankly creepy amount of interest in the drug that had been used on the young werewolf and had even requested a sample of what Connie had left behind in her escape. Stiles had outright refused at first but had relented on the grounds that they didn't know if long term exposure had affected any of the cubs adversely.

The rest of the ware house had been summarily processed, sealed, packed and shipped to the Fish and Game Offices with the assistance of Erica, who had been beside herself with excitement at getting her forensics on with a Federal CSI crew that had come in from Sacramento. The head of the Division had even commended her on her quick mind and steady hand and had suggested she pursue it further, going so far as to invite her on an exchange program with his department.

The coffee machine timer goes off and as he's finishing the last of the eggs and bacon, swerving around Coz who's topping off everyone's cup and flipping off the stove. The radio had just changed to 'Heat wave' by Martha and the Vandellas when arms snaked around his waist from behind. There's a warm body pressed against his back and a nose sniffing at his neck.
"Morning" the words are so low that they are almost vibrations against his tingling skin.

His turns his head to the side, pressing a soft kiss to a stubbled cheek, giggling as the hair prickles his lips.

"Morning to you too, sleepy head."

He went to press another kiss but Derek twisted his head and caught his lips with his own. With a moan, Stiles twisted in his embrace and with one hand in the werewolf's crazy bed head and another on his bare shoulder, leaned forward to lick at the claim mark he'd left in the meat of his shoulder near his neck.

After he'd gotten back to the warehouse, Argent had been ready with a knife and lighter and they'd administered the cure. It was only when Derek's breathing had evened out and the colour had started coming back to his skin that Stiles heart had finally stopped trying to jump out of his chest.

When electric blue eyes opened and Derek had whispered for his mate in the quiet of the warehouse, Stiles had reached the limit of his endurance. With an inhuman growl, his eyes flashing red, he'd cupped the back of the beta's head gently and at Derek's nod, claimed him as mate in front of the stunned crowd.

The echo of the shredded bond surged between them, pulsing with every heartbeat. He sunk into his alpha spirit, his jackal calling out for the wolf. His high pitched call echoes through the spirit plane, running, searching, for the one that completes his broken self. He howls again, pain and loneliness corded through the sound. Hoping for an answering call.

In the distance a wolf howls, long and filled with despair. He races toward the sound, his rapidly closing the distance. Soon enough he comes to the edge of a cliff, the sheer drop of the edge plunges into darkness below. On the other side of the chasm he sees Derek's beautiful black wolf standing tall, blue eyes like gems in the moonlight.

Try as they might, neither of them can get across to the other, the chasm is too deep. The wolf's pained howl breaks Stiles' heart utterly and he sings out a promise of deepest love to the wind. Hold on, it vows, I will come for you. I will find a way.

He comes back to himself in the warehouse, holding his mate gently and licking at the still bleeding wound as pandemonium reined above them. The werewolf had fallen unconscious moments later and had not witnessed the mini bitch fit Cora had thrown at the warehouse as Stiles had seen Derek into an ambulance and organized for Jim to lead a team to back up for Clem. He'd also slept through the confrontation at the hospital with the Hale Alpha.

Laura had taken offense at Stiles' claim on Derek and had even tried to get Chris Argent to put Stiles down as a skin walker, snarling that no abomination could hope to lay claim to her brother, her beta, her blood and she'd be damned if she failed to finish what her mother had started.

He'd responded that Derek had made his choice of his own volition and if she or her bitch of a mother had a problem with that then he'd be happy to punch their one way tickets to hell. Derek was his soul mate, and no one was going to "Come at me bitch" he'd snarled.

And she did.

Fangs dropped and claws, she'd lunged at him in the middle of the waiting room before any of the other surprised Betas could stop her. Stiles twists his body, deftly flipping the alpha over him and
taking her to the ground with a knee in her back. Jim tossed him his pair of custom flex cuffs that were built for subduing the supernatural and soon he had her trussed up like a turkey.

He grabbed her by the back of her shirt and placed her unto a waiting room chair, twisting out of the way again as she tried to bite him again and again until he threatened to muzzle her. The thought of being muzzled like that seemed to quiet her down to a silent seething rage. Her eyes seemed to burn with an unholy rage as Parrish led her away, Cora following her sister.

Peter seemed conflicted over the whole thing, choosing to stay out of it even as Laura had ordered him to 'just fucking DO something for once'. So he decided the something he would do was to go and make sure the Alpha's mate and child weren't left unattended since Laura seemed to forget all about them in the midst of getting her panties in a twist about Stiles and Derek.

They'd slapped an assault charge on her, as well as trying to strike a federal officer as well as attempted bond interference and let her stew in holding over night before her lawyers got her out on her own recognizance. He knew that this wasn't the end of it by far. That soon the rest of the Hales would be back in Beacon Hills and things would really heat up.

Until then, Derek had been brought to his father's house to convalesce after his release from the hospital and Stiles had reveled in having his mate so close to touch and taste at his leisure. They hadn't gone very far as yet, just kissing and light touching. Even though the wound had healed, the prototype wolfs bane had wreaked enough damage to Derek internally that it was taking longer that normal for him to shake off. But he got to have him in his arms, in his bed, to be tucked up against that hard body and sink into the heat of Derek's skin.

And that was all he needed today. His wolf smiling shyly in his arms and his pack in his den, safe and secure and happy.

Everything else could wait until tomorrow.

He would deal with his grandmothers and repairing the shredded bond.

He would see his father recovering enough to come home, caring for him until he was back on his feet.

He would deal with the Hales, with Laura and Talia and that motherfucker Deaton and his Druid friends.

He would drive himself crazy thinking Connie Bright and the repercussions that would come from this.

He would check in with Chris Argent who was rounding up all of Kate's accomplices along with Peter Hale and Deputy Parish.

He and Derek would figure out where they went from here.

But that was tomorrow.

He pulled Derek in for a scorching kiss, a flush of want thrumming through him when Derek opened to his questing tongue with a soft sigh, the heavy scent of caramel and sex intoxicating to the Alpha.

But this…. This was today.
Done. Whew
I wanted to add some smut but I can always to an addendum. Derek and Stiles are not ready for that yet I feel so it will have to be in the sequel. Most of the plot points I had to cut from this will be in my eventual sequel. We are not done with Connie and Eugene Bright. Thank you for reading and liking and commenting. You guys are the BESTEST!!!