were (you)

by bhanesidhe

Summary

Scott, Stiles & Lydia were the best of friends until tragedy struck, when an outing to Lydia's family Lake House ended in a car accident that took Claudia Stilinski's life. Scott & Lydia alone were rescued from the crash site, Stiles' body was never recovered. Traumatized & grief-stricken, Scott & Lydia drift apart until 6 years later when a Monster descends on Beacon Hills. As Supernatural forces throw them together they soon realize what really binds them is loyalty, friendship and finally a chance to find out the real reason behind Stiles disappearance.

• question everything •

Notes

This is posted/shared for my dear friend Saoirse, now Ms. professional Dr. Seahorse who hardly has time to read textbooks even but I always look forward to sharing my best/worst stories with. Here you go babe, another one.
+++

DISCLAIMER; Everyone Dies At Least Once Except When They Don't.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Debs child-like features made her easy to underestmate. Her skin caught quite enough sun but her Irish heritage kept it from being brown. It was hard to gage her age, old maybe but not too old to get flustered about. She moved like a young thing, skinny and light, auburn and salt streaked hair flowing, heart-shaped face and bright eyes. If someone started a rumor she was a witch it wouldn't take a big stretch of the imagination to believe it. They aren't that far off, but the word "Werewolf" would never come to mind.

Coot however, her partner in crime was something of a cliché. He was all limbs and scruff. He stood a foot taller than her, spoke more often and several octaves louder than her. If it weren't for the fact that he often forgot to shave he would look twelve, plus he acted like it. With dark eyes and darker hair, always peppered with food crumbs that seemed like starburst against his pale skin; what a pair. Inseparable, since they separated from their pack anyway.

Their defection had come by a strong intimation. The pack would be stronger without a disloyal Alpha, and she thought to warn Coot before all others when the threats came. Before her second, before full-humans and children among them. If danger neared her ability to lead was compromised because she cared for the town idiot and he was probably too stupid to know. Stupid and loyal, because when she directed him to leave, he begged to know why he was being banished. When she begged him to run, he insisted he'd die loyal rather than live apart. Before she thought better, she offered to do a runner with him. Figuring if the need to keep Coot, that knuckle-headed clumsy charm-fuck felt safer than the want for self-preservation came with the difficult realization she had fallen in love. And so, her Beta's knew she was too weak to lead. The rest came easily.

Step down. The pack would stand stronger without a coward for an Alpha, without Debs. And where Debs went, Coot went without even being asked.

"You're probably half my age," Debs smirked, loading a box of canned goods into the back of her truck.

"More," Cooter grinned like it was an accomplishment. He dropped his box harder, louder making a twang ricochet through the hilly dark.

"More or less," she glared; her eyes turn beta-blue instead of their previous alpha-red. "You sure about this?" she asked while hefting a spare tire one-handed and sliding a yard lengths tool kit
along the steely rails with the quiet ease of someone settling a glass vase.

"Good thing they don't card for your vag," he tried to sound sassy, but his heartbeat sounded all sorts of timid.

"Com'ere and close your mouth," Deb smirked, yanking him forward and low against her. She kissed him full on and while kissing grew lost in the thought of it. It was weird and made no sort of sense, but it was a good thought because it made her realize she wanted to kiss him for the rest of her life.

Coot loved her quickly after that, even after he realized they were running low on money as they shared less motel nights and had more tucked in at the side of the road. She rarely complained as she drove along scenic 101, through county and town. They ran cons to afford food but she wouldn't stop moving. Things weren't less scary on their own, they weren't more either, but Coot didn't realize he should be scared until he figured why she swam only if he watched her. He thought it was kinky at first.

"Watch me," she said one night under the new moon. Everything was raw in the air and felt like static electricity, except conducted with ice and made of river water. Her naked body cut through the midnight skyline, the rivaling mountain range as her silhouette slide under water shattering the mirage of where the earth ends and begins. He sensed it then, he didn't know the words for it but he sensed the actual end of his life and the nearness of it.

He bought a gun the next day. He spent more money than he should have, and it pissed her off. They argued about it for days. Still, every night when she said "watch me" he would but with his gun at hand. She made fun of him for it, reminding him that a Werewolf had claws, keen sight and super speed. Coot was rarely slow to speech but he found a way to phrase it exactly so she understood. See, she used to be an Alpha and it wasn't just that she was older that made her stronger; she was smarter, wiser simply better. Maybe she loved him first but he loved her so much harder. He couldn't protect the way she could, couldn't turn when there wasn't a moon like her. So a gun made sense because he damn well was gonna protect and heroes had guns. He'd made the last bullet silver because he knew how far to go, farther even. She listened thoroughly, her tone got firm but wavering like her voice always got when she was all emotional and she asked if he really meant to protect her.

"Watch me," he said grinning like a goon, bathed in sunlight smelling of gunpowder from popping off sodas and cans.

They travel north. Further North. Norther. Driving and things get pretty green although the stories of strange murders get pretty dark and they worried for the pack. Debs figured even if they're not her people anymore, even though they'd already burned through the Alpha who'd inherited her position, she felt what's left of them are still good-ish people, so she called the Alpha Twins. The scars they left her made it look like her ribs had grown ribs and in truth she had grown to like them; there was no ill will between any of them. She shared information she of their kind getting killed and the killings were getting worse. They said nothing much, after all they don't answer to her.

Debs a cast off now, an Omega just Like Cooter. But the two of them felt stronger together, they're own tribe but being safe means never staying still but never staying still meant being a moving target. It's a killer.

Beacon Hills was nothing special like all the other counties except it's their last.
BHHS let out close to 30 minutes ago and Allison hadn't stepped out yet. Scott pretended not to be impatient. Pretend poorly; rocking back and forth on the balls of his heels. When she finally stepped through double-doors and her eyes skirt the front lawn for him, he crossed the distance with a burst.

Allison Argent's smiles were little works of art, all ten thousand versions of them. Scott McCall had only begun to learn their language. Slight dip of her head, penetrating gaze up from under long lashes, petal pink mouth curling slowly in thought; she would ask a favor next. Hair dark as night, skin white as snow; princess and huntsman combined, an intimidating paradox it would take someone stronger than him to say 'no' to. That was until the heft of papers dropped into his hands.

"Thanks? That's really mean of you."

"You figured me out," she joked and used her newly freed hands to pull wandering strands of hair behind her ear.

"That's more homework," he accused.

"It is."

The weight caused him to slightly teeter. It boggled the mind and surpassed the hormones. It was Lots of Schoolwork. He had to take a seat.

"Aw, it's not for you," she smirked, dropping beside him on a bench seat. "It's for Lydia."

Allison stared with such open amusement it disarmed him. Grinning, he caught her off-guard with a brief kiss of retaliation while he tucked the sheets into his backpack.

"I'm sorry. She extended her Holiday break at her family's lake house with her Dad and missed couple of day's schoolwork."

"This is a couple of days?" said Scott looked very discomforted. He lifted the backpack and dropped it onto the bench with a thud for effect.

"For Lydia, I guess it is," answered Allison, trying not to laugh. She pressed his arm gently. "These need to get to her. You don't mind, do you?"

"Sure, -- you're not coming with me?"

"No," she urged him toward the bike, "I'm really sorry. I'm trying out for the gymnastics team. My Dad is on his way. He wanted to come and show support." Her voice grew tender with each word. Scott pulled her hand into his.

"Is there something else?" she picked up on the subtleties of his frayed nerves.

"Not exactly. Not something real," he mumbled.

"Something fake?" she smiled again, her brows drawn together in sweetness and concern.

"Maybe. I hope so," he fumbled onto his bike. "Nightmares but it seemed real. Who's to say this
Isn't natural?"

"I am," another smile. Differently this time; her body turned into it, her chin higher, haughtier. Her eyes narrowed in playfulness. "Even your phases are consistent. Like with the full-moon last night."

"Oh, right." He tried for light-hearted, but it wasn't quite there. That bastard the moon didn't make for light commentary. "But even that's not natural. Something made me that way."

Allison thought for a moment and walked around to the opposite side of the bike. The curb gave her the leverage of height as she leaned into his personal space, as if daring him to stay his ground or retreat. If he did, he'd tumble off the bike. But with his senses on high, her varying scents were pointed enough he would be overwhelmed if he wasn't in peak control. She threw down a challenge and he was quite capable of meeting, something she made a show of reminding him.

"Something made my piercings, your tattoos" she whispered near enough to his mouth it may as well have been kisses. "It's just...modifications. Pieces of the package, not the whole. Scott, you are how you are, the kindest most down to earth person alive. So once a month you're a bit of a monster. Me too. Hey, maybe our cycles will sync."

"That'd be nice. How would I get through any of this without you?" he smiled first, his eyes intent and memorizing her nuances.

"You wouldn't," she smiled, her nose scrunched up.

"No, I wouldn't," Scott's tone went serious.

"Oh, come on you would," Allison no longer smiled.

"No, I wouldn't."

"No, you wouldn't."

"Anyone else would have left."

Allison shrugged and looked up from beneath her long lashes revealing a wealth of unexpressed emotion. "Anyone else would have missed out. I'm not prejudiced. I wasn't going to just abandon my boyfriend because he's different."

Scott closed his eyes slowly. He felt they might change colors, like monsters do. Terrified that looking into her depths would be like staring into an abyss. He breathed her in, knowing when he looked again, he'd feel braver, to have her, to keep her. Maybe it was greedy to shape his fears and conquer them by having her to anchor him. It was dangerous to feel so much.

"It isn't racist to want you to stay safe."

"Hey, no matter what anyone says I would never run from your Hispanic roots."

Scott laughed, she made him. He kissed the side of her mouth, her cheek and her ear. He wrapped his arm around her waist, pulled her against him and rested his head in the crook of her neck.

"Speciesist?"

"Eh."

"Classist?"
"Close enough," she snuggled into him; her purple woolen hat scratching against his nose.

"Allison, if anything were to ever happen to you--"

"You never have to worry about that. I can take care of myself." She wrapped her arms around his neck and squeezed him gently. She pulled back and studied Scott's face. "Do you want to talk about what's really bothering you?"

Her tone said, -"Don't waste time worrying. Not when we can work to fix things."-

"No. Yes."

"You could text me later? If you don't want to tell me..." she considered how soon her Father would arrive.

"I want to tell you everything," his voice got small. "I killed last night. A man and a woman. It felt real; I could smell and feel everything. I couldn't control it, I was a Monster. I tracked them down, sensed his terror when I used the car to crush him. I chased her to a gas station, felt her struggle beneath my claws but then instead I shot her. I mean none of that makes sense."

"You're right. That's very strange. I-- I can look into it. But Scott, it wasn't you. You were home all night, right?"

He seemed uncertain when he answered "sure."

"Scott," she reminded firmly, "you don't fully turn. You don't even own a gun-- no bodies have turned up yet."

"Yet?"

"Maybe not at all," she soothed. "Can you tell me anything else?"

They had exercised focusing skills before; hands placed in each other's, centering of selves, breathing from the diaphragm, foreheads together. The world around them fell away and nothing mattered except what they chose to let touch them.

"A small rundown gas station. I've never been there before. It didn't even smell like a gas station, it smelled like rust and-- like a swamp." Scott sighed, again his shoulders dropped from strain. Allison ran her up hands over his denim jacket, along his arm, tracing the detail of the flag patch his left sleeve, flicking her fingernails on the buttons, smoothing along the kinks and stress points underneath she'd rather touch finger to flesh but couldn't reach.

"Okay. If it happened, I'll find it. We'll find out why you dreamt about it. Maybe it was a good thing? Maybe it was a vision?"

"A vision?"

"Like a premonition. They exist. I have it on pretty good authority you're 'Lover not a Killer' type. Come on, go home. Just go to Lydia's first? I'll text you her address," Allison scrambled for her phone.

"It's okay, I remember the way" Scott reassured her, strapping his backpack into the compartment under the passenger seat. Scott kept his back to her for a beat hoping to obscure some discomfort. It had the opposite effect. Allison stepped back in surprise, her face turned bright with delight. Her response was understandable.
"You're just full of surprises."

Allison's confusion was justified.

In the 4 months since she started at Beacon Hills High School, since meeting Scott McCall and befriending Lydia Martin it could be easy to assume that they rarely traveled each other's circles. Aside from required classes, their paths crossed through two ways; through attempts vying for Allison's attentions and Lydia's legendary Lacrosse Game after parties. Any of Scott's misguided attempts for Allison's favoritism died early on when he realized it just made his awkwardness more obvious and although he got an invite by default because of being the team's Co-Captain, Scott never attended. At first, he gave her lame excuses to skip out, but she caught on quickly. Plus, she preferred one-on-one dates.

It probably would have made Allison's life easier if her best-friend and her boyfriend could manage staying in the same room for more than 5 minutes, (besides mandatory classes) but he couldn't bring himself to do it. Scott could never bring himself to tell her about their history. In all fairness it seemed neither had Lydia.

"Yeah, we used to go there all the time as kids. We used to be friends."

From the quirk of her brow and her gaping mouth it was obvious Allison was desperate to press but she proceeded delicately.

"How long ago was that?"

"We met in the third grade," he messed with his helmet, displaying his readiness for the road. "We've always had a couple of classes together since. We just stopped talking somewhere in between," he sounded reluctant to admit, a sense of sadness cast everything in a different light.

Allison collected the information and filed it away for a later date. They glanced around awkwardly, remembering to hurry their goodbyes.

"I'm sorry. This made you uncomfortable."

"It's ok," his usual warmth hurried back. "I'd do anything for you."

Allison groaned in embarrassment and kissed Scott to shut him up. Innocent at first and he deepened it. She had warned him a Werewolf felt things intensely, fiercely. But this was different; he loved her before he got bit. He just didn't know he knew it. After getting bitten Scott didn't know how he would make her know it, how to put into words how meaningful she had become over so little time. It was unbelievable but then so were Werewolves.

Both felt light-headed when they pulled apart.

"Your Dad will probably be here soon?"

"Yeah." Sigh.

"I guess it's really important I get this to her today or you wouldn't have asked."

"Yes. Please." Double-sigh.

"Are you okay?"
"Yeah." Allison stepped back, big smile on her face. A broad unfathomable one that disarmed him and set him to get the bike's motor going. Not a metaphor.

"Plus," Scott said to cut the lasting bits of tension, "it'll be great to see Mrs. Martin again." Scott wasn't good at deception and she sensed something dubious.

"Uh-huh."

"When we were little, we used to fight over who'd grow up to marry her. I hear she's divorced now."

Scott laughed because he had made Allison laugh. She shoved his helmet down roughly onto his head and with that he went on his way with seconds to spare.

Track 03 - Don't You Give Up on Me by Milo Greene

In the foyer of the Martin's doorway Natalie Martin's went from uneasiness to bursting with laughter. Mrs. Martin came forward helped Scott to upright after he mistook a handshake for a hug. He moved forward too fast and she reached over too far. She ended up petting him on the head.

"Scotty!" she began, then corrected. "Scott," her tone was familiar enough he thought he could have been there just six minutes ago not 6 years.

"Mrs. Martin." There was no way to save face after such an awkward entrance. But Scott had to try. "It was really good seeing you. I mean it's really good running into you. I mean--"

"It's good to see you too, Scott. You never come around anymore."

"I know." As he tried to keep guilt from his voice, he felt his smile twitch instead.

Mrs. Martin had a kindhearted and commanding way about her; he couldn't just hand over homework and walk away, even if he wanted to. She asked how he was and his Mom, and about his Dad. He didn't know why he admitted to modest hardships, like the divorce and needing several summer jobs turn earn his bike as well as gripes about his Mom's excessive nights shifts when he should have just answered "Fine."

When he asked how she was she smiled and answered "fine" and he envied her coolness. When Scott mentioned Lydia's homework, she became confused and the speed of her heartbeat betrayed her coolness.

"Right, well we stayed at the Spa for an extra few days. You know how it goes."

"Not really," he chuckled nervously. She was lying and he felt bad for knowing it.

"She wasn't happy about missing school but... you can't just disappear for a week straight" she sighed, her heart rate went erratic. He followed her through the hallway into the kitchen, she gestured for him to keep up leaving no room to refuse. Apparently, cookies were still on the snack menu even as a teen. But instead of juiceboxes, soda and coffee were offered. Scott stuck with water and turned the glass in his palms, listening.
"She works herself too hard. You're all growing up too fast. Look at you. You were 10 just a minute ago, what happened?" she wrung her hands, regretting what she said. "You don't mind, do you?" she gestured to a bottle of wine beside the refrigerator before pouring herself a tall glass. The tannins in the wine prickled his senses and stung behind his eyes. They clinked glasses. Scott drank his water deeply too avoid saying anything stupid. What happened indeed?

"I'll get Lydia for you," and she pet his hand when she left the room. Although she made him feel very young, he felt adult enough to be out of his league.

Allison made it sound urgent for Lydia to be caught up because of extended time with her Dad at the Lake House. Meanwhile Mrs. Martin made 'reparative spa time' sound desperate just before she said Lydia had 'disappeared'. He didn't make a habit of getting involved in Lydia's business, for the same reason Mrs. Martin would learn as upstairs she started in with "your friend Scott is here."

Supernatural hearing wasn't needed to hear Lydia fiercely snap at her Mom "Scott McCall is not my friend!" After a few minutes of coercion, Lydia conceded.

Scott busied himself looking around the kitchen while he waited; he stared at booth photos of her and Allison at the ice skate rink, postcards from her to her Mom from trips to Paris, pieces of old artwork and good grades taped to the fridge. Lydia was exactly right, they weren't friends, but they were connected.

"Why didn't Allison come?" She startled him from behind. He should have sensed her, but he had been spellbound by memorabilia.

"She uh... she's trying out for gymnastics."

She looked unfamiliar without four-inch heels, designer outfit, long wavy hair down, glossed lips and perfectly shaped eyeliner. Before him she stood a barefoot, fresh-faced, a man's shirt synched at her waist like a makeshift dress and hair collected in a top knot. She looked small in more ways than one.

"Hello!" she snapped.

Scott shook his head free of his wandering thoughts. How long had she been talking?

"What?"

"I said what's with the lying?"

Scott wondered the same thing.

"Lydia, here's your schoolwork," he hurried, pushed them toward her. "Can I ask why you missed school?"

She gave the homework as much interest as take-out menus, with a quick nod and dropped them onto the kitchen island between them. There wasn't a hesitation in her answers which made it hard sense if she lied. Her heart rate, fidgeting hands, the sweat at her brow had been hectic since she arrived.

"I went camping with my Dad. We got lost. Why do you care?"

"No reason."

"More lies."
"Wait. You think I'm lying?"

She tsked and rolled her eyes at him.

"Of course, you are. Beacon Hill's doesn't even have a gymnastics team."

A sense of shattering passed through Scott's mind; he took a deep breath, then another and tried to focus on the feeling of the seat beneath him, the table he leaned evenly against, the places in the world stabilized so the Werewolf wouldn't overrun him. While he focused on answering the question 'What was going on?'

"Jesus Scott!" her sharp voice cut through his muddled thoughts. She pried his hands open and pulled pieces of shattered drinking glass from it.

Scott apologized and apologized but Lydia ignored him. She smoothly collected a small pile of broken cup before wiping them up and tossing them away. She handed him a damp paper towel to soak up the blood. While she muttered under her breath, she glared at him but didn't ask him why.

"She lied to me," he whispered incredulously.

Lydia brought him another damp cloth from the sink and her hip leaned against the counter close to him, her eyes challenging.

"I'm sure she had her reasons. Come here." She took his hands in hers and started to swipe away the blood. When she moved her arms, the sleeves rucked up and revealed healing scrapes.

"Thanks, you're good at this," he said kindly.

She followed his line of sight. "I've had a lot of practice recently."

At such close proximity he could see her eyes were dilated. He wondered how much pain-killers she was on and if that was the only reason for her outgoingness?

"Allison said you were at the Lake House with your Dad."

She nodded.

"I didn't think you would ever go back there."

"It's where my Dad stays when he visits Beacon Hills. I hate it there."

She sounded child-like and timid.

"Your Mom said you went to a Spa."

She laughed; her hands stilled, and she stared at the floor.

"I wish. She likes to say things until they become true."

"What about camping?"

"What about camping?"

"I thought you hated the woods."

"I hate the woods because I was a Brownie Scout. Best of the Beacon Brigade."
"So, you went to the woods too?"

A violent shudder ran through her and she clutched Scott's hand, her freezing fingers cast an iron grip. After a calming breath she apologized for crushing his hand.

"No problem," he said.

"No problem?" Lydia doubted, then opened Scott's hand, palm up and looked to see it had scabbed over. Her eyes narrowed, she detached from Scott and tugged down her sleeves. She drew herself up and stood larger at 5'3 than most of the guys on the lacrosse team.

"Since you're good now, you can go," unafraid, she recognized the symptoms and dismissed him.

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**Track 04 - Without Lies by Sky Ferreira**

The penny dropped.

Suddenly Scott understood Lydia; medication hadn't skewed her senses, these were familiar abnormal symptoms cast under a full moon except without learned control or the ability to heal. But if she'd been bitten during her 'extended vacation' and wasn't a Werewolf, what was she?

"Lydia, did you go to the Preserve? Is that where you went when you--" he gestured up-and-down at her "--vacationed?"

"I went camping with my Dad. I got lost," Lydia crossed her arms defiantly and leaned away. "What's the big deal?"

"Because I went running there, remember, last summer when I got hurt?"

"I remember Allison babysitting you after you tripped--"

"A wolf bit me," Scott cut in.

"No, not a chance," Lydia scoffed.

"You saw the wound."

"No, I didn't."

"What do you mean, no, you didn't?"

"I just saw bandages. Some bloody bandages, a high-grade fever. An infection, maybe. So, you had a bite but a wolf? Really? California doesn't have wolves, okay. Not in like 60 years."

"Alright, well, if you don't believe me about the wolf, then you're definitely not gonna believe this."

Having seen enough Lacrosse games, Lydia knew Scott always hesitated when he moved except when he made moves that mattered, game winning moves. When he reached for her over the kitchen island it felt like a dancer guiding their partner. When his left hand skimmed the length of her right, he traced the cuff of her sleeve without pushing it up and she locked her fingers around his wrist to still him. Their arms made a circle that pulled them closer than they had been since
they were children. Like a dare she kept her eyes on him, face schooled in cool detachment when a sudden sedate calm passed through her, something like being wrapped up in her favorite comforter and dosed with codeine combined. She sighed and sagged against him, her knees having gone weak. She quietly observed lines along his arm changed colors, black pulsing veins pressed against her fingertips, pulling pain away from her body into his.

Lydia looked up again, her expression open with fear and fascination. "Stop," she said weakly.

The moment she asked, Scott stopped and steadied her before letting go. He explained it helped but wouldn't heal. She looked miserable and muttered something under her breath which Scott only caught because of his keen hearing. "I'm gonna have nightmares for a month."

"Are you okay?" he settled further away from her, trying not to upset her.

"Am I okay?" her voice was small, but her tone was massive. "I didn't ask you to do that!" she shoved a finger in the center of his chest, her thoughts mixed over whether to be concerned or angry with him. When her initial shock faded the question remained "what did you do?"

Upon entering, Mrs. Martin knocked on the doorframe and apologized when she noticed how intense the two looked leaning over Lydia's schoolwork. Unnoticed they had scattered around the papers on the kitchen island. She meant only to ask how things were going and offered to make them some brain food or refreshments as compensation, but Lydia cut in that Scott wouldn't be stay. He watched her closely, his disappointed apparent. For a moment Scott thought he had broken through to her, but Lydia's expression became smug and hard.

Not wanting to miss the opportunity, he whispered "I can help."

"I didn't ask for your help," she did not whisper.

Mrs. Martin eyed them both and excused herself, leaving them to continue discussing schoolwork.

Scott persisted, "Still. You have it. I mean, I want to."

"Why?"

"I don't know, because you're still my friend," flustered he spoke nothing but truth.

Offended, Lydia's face colored and she backed further away. She mocked that shared trauma would what? Bond them? As if that had or would ever mean anything. She laughed even. "Someone would have to be really desperate to ask for your help, McCall. You should go; I don't hang out with losers."

He had hit a wall unsurpassable.

"Ok," he conceded for now but still, he wouldn't give up. "We'll see each other tomorrow. And every day after that."

After a pause, Lydia narrowed her eyes in a challenge. "Whatever," she ignored him, rubbed her arm and started shuffling through her schoolwork.

As he passed through the foyer Mrs. Martin waited. Her thoughts were heavy, making her quieter than when he first arrived, more concerned and hesitant. She caught him with a question as he descended the first of the front steps.

"Do you hang out with her often?"
"Not really," Scott answered, he wanted to be kind but struggled not to lie. "We see each other around the lacrosse games."

Mrs. Martin laughed, she seemed genuinely proud. "You're on the team. That's great!"

He smiled at that. "I've been on the team for a while, but this is the first year I've gotten a chance to play."

"I guess that's why I haven't seen you," she rationalized. "Lydia still has the post-game parties but she doesn't do pep-squad since she broke up with that boy." She settled against the doorframe and shook her head looking troubled. "Scott, you watch out for her."

Scott felt conflicted. He just spent 10 minutes trying to convince Lydia of exactly that. Watching Mrs. Martin, he thought about the lies she told herself to protect Lydia and how it wouldn't help. The truth might not feel like it helped but the truth was Lydia returned home safely after being attacked, was adjusting to supernatural physical changes and even stood up to him. All Alone.

"She can take care of herself, Mrs. Martin."

Mrs. Martin was tired but had a sincere smile, "of course. But we all could use a little looking after, Scott."

They talked about Lydia returning to school and she left him with the impression it would be a few days. She hugged him one last time and made no mistake in letting him know she didn't want to let him go. In fact, she hoped to see him more often.

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Track 05 - Mother Once Said by Landon Liboiron

Natalie Martin was a firm believer in "love the life you live. Live the life you love". Despite loving teaching, the University nearby wasn't affording her the academic tenure she deserved which meant the money wasn't coming in as it should. So, she flipped houses on the downtime between semesters, which keyed into her guilty pleasure of poking through other people's houses. Fortunately, the housing market all over Beacon Hill County was booming and Natalie was clever enough to take advantage of it. In the study, course work and estate sales littered the coffee table and while one hand sifted through listings the other held a glass of wine.

Lydia knocked on the door and made her way in without waiting for a reply. Her Mom gestured for her daughter to join her on the couch without looking up from her work. Through a practice act, they twisted into a laying position on their sides, and breaths in sync. They worked in a comfortable silence for short time when her Mother commented on Scott's visit.

Lydia rolled her eyes and made "Momm" a groan that was barely recognizable as the word. "Let's not."

"Talk about men."

"Talk about things that are offensive."

"I thought that was Money, Politics and Religion."

"Lacrosse is all of that," Lydia muttered and nestled further into her Mother's shoulder.
With a laugh, Natalie kissed her daughter's forehead before she pulled her hair down from its top knot. She ran her fingers through Lydia's hair, an act that soothed them both, but it wasn't long till her cellphone chimed and she was called away.

Lydia poured the last of the coffee into a thermos for her Mom's drive as she fusses about driving after a glass wine. While Natalie assured her if she weren't so clearheaded about it and if they weren't in need of the money, she couldn't bear to be parted. She wanted the jump on any new list, she loved getting a look at the land and visualizing possibilities before some crook got their fingers in it. As she left Lydia brave-faced a smile, then she tried to focus on her schoolwork, but she couldn't bring herself to do anything other than fixate about her "fugue state", the only logical, clinical and scientific (not supernatural) explanation for her gap week. With her Mother, the last link to normalcy in her life, gone she was left to obsess.

Switching gears, instead she thought of that "Other One"; Jackson Whittemore, Co-Captain of the lacrosse team. She started a text but thought better of it. He had sent one text since before she'd disappeared and one since she'd returned, demanding to know if she would miss another day. She called Allison but it went straight to voicemail, so she sent a passive-aggressive text instead. She thought of Scott offering help and how much his presence complicated life. She resented him that. She tossed aside the phone, started on her schoolwork while her Papillon puppy fell asleep against her feet after 30 minutes and she bemoaned the loss of the coffee. All of her usual comfort things, gone to waste.

Track 06 - Until We Bleed by Lykke Li

They fiddled with the radio, they joked and talked about what to eat. Coot and Debs wondered aloud where they should head next because they still couldn't bring themselves to admit what they ran from. Except they were nearly out of money, Debs had the purse strings and Coot had the temper with not a lot of commonsense, which is why he left a loaded gun on the dashboard instead of locking it in the glove compartment. After shooting a few rounds to blow off steam, which he'd been doing a lot more often, it accounted for him not hearing things so clearly. They were cycling through things quicker these days like they were winding down to something. They laughed till they argued, argued till they fucked, fucked till they got hungry, ate until they slept, slept until they woke laughing.

Debs sensed the Monster first but before she could move her mouth from a kiss to a warning, their truck went spinning. Then it went very still. Debs grabbed hold of Coot with one arm and while she braced herself with the other. Coot went for his gun, forgetting it wasn't where it was meant to be after he had been firing it wildly. The second impact sent Coot through the windshield. He barely got to his feet before the truck skid sideways toward him and crushed him into a support pillar of the Industry Bridge. Debs screamed, scrambled through the windshield but abandoned helping him for saving herself. She loved Coot surely but from the sound of it the Monster wasn't leaving room for hope. Coot's last words were "Deborah, run!"

The night felt still despite the violence, when she came up on the other side of the muddy water; driving cars overhead obscured sound below. The hour was late enough it verged on early when she burst through the gas station's concession doors. Her hurried speech slurred from her biting fangs. Shouting, Debs asked the teller if he had a weapon. When he admitted he had a bat and she riled he needed a real weapon. As the pursuant neared Debs nails extended and right shoulder twisted, snapping audibly in realignment. She gave off an unearthly sound and in fear the teller
cradled his bat to him.

Not daring to look away, Debs glared through the fiberglass toward the impending threat; instead she gestured offhandedly with her blood covered, well-healed arm and commanded the teller to "Move!" seconds before a wild blurred Monster flung the double doors apart.

The teller, abandoning his bat, ran blindly for the back room that led to a street exit. He wouldn't look back. He would run five miles home on sheer adrenaline, shower, head straight to bed and assume he'd imagined it, the way he always imagined weird things during a 16 hour shift.

Debs dragged down and collapsed the cigarette/snack rack onto her attacker, entangling it. The video recording would become dislodged and no other documentation would exist to capture the last efforts if Deborah Pelt.

For the 2.5 seconds the rack kept the Monster low while Debs bent backward, hefting herself onto the counter as she swung her legs around. She wrenched herself away from danger and grabbed hold of the bat before landing smoothly behind the counter. Debs raced around the counter and down the aisles making certain to smash every loud, bright or five-sense enraging item she could crack at the Monster.

Finally, she made a desperate run at the wide open doors, when partway through the Monster caught hold of her collar. A clawed hand swung her around while the other pistol-whipped her hard enough it nearly took her head clean off. Knocked sidelong it lifted her against doorframe, she saw stars when she hit the pavement, splayed and laughing.

"His gun. You have his goddamn gun," she spat out along with bits of blood. It growled and muttered indecipherable things.

Debs rolled onto her back, flicked out her wrist, shot out a dog's lead she grabbed earlier and wrapped it around the beast's throat. The further the Monster lifted her off the ground, the more she thrashed and tightened the leashes grip. Struggling, it got out what sounded like the word "Where?"

She grimaced a reply, "you'll never--find--them--".

They collapsed onto each other and tittered toward the curb. The weakened beast pawed at her, dragging her as it inched along. It eased back and abandoned its straightforward attack.

It's eyes turned red, as it reared back itsfangs extended and mouth went slack, then it let out a roar that rumbled through the bottom of its belly. She felt her core unravel and herself begin to turn, begin to change; she knew he would tear her apart if it came down to animal instincts. All she had over the Monster was clear-headedness which she started to feel wasting away. Unlike the Monster, her hands were small enough to fit through the trigger of Coot's gun. She grabbed it up from where it fell and felt grateful Coot left her enough, maybe not to kill but to give her a head start.

Made trickier as it bit and smashed her head backward, she wasn't a fast enough to get off a clear shot. There was an abandon in her eyes, the eye that wasn't scratched and swollen closed. So, with arms twisted up uncomfortably, she aimed and the last shot at the juncture between her own shoulder and neck. The spark was enough to set off the butane Debs had earlier smashed all over the Monster. It reared up and nearly choked them both as it snapped the leash. The Monster combusted, half-human/half-man, deformed and unable to maintain one shape as it ran stumbling and howling into the woods.
Grateful Coot's specialized bullet suppress any supernatural change/healing abilities, Debs collapsed onto the pavement and went into a perfectly natural state of shock until she bled out seconds later. Better than that, with ebbing clarity, Debs felt pleased with that fact she remained loyal to a pack that didn't want her anymore and avenged the murder of man she loved till the day they died.

A high school student stopping for a cup of coffee would find her within minutes. It wasn't the graphic nature of the murder that frightened her. It was how unfrighteningly familiar the bite marks were that caused her to scream.

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Track 07 - Anthems for a Seventeen-Year-Old Girl by Broken Social Scene

The Argent's were traditionalist when it suites them; which is why Allison Argent's father collected her from school to observe a 'Family Meeting'. At least the meetings weren't boring. Often, they talked about Dragons or Demons or Vampires, after all the vast Argent family were centuries old keepers of the secrets of Supernaturals. Their faction was surveyors; world travelled careful observers who calculated anomalies, a lone Werewolf here, stray coven there but they never laid roots. Yet suddenly she was enrolled in a high school and dating a boy, her loyalty became split and she felt mildly traitorous.

The Beacon Hills faction consisted of; (her parents of course along with) Rumy, her godfather with a brotherly closeness to her Dad. Axel, an older second cousin whose coolness created distance, although she respected his marksmanship. And Bennett, nearest in age by two years and they bonded over the misery of training throughout their youth. Those five were the immediate few who shared a roof, not accounting for the one or two freelance members that passed through (most often Ulrich and Leveque).

In their family home, meetings were held in an office on the second floor that served as a panic room (it had self-generated power, went soundless, had steel re-enforced alarm coded doors and unfortunately no cell reception). While mostly she was meant to be there as a show of united Argent presence, over years her clever mind picked up skilled stratagems.

Recently, Allison listened in hopes they would finally reveal why her Family's faction were chosen to drop everything and move to Beacon Hills. Until her boyfriend got attacked by a mad Alpha, then she wished she hadn't been so eager to discover the truth. A stray Alpha was virtually unheard of. Packs were supposed to deal with their Alpha if they went mad or weak. Not to mention these Hunters were surveyors, and no longer got involved if Supernaturals got out of hand. But most importantly the future leader of this Argent's faction would never date a Werewolf. Some traditions could not be ignored.

When Allison didn't report Scott's attack (and his inevitable transformation) even though she knew it left her family at a disadvantage in their investigation. But it meant more, it also meant the
responsibility of strategizing and investigating solely landed on her. She took advantage of every piece of surveillance and restraint equipment she could reasonably get away with. She became less of a figurehead a more active member of the Argent as well as a secret mentor to Scott. She felt like a double agent. Sometimes her grades suffered but that's what zero period cram sessions were for.

Any feelings of conflict vanished with golden moments; moments like when she trolled the police bandwidth for Scott's clues and found something her family could actually use. Her stomach flip-flopped when she heard the phone call. Soon, she uncovered an Industrial Plant shut down due to Mycotoxicosis, something that "smelled like rust and-- like a swap", on the border of Beacon Hills and Fairvale. Surely enough, walking distance across the Industry Bridge that cut between the townships, at a virtually deserted gas station a grisly robbery had gone wrong and been reported exactly there. Just as Scott dreamt a day earlier, a Jane Doe mauled and shot in the face had just been called in.

Allison verified the transcript and brought the family meeting to a standstill. She appreciated the moment they looked to each other in alarm before they looked at her in regard. This would help their cagey investigation for sure but it would help Scott too. Once a plan was made the doors to the meeting room opened, her cell phone flared up with missed calls from Scott and a missed text from Lydia.

While members filed out, she gave each the briefest grin goodnight she could manage before she escaped to her bedroom. The messages were small grievances; Lydia wanted to know "what's up the white lies?" And after the third time he called, Scott wanted to know "if everything's alright?" He had a couple of things to tell her, one or two things to ask her but from his tone she could sense he just wanted to talk. Allison checked the timestamps on each message. She noted it against the time the Jane Doe's murder was called into the police. No way could Scott be in two places, clear across town at once.

She nearly screamed when her cell phone lit up in her face. "Yes," she assured Scott. "Everything's fine." Was he fine? Was he home? Good, good. She was just caught up in some family drama and they had her running through hoops, not a lie. They would talk in the morning, so much to talk about, first thing in the morning, she promised but there was so much to talk about. Bye.

Allison spun around a couple of times before she collapsed onto the bed somewhat relieved. Any pang of guilt she felt about Jane Doe's death she packed it away and replaced it with determination, she would solve that mystery. Allison was a Hunter, an Argent and she was in love. No one had more reason than she to work out the mysteries of Beacon Hills.

Track 08 - This Is Twice Now by Lydia

The high school student explained to the officers she discovered the crime scene when she stopped for a cup of coffee (despite being it being 30 minutes out her way and pass several gourmet coffee shops, cafes, Dunkin' Doughnut and a couple of other gas stations). She found the place unmanned, what smelled like fuel in the air and what turned out to be blood on the pavement.

From the little footage that survived the Sheriff's department pieced together Jane Doe came for aide from a pursuant who then robbed and killed her. From the bruising pattern, it showed offensive and defensive wounds. The victim's directions to the clerk saved his life, then it appeared the woman gave in the fight as good as she got. A couple of the Officers admired Jane Doe, which made them more determined to find her killer. What was taken or the woman's identity went
unknown for the time being. As it stood their only witness (the clerk) remained at home, traumatized and a less reliable source of information than the person who discovered the body.

Lydia pointed out from the quality leather of her boots they were Southern, the sort of ankle boots meant for desert, not the woods and certainly not for fashion. She noted they might want to start with Texas. They asked from what article of clothes she surmised that fact and she answered "not the clothes, the hair. Texas; bigger the hair, closer to god. Or you could go by your utter lack of forensic evidence. You choose."

Sheriff Stilinski found her stylistic input refreshing but her presence unsettling. Lydia rattled his men, she was a little too at ease and he pulled her aside for a more intimate talk. He thanked her, genuinely and asked again why she went so far out of her way for such bad coffee.

"Do you think I'm lying?" after glancing around, her eyes narrowed as she looked back at him.

"No, of course not," he squeezed her shoulder to reassure her but his face said something different. "I'm just worried about you. Now if you saw someone who do this-- if you're afraid that they're maybe going to come back to make sure you don't say anything about it--"

"I didn't see anything, at all. Can I go now?" she ran her hand through her hair in frustration.

The Sheriff offered to get her that coffee and have her driven home. She shook him off and wondered aloud why she wouldn't be allowed to get back in her car, alone. He even offered to have a word with the school to grant her another day's absence. With a tight voice she thanked him and expressed a determination to attend school in the morning despite everyone's "well meaning". But the Sheriff seemed equally determined to at least provide her with a police escort back, when Deputy Parrish cut in with a cup of coffee and a quick escape.

Track 09 - Recover by CHVRCHES

The moment Deputy Parrish offered to lead the way, with sirens and flashing lights, through the short cut via the 'Industry Bridge' Lydia felt as though someone had walk over her grave. But she conceded, desperate just to get away from the gas station massacre.

Except the moment bridge began to arch, Lydia pulled into the shoulder without signaling and Deputy Parrish reversed abruptly to align with the front of her car. She tried not to look frightened but wasn't doing a very good job. When Parrish asked if she was alright instead she handed over her coffee. The only explanation she provided was he would need it more than she would before the night's end. Over the ledge of the bridge she pointed out evidence of the car accident simmering against a support pillar bellow.

In the darkness of pre-dawn, at the speed they drove, from the angle they crossed, Parrish had to ask, how she knew where to look? How does someone, by sheer luck, stumble on two crime scenes in one night? Lydia answered simply; she had a feeling. She didn't need to follow up with "the feeling frightened her," or "she really wanted to go home." The tone was implied.

"I believe you. Sometimes, people are just more sensitive than others. Thanks for the coffee." He smiled mildly and ushered her back to her car. He called in the second crime scene and asked Lydia if she felt alright enough to get home on her own. She never felt more alright about something so not right in her life.
The sun had begun to rise; school would be in 2½ hours and she still had 2 assignments, 1 more subject to review and blood to wash off her 4½' heel Jimmy Choo platform pumps. Lydia Martin was exceptional at compartmentalizing.

Track 10 - Dream (Fleetwood Mac Cover) by Gabrielle Aplin and Bastille

[Thursday; Morning - Beacon Hills High School]

Excited about her news, Allison rushed to find Scott during morning practice. After all, zero period cram session wasn't mandatory and yes, her grades needed tweaking but assuring Scott that he wasn't a cold-blooded murder took precedent.

At the library door she faltered; her grades weren't something to laugh at yet, but she couldn't be suspiciously failing or her Mom would come to school. She signed in for attendance but excused herself. If she spoke to Scott quickly and made the second half of the period (switching off priorities not at all being symbolic of her life) she could maybe, possibly get her textbooks cracked open for 20mins. Borrowing notes from Lydia was a surefire way to pass every class, a thought that entered Allison's mind when she caught sight of Lydia. Nestled in the library, hair-pinned back expertly, shift dress modeled to a T and head bowed over enough composition notebooks to create a fort.

Before Allison could decide to stay or go, a grip pulled on her arm and whipped her out of the doorway. She twisted herself out of the grip and reversed it, pinning the arm backward at the elbow.

"ow ow ow ow ow" Scott whined in a whisper.

"God, I'm so sorry," her hands flew to cover her mouth, embarrassed for almost breaking her boyfriend's elbow.

"I'm okay," he grinned and moved around his limbs to prove it, "all healed." He reminded her of his super healing and when she calmed, he pulled her into a hug.

"Did you see?" she jumped to attention, "Lydia is here. I thought she was, you know."

"I do know. Maybe more than you know. Or do you know?" Scott's made several faces that made up more confusing expressions than even his words. She pulled at his arm until they were by a stairwell and seemingly out of everyone's way. She listened attentively to what it was that Scott had to get off his chest.

"Yesterday, Mrs. Martin said Lydia went to a spa and she disappeared. But you told me she went with her Dad to their lake house and overstayed."

"That's weird," Allison absorbed the information and placed it on a shelf with everything else about Lydia she had been investigating.

"But then Lydia said everyone is lying."

"Do you think she's paranoid?"

"No. I think for once Lydia was trying to really tell me something. She said there isn't a
Gymnastics team."

Allison didn't try to cover it up, just nodded a concession. She would apologize later because there are other things that mattered more than hurt feelings.

"She told me her parents both lied. Maybe because they felt guilty, I'm not sure. She told me she was at the lake house, but she also went camping with her Dad. But Allison it gets worse," he looked around and listened closely to hear if anyone had come near. "I think Lydia was attacked by something like me."

Another thing on the shelf.

"You think Lydia is a Werewolf?"

"No, definitely not. She feels different but she seems the same. I don't know how to explain but last night, I'm pretty sure the full moon's after-effects was making her sick."

"Is she going to be okay?"

"She's here isn't she?"

Allison grinned at that. At times, Lydia Martin could be more of a monster than most things that go bump in the night. Scott would keep an eye out for her without having to ask, she knew he would. Whatever childhood squabbles Lydia and Scott had behind them it wouldn't keep him from trying to keep her safe.

"I have to catch up to the team," Scott jumped forward and kissed Allison on the check, "we'll talk more later."

"Yes!" She called after him, "I'll see you later!"

With a grin he disappeared through double doors toward the locker rooms, lacrosse gear and all. Of course, she would see him later, but she missed him already because she worried about him every minute. The mental shelf she kept for the concerns and interests of Scott McCall had grown so consuming and heavy it became a vault onto itself.

"Did you know?"

Allison nearly jumped out of her skin. She tripped up the stairwell and stumbled into the hallway, Jackson loomed over her and she was grateful there wasn't a wall behind her.

"Jackson? What? What's going on?"

Jackson was sweaty from post-practice action, adrenaline high and jaw line stiff as if sculpted.

"How could you not know?" he practically accused, his glare was assaulting but before he made a move or explained himself everything about him seemed to shiver.

Disarmed, Allison turned back around and followed his line of vision. Lydia stood in the doorway of the library, books in hand, poised and expression unreadable. The bell rang before Allison could answer him; she turned to find him gone and Lydia as well when swung back to look for answers herself.

Track 11 - Alice by Mononoke
Mr. Harris could intimidate the white off a skunk's back, but he couldn't keep Danielle from reading off the scandalous twitter tag #DoubleDead during 1st period Natural Science. The world had gone red with a double-murder on the edge of town. Nothing happened in Beacon Hills and definitely nothing happened in its-pale-by-comparison neighboring town Fairvale, but double-murder was salacious enough that gossips from both towns wanted to claim ownership of such an awesome event.

It turned worse for Lydia when she had the nerve to correct Danielle by clearing up that the female victim was found in Fairvale and the man in Beacon Hills.

"How could you know that? That information wasn't released yet."

"I just do?" Lydia slammed her books open and flipped through her notes, her late night scribbles made superfluous by scandal and nightmares. She hated to drawing attention to herself as 'that' geek student, but the words were already out of her mouth before she gave it any thought. "Mr. Harris aren't we supposed to have pop-up quizzes before the mid-terms?"

In polar opposite, during homeroom Ms. Ramsey was so giddy with gossip she neglect everything but attendance. Danny greeted her with a winning smile and welcomed her home. No suspicious follow up, no live feed announcements, in fact Danny was genuinely Danny esk it was hard to believe she missed a day of school.

"You should come to afterschool practice," he insisted with a poke at her arm.

Lydia made a face like the room had suffered a stink bomb, "thank you but no. Jackson is still Co-Captain. Plus, McCall is the other Co-Captain."

"I'll be there. I need someone cheering for me," Danny charmed her with a fluttering of his lashes.

"Sorry, but that doesn't exactly do it for me," although Lydia grinned, her beautiful non-hetero advocate did little to move her motivation meter.

"I thought supporting lacrosse players was your thing," Danny tilted his head toward the lanky classmate to his right. Light eyes, pouty lips, curls and long, long limbs. "What am I supposed to tell Isaac over there?"

Isaac Lahey swiveled around at the sound of his name, he didn't pretend not to hear, and he just smiled playfully and insisted "you should definitely come after school, Lydia. We would be lost without you."

Lydia poked Danny in his side, pushing him back toward his own seat. She didn't take her eyes off Isaac as she sat back pretending to consider the inevitable.

During Algebra2 Scott whispered loud enough he might as well have had a blow horn. He insisted Danny switch seats with him, he pleaded and begged, at one point he fell to his knees but that might have been incidental. Danny calmly answered "No" each time; Danny listened, or at least pretended to, with the expression of a man tolerating a neighbors yapping dog. Finally, to keep the peace, Lydia insisted Scott take her seat; she was out of it before he had a chance to say otherwise and transposed herself onto his. It was too late to explain to Danny he wanted to switch seat so he could sit beside Lydia. Not that he didn't try but the moment he opened his mouth again Mr. Atwood said "No" with such authority Scott feared for his life.

During Chemistry Allison and Isaac sat beside one another and things could not have been more
awkward. Both stole glances over toward Lydia throughout the period while trying not to look as
though they were trying to get her attention. When Mr. Harris asked people to pair up they
stumbled to take a seat beside her and Lydia was visibly startled. Later she asked to be excused but
didn't return to class so Allison and Isaac were left to rub up against their competition. Needless to
say their work suffered greatly.

During lunch Allison found Scott sitting alone and drop beside him with an empty tray. She opted
out of food for the sake of information.

"The murders," she started. Scott choked on his water. She apologized and continued. "It has to be
the same as your dream. The location, the chemicals in the water, the smell match an abandoned
plant nearby. That's where the man died. And it's within walking or running distance of the gas
station where the woman died."

"The news thinks that this was a robbery gone wrong," Scott added solemnly. "That sucks."

"Scott, they weren't just murdered by some Monster. They might have been Werewolves."

"This is crazy," Scott shook his head, "why would Werewolves kill each other?"

"Lots of reason," Allison said casually. The fear on Scott's face reminded her of his lack of
knowledge in the Supernatural department, it also reminded her to slow down. "Territory maybe.
Freedom."

"What if one of them made me?"

Allison shook her head, "no, I don't know. We'll figure it out. But the two who died, they're not
even from here. The police radio chatter confirmed they were just passing through. Scott, I know it
doesn't seem like it but this is good news."

"How? Somebody was murdered last night I could have saved."

"Exactly. Sort of. Now we know you could have saved them. The next time you have a dream we
know there is time to save them."

"Yeah," Scott tried to smile; instead he opted to squeezing her hand over the lunch table while she
smiled for the both of them.

"We both will."

Lydia sped pass the sweethearts and made for the lunch line. She collected the bare minimum and
went for the outdoor seating. Everywhere there were whispers, whispers that were so loud they
may as well have been screams. Instead she tossed her food into the nearest trash and went to the
library to study, not that she needed it. In the library Isaac sat two tables away, tapping on his
laptop. He hadn't even looked up to say hello and somehow that was terribly refreshing.

During English Lit there were no empty seats; Lydia, Scott, Jackson, Allison, Danny and Isaac
were among the attendees. It wasn't hard to get caught up in one of Ms. Blake's discussions and feel
the minutes hurry pass. Even so Jackson didn't miss a moment to ask Allison how Lydia was
doing. Allison glanced over to watch her best-friend do her best-work on someone new. Allison
suggested Jackson get over himself because if he really cared he would ask Lydia directly but
when the bell rang he was gone.

During Genetics/Bio Jackson had the chance; Lydia was loathed to admit it but he still knew how
to get under her skin. It took less than a look. Not one of his glares, scowls or pouts even. Just a
glance and she would remember a thousand private moments where walls between them fell away and everything felt right. Each class she attended she was eager participate but bio with Jackson she couldn't bring herself to speak. There had been a time she remained silent during classes for fear of coming across as smart in front of Jackson. Now, she couldn't speak for fear of her voice cracking. Some habits were even harder to break and when he wrote down the wrong answer she leaned over, crossed it out and wrote the correct one. When Jackson finally got the nerve to say "Hi," she stared at him as if he had grown a second head. Eventually she sighed "Hey" not to seem cool but because the breath in her lungs collapsed in that shape. When the bell rang he was the first out the door and she was the last.

During Art with Allison they laughed as if there wasn't deceit and suspicion between them. Lydia critiqued Allison's kindly but explained that everyone else looked like they painted with their feet. Ms. Ramsey called them out several times to keep quiet and focus but they didn't. Before they knew it class was over and it wasn't till the bell rung that Lydia asked "it should have been you to come to me yesterday."

Allison winced, "I know. I'm sorry." They walked toward the gymnasium together; they're next class being PE.

"And your lie about gymnastics was a lousy cover."

"You probably would have come up with something better."

"Only a million times, especially something that couldn't be checked with the Coach. Why did you lie to Scott? Was something really happening or did you just want to mess with us?"

"I can't have my vanilla and my chocolate," Allison grinned. Lydia rolled her eyes. "Yes. Something happened with my family and I'm sorry. I did want to see you yesterday but I am also glad you saw Scott."

Lydia remained beside her locker and let everyone else change. She felt a stress headache coming on, more than that she felt the wound on her hip was too new to be put through the perils of Coach Finstock's abuse. Allison dropped to sit beside her already dressed in gym shorts and a tank top.

"Are you okay?"

"No," Lydia sighed and smiled at her friend, "but I will be."

Allison smiled back, dimples and all. "That's the spirit. Are you going to come?"

"No, neither are you," Lydia stood and reached out a hand for Allison. Allison's brows went up in curiosity but Lydia gestured in insistence. They held hands as Lydia led her to the showers. When everything was as still as could be and Coach called out for the last locker check they made certain to lock the doors. Allison felt the urge to giggle and Lydia made a face, mouth pressed hard in a line telling her silently "don't you dare."

After a deep breath, Lydia passed her bag over and then turned away from Allison pointing to have her dress unzipped. Once partly down, Lydia turned back and pulled the front down enough the dress came forward and draped around her waist. Allison's hand went to her mouth to cover her gasp of alarm. Five wounds, like claw marks encircled from navel toward left hip. Although closed, the gashes looked red and angry. Without thinking to Allison reached out to touch, she drew back quickly but Lydia caught her hand and kept it still. She nodded, giving Allison permission to inspect the damage.
"Is it?" Lydia whispered. Allison pulled her hand back as if a spell had been broken. Lydia yanked her dress up and zipped it into place. At first Allison was confused but from the look on Lydia's face she could guess what she meant. "Is it like Scott's?"

"Is it something you've seen before?"

Allison nodded. Lydia swallowed, she worked her jaw keeping her thoughts masked and while she collected her bag.

"You should pick a sports elective," Allison suggested when they left the locker room after she changed back and changed subjects. All hopes of PE abandoned.

Lydia barked with laughter.

"I am absolutely serious. Join the Swim Team with me," Allison tugged on Lydia arm.

"First you want me involved with Gymnastics now Swim Team. If all you want is for me to cover for you when you're cheating on Scott, say so."

"I would never!"

"You wouldn't, would you," Lydia booped Allison's nose playfully.

"It can be just us," Allison promised.

Lydia looked dubious. "Fine, but the first sign of trouble I'm leaving you to drown."

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**Track 12 - Charon by Keaton Henson**

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_Thursday; Afternoon - The Sherriff's Station_

"It's serious question," Deputy Haige griped, "you can't really consider it an all-nighter if you are going into your 14th hour now can you, sir?"

"It's a thing we can discuss another time," Sheriff Stilinski concluded sagely and moved onto the next piece of evidence to cross his desk.

"We could have passed the distress call over to Fairvale since it was on the Industry Bridge border." Deputy Haige supposed for the umpteenth time, back toward an uninterested bull pen.

Deputy Graeme advised him to get more coffee if he was felt tired but a work load is a work load and he should just accept it.

Deputy Parrish, peacemaker extraordinaire, offered to even pay for lunch and Haige could pick the place if they just settle on different side of the station. Embittered, Deputy Haige pointed out the only reason Sheriff Stilinski took on every little complaint was because he had no one to go home to. Petite Deputy Graeme came up to Haige's face and informed him in no uncertain tone he stepped out of line, his sleep depravity compromised his brain and he was relieved for the time being. When he argued she wasn't his superior, she agreed and while that is true she could always clear it with the Chief.

After Haige left in a huff, Graeme apologized to Parrish. She asked if he minded taking the coffee
to the Sheriff while she manned Haige's duties at the front. Parrish grinned, even saluted a little and admitted he was eager to back her up.

When Parrish entered the office, he found Stilinski alone in middle of a rant about being ill-equipped at handling things without a forensic department capable of investigating connecting the two murders to the animal markings. On instinct he asked Deputy Parrish's opinion, not expecting an exchange.

Instead, Parrish inquired "why does holding onto theses cases mattered so much?"

Stilinski answered "because it's rare for Beacon Hill's proper to pass anything on. Actually, unheard of."

"Well," Parrish casually reminded "Fairvale is much smaller, less staffed and no offense, less capable. Just because the Beacon Hills Sheriff dept. hasn't come to any conclusion yet plus doesn't mean they can't reach out to their local animal clinic as a resource."

"Aw, hell," the Sheriff groaned. He brought bottle of J. Bean out from his bottom desk drawer. Parrish closed the office door and seal shut the window blinds. The Sheriff pointedly reminded Parrish "You're still on duty Deputy," and would not part-take. But when a call out front came for the Sheriff they called out in unison the Sheriff had left the station.

In any case, the Sheriff asked Parrish to pull up a bit of desk and listen. If Parrish insisted on asking smart question he should be damn well be prepared to listen to the whole answer. Stilinski explained their new case shared earmarks to an unsolved case 6 years ago.

"A car run off cliff-side; driver died immediately on impact. Rear passenger side had its door ripped apart with identical five gashed marks. There was a significant amount of similarities in the cases but the backseat passenger, my son, was never found..."

"shit," replied Parrish and leaned further back into his chair. Stilinski slid over the dated files and when Parrish reached for the documents he also took a shot. He didn't like the taste, but it was the gesture that mattered. They were in on this together.

When another knock came to the door, both responded "There's No One Here" as if rehearsed.

Parrish leafed through the files; the animal markings had been written off as crash damage at the time of the accident because they didn't have animal/forensic specialist. The only reason the Sheriff hadn't pushed the animal attack angle had been because the two witnesses were considered unreliable. Parrish looked at the names and asked if it was because they were children. Stilinski drank deeply and shook his head.

"No," he stared off to the side as if he relived some dark day in his head. "Because they were traumatized. They were in the car when their best-friend, when my family was taken from me."

Track 13 - Risk/Loss by Young Heretics

We want to take these moments to acknowledge the great sense of shock our community is facing. We would also like to take this opportunity to expression or sympathy and offer counseling to
students in need. And we would like to remind everyone that Beacon Hills will emerge stronger and better after such an event due to the efforts of our Sheriff's department. So please, if you know anything come forward. And for a quick resolution, despite your curiosities please stay out of their way. In closing, our heartfelt thoughts and prayers go to those lost in this sudden and terrible tragedy."

"I heard Tracy say it was a murder-suicide."

"Tracy is an Idiot. There were cameras and everything. It was an animal attack."

"An animal got in the car?"

"Don't be morbid. The woman was like trying to kill the animal with the car or something."

"Matt said it was a robbery gone wrong."

"Well, Matt's an idiot."

"I'm right here dude."

"Sorry, Matt, you're an idiot."

"Thanks."

"Why are they having this announcement on the field before practice? You know not all of us are into Lacrosse."

"You're a crazy person!"

"Why? Because I would have rather killed myself before letting animal maul me like that or because I hate lacrosse?"

"Both!"

"Do we have to wait for the whole speech to be over? I want to break out and I can see my car from here."

"I'm pretty sure, no I'm definitely sure they were together," Allison whispered to Scott. She meant in the same pack and she hadn't meant to be heard but the bleachers didn't afford privacy.

"They were in different towns when they died though," said Mason.

"So," Lydia yawned, "they could have done everything in their lives together except die."

"Is this boring you Lydia? Taking attention away from your drama-queen disappearing act?"

The crowd nearest tittered. Allison and Scott moved forward as if somehow they could physically block the blow of ridicule.

"Scandal is fleeting but grade-point averages are forever," Lydia yawned again, hefting her purse onto her shoulder while she placed a hand languidly over her mouth in an exaggerated drama-queen gesture (obscuring the fact her late night/morning had caught up with her).
Finally, the speech had ended.

Track 14 - Safest Place by Echosmith

"If sticking around during practice is making you miserable--," started Allison.

"I never said miserable," Lydia paid more attention to the class notes on her iPhone. "I implied everything here is beneath me, but I never said out loud that I was miserable."

"Didn't you just say it though," Allison smirked.

"No, that would be beneath me," Lydia smirked back, Allison had earned the first gaze over the lip of her phone since practice began. They watched as sophomores made a tumbling display beneath them. Allison gave a pity applause and jabbed at Lydia to follow. Lydia warned, "Don't encourage them, you'll just bring around the dumb eager ones."

Scott bound toward them across the field; Lydia grinned and went back to her phone while Allison jumped to her feet and leaned over the back of the row between them. Scott asked for a kiss "For Luck" and Allison pleaded for Lydia not to laugh when she sat back down. Her pleas went ignored.

"You might feel less cynical about watching practice if you actually watched practice," she gestured toward the field. Lydia glanced around and hoped her friend had a point. "There are plenty of other attractive displays to look at."

Lydia shrugged but made a humming sound that sounded agreeable and hungry at the same time.

Allison gestured toward Jackson "what about our Co-Captain? He was asking about you earlier. Plus, he is very--"

"Very what?" Lydia cut in harshly.

"Available. I wasn't going to say anything bad."

Lydia settled back, "of course you wouldn't. He's old meat. He isn't worth mentioning again. Not ever." She pushed stray hairs out of her face with an air of drama and set her eyes back onto the field, "but there is a new item up on the menu."

"Who?" she followed Lydia's predatory gaze. "Lahey?"

"Otherwise known as 'fresh meat'."

Allison thought long and hard about a smooth way of approaching the next topic but no segue presented itself. Instead she went for bold.

"I guess you're right about Jackson."

"Yep."

"He was probably only asking about you because he drove me to Fairvale when you were missing."

"..."
"…When I couldn't take my parents car and he called looking for you, so, well I asked if he would drive around with me to search ER's."

"So, what?"

"Nothing, he just can't be all that bad if he is willing to drive all the way to Fairvale, with a virtual stranger on a hunch."

"It's the 'not all good' parts you should wonder about, Allison. A guilty conscience needs no accuser. Do you know why my father owns my grandmother's lake house?"

"Because he's her son?" confused, Allison fumbled for ground.

"Because he proved a crazy woman can't sell legacy property to the state. He can barely stand to stay in it," Lydia became more animated as she spoke.

"You don't think he might have done it for a good reason?" Allison delicately played Devil's advocate, because at the end of the day she was on Lydia's side.

"I think he helped out for reasons I don't care about," as much as she insisted the topic bored her, getting her digs in mattered.

"Which one?" father or ex-lover.

"Either. I see something else I'm going to study," she stood abruptly and dusted herself off.

Before Allison could protest, Scott jogged over once again to say "Hi" and Lydia took that as her cue to leave toward the locker rooms.

"What's wrong?" Scott asked, sensing Allison's anxiety on air. She put her hand in his, smiled but it didn't reach her eyes. She shared what Lydia said, which admittedly wasn't much but more importantly was how she said it.

"I think me going there yesterday was a big mistake," Scott expressed regret. "She wouldn't even have brought up the lake house if I hadn't poked my nose in."

"It's a great nose and it has a pretty great sense when something's up. And you were right about Lydia's injury. But being hurt is one thing. Missing for a week? Her Mom didn't even report it until the fifth day."

"Her parents might not have known. Lydia is known for taking off. Roughing it could explain away most of her injuries. Her Mom used to sign her up for everything, including Brownie Scouts. Lydia learned how to skate, swim, hike, camp, even if she didn't like it she still knew it. But for a week?"

"Scott," she marveled and hugged onto his arm as they walked. Her best-friend needed her and her boyfriend had her back without having to be asked. It only made her want to shift more things around on mental shelf so that everything would begin to fit, "you wouldn't happen to know if the lake house is in Fairvale?"

"No," he shook his head in apology.

"Oh," she sighed in disappointment, leaving him near the locker room doors.

"It's their neighboring town just North of it, basically just fishing boats and a farmers market. It's
the smallest town in the county--" Allison cut him off with a kiss.

Track 15 - Kissing Girls (You Shouldn't Kissed) by Hawkley Workman

Isaac cleared the locker rooms entirely before he realized the number was for him.
"14."

It left a sour taste in his mouth.
"14."

But he did always like the sour candies.
"14."

"I do have a name you know," he said in a voice mildly above a whisper.
Lydia shrugged, "I hadn't noticed." She tugged at his jersey and brought him with her toward the Chemistry Lab, unlocked but abandoned.

"Come on Lydia, you know this isn't exactly safe."

"If you say 'I'm dangerous' than you lose points for unoriginality. If you're talking about the room, its fine. Back in freshman year, Harris gave me a spare key for study drills and forgot about it."

Isaac chuckled and bit his lower lip "I didn't mean that either but the magical Harris key, I'm remembering that detail future use." He moved forward, wrapped an arm around Lydia waist and pulled her up against him. He dipped low to catch her mouth in a rushed kiss and smiled to see her amusement.

"Come on, 14" she pulled him further into the room. She hopped up onto a table, leveling out the height difference and yanked him closer. "I've been gone for a while; I think I've forgotten where everything goes."

He swooped down and placed a trail of kisses along her neck. When she made a sighing noise of appreciation he sat upright, "I think you remember my name."

"Oh?" she noticed a challenge, "was it those words written across your lacrosse jersey?" she dragged a finger along his collarbone, leaned forward and kissed his chin before easing quickly backward and pulling his shirt over his head. "Well, I don't see it anywhere," she said and tossed his shirt aside.

Isaac shook his head, a warring glare and smirk before kissing her fiercely and he knocked her nearly flat against the desk. He would have said he missed her, but it would have ruined their arrangement.

They weren't a couple. They weren't friends. They weren't an anything, certainly not anything that anyone was allowed to know about but hooking up with Lydia Martin was definitely something you missed when you were deprived of it.

Lydia's eyes were intimidating without passion in them. With heat they were fierce enough to glow
and when she closed them because of something he had done it was that much more powerful. Her hands were soft and forceful, her mouth yielding while her words were few but demanding. She was Lydia Martin turned up to eleven and every sensory was in overload.

When he touched along her side her flinch was more of a spasm. Isaac stopped, afraid he had hurt her. Lydia laughed "Just a war wound," she joked but her voice was a little strained.

Before Isaac had a chance to ask Lydia advised him to do something more useful with his hands, after all she wasn't a nun and she placed them on her breasts. Isaac didn't need much convincing after that. For several minutes she continued to whisper "it's okay" until she lost her breath to kisses.

Chapter End Notes

[*]Mycotoxicosis – a pretty damn gnarly mold that poisonous and spreads through spores. Not remotely important to the story but Scott would have picked up on the smell pretty damn strongly even if the plants was treated and cleared of it fifty years ago point-n-fact. That's a pretty intense dream bruh.

CREDITS/ROLL CALL:
Argents - Team1; headed by Victoria, Chris & Allison.
  • Rumy - [Sergeant] specialized in Recon; Special Forces and espionage. Chris' right hand man and Allison's godfather.
  • Axel - [1st Lieutenant] expert tracker, marksman and Allison's 2nd cousin.
  • Bennett - [Field Officer] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old and friend to Allison.
  • Tyhurst - [Lieutenant] on lend because of his state detective credentials, often referred to as 'try-hard.

? Other;?
  • (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
  • (deceased) Coot - [Omega] former Beta, killed by the Monster.
Chapter Summary

Ensnared in the shadow of Monsters, the murders increase border of Beacon Hills County draw the likes of Supernatural Hunters with the addition of more werewolves. Among those drawn in, Isaac Lahey finds himself vying for loyalties between fledgling beta, Scott McCall and queen bee, Lydia Martin.

• Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/02-were-you-still

Chapter Notes

Previously on "were (you)"

Months after being bitten by what appeared to be a wolf, mild-mannered teen Scott McCall developed preternatural abilities and uncontrollably transformative tendencies. The Argents; a family of Supernatural Surveyors also called "Hunters" moved to Beacon Hills to investigate a rise in dead bodies being discovered along the East Coast. A mad Alpha (without a pack), also referred to as The Monster has been killing humans and Werewolves.

New to town Allison Argent, raised into a venerable family of Hunters, happened to be dating Scott at the time he was bitten. She kept the secret of her family's lineage from Scott, just as she hasn't reported Scott's transition to her family.

Over Christmas Break, counted among the rising number of victims was estranged childhood friend of Scott McCall, present best-friend of Allison Argent and top of the food chain社交ite at school, Lydia Martin. Although having been similarly attacked Lydia suffered none of the same developments as Scott. Scott and Allison have observed Lydia develop different symptoms in secret, which they are trying to investigate.

Beacon Hills, true to its title, continues to draw in the likes of the Supernatural. Among those discovered are Debs & Coot (from the Twins Pack). There will be more.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Track 01 - Feeling Good by Nina Simone

Mrs. Martin earnestly explained that the Spaulding district was up and coming. Despite the homes might seem expansive, but they were prefab so cheaper plus the community gated. The neighbors were quiet and kind, the space between houses were big enough to park a couple of cars or to build a garden. She hated to mention it but the families that recently moved happened due to highway construction. New construction brought in new shops and business, which was good for the neighborhood, but some folk liked their tiny vista and didn’t agree with the change, not that Mrs.
Martin was one to gossip.

Being one of the arriving new population to the neighborhood Ms. Blake, couldn’t complain. Let the rich snobs take to building their private homes in The Hills district, leaving behind a discounted McMansion. They shared a laughed at the unexpected and upside results of local prejudices.

"I don't mean to pry," Mrs. Martin said kindly, "but how can you afford something like this one a teacher's salary?"

"It's okay," Ms. Blake looked out across the cul-de-sac through tinted bay windows, "I used to have family here and they left some money. I just want to be part of the community again and near to the school."

"A bit too close to the students maybe," Mrs. Martin sighed but kept a professional smile. "Let me show you a better home." Motioning to the door although Ms. Blake didn't move, she warned, "I'm sorry it looks like someone's been here. It happens sometimes, teenagers break in for parties."

"Don't worry about it. It's perfect," her voice smooth and satisfied. From the home to the car Ms. Blake's milk chocolate eyes looked to the home like a great ease had been lifted off her shoulders.

Track 02 - iHeard by Young Fathers

"That's just great," from across the street, Jackson muttered not too subtly while he took out the trash, "I always wanted to live across the street from my teacher." He smacked down the lid and stormed back in.

It wasn't that school was hard it was that it was unending. From his ex-girlfriend warring in his nightmares, to his English teacher moving in across the street straight to Lacrosse team's newest midfielder casually wandering around his neighborhood.

First chance he got, Jackson confronted him Isaac, demanding to know why he'd follow him home. When Isaac explained he hadn't, but Jackson scoffed.

"Why else would you be skulking around a place like this? It's not exactly your vibe."

After an awkward pause he replied he lived nearby, and Jackson's disbelief turned his hands into fists.

"What are you even doing in Beacon Hills? You're a freak you know that?" he spat "you just turn up and the next day you're some star player. It's like someone bought you a Porsche when they should have started you out with a nice little Honda. Me? I drive a Porsche. Did your parents hook you up? That's it, isn't it?"

Isaac answered, "my parents are dead." Jackson didn't have a smart remark for that; Isaac's voice went flat when he reminded "not everyone is lucky to be from a well-adjusted two-parent home. Shiny Porsche and all," and he excused himself.

After a period of stillness from Isaac's absence Jackson threw the garbage can and concaved it.
Isaac felt panic at the sound of keys turning in the lock and took the sound of strangers entering the home. If an underaged kid broke in and stayed without permission squatter's rights didn't apply. A definite sign that he should run, and he was good at avoiding questions of where he belonged up till then;

"Where did you come from?"

"Where are your parents?"

"Why are you here?"

The only answer to this predicament aimed him through the backdoor, behind bushes and scrambling down the block. Neighbors were easily avoided when they didn't know you but that wasn't always the case. There was the worst scenario of Jackson Whittemore who lived in that same district.

Otherwise, Isaac knew to walk with shoulders hunched, eyes to the ground, body language designed to deflect conversation. In the morning, if he wore his "14" Lacrosse Jersey on his way to zero period, the school bus stopped even though he wasn't on route. When he made practice, he got access to the showers and even caught a decent lunchroom breakfast. Twice if Coach Finstock was on a carbo-loading trip. He created a low-key method that kept everyone from knowing he was a refugee in prefab housing. It just happened to be his luck that out of the many houses Mrs. Martin picked to show the one he had hidden in.

After all, her daughter Lydia was the only other person to pick him out of obscurity a few weeks earlier, when she asked him in the most analytical and seductive way anyone could.

"How tall are you?"

Outside of the locker rooms, she caught him off guard with her eyes were unreadable as she made it sound like 'I want to climb you.'

He put together a quick pros and cons list; Lydia was controlling, unpredictable, gorgeous, and mysteriously into him. Isaac wanted to be structured, safe, invisible, ignored and completely wrapped up in her. Hands down, she won.

At the After-Game party just a week before she came onto him, he'd asked her to dance.

"Pass," she answered, as if it was an action she could move through him, as if he were nothing. Then quite randomly one day, she introduced him to the joys of fooling around in the Coach's office. Isaac wasn't used to abandoning control. The only other time he'd done something like it was a dark rainy night in a graveyard when he'd said yes to a Werewolf's bite; the scariest most confusing bravest decision he'd ever made. While always a little thrilling in the end it turned out to be more work than magic.

"I have Harris next period," Lydia said and pushed him back into Coach's chair. "I need to clear my head."

"Right," Isaac lost track at the word 'head'. He helped her onto his lap and slid his hands along her
back. She leaned into his chest and pressed her warm mouth along his throat. Heated kisses with teeth and tongue. His hands roved along her body, they traced a path over seem lines until smooth turned to rough and then turned into the bell ringing. Lydia bolted upright in surprise and Isaac managed to steal a kiss before she disappeared. Her parting look promised that later she would even the score.

A diphthong was never as suggestive as when after school Lydia asked him if he needed a "Ride."

Wise mind said "No", but there isn't diphthong in "No", so it didn't stand a chance. Really, Wise Mind, why should he? The universe had a habit of immediately answering Isaac's questions before he had a chance to.

Like the tap-tap at the car window, when the foggy silhouette appeared and reminding why this was a thing they shouldn't be doing. Post-limbs disentangling, Lydia wiped at the window and revealed a grinning Allison Argent, waving with sweater paws. Lydia forced a smile and muttered through clenched teeth, "she won't leave until we go and say hello."

"This can't get any worse," with a whisper and a shrug. His concession was meant it as a comfort, 'a comrade in arms' moment. Her glare told him he had obviously misjudged the situation.

"He's nice," Allison whispered too loudly, as Lydia climbed out. She made no comment to correct or deny, just brushed out the wrinkles from her skirt and aligned her coat seams of her scarf.

"Thanks, I think" at least he acknowledged it.

"I'd offer to shake your hand, but I think I know where it's been," Allison said with a Cheshire cat's grin.

Isaac shoved his hands in his pockets and stared down at the ground. He wasn't embarrassed; he was just trying not to laugh. They both knew it.

"Charming, as usual," impervious to their mortal barbs Lydia tossed her hair over her shoulder.

Remembering her original intention, Allison giggled and invited Lydia to go bowling on the weekend. She wanted to 'mend fences'.

"Sure," Lydia answered reflexively.

Shifting her bag on her shoulder, her brows came together as her thoughts ticked along. "You should come too."

Isaac's want to 'fit-in' versus his want to 'be-invisible' battled it out but he heard "uhm sure," before he realized the words were his own.

"Great! We'll play teams," she turned on Lydia, "it'll be a double-date!" she whiplashed to Isaac, "Scott is going to love this." Her tone warmed with every word, all while her perfect nails anxiously needled into the fabric of her backpack.

With a chin held high, Lydia schooled a perfect smile as small blotches of red appeared on her neck and cheeks. She would later blame this on the weather and not her pent-up rage. For a while after Allison left Lydia remained frighteningly still. When she finally spoke, it was an impactful accusation of "THIS."

"This can't get any worse?" Did you have to jinx it?"
He tried to refute the charges but when he opened his mouth nothing came out. Instead, he ducked his chin deep into his scarf for security.

"Fix it. Or you can forget about ever coming back into my car," she spun on her heels and slipped into the driver's seat. Again, more work than magic.

By definition Lydia Martin and Isaac Lahey were in 'no way dating'. Or by lack of definition 'not a thing'. He learned somewhere in school, math class probably, that someone couldn't be accused of random things like 'dating a hot girl', without the burden of proof being on them. So, why was he suddenly under all this pressure? How do you show proof of what you aren't? That's positive of a negative.

Nope, definitely learned it watching re-runs of Law and Order. Shit, why had proving he wasn't hooking up with the hottest girl in school become the most vital thing in his adolescent life? Oh, right.

Back to the original questions; Had he somehow belonged because of Lydia? No. Because he needed to be part of a pack? Yes. Because of Scott. Maybe?

Firstly; The more he stressed over Scott discovering he had come to Beacon Hill's to be closer to the only Werewolf he found in the County, the more he felt compelled to confess. Not to mention Isaac started to get good at things like Science, French, Lydia Martin, Lacrosse and he thought sticking around would totally be worth it. Every day he stayed a little later at practice, he debated the merits of revealing himself versus being found out.

Secondarily; a stray Werewolf didn't pop up without an Alpha. Originally Isaac hoped Scott would lead him to a pack. Then he learned Scott was a stray; hell, he was so unlearned he didn't even know how to suppress his presence.

Thirdly; he learned Scott wasn't an ass. He met all the minimum requirements but in the end cared more about people than power. Even people that yelled in his face, like Coach. Or bullies like Jackson. Or disrespected him like Lydia; Scott was a textbook "nature versus nurture" case study.

A plan started to form. He felt less afraid of Scott than Lydia, so he decided to reveal himself to Scott through Lydia. If he asked her out publicly, of course she would shut him down in one of her classic displays and he'd be humiliated. Result! No one would think they were together after that, including Allison. His teammates would probably take pity on him, including Scott and they would take it from there. Two birds with one stone...ish.

Track 04 - Human by Daughter

[Friday, Mid-Morning]

"How could you need to study more?" Allison's voice verged on genuine concern. Glancing over her books, Lydia hushed her with a finger to lips, and went back to task.

Whether she admitted it or not the library had become a cocoon for Lydia, there she hid covered up in a cardigan and tall boots instead of one of her usual form fitting outfits. The behavior frightened Allison a little, after all the only evidence of her friend getting back to normal had been her
crawling on top of a Lacrosse player. Except she'd gone and ruined that by making Lydia acknowledge it, view it as a human interaction then it was over and done.

During the start of lunch that same Lacrosse player all but swaggered up to Lydia and outright propositioned her. Any girl would have swooned, but Lydia poured an arch of disgust over him, his status and his visage. It was a rotten beauty pageant and Isaac was both winner and loser. Despite the fact that the earth virtually shook when Lydia walked away, Allison wouldn't be prevented from following her to the library. She wouldn't abandon her best-friend to despondency.

"You're brilliant and you know it. You make the rest of us look like unevolved monkeys."

"Neanderthals."

"Making my point exactly," Allison tugged at Lydia's arm. "Plus, you promised to join me," she wore her excitability like billboard advertising Swim Team; This Way!

"Not now," she groaned and tugged back on Allison's arm pulling her onto a seat.

"Are you hiding after that scene?" Scrapping her chair closer, tilting herself toward her friend's orbit, all iPhone, textbooks and composition notebooks.

"That spectacular display?" Lydia straightened her back, posturing like a peacock. She grinned even when Allison narrowed her eyes in judge-y-ness. "Of course not. I'm backing up my AP Science notes to the iCloud." She went straight back to it.

Propping her chin on her hand, "You could probably recite your notes in a song."

"Oh, definitely." Lydia glanced over and smirked. She stopped typing and leaned closer, bringing Allison a little further into her gravity, "But it doesn't hurt to have a second copy for when your friend calls you in the middle of the night 'Lydia please, I'm desperate.'"

Allison grinned, "Oh. right, those times. You're definitely not hiding from anything? Like maybe Isaac."

"Who?" Lydia went back to typing, then after a decent ten second, "Ah, number 14."

"I'm sorry" with a sigh, her eyes inspected Lydia from the inside out, "I ruined everything."

But Lydia softly shook her head, Allison's intentions are always the best even when they were at their worst. As if a realization just occurred to her "Seriously, so you've just been..." just shy of rude gestures, Allison spun her fingers in the air as if she were magicking some expression into being.

Lydia scoffed, "yes, 'We Just'." She confirmed her non-relationship relations with Isaac.

"Okay," tucking her hair behind her ears, Allison tilted her head in thought. "Then why did he ask you out?"

"To finish it publicly," Lydia shrugged, "because I asked him to."

With a nodded she pressed her lips together. She couldn't imagine Isaac agreeing to such a humiliating sign off. "If you didn't want to date him, why did you say yes to Saturday?"

Lydia shifted and faced Allison directly, "Have you ever tried saying no to you?"

"No."
"Well, then you don't know how hard it is, do you?"

Allison ran a finger along the hem of Lydia's cardigan. "Swim Team, you promise?"

"Later," she promised, "How could I say no?"

Allison shifted around in her seat to face forward.

"Can I stay with you and study?" she began sorting through notebooks. "For Mr. Harris' Anatomy and Human Sciences'..." one of the few classes Allison shared with Scott.

"Ah, too distracted?" she sat back and smirked then reached through Allison's limbs to pass along the correct notes.

"Soo distracted," she flashed a thankful grin and flipped through them ravenously. Lydia scooted her seat closer until the girls were a united studying machine. A rhythm had just begun to form when the library erupted with one word.

"FIGHT!"

Students rushed from their seats to shove through the doorway and catch sight of the mayhem. In their seats, Allison stiffened while Lydia huffed in annoyance and began to collect her things.

"THERE'S A FIGHT!!"

"Of course, there is," Lydia rolled her eyes and then froze at the sound of metal stretching.

"Of course, there is," and Allison took off through the door.

Track 05 - Think of You by MsMr

Scott imagined having heightened senses would connect him to things on meaningful level, the way hippies do. Everything would be made more pleasant. Like the way he smelled his Mother's Chuletas before they burned and how Allison's pulse felt when she grew excited and when the whole team raged as they won. He learned how to put enough of a wall up so he could touch their feelings or could admire them like a display. But watching Lydia dump on Isaac was none of those pretty displays. No wall could keep back that tsunami. It was the right thing to do for Allison to take off after Lydia, but it abandoned Scott in a public place with a lot of people having a lot of untamed feelings. His own emotional turmoil mixed among the numbers surprised him, with one sense staying on the surface. Protectiveness.

Isaac was a good guy, he reminded himself and after the way Lydia crucified him everyone in the lunchroom sympathized him. But Scott wanted a go at him, even though he'd never picked a fight in his life. Hell, he never even considered hitting an opposing Lacrosse team the way he wanted to hit Isaac. None of this added up. When he went to dispose of his tray only to realize he had crushed it into bits and pieces. He tried to put distance between the two of them by leaving the lunchroom, but the protective feeling followed him.

When Isaac called out to him he understood why. Isaac apologized about some unrelated bowling thing and then his expression switched, his hands clenched, and his words were practically growled. "Scott, calm down," which was just enough to push him over the edge.
Students collected but kept their distance, chanting crowd at ancient coliseums. Allison struggled to break through without being aggressive. It would betray Scott's trust to intercede and not let him regain control but if the teachers interceded there would be no coming back from that. Lydia gripped Allison's arm hard goading her on to stop them. Scott had Isaac in a headlock, in turn Isaac grabbed and lifting Scott off of the floor rammed them into lockers. Fortunately, their growling couldn't be heard over the cheers. When Allison could think of nothing else to do, she darted forward while they grappled, and hoping Scott would forgive her the embarrassment, she kicked in the back of Scott's knees. Both Isaac and Scott clattered to the floor on opposite sides of the hall.

Shouting they were idiots, Lydia cut them off when she moved between the two. They went silent as the crowd goaded them on, booing and cheering for them to continue as Coach arrived. Lydia looked to Scott on all fours. Clearly not knowing what to do, she yanked at his shirt collar. "I think we should run."

Track 06 - Help I'm Alive (Unplugged) by Metric

While in the confusion of the dispersing crowd they'd made it to the chem. lab and Lydia locked the door behind them. Although she had been part of his rescue-team her words were pointed accusations.

"Twice in a week. What's with the sudden rush of brotherly concern?" she stepped forward, near enough that he stepped back.

In the background the voices of the Teachers were like Riot Squads in a war zone. Scott felt dizzy and oppressed by every feeling, every sound and every fiber in him wanted to claw out through the walls and run wild. He tried to find the ground beneath him, to center himself, he tried to find his breath but all he had were waking growls of something untamed unraveling in his core.

Lydia stepped further into his purview; he shut his eyes focusing on her words, on her smells, detergents, of jasmine hair products and kiwi lip glosses, negative emotions of anger, more than that. Concern, confusion and hurt. With her hand on his bare arm she snapped him to the present, her frozen fingers burned everything else out like the sealing of a vault.

"Scott? What is going on with you?"

"I'm sorry," he sighed, "I'm not great at this yet. I keep trying to help and messing everything up. With Allison and now you."

She rolled her eyes at that. She almost corrected him about Allison, she thought he was a saint. She would bet if he grew a lizard's tail Allison would still be devoted but she abandoned that argument. It wasn't worth her breath. "Don't worry about me, weirdo. Worry about yourself."

When Lydia moved to leave he stepped in the way and she practically leapt back. Scott put his hands up and apologized but it didn't matter, he had ignited something.

"It should matter that now you care?" her tone was bitter. "Is this part of your lessons from Allison, how to act like a real boy? Or did it take you 6 years to grow a conscience?"

"If 6 years isn't enough, how long will it take for you to forgive me?"
Surprised at his frankness, Lydia stared at him and shifted her weight from one foot to the other while she processed her thoughts. Wittiness wasn't her intent, neither was hurt but her answer was effective "why should I?"

Lydia hadn't understood the question any more than she understood why they couldn't untie what bound them. The look of hurt on Scott's face matched what Lydia felt in her core and she had to get out of the room. But when she turned to leave she fell forward. As Scott caught hold Lydia grabbed onto his shoulders for support and he gasped but kept quiet about how much colder her touch had turned.

"You're going to make a big deal about this too." Whispered breath came easier, her legs steadied, and she stood upright.

He shook his head, but she didn't believe him. The gold change in his eyes was evidence otherwise.

"And who should I believe? That or you?" Lydia slipped away, leaving Scott in an empty room distracted by the monster in the windows reflection.

Track 07 - Progress and Perseverance by Safety Scissors

Coach caught up with Isaac but not for fighting. No, not that. After all anything that would lead to suspension would take one of his star players off of the team. BUT Coach could not abide the destruction of school property. Especially the Lacrosse Team's equipment, after all, couldn't Isaac understand how expensive it was to replace? And who breaks a lacrosse stick so easily? Especially so close to game days? It didn't matter however angry Isaac was, or who started what but 'roid rage would not be tolerated. Didn't he have small animals at home he could abuse?

Isaac proposed the lacrosse stick might have been defective and Coach should be thankful he found it in time. Coach didn't know how to process that and went mumbling away after giving him endurance drills to run before practice the next day.

Allison listened from outside of the locker room; she intended to make sure Isaac hadn't been hurt by Scott. She played bits and pieces of the day through her head again and noticed Isaac could take a hit. From her training experience, people don't get that way without learning how to give as good as they got. She slipped away before the Coach finished rattling off the season's insurance cost versus betting on the team's Championship wins.

Track 08 - You Hold by The Mispers

"Scott," Allison inched along the hall.

After the fight, Lydia and Scott had vanished into the scattering crowd. They managed to not get caught which gave her confidence that they were safe from prying eyes but safe from tearing each other apart was another thing entirely.

"Scott," pleaded Allison in a small voice, hoping he could hear her over the bustle of school noises. Desperation was setting in, but she couldn't raise her voice without being found out. With her book
bag, cellphone inside, abandoned in the library and not having supernatural hearing herself meant the only option left to reach out to him was to creep door to door.

"Allison."

It was little more than a whisper, it might as well have been imagined but Allison latched onto it and raced along the hallway until she found the Chemistry lab unlocked. Her relief died quickly when she saw Scott's face held unnatural features of bright eyes, hallowed out cheeks and fangs. She took off her jacket and covered his head as she yanked him stumbling undercover through the hall and down some steps.

"Where's Lydia?" she whispered.

"I think I scared her away," he partly growled, partly grumbled.

"Which way did she go?" As she feared, he points upward toward the stairwell in the direction opposite. It was hopeless; she could not head in two directions at once. Getting a growling Scott, glowing eyes and all, to take a sick day was the priority.

Track 09 - Breathe Me by Sia

Isaac had partly ascended the stairs from the locker rooms when he heard them whispering, not as quietly as they might have thought. He even clearly heard Allison's frustration for not being by Lydia's side, Lydia who'd gone in the opposite direction.

After the period changed over, his classmates went from free period to their next class, but Lydia wasn't among them. After considering her schedule he retraced her footsteps, it led eventually to the upstairs bathroom farthest from any of her classrooms and to the sound of her trying not to cry.

"Go away!" she sobbed when he knocked on the stall door.

"That's not scaring me off," he smirked, and it sounded in his voice. "That is the least offensive thing you've yelled at me today, so I think I'm going to stay put."

"I don't want to talk to you! I don't want to talk to anybody!" she riled.

"I brought your things from the library," he dropped Allison's and her weighty purse onto the floor beside the stall. She didn't yell in reply which was a sort of improvement.

The door creaked open and she slipped out, her eyes were watery, and her voice cracked but as she patted her face dry with paper towels her stare held firm.

"I am furious at you for getting Scott involved with my personal life," she announced as if he didn't already know. He nodded contritely.

"I'm missing a chem. quiz because of this" she also announced, and he admitted he also knew that.

She let out a shiver and hugged her arm around her middle. "I'm freezing," she complained to which he admitted he knew. After a pause he added his body temperature always ran hot.

Lydia scowled at him for a long moment, looked at the clock on the wall opposite then pulled him into the bathroom stall with her.
Parked on a hillside overlooking trees, a bridge and browns and greens as far as the eye could see, Allison and Scott waited. She asked why Isaac picked a fight with Scott.

"It's the other way around," Scott admitted with a groan. "For Lydia to gut him like that, in front of everyone, don't you think he must have really hurt her?"

Allison stared up at the way the leaves made stars of the sunlight bursting through. "No, actually," she felt a twinge of guilt that over Isaac and Lydia explosive display. But her instincts said to leave it alone.

Instead they listed off things they felt were fortunate and unfortunate;

1. Fortunately, Allison didn't lock her car door.
2. Unfortunately, they hadn't realized that before Scott scraped up the handle a bit trying to pick the lock.
3. Fortunately, they weren't noticed skipping school.
4. Fortunately, they were skipping school together.
5. Unfortunately, Scott could not control his temper and keep out of a fight.
6. Fortunately, he hadn't actually hurt anyone in a lethal capacity.

Unfortunately, Allison suspected that had more to do with Isaac's nature than Scott’s, but she didn't want to unnerve him before she had proof.

"It's your turn."

"Hmm?"

"To list something, it's your turn," said Scott, with an easy smile. He lay stretched along the roof of her car like a large cat.

"Uhm, fortunately Lydia didn't use her lethal capabilities on you both," she grinned, propping her head up on her hand while she lay on her side, admiring the view of him.

"I don't know about that. She pretty much murdered Isaac's reputation," Scott's face scrunched up.

"Are you feeling bad for him over that? But not over jumping him in the hallway?" She dropped her hand, but kept her arm folded so it pillowed her head and brought their faces closer.

Scott looked thoroughly confused as he worked his mind to drum up some clearer memory of events.

"That's different," he extended a hand, splaying his fingers wide against the sky. His claws had yet to retract. "I don't know why that triggered. I don't know why Lydia triggered it, or why dreams are drawing me out of my home."

Allison reached out and touched a finger lightly to his temple and dragged it along the shape of his eye, across his cheek bone, down to his jaw, softly along the slopes of his skin, where it was sometimes soft and sometimes not. The sun blasted his face with such an overlay of light she felt the need to make the lines of him real again or he might slip away. Worries were taking him away,
away from school, away from his friends, away from his Mom and little by little away from her. He turned to look at her while her fingers lingered, his brows cinched together in bemusement. She reached up and touched those lines as well before she leaned forward slowly, to watch his eyes, dark again, no longer glowing but still magical, fall shut. Just as magically his dimple appeared right before she shut her eyes and pressed her lips to his.

"Hi," he said wistfully when she leaned away.

"Hey," she said casually. They scooted closer, he turned on his side to face her and when he reached between them to hold hands he noticed his claws had retracted.

"Scott," she brought up "you're not always going to be in control but that's not a bad thing."

"How?"

"Your healing for one," she said smugly, he smirked in return. "Sometimes it's nice to have super healing even if you're unconscious." Allison half-way sat up, "I need to tell you something."

Before he could question how she seemed, once more, to know so much Allison threw herself full throttle into her findings. She explained that because of the low resources within Sheriff's department her family was tapped for their expertise in weaponry they gained access to the evidence room. The woman was shot with a silver bullet, her blood, that hadn't bled out onto the pavement, coagulated to black. It's also worth noting the man's body tried to mend while it died. The bones where it should have capped from being broken the calcium deposits kept accumulating. Both definitely Werewolves. The Sheriff's department was also considering soliciting the help of the local animal clinic to aide in the future, since there were strange animal markings on all the bodies.

When Scott mentioned that he had once had a summer job at the clinic Allison jokingly suggested he might want to reach out again.

With better access to the police he could trust her to do more research out in the field, so even if he didn't see her out in the game stands she had his back.

"I have to go into practice early tomorrow." he sighed, very disappointed with that suggestion, they readjusted until she lifted her head to rest it on his shoulder.

"Yeah?"

"I have to go, don't I? I'm Co-Captain."

Allison gave him an incredulous look, she agreed with the sentiment he needed to hold onto his normal life but somehow hearing him say it aloud it sounded like the silliest thing. "You think you can handle it?"

"Yeah. Sure. I think," his voiced wavered as he went on until it eventually cracked.

"I guess you won't know until you do it."

"If you come back to support me," Scott got keyed up, "you can monitor how I respond to Isaac. In case something goes wrong--"

Allison opened her mouth to object, for what reason she wasn't sure. She wanted to ensure Scott's safety always. And she wanted to know more about Isaac; what his ability were if any and why he had an effect on Scott? Or was this all just a fluke chalked up to Scott's new innate territorialism?
Whatever reason she would attend didn't matter, she never wanted him to lose faith in her.

"Scott, I will always be with you."

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**Track 11 - The Joke by East Cameron**

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The veterinarian hadn't locked the front door despite having had the "Closed" sign up, almost as if he expected after-hour visitors. Sherriff Stilinski and Deputy Parrish presented the investigation straightforwardly. Deputy Parrish had expected some hesitance on the Sheriff's part, but it was wrong to expect the man to be uncertain while on the verge of an authentic lead.

There was something about the vet, Doctor Deaton, which reminded him of the Sheriff, they had a similar critical mind and certainty while he digested the information.

"Do you mind taking a look at those pictures? Sacramento still can't determine the animal."

Deaton didn't say so, but his face changed, and his interest was piqued despite his answer, "I'm not exactly an expert. This is the woman who was attacked?"

The Sheriff was used to seeing these photos but passing them over, despite it being within his jurisdiction, still felt like exposing her. Deaton noticed, gave a nod of thanks and touched the photos with care.

"Yeah," Deputy Parrish added. "And we found wolf hairs on her body."

"And wolves haven't been in California for, like, 60 years." Sheriff noted. He felt like adding more but waited to hear what Deaton's observations would be.

"True enough," Deaton nodded and tilted his head along with the photo as if he could teleport to the scene, as if he could find something there and touch the true surface. "But wolves are highly migratory. They could have wandered in from another state driven by impulse or strong enough memory."

"Wolves have memories?" Parrish gripped onto the second file and waited on the Sheriff's sign to stay or go.

"Longer-term memories, yes. Associated with a primal drive. See this one here?"

"Yeah," the Sheriff leaned in further.

"Those claw marks." He drew his finger over the photo, careful not to touch the surface. "A wolf would have gone for the throat or the spinal cord with its teeth."

"So, what do you think, it's a mountain lion?" he sounded discomforted and relieved.

"I don't know." Deaton handed the photos back to Deputy Parrish who slides it against the Sheriff's second files. "A wolf could chase down its prey, hobbling it by tearing at the ankles. And then the throat."

"If this thing has memories but it's not a wolf, what else can be?" Parrish intercut.

Deaton's looked intrigued and straightened his posture, "why would you suspect it's been here
"Because it has been," Sheriff Stilinski put his hand out and Parrish handed over the files, "6 years ago."

This time around, Deaton knew the files were both precious and out of the ordinary, the pages were colored, and the photos dated but the evidence was undeniably similar. What Deaton wouldn't do to teleport into that scene?

The Doctor took a seat and silently perused the file for what seemed like a small eternity and when he looked up at the Sheriff he asked, "how can I help you?"

Track 12 - Young and Beautiful by Lana Del Rey

{Friday, Night}

Scott had barely gotten through the front door when his Mom's voice rang through the kitchen, "are you hungry?"

Old habits die hard when he answered, "God Yes!" before he sensed something was off. Hell, teenage boy senses should have sensed there was a trap.

"That's great," Melissa McCall added cheerfully, "so am I!" She sat with her hands propped up underneath her chin. She remained that way for an awkwardly long time for a woman so animated.

Scott groaned and smacked a hand over his face, "It was my night to bring home dinner."

"It was," she stood smoothly came around the table and confronted him, "but you don't have to worry about that." She cupped his face and brought him to focus, her warm dark eyes the mirror of his own, "I've lost my appetite. Really, Scott fighting? You're lucky you didn't get suspended."

"I'm sorry Mom," he flinched, her tone hurt more than any blow she could have dealt.

"What were you thinking?"

"Honestly, I thought no one saw me."

She smacked him on the head and stepped aside, "THAT'S what you have to say! I just spent 30 minutes on the phone with your Coach. Strange, strange man--" she shook her head, more in confusion than dismay.

"uh, yeah." Scott disrobed of his backpack and coat quickly and followed her to the kitchen while she took out dinner items.

"He says you're going to do endurance runs after practice plus you have to be on the field for drills, before zero period tomorrow. He said be there 'so early its yesterday'."

"Sounds like him," he took out the cutting board as she handed him fresh vegetables from the crisper.

"If I had my way, you wouldn't be on the Team anymore at all--"
"Mom, No! Please, You Can't!! I beg you! I'm Co-Captain!! They Need ME! I NEED Them! Please anything bbut That!"

"Funny. You sound exactly like your Coach," she looked at him quizzically, awkwardly startled still while holding out packet chicken cutlets. "Strange."

"Please Mom."

"What's going on Scott? Cutting school, getting into fights. Oh, yes I know about you cutting school. This isn't like you."

Having no idea what to reply Scott turned to defrost the chicken.

"Is it, you know--"

"It's not drugs! Mom, I would never take drugs. After all I've seen at the ER," Scott spun around, hands flailing in the air, chicken slime still on his fingertips.

"Drugs?!!" Melissa stepped forward, her finger pointing an accusation. "Who said anything about Drugs? I was going to say 'peer-pressure'. Do I need to have your urine tested?"

"God, no Mom!" he half-laugh, half-whined. He stepped forward and hugged her at an awkward angle. All elbows keeping his hands up in the air to not touch his Mother's back. "I'll do better. I just had a really bad day. A guy on the team had a really bad break up with Lydia. I lost my cool. It won't happen again. I swear."

"You had better." She pulled away and kissed his cheek, "babe, these things are going to happen. Feelings are going to get stomped on, hearts are going to get broken so they can heal up stronger. But... if you see someone hurt your friend again, be smart. Wait till they get off school grounds to settle things, do you hear me?"

"Y-yes," he felt incredibly uncomfortable. His Mother worked to heal hundreds of bodies a day. And she had never before condoned violence, but his senses didn't lie and her heart-rate did not falter.

"Good," she turned and started toward the stairs, "now you've made me late for an appointment with a hot shower."

"But Mom. Dinner?" Scott held up his gooey hands in dispute.

"Right, I expect beans with that. Black ones. Tomorrow I want soup instead of salad with yellow rice and pork chops. I haven't decided on Sunday yet but I'm thinking Fish."

"That's my punishment?" he shouted as she disappeared upstairs and behind the bathroom door.

"That's my son," she announced smugly.

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**Track 13 - Mess Around by Indiana**

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{Saturday, Morning}

Student services at BHHS offered weekend cram sessions leading up to the Midterms.
Sessions were set in blocks of two-segments; first block [9am-11am], second block [12pm-2pm]. With an hour lunch break in between. Lydia signed up to be a tutor, Allison the tutored for the afternoon session at least which granted them just enough time to share a meal before trudging back into the depths.

While Allison waited around in Student Parking to trade off food between Scott and Lydia, (she brought them both Chinese takeout to share, even if they refused to sit down together) she caught sight of Isaac as he came through the side exit and she waved him over. Her open expression and awkward smile, a gesture of charm had almost the effect as if she were fly fishing. She apologized; if she knew suggesting a double-date would have created so much drama she would have kept her mouth shut.

"It was nice to be considered on the boyfriend list for a moment, even if it immediately short-listed me for the shit list," Isaac half-smiled, from his height a shrug to her seemed like lifting up the world's troubles.

"You're definitely not on a 'shit' list. You stared down two dragons in one day. That's pretty damn brave actually. I feel like I should apologize again," she hopped off the hood of her car and confronted Isaac head on. His embarrassment was evident, "I'm really sorry. I'm sorry I painted a bull's eye on your back, I just thought Lydia venting with you would be a good thing."

Isaac wasn't certain if Allison knew how spot on her assessment was. He stood to leave, "trust me, I was glad to be of service, but it wasn't like I was her diary. That girl is repression wrapped up in expensive accessories."

She frowned. That was not the feedback she had anticipated, and she wouldn't be happy with those results, "maybe it is just restlessness because of her nightmares."

"What nightmares?" he failed to convince himself he wasn't interested. The practice hunched shoulders, the hands shoved in his pockets, even the start to walk, but his body swerved back around in a need to know.

"You don't know?" surprised, Allison had to follow it up, "but haven't you been sleeping together?"

Isaac's pressed his lips together, his head ducked to the side as if he could dodge his own awkward reply. "There was very little sleeping during the time we spent together."

Later on, Allison would wish she had at least paused before she laughed, "I'm not exactly surprised."

"Thanks."

"It's not anything mean. I mean I hope not, it's just that you're type," Allison pointed out, gesturing toward his athletic build although wasn't brolic like any of the other team members, "isn't exactly short in supply when it comes to stamina."

"Lacrosse players?"

"Sure," her brows went up minutely, but she didn't smile.

Track 14 - Beautiful Pain (Ft. Sia) by Eminem
Further South along the Highway the land collected water and tall grass into mossy shapes people who lived nearby affectionately referred to as The Ponds. The land sank too often to construct housing on it, but it still had an abandoned service station in its heart. If you didn't mind the earthy tones, which Kali loved underfoot, then this was the ideal place to settle in unnoticed. Well, almost unnoticed.

Kali left the entrance open because anyone would be foolish to walk into a den of monsters, but the Twins didn't care. They wanted their presence known like ballers blowing trumpets along their path. If they came through expecting some sort of warm welcome because they were now Alphas they were mistaken. Their packs had had an alliance since long before Kali had been born.

These were the times to test those ties.

Packs had come through these underground halls before and they were too small to be at capacity, it even smelled of too many people. Even in while in hiding, Kali could plot head games like the best.

"You've got as much business being here as the talking corpse we have strung up," she made certain they saw her captive as soon as they entered, distasteful as it was. Kali wasn't proud of her torture victim exactly, but she wasn't ashamed of it either.

It was a necessary evil. Alphas quickly grew to understand the horrors committed to keep their pack alive and safe.

"We came to collect our dead," Ethan said straight-faced. Aiden stared at the body and wondered if the body was even still alive. The heartbeat sounded impossibly slow.

"Debs," Aiden said the name to remind Kali of her old friend and long-time drinking buddy.

It had a certain sort of effect but not the one they had anticipated. Kali laughed and laughed until it appeared her side ached.

"That bitch," Kali wiped at her eyes. When she opened them again they were hard and angry in contrast to her behavior, "leaving Tweedle-dee and Tweedle-dumb as Alphas. Not likely."

"She was killed by the same Monster that's been taking out Werewolves," Aiden growled unsure which he found more insulting; Kali laughing at Debs' passing or insulting their status in front of his pack. Evidently from Ethan's elongated fangs, his brother felt the same.

"What do you care?" Kali walked idly toward the prostrated body, "she must have been an Omega by then. She left and the both of you got Christmas early, didn't you?"

"This Monster is slaughtering humans, Omegas and Betas," explained Ethan, "who knows what's next on the menu? Maybe Alphas?"

Kali laughed and wrenched back the man's head by his elongated ear, the Werewolf moaned low. She examined him and seemed content to know her victim wasn't dead, yet.

"You can see I'm in the middle of something more important than your childish scary stories--"

"Debs didn't think it was childish. 4 days ago, she called to warn us. Less than 12 hours later she ended up practically pulled inside out on a curb in the middle of nowhere...oh, no wait, not nowhere. Right here in Beacon Hills."

As if summoned from shadows, Kali's pack stepped out from pathways throughout the
underground. The Twins pack members were 5 compared to Kali's just shy of 10 with a home-field advantage. But she showed a notable loss.

"You are wearing out your welcome children. That has got nothing to do with me."

"Doesn't it?" Aiden grinned. "Where Marsten? Looks like your number two has gone missing."

Kali growled, fangs creating a grin that she turned on her own people.

"Have I got a little spy in the ranks?" with an arched brow, she moved along her pack and smelled the anxiety off the small red-head standing stiffly closest to the exit.

"I'm not spying," the red-head claimed calmly, her chin held high despite her follow up sentiment. "I'm scared. We should be running."

"Like Debs ran?" added Kali. Her eyes were steady and Midnight-Dark as she grabbed firm hold of the girl's chin and glared down at her, locked onto Ocean-Blue.

Aiden growled as claws snapped out reflexively. Ethan stepped forward and gestured to the guy strapped to the linked and barbed wire fence against a moss riddled wall, ankle deep pond water. The fresh water that seeped through kept the blood from stagnating, but it also brought in the outside chill leaving the half-naked man to likely suffer hypothermia.

"What are you even doing with this guy when there is still killing going on?"

"This guy," Kali dropped her Beta with disinterest and stepped toward her catch, as proud as a cat playing with a mouse, "his pack have been part of this land since before there were people settled here. If anyone can give me answers as to what's going on in Beacon Hills it will be him."

She reached for a crank by the wall and locked it into a new setting. A pulley system twisted against the barbed wires, pulled the man into alignment setting off popping sounds and he twitched into animation. He howled and snapped at them. Kali looked barely interested. She wasn't even interested in asking questions at this point. Just taking out her anger on the captive.

"You're fucking crazy," Aiden scoffed.

"You stick around here, all you're doing is making that Monster a buffet," Ethan pointed out and gestured for his pack members to move toward the exits.

"Then why are you even here?" Kali snapped and stepped toward them. Everyone in the room froze in apprehension.

"We came for our dead?" Aiden growled, his toothy grin an accusation as damning as his words. "Are you staying for yours?"

"Oh," Kali walked slowly toward him, bare feet with her extended black claws, gnarled tapping, the only prominent sound in the world, "you thought after having a title dropped onto you, you could play with the grownups?" she encircled Aiden slowly. As she did so, Ethan stepped forward, claws out with a flick. They sandwiched her.

Members the once allied packs muttered with unease; Although in Kali's pack Santos once mentored Ethan and Aiden, his divided natured helped guide the Twins during their earliest combine shapeshift to maintain their identities. Bridy, the youngest in the Twins pack might as well have been a little sister the way she idolized Ginger, the red-head in Kali's pack. Huntington was the not-so straight, straight man from Kali's pack and Gus the goof of the Twins pack, together
they were once practically inseparable. But then Kali had members like Levi, though Marsten was the worst. They were killers for killings sake. The Twins had their loose cannon, in what? Gus, a Beta who was at worst a Psychotic, before the bite at best a masochist. The Twins had Marta, she could kill if her switch was flicked but it took her a while to get there and from her silent scowl she wanted nothing more than to get out of Kali's make-shift torture nest.

Ginger was the first to cross the line. Not in an attack, but in retreat.

"This is fucking stupid" she threw her hands up and walked toward the hall. "If we're really lucky we might all kill each other before the big bad boogie Monster gets a chance to."

With a slow shake of her head, a deep and terrible growl that ripped through the underground Kali set everyone back a few steps. Kali pointed an accusatory finger toward the Twins, specifically toward Aiden, Kali's breathe caressed Gingers' face. The girl shuddered and stumbled back, her doc martin's sliding against the moist ground.

"You think if you run, you'll run to him?" Kali smirked; pleased at the blow to the soul of her Beta, her girl. When she opened her eyes again they were no longer pale Ocean-Blue but an angry Yellow-Gold narrowed into slits.

"Ginger." Ethan called out to her. He said her name because he knew if Aiden called to her, his voice would crack. Ethan cared for her not in the same way Aiden but on his brother's behalf, but he still wanted her safe.

The girl's eyes flittered around the members of both packs as if she searched through missing members.

"Aiden," her eyes clouded over, her copper hair looked like rivets of blood in the dark "get out of here." She stepped back, defeated and waved them off as someone would push back a pet. "No one should be here who doesn't believe in the cause." Misery weighed down on as if a landslide washed through and she hugged her arms over her mid-drift. She wouldn't make eye contact with Aiden, or Kali for that matter.

"Fuck causes. Fuck Beacon Hills," Aiden's voice rivaled Kali's earlier rumbling. When he looked over his eyes flashed red, a reminder of his Alpha standing, despite his youth.

Then Ethan put a hand on his Twin's shoulder and pulled him away. They could fight but they would lose, not because they didn't have the numbers but without Aiden's true conviction they didn't have the strength. While Aiden drew himself up and ushered his pack away, conducting his duty to keep them safe but he wondered why Kali would show such smug devotion to a Beta who clearly held no loyalty to her.

When the Twins climbed onto their Kawasaki's Bridy came running over to Aiden's side. Her wild brown strands whipping him in the face, hope and hot breath seeping through his ear canal. "She's watching" Bridy whispered.

"They're all watching," Gus mocked. Bridy glared at him.

Aiden ordered them to get going and they did. Bridy hopped onto her Cruiser and sped off, irritated and didn't look back. Marta had a Thunder Bird Triumph, a bike so vast she may as well as been driving a small sofa. Gus climbed on obediently behind her, riding bitch as he was ordered.

Ethan gave him another pat of assurance on his shoulder to steady his thoughts before he turned on the engine. Aiden smiled at him with no teeth and settled onto seat. Ethan was stronger, stricter,
and bolder while Aiden was divided and entertained dumb-ass weak thoughts like running. But they were weak thoughts because even when he imagined running for safety he couldn't imagine doing it alone.

While Aiden drove off, dark helmet locked over his face, he looked through the rearview. All of Kali's pack came out to see them off but Ginger stood further off, she stood outside of The Ponds, closer to the highway. Even as they grew smaller in his rearview, he could make out a shadow of hoodie and studded tight black jeans, tiny mid-drift where exposed skin reflected bright against the moon. Her silhouette made a path breaking through the highway into the horizon. The way she watched reminded him of how it was in the end. How Debs stole glances of Coot when Bozeman fought her to be Alpha, and then she didn't fear pain or banishment--

While waiting outside of the City Morgue for Marta to collect Debs and Coot's ashes, Ethan talked Bridy down from killing Gus. She was young and more rational, but Gus was older and unhinged, for the most part they got along but not when it came to emotions. Aiden had opted to stay out of it when he received a text.

- "No one should be anywhere with anyone they don't believe in."
- "I won't run to you. but I will run with you."

On their bikes again they stayed idle and discussed where it was they should spread their friends' ashes; Gus wanted to smoke them. Bridy wanted to pour them in the Ocean. Marta suggested spreading them somewhere still and upwind. Ethan suggested somewhere nearby so they could get it over with. Aiden suggested the woods just North; Debs and Coot were headed that way anyway. When they finally agreed he felt better, like a leader, braver, guiltless.

Track 15 - Raise Your Weapon by deadmau5

"That was distracting." From the doorway of her bunk, Lark added blithely. Kali noticed the young Beta hadn't bothered to show face for the squabbles earlier and she wasn't pleased. She cast a warning look to keep keeping her distance.

"It's a shame about Debs," Huntington came through and stopped beside Lark, putting his lanky body between her and Kali.

"It's a shame about all of them," Santos pointed out, "Didn't you notice? Coots, Bozeman, Naylor even Luna were all gone."

"They probably all just jumped ship," Kali snapped, pacing the room.

"What if they're dead?" Levi suggested.

"What if Marsten's dead?" said Ginger hovered in the entryway, her hood pulled low. All that could be made out were the cold glare, like pinholes of diamonds; she could easily have scared clear a children's school yard.

"Shut Up!! Shut..." Kali snarled and breathed a calming breath "shut your ignorant useless little mouths." She paced the room glaring all of them into silence, even Santos tall as he stood. "That pack will be nothing but wanderers or roadkill by the next full moon but not us. We're going to find and kill whatever this thing is before it kills again."
"Why?" Santos asked, because someone had to. Debs was the only victim of the Monster they personally knew, so far. Why did their pack have to get wholly involved?

"Because no one gets left behind," she said and turned away from them. They knew it should have been a comfort to know that if they had been compromised in some way the Pack would go through hoops for them. But the ante had risen.

"Marsten wouldn't want you to wager all of our lives for his," Lark started more cautiously than before because she was both right and afraid.

"We'll just have to ask him when we get him back," Kali sighed. She tried and failed to sound encouraging.

Sound of footsteps came along the hallway once more. A few of Kali's pack slinked away as Ennis' pack started to arrive. Ennis was eager and happy to see Kali, another set of longtime companions. But not as far back as Debs, she couldn't help but remember. When he lifted a latch against the wall freezing water rushed from a drainage pipe along the dip created by time, leakage and pond water under their prisoner's feet.

"My turn," Ennis was all but cheerfully. The prisoner squirmed into life and trembled hard enough to convulse against his binds. "I see some new scars, Kali. Did we get anything out of him?"

"No," she sighed, "8 hours and the man has done nothing but chant 'Alpha, Beta, Omega' as if it could cure him. He hasn't even transformed all the way so, that is some control."

"Have you had to revive him?"

"Not yet?"

"I bet I could--"

"We need him to talk, not to die."

"HE'S SAYING SOMETHING!" Quint, the youngest in Ennis' pack called out to them.

"Is he muttering 'I'm freezing'?" Ennis waited.

"Yeah. Sorry. I'll help my Dad watch him instead," Quint sounded like a wounded bird, chirping away pathetically.

"Do that!" Ennis shook his head and look at Kali in commiseration. "How do we know he has something to say?"

"Because," she sauntered closer and brought Ennis in her wake, "a Hale appears in these parts for the first time in over a decade, immediately followed by a Monster."

Ennis grinning reached over and turned off the water. Doc brought out a box and from it a picana, while Quint dragged over a car battery.

"Come on Derek," Ennis manhandled the control box while Doc clamped bronze tip to the back of the victim's neck and extended the wire to the control box. "If you don't tell us who it is, we'll just find where your pack is hiding and make them tell us."

Derek breathed in deep into his diaphragm. He held onto the image of his Mother, his mentor, his teacher and her lessons. Be prepared. Everything would go white with a spark until everything
would freeze and it would happen again and again. Until then.

"Alpha, Beta, Omega. Alpha, Beta, Omega. Alpha, Beta, Omega."

Chapter End Notes

**CREDITS/ROLL CALL:**

**Argents - Team1; headed by Victoria, Chris & Allison.**
- Rumy - [Sergeant] specialized in Recon; Special Forces and espionage. Chris' right hand man and Allison's godfather.
- Axel - [1st Lieutenant] expert tracker, marksman and Allison's 2nd cousin.
- Bennett - [Field Officer] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old and friend to Allison.

**Hale (Present Day) Pack; Alpha**
- Derek - [?] In a very precarious position.

**? Other:**
- Isaac - [Omega] abandoned Werewolf in search of a pack.

**Twins' Pack; Aiden and Ethan Carver Alphas**
- Marta - [Beta] she's an older motor head and their 1st Lieutenant.
- Bridy - [Beta] the packs' spy because she's diminutive and easily underestimated.
- Gus - [Beta] referred to as psychotic now and again, but his very few (and dwindling) close friends' are his touchstone.
- (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, bi and partnered to Naylor, formerly to Bozeman.
- (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
- (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
- (deceased) Coot - [Omega] former Beta, killed by the Monster.

**Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha**
- (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed 1st Lieutenant, possibly romantically entangled.
- Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali and closely bonded to Huntington.
- Santos - [Beta] while loyal to Kali has mentored many, without regard to packs. He helped the Twins first learn to shift together without losing their identities.
- Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed and with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
- Levi - [Beta] he's neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
- Huntington - [Beta] has strong empathic senses, is very good friends with Gus' from Twins' pack and Lark.

**Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha**
- Dr. Kane - [Beta] both a medical Doctor and their torturer.
- Quint - [Beta] eager to please teen and Dr. Kane's biological son.
were (you) hunting

Chapter Summary

While Scott's dream premonitions tie into Lydia's nightmares, Allison's attempt to keep her friends together only leaves her separated further from both friends and her family.

* Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/03-were-you-hunting

Chapter Notes

Previously on "were (you)"

(Normally) mild-mannered Scott McCall finds himself compromised by forces he cannot understand. Enraged by Isaac and transformed by Lydia, it's only through Allison's guidance and understanding he felt he could regain control.

Isaac Lahey, is a "lone wolf" newly arrived to Beacon Hills in search of a pack, chanced upon Scott McCall. Although not finding a pack, he stayed to spy on Scott as the anomaly he seemed to be.

Sheriff Stilinski; continued the 6 year-old unsolved investigation into the death of his wife Claudia and the disappearance of his son Stiles separate to the Department. Reignited due to evidence similar to a recent equally unresolved double-murder he enlists the help of Deputy Parrish.

Allison Argent; continued her own investigation into the double-murders and their motives for passing coming to/passing through Beacon Hills. While keeping tabs on Lydia and Scott's progress, so she noted signs of the Supernatural tendencies within Isaac as well.

Beacon Hills, continuing to draw the Supernatural entertains at least three new werewolf Packs under the leadership of Alphas known as Aiden and Ethan (The Twins), Kali and Ennis. There will be more.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Track 01 - You (Ha Ha Ha) by Charli XCX

[Saturday, Morning]

"A decision has been made," Allison's her fingers splayed dramatically, her voice pleading despite her animated her face. "I'm reinstating bowling night!"

For once Scott and Lydia were on the same page. From the look Scott cast Lydia, he was the easier to fold. Lydia's right brow went up so high it may as well have been part of her hair line. Isaac took a step further back keeping brave footing behind Allison.
"Hear me out," Allison put the take-out ominously on the car's hood, so Scott rush forward get hold of it. "It was only ruined because I pushed it onto everyone to begin with," she reached forward and grabbed hold of one of Lydia's hands and one of Scott's.

"If I had asked you both, to mend-fences, would you have said yes?"

"Of course, I would have," Scott grinned then looked over her shoulder at Isaac and smiled a bit less.

Lydia sighed, "if you begged. Offered to pay for the first frame."

"Is that a yes?" she bit her lip.

Lydia sighed and nodded.

"Now, Isaac, I want you to come bowling as an apology. If it weren't for me butting my nose-"

"It's really fine, Allison."

"See. He said its fine, Allison."

Allison turned to half face Scott knowing he'd sense a lie. "I owe Isaac, and I want him to come as my guest to make it up to him. Even Lydia admits she wouldn't have torn into him if I hadn't pushed her."

Lydia's eyes shot daggers at Allison. Allison wasn't afraid of daggers.

"Scott? What do you think?" Allison looked to him, sweet smile and long lashes.

"Scott?"

His head whipped around at the sound of Lydia's plea. Her expression wasn't soft, but her eyes were in earnest. He was too shocked at her addressing him to know how to respond.

"Scott?" Isaac asked mostly because he was afraid Scott may have had a small seizure. "It's really okay," Isaac redirected toward Allison, "we don't get along really."

"That's not true," Scott answered quickly, "we probably have more in common than we don't. If Isaac wants to come... sure."

Isaac shrugged, "It's up to Scott and Lydia."

"Typical guy-language," Lydia groaned. She wrenched her hand from Allison's and rubbed its soreness away.

"Meaning?" Allison asked.

Lydia grabbed at the take-out, marched away and left nothing for Scott, "of course Allison, anything you say Allison. I'll be there with bell's on Allison..." not that anyone heard her, but Lydia kept on her tirade after she marched through the school doors. Chasing after her, Allison smiled assuredly that things would be okay.

Sighing deeply, Scott encouraged Isaac to join him back on the field for a healthier outlet, maybe for a better way to execute camaraderie. Isaac replied, "Sure Captain!" and left it at that.
The second of the cram sessions were cancelled.

"Pretty sure at this point I need to remind you that we are best-friends."

"I know that very well," Allison tossed over her shoulder.

Lydia twitched, unconvinced but pushed on. "When our second cram session got cancelled you said we'd have quality girl time."

"I said we'd spend quality time soon. Who knew Ms. Blake would leave after the morning session."

"If you saw the way she was ogling the boys at lacrosse out of the class window-"

Allison stopped short, "no way!"

Lydia shrugged. "I do it too, but I never used it as an excuse to miss a class."

Allison continued onward, with a shiver Lydia clutched her coat closed and moved to follow. "Allison," she whispered searching around as they moved through the woods. "How far out are we going?"

"You didn't have to come?"

Lydia waved the remark as one would a passing fly. She quickened her pace to march alongside Allison instead of straggle.

"Allison, when you needed to stop for an errand before Häagen-Dazs and chick-flicks a 5-mile hike was not what I was expecting. Or wouldn't have left my phone charging in in the car charging, instead I'd be calling for an Uber."

Allison stopped. Lydia smirked, her hands on her hips in triumph, Allison responded by dropping her quiver to the ground to strap on her shooting gloves. Lydia would have complained more but she became intrigued while watching her best-friend at her best-work. Allison knew she had won the argument when Lydia didn't even snip at her when given a gentle-push in the arm with the edge of her bow to move out of target range.

"Well, critique?" beaming, Allison expected her best-friend to be full of them. Lydia's lips pressed into a withholding grin as she handed over a second arrow.

"If there's one thing I could say..."

"Yeah?" Allison placed the quiver in alignment.

"Did it have to be here? I feel like I'm being watched in these woods," her voice grew small.

Disengaging Allison turned to face her with an uncertain expression. This far out, she couldn't imagine that to be true. Lydia snapped, if she wasn't scared of harassing ex's why would she be scared of a few leaves and branches?

"Is Jackson the ex?" she supposed. Allison didn't know everyone at the High School, but she understood social hierarchy and she'd been raised to understand certain signs.
Lydia laughed like that had been the punchline to the worst joke, so she followed it up with her own. The bad joke of her messed up relationship where Jackson turned from eye-candy to abusive prick overnight.

"Look, sometimes going off like a rocket is a good thing and he was pretty to look at. But I didn't love him I just loved liking him. It took me a little too long to figure that out."

She put Allison's hands back in position, she carefully noted and encouraged her to continue shooting. "You're fortunate you came along when you did Allison Argent. Perfect timing. Just when I happened have the opening for a best-friend to gossip about how he turned into a possessive freak overnight!"

"You never have to worry about that happening again," she promised. The second arrow hit the tree with such force it echoed through the wood and sent birds scattering, "I'll have your back." She smiled sweetly and turned for Lydia to hand over the next arrow. Lydia didn't hesitate, instead she preened.

"Listen to you, like a Knight in a skater dress, protecting her Queen."

"You bet," Allison slid the arrow against her gloved finger. She took a calm breath and shot the third arrow close enough to the first to nearly split it. Lydia gave a slow clap, admittedly impressed.

A serious tone settled. "Well, you had better look out for me. Not just because you owe me for being so patient with your practice for archery team, gymnastics, cross-country-" she ticked off a list on her fingertips.

When Allison kindly reminded her wasn't an archery team, Lydia beamed "yet". But when she offered to teach her archery in turn Lydia's eyes suddenly dilated, her mouth went slack and she stumbled backward. Allison caught hold of her before she hit the ground, but Lydia tried to excuse it away. Allison was having none of it. She knew symptoms of supernatural symptoms and she continued to question Lydia while the effects were fresh in mind. Lydia caught her footing quickly but never quite regained balance. She used Allison as a crutch while they made their slow and trailing way back to the car.

Along the way Lydia described what she felt, the harsh dizziness that rose to the point of an ache, driving her to want to scream until her head ached. "Now I hear it, like a sort of pounding. It's so loud, don't you hear it?"

Shaking her head, Allison pitied her friend and pushed them along.

"Pounding like, pounding like trampling," Lydia looked around, paranoid and skittish. She moved faster until Allison tripped to keep hold. "It's getting too fast, it's getting dangerous " and she grabbed her chest, as her breath sped up and Allison rushed her into the car. She hardly spoke between her harsh pants. Allison wanted to the hospital, but Lydia urged them to go home. "It'll pass. These seem to be..." she gulped for a breath of calm, "anxiety attack. It'll passes. It always does." Allison tightly held their hands together and pressed her lips into a confident smile that held promise.

"It'll pass," she clutched her head and collapsed into the passenger seat. Allison knelt on the ground beside her, knees pressed against the nettle covered ground as she looked up at her semi-conscious friend. Lydia's back arched away from the seat, her mouth dropped open in a silent cry, as her face crumbled in agony. Then in a moment it was over.
Allison was surprised to find her pulse calm when she checked and to feel her skin warm to the touch. When she sat back, she looked fragile and seemed to be falling asleep. Despite that, when Allison moved away Lydia squeezed her hand tight. She squeezed it back.

"Lydia?" and the only response was the twitch of a brow. "Lydia you're going to be okay." Her voice croak, she sounded pleading instead of confident.

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**Track 03 - Amorphous by The Underachievers**

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Endurance drills on the cross-country path weren't uncommon for the Lacrosse Team. Having it held on a weekend was verging on barbaric but "them's the breaks!" as Coach was happy to inform them.

"I hear you're to thank for this McCall," Jackson's voice virtually slid through the group and struck Scott in the back of his head.

"Well I-" Scott started to explain he wasn't the only kid involved in the fight but thought better. It wasn't in him to throw someone else to the wolves, so to speak. Even if he an Isaac weren't on the best terms.

"I'm going to make sure to show you my gratitude. Do you hear me?" Jackson ground out the words, his enunciation like bite marks. It made Scott's ears hurt.

Coach crowed at the sight of Jackson and smacked him hard on the shoulder, "what an honor! To have not one, but both our Co-Captains in attendance. I could cry. No really, it's so pathetic it takes these extra measures to get you all to turn out. Maybe I should have endurance drills every weekend?" His suggestion was met with enough groans to cause an avalanche.

"Well, then get out there and show me it's not necessary! GET!"

Jackson turned, clipped Scott hard enough in the shoulder to set him back a pace and leave a bruise. Isaac winced at the sight.

The term "on your mark, get set, go" is wasted when everywhere is marked as place where a Werewolf's set to go. Although they were the last to run, the boys surpassed the rest of the team. If anyone was going to be suspicious would have had to catch up. In intensity, if not competitiveness.

If Isaac had been clearheaded he would have remembered to stay under the radar but a chance to mess around with a pack member- Meanwhile Scott forgot Allison's suspicions of Isaac but never having challenged another supernatural being on equal footing (not since their fight the day) before, he couldn't help it. And along they went. Over hillside, kicking up dust, cling and kicked off of tree branches, leaping over stones and skidding around bends.

Not wanting to be shown up Jackson, pushed himself to catch up. His body strained, he heard his heartbeat thunder, ricocheting down to the soles of his feet and back to his brain. It was a sound he preferred to the voices of two over-animated idiots. As much as he pushed, he couldn't get pass the fact that the wrong people were in the lead and he was set, yet again following.

"Hey, man! Don't! You're going to pull your-" Danny's voice sounded like something from the bottom of a tin can. With a snarl Jackson shoved him off hard enough to knock him over. He couldn't bear to hear one more person's voice rolling around in his head. The sight of Danny
vanished into a cloud of dirt stopped Jackson in his tracks, too quick for his velocity and sent him stumbling. Jogging, he back tracked over to help Danny to his feet. Despite his apology, possibly due to his limp, Danny wasn't quick to forgive.

In a childish display of one-upmanship, the made demands as surpassed each other;

"What do you want with Lydia?" Scott wanted to know as he leapt over a rockface.

"That's not a question I can take seriously," Isaac admitted while he jumped past a ditch.

"Are you using Lydia?" He chose a different tactic, closing Isaac against a wallface. Listening to Isaac's heart-rate he noticed an irregularity, not a spike like a lie but something of a hiccup and Scott's hackles rose. They would never be certain whether it was an honest-to-god trip or a tackle but they both went down, all-limbs and bruising.

Until Danny caught up and asked if there was some 'hotness' happening because he didn't mind but Coach might have words. Isaac and Scott broke apart and sat breathless in a familiar tangled mess.

Isaac opened his mouth to apologize but Scott beat him to it.

"I don't know why I keep losing my temper," Scott wiped his face with the back of his hand, putting more dirt on than taking off.

"Have you tried smacking around your friends? I hear that helps." After sucking on his bloody lip, Isaac's grin looked stained.

Scott stood and helped Isaac to his feet, "it's not like me."

"No, Scott. It's very much like you to get protective over the people that matter to you." Isaac clapped him on the shoulder, "I'm just sorry you don't see me as one of them yet."

"What are you saying?" Scott scuffled along, setting a pace that put them in last place.

Isaac made at cracking his neck to try to obscure the way his wrist healed from a fracture, when a thought occurred to him. "Scott, have you tried focusing on nerves?"

"What?"

"I don't know." He took a moment to consider how vulnerable Scott was as a Beta- or an Omega, whichever he technically was. Without a pack he should have been weaker or desperate, somehow he was none of those things. But Isaac certainly felt that way at times which is what first drew them together, his own need for a pack. Even if it led to them coming head-to-head. But as long as Scott remained a beacon of vitality, others would be drawn in. Without some guidance, without an Alpha to learn from he'd be in harm's way.

Isaac sighed and dove in, hoping for the best, "this's just something I picked up from my foster parents to help keep myself in check. Try to visualize each nerve, individually inside of you. Not slowing them down or separating them, just being there."

"Does it work?" it was then that Scott worried on what Allison would think about him going to Isaac for advice. He wondered what she would think of Isaac's theories. And then he thought maybe for now he shouldn't tell her, or at least not until he tried it out first.
"I guess. Because once you know that 'there' is where you are, you don't have to worry so much
about losing control. Even if sometimes you still do."

"Isaac, is that Buddhist?" excited at the prospect, Scott's face lit up.

"Maybe a little bit," Isaac's brow cocked in thought. "I don't know. I never asked them."

They got near enough they could make out the rest of the Team waiting up for them. They stepped
apart from one another, keeping a distance to assure the rest of the Team they wouldn't burst into a
fury once more and cause any more spontaneous endurance drills.

"Scott, try it." He squinted against the slanted rays of dying sun, "and when it doesn't work, try it
again. You should know yourself before someone decides to label you."

After several small nods a grin split Scott's face. It was the least Isaac figured he could do, if Scott
learned to suppress his nature, and it prevented him from being a target, it might prevent them from
rubbing each other the wrong way. Although, he didn't imagine it would go far in resolving where
Scott figured he fit in the greater hierarchy.

At the end of practice when Coach said anyone who doesn't check in gets left behind Danny asked
if anyone saw Jackson. No one had. They return to BHHS without him.

Track 04 - Flux by Bloc Party

It never willfully happened where Danny thought of Jackson in the showers, but it was bound to
happen at least the once. He thought of him snarling and disappearing over the horizon and not
having heard from him since. He thought of Jackson the way a parent frets over a child with a
fever from one room over, so much so he lost focus and almost burned his skin off. So, he jumped
out and after dismissal hopped in his Toyota Yaris, raced up the mountain side and retraced the
miles they had just run. He retraced their trail, but slower and by the light of his phone.

The sun having set might have meant more caution, but it only made him fear more for Jackson so
he sped up when he should have taken his time.

"You can be killed being out here this time of night, no visibility," said the guy who pulled up on
the dirt bike. "Not to mention there are weirdoes all around."

"I kinda know that. I've misplaced my weirdo," Danny answered as he threw an arm up to shade his
eyes from the headlights.

The driver chuckled and turned off the bike.

"I'm worried about my best-friend." Danny explained. He wanted it to be clear his reason for being
there was serious and, also seriously he was not searching for his boyfriend. "He's been acting
weird and took off around here a couple hours ago."

The driver advised him to go home "You're just going to get into trouble up here. There's poor cell-
phone reception." The driver looked him over top to bottom as if he considered him something
worth his full attention. "It'll be better to come back in the morning when you can see better.
Although you could probably get in just as much trouble then."
Danny clicked off his phone's light to let his eyes adjust, discerned that light brown hair and dark brown eyes in the shade, and convinced himself they were enough to stop and listen for a while. The stranger pointed out any tracks that could have been followed would have been obscured by now, plus his best-friend (who had better be worth it) probably managed a different way home. The guy started his bike as an example, kicking up dirt behind him.

"If your friend doesn't turn up by the morning you might want to have the Sheriff's department come out here to look with you," the cockiness in his tone left no room for argument. "Until then, why don't I take you some place safe?"

Track 05 - Girls Like You by The Naked and Famous

While Scott's was still in the locker room shower his cellphone rang. He sensed it would bring more bad news, but he also had the sense he should get it before he regretted it.

"Scott?"

"Hi, hello" Scott tried to assure her he was ready to listen. He remained on his knees after having tripped across, over benches and barely tumbled into his shorts.

"If I cancelled tonight, would you be mad at me?" her wispy voice sounded tucked into her elbow, curled into her crossed arms and hidden from her nerves.

"Of course not." He glanced around the locker room for Isaac.

"Really?"

"Well, not mad."

She laughed nervously while Scott juggled the phone and tried to yank on a t-shirt.

"I'm confused," Scott admitted, trying to hide the sound of his frustration. Allison gave a shaky sigh. She could often see through his act.

"Lydia asked for a 'Girl's Night'. I think she really needs it," a rustling through the phone was the sound of her running her hand through her hair. Her voice showed tiredness and apologies her words could not get across. "I think she needs to crash really."

"Is she going to be okay?" The line stayed quiet, not perfectly since he could listen to her breath and how it stayed muffled at a stilted rate.

"I know something's wrong," Scott's voice came across firm but a tremble of tenderness, "I can tell when you're hiding something." Scott cradled the phone to his ear; he could see in his mind's eyes the way she would cradle her head against her forearm while she peered out and figured how to approach the world.

Allison expressed her growing concern. She described Lydia's episode in the forest, the sudden onset of headache and chills. Scott was too embarrassed admit he had kept silent about his concerns for Lydia's symptoms earlier in the chem lab.

"Will she be okay?" Scott cut into her stilted recap as he caught sight of Isaac walking with other
"Yes. Of course," she assured him.
"Good, that's good," and for the time being that would have to be enough.

Track 06 - And The Boys by Angus & Julia Stone

"Hello Allison," Isaac answered in a tone of exasperation that answered the point of her phone call before she opened her mouth.

"Would it help to say I'm sorry?"

"I'm don't know if you know what that word means" Isaac smirked and then tried very hard not to. From the corner of his eye he caught Scott listening. Scott probably didn't even know he tried to, but it was Allison and he could probably hear her over jet propulsion.

"Let me make it up to you!" she sounded falsely cheery.

"Please, if you say bowling-"

"Fine, no bowling. Something else."

"Allison please," that had been a mistake. Scott froze pulling his shirt midway down his torso. Isaac couldn't afford their barely managed peace getting worse. He walked himself and his phone nearer and mouthed to Scott, as if he hadn't known "why's Allison calling me?".

Scott shrugged, pretty good at playing dumb.

"We just keep taking off on you-"

"Hey, if you ever had Jackson as a Co-Captain you'd get used to it. Here for drills, gone for practices, takes off right off the running tracks, looking like a lunatic. You're not half as crazy as that guy."

"I guess, if that's what I have to measure up to I'm in good standing," she gave an awkward chuckle.

"Next game just cheer extra loud, okay?" Isaac suggested.

"Not good enough," she insisted. "Next dance, I'll owe you a spin on the floor. Sound good?"

Isaac felt like he had swallowed a dozen marbles while standing on hot coals. Scott stared with one eyebrow shot up in accusation. Isaac didn't know why he did it or how it became an impulse, but he answered "yeah, sure" before he realized he had opened his mouth.

"Great! Scott's a great slow dancer... I mean you didn't think I would give you the dance? You good with that Scott?" Allison's grin sounded thick in her voice and it wasn't hard to envision.

"Uh..." his jaw worked on vowels while his eyes squinted trying to catch up with the pressure in his brain. "Huh?" affectively he had answered. 'uh-huh'
"Great! Talk to you later," and she disconnected. Isaac looked toward the ceiling as if it held some explanation. The rattling in Scott's brain was nearly audible.

Track 07 - Living Dead vs. Figure 8 (Marina And The Diamonds Mashup) by DJ Bulbou

{Saturday Night - Sunday Morning}

It hella-sucked to wake up hungover without the bonus of having gotten drunk.

Lydia's brain rocked through her skull, she felt nauseous and to use the term generously 'ruined'. Her skin felt stretched a bit too thin and light and sound affected her like a battering ram. In a round-about way, life sucked.

She puttered across to the bathroom bare-foot and the soft carpet felt like gravel underfoot. Across the way, the flow from her showerhead sounded like those unexpected rainfall that came along sometimes and made the streets reflect the dark of the night. She closed her eyes and found something in it that cooled her. She imagined she could feel a breeze against her skin.

When Lydia opened her eyes again her reflection showed her something different than what she expected so her breath tightened in her chest. Humidity trailed her hair in a bloody red rivet over her shoulder, the dark circles around her eyes and pale trembling lips left her face unrecognizable. The eyes looking back at her searched for answers to questions she'd yet to pose. Startled, Lydia spun around and searched the room for answers in unison with her reflection. In the mirror she stood in the rain-soaked street while she remained beside her dresser staring into a vanity. When she looked back, her mirror-self watched her with mild suspicion but with much more fascination. Lydia tilted her head slightly and thought while she understood the appeal, corseted dress was a bit too showy for her taste. It took seconds really, to look in and know you're yourself and not yourself. It took less than that for Lydia to see red eyes in the dark and recognize looming death. Her breath became labored, her memories of running in the dark came flooding back and she struggled to stay put. Her expression must have said enough. Her mirror self-turned around and saw the Monster bearing down on her, on two legs, then on four. Lydia saw it leap over obstacles, shopping carts and car hoods, like they were invisible things. Burning flashes of fear and panic washed through her. She clasped her hands to her mouth, because mere words weren't enough to express her terror, instead she filled her lungs with it. Of all the things to come back from her missing time, did it have to be witnessing her dying?

Lydia glued her eyes back open both terrified and transfixed while the Monster killed her again. She reached out her hand when the roar collided, and her world shattered into a million pieces.

"Lydia!" her Mother's scream, a sound that would normally snap her awake. Mrs. Martin shook her daughter and dragged her physically from her sleep. Groggily Lydia rolled over and wondered, if everyone only understood, nightmare or no nightmare, how difficult a time it took for her to get to sleep. Why wouldn't they just let her alone?

"Lydia, please," her mother begged, needed for her daughter to confirm she was okay, was unwilling to take no for an answer. She pulled back her duvet to find the layers of blankets and sheets coated with fresh blood and bits of glass, and her daughter's hands recently had been split open. "What did you do?"

Awake. Fully awake, Lydia sat up leaning against her Mother and looked across the room to see
that while everything else in the room had been perfectly unphased her vanity mirror was spiderweb fractured through.

"Oh, my God, what did you do to yourself?" Lydia knew her Mother really wanted to ask what is wrong with you? but Mother's aren't allowed to ask those sorts of questions aloud. She glanced to her nightstand and found her phone charger empty. No safe-line in Allison.

"Lydia, sweetheart. Why did you do that? Lydia."

She couldn't think of an excuse. She couldn't comfort for her Mother. She couldn't think of a thing. Her mind was a blank.

Track 08 - Beautiful Nightmare by Skylar Grey

The Monster didn't smell her fear at first because she wasn't at first afraid. She stood tall for someone so small. She wasn't confused either when the Monster showed, and she didn't have weapons. The rain started and changed the smells around her. Somewhere he remembers we are born appreciating the scent of rain because our ancestors have relied on rainy weather for survival. That isn't what begins the hunt, but it is what makes it much more fun.

She does run. The sound of her boot clad feet against the moist pavement is more enjoyable than had it just been the clomp-clomp-clomp of a teenage stampede. She scurries around things, but it isn't hiding exactly. Its strategy. And she is clever, this wily redhead, his precious commodity. But she falls under his claws, when Scott flings her through the air it's almost as satisfying as blood dampened thump of when she hits the ground.

The Monster gives her just enough time to get up again before leaping onto her and digging teeth in. He didn't want it to be teeth, he hadn't meant to be angry, Scott was not an angry person after all, but he liked the adventure of it and the soft crunchy sensation of sinking into her. After surrendering to the hunger, it became impossible to stop.

When she screamed Scott fell out of bed. He curled into a ball and clutched his head as it continued for a full minute in a voice he would recognize anywhere. Instead of feeling grateful to be woken from another premonition he feared for everyone, but especially for Lydia.

Scott's voice felt raw. Until he actually spoke, and he realized only his dream voice felt raw. He hadn't been growling, he hadn't been hunting in the evening's cold night air, chasing down his friend in the dark. He hadn't been tearing into her skin and swallowing bits of bone that scrapped his esophagus.

"Scott?" Allison sounded tired. He felt guilty for waking her up. He felt worse for the unrest he was about to cause.

"Is Lydia okay? I heard her screaming?" He shook as he asked. He shook worse than when he first heard voice her rip through his skull.

Allison cleared her throat. "mmyeah, why? What's going on?"

He breathed deeply and gripped his knee tightly hoping to still it. "Nothing, I guess. It was a
nightmare."

"A "Nightmare" nightmare?" she sounded more awake.

"Are you sure she's fine?"

"She's fine Scott," she assured over and over again. When she asked if he wanted to talk about it, a blow of tiredness ran through Scott and he couldn't keep himself awake anymore. He didn't think the dream would come back. It wasn't the sort of thing that would reoccur.

"Tomorrow," he promised, and she nodded which was the sort of thing he could actually hear. He hung up.

Allison stared at her cellphone. The night was long, and her tiredness wasn't an act. She wondered if Scott even sensed a blip in her heart rate anymore. Conniving had become such a common practice she'd become numb to guilt.

What bothered her was not being able to call Lydia's cell. She wouldn't blame her for forgetting the iPhone charging in the car to begin with. Cloning the phone gave her busy work while she waited outside Jackson' house. Although she'd only just gotten around to it, the idea had been brewing in her mind for some time, so she had the equipment ready.

She felt guilt having to decide between her duty to stay on task or to leave her stake-out to check on Lydia? Instead Allison took a 3rd option and left the car for closer investigation. The little impression Allison had of Jackson were conflicting at best. His display of concern for Lydia was passive-aggressive.

Weeks earlier, Jackson had driven Allison around to the ER in Fairvale for Lydia's sake, but refused to get out of the car. At the time it was a blessing because Allison didn't want him seeing how she worked her investigative skills to get pass security. Afterward, he seemed equally upset and relieved when Lydia returned to school. The way Lydia described his flip-flopping behavior over the summer months coincided with when there were attacks in the Preserve. But ex-girlfriend centric behavior aside, his frazzled disappearing acts from Lacrosse practice were suspicious. It wasn't much to go on, but it was enough to pique her interest.

Investigating solo was a dangerous route; if Jackson was a Werewolf, an aggressive one at that and he discovered her snooping he might attack at any moment. But she wanted to get out of there, the sooner the better. She missed her partner, Bennet. She missed her real partner, Scott. But her instincts told her this hunch couldn't ignored and it paid out.

The broken trashcans in Jackson's driveway presented the unmistakable detail of claw marks.

While he stood underneath the rhythmic pressure of the hot shower water blasting away at his
topmost layer of skin, there was little Jackson sensed or understood. It was safe to say he hadn't sensed being observed. It took away with it mud, grit, blood and guilt. Guilt for something he couldn't even remember. His hands moved slow over his body, from his neck, over his collar, across his breast plate and hugging his arm close he bowed his head up the fall of water.

If he remembered nothing, if he could force himself to wash away the present tense too than he had no need to question whose blood still clung under his fingernails. He could tell himself it is just the shower water, it's just nothing but the faucet valves open on full and the colors going down the drain were the same the always were when training got away from him.

Not that anything really got away from him.

Chapter End Notes

CREDITS/ROLL CALL:

Argents - Team1; headed by Victoria, Chris & Allison.
• Rumy - [Sergeant] specialized in Recon; Special Forces and espionage. Chris' right hand man and Allison's godfather.
• Axel - [1st Lieutenant] expert tracker, marksman and Allison's 2nd cousin.
• Bennett - [Field Officer] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old and friend to Allison.

Hale (Present Day) Pack; Alpha
• Derek - [?] In a very precarious position.

? Other:?  
• Isaac - [Omega] abandoned Werewolf in search of a pack.

Twins' Pack; Aiden and Ethan Carver Alphas
• Marta - [Beta] she's an older motor head and their 1st Lieutenant.
• Bridy - [Beta] the packs' spy because she's diminutive and easily underestimated.
• Gus - [Beta] referred to as psychotic now and again, but his very few (and dwindling) close friends' are his touchstone.
• (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, bi and partnered to Naylor, formerly to Bozeman.
• (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
• (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
• (deceased) Coot - [Omega] former Beta, killed by the Monster.

Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha
• (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed 1st Lieutenant, possibly romantically entangled.
• Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali and closely bonded to Huntington.
• Santos - [Beta] while loyal to Kali has mentored many, without regard to packs. He helped the Twins first learn to shift together without losing their identities.
• Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed and with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
• Levi - [Beta] he's neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
• Huntington - [Beta] has strong empathic senses, is very good friends with Gus' from
Twins' pack and Lark.

Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha

• Dr. Kane - [Beta] both a medical Doctor and their torturer.
• Quint - [Beta] eager to please teen and Dr. Kane's biological son.
were (you) hurt

Chapter Summary

The werewolves throughout Beacon Hills start to track violent and strange behaviors while new Hunters continue to occupy the town. Meanwhile "Dead Week" sets in; Students in BHHS are tense with pre-midterms jitters but Isaac and Scott are especially on edge when a Lacrosse game spins out of control, and mayhem breaks out both in the fields and on the stands.

• Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/04-were-you-hurt

Chapter Notes

Previously on were (you);

Mild-mannered Scott McCall turned Werewolf finds support and guidance to control his untamed rage from an unlikely source.

Isaac Lahey made a temporary peace with Scott using the guidance of his Werewolf upbringing without the admission of his nature. His true identity growing closer to the surface, how much longer can he keep it a secret?

Lydia Martin's effects of the Bite culminate in mental collapse and nightmare visions spilling over into real life physical consequences.

Another prophetic dream of the Monster brutally murdering an innocent mentally links Scott to Lydia, only to be awoken by screams carried over a half mile away.

Allison Argent's private investigation of AGRO classmate Jackson Whittemore turned up evidence he's a potential Beta Werewolf. The cost of that information meant willfully deserting her loved ones just as they needed her.

Beacon Hills continues to draw the Supernatural, hosting at least four werewolf Packs under the leadership of the Alphas known as Aiden and Ethan (The Twins), Kali and Ennis. More to come.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Track 01 - This Is What Makes Us Girls (Parkinson Remix) by Lana Del Ray

{Sunday, pre-dawn}

"Will you be checking out?" the woman rasped, her voice sounded like she gargled with razor blades.

With barely one foot in the main office it was hardly customary to infer, the guest reminded as much.

"But you are leaving?"
"Your tedious establishment? It seems so," the curl of her mouth as she enunciated seemed more the insult than the words. She tilted her head to the side and gazed from the front desk toward the parking lot. She twiddled two room keys in her hand and the shine from her ring flickered.

"We could use the rooms, we've got a whole bunch of guests coming in," the Manager croaked, she referred to the vehicles queued up beneath a stairwell.

"I can see that," she turned to face the manager once more. She snapped back the keys and didn't exactly grin. Like a lion's man, her dark hair flowed as she straightened up, her expression looked nearly as predatory. "My companion, when did she collect her personal effects?"

"The stuff she had us put in the safe? They're still in the safe."

"Hah," she had no humor in her laugh, "I'm afraid I'll have to collect those than, shall I."

The manager shrugged, turned around and went through a narrow door.

Meanwhile she took full advantage of the little time and space afforded; the scissors she would reach through the hole in the plastic divide and she would use the belt buck from her trench coat as a flathead wedge. The cheap lock that protected the purveyors from conventional thieves and robbers would pop open easily, her buckle slid at the top of the lock, the scissors provided leverage against it and with very little pressure it popped apart. The proprietors would never know.

Beneath the desk the manager kept an intake pile of guests, photos copies of state ID's and credit cards, license plates or passports. She connected the 3 closed doors, the newly occupied rooms, to the 5 vehicles beneath the stairwell and snatched up all the associated paperwork. She returned the scissors to their place, folded the papers deep into her coat pockets, snatched up a cigarette from the table before she buckled close her bone colored trench and snapped the office door behind her.

"I didn't think it would be very difficult, the act of retrieving a singular item," she had the audacity to knock on the window to hurry management along.

The manager shuffled in backward, she carried a valise by its handle but gripped it with both hands to keep upright.

"Well, I'd like to see you rush along carrying a ton."

"Yes, I suppose that's why I asked for it," she played with the cigarette between her fingers. Happy to be rid of it the manager hadn't asked for identification when handing over the parcel. And to make a point, she did indeed pick it up quite easily despite its weight and glided out into the dewy morning mist.

After a moments' process the Manager hurried after her.

"You forgot to hand in the keys," she wheezed, out of breath but probably not from running.

"Ah," she made a flicking gesture to demand the manager offer her a light. She did. Of course, the Manager followed in suit and started to smoke a cigarette of her own.

"I've decided against it," the woman breathed out. The metal valise draped easily in her hand but the paper in her pocket weighed heavier still. "You have my partner's card on record; that should be sufficient. Hell, why don't you make it a monthly fee."

"Really?" the Manager choked just a little.
"Darling, I'd say yearly and give your pudgy little self a Holiday bonus. Presently, this will have to suffice," she drew on the cigarette silently after that. The Manager stood beside awkwardly thanked her and waited for some sort of human interaction to continue. It wouldn't.

After finishing her drawn out cigarette, she flicked the butt in an over-arch and raised a brow toward the manager as a means of goodbye.

The time spent during the smoke break she'd noted; from the license plate the sedan belonged to a Doctor, which was likely shared with a younger family member by the amount and variety of the take-out wrappers. A woman, Eurasian and in her early-40's, hastened between the three rooms with equal parts authority and urgency, her harried disposition the tell-tale signs of a second in command. Alpha withstanding, it brought the pack number to six.

The paperwork laid out on the bed gave her their names; in the center room guarded on both sides was the Alpha's going by the 'Ennis'. She didn't catch sight of him but she didn't have to too catch wind of his reputation. His second in command, the smallish woman zipping back and forth whipping the troops into shape, rented the connecting room under the name 'Herveaux'. That was an old familiar name, even older than Ennis' name. The third room on the opposite side of Ennis' door was rented under the moniker Mr. Kane MD. The MD seemed prevalent to his listing as well as his parking space. It seemed they awaited their unaccounted for. But after one appeared, in a torn and bloody mess, despite the good Doctor rushing to mend the big fellow, Herveaux went back to watching the line expecting their missing more.

It added up to the pop of a latch, the valise emptied and the high powered rifle snapped together in the speed record her Hunter friends were envious of. What a disaster, a pack of Werewolves and one Hunter armed with one gun.

Granted it was her leader Kate's favorite high-powered rifle but she wasn't Kate Argent and this wasn't a shooting range.

Livy set the 'Do Not Disturb' sign on the door, dragged the desk toward the window, set the riffle on it and lined up a shot across the parking lot. After she shifted off her coat, she climbed onto the bed and lay on the paperwork. Propped against the starchy pillows, tiered white dress artfully draped, with her heeled shoes kept on and her weapon at the ready she looked every part the sophisticate while she flipped back and forth between the Motels spectacular viewing options spanning cartoons to pornography, on mute.

Track 02 - So Here We Are by Bloc Party

{Sunday; Dawn}

The porch of the McCall' home creaked in all of the same places. Lydia couldn't recall them creaking, she only remembered the sound they made thundering underfoot when they had raced. The slight creak vying against the notes of Song Thrush and Lydia wondered the merits of staying still to feel less at war with events. Not very.

The front door swung open before she knocked, Scott stood in checked boxers, a black tank top, a wet crown of hair and his usual baffled expression. She had practiced what to say but nothing came to mind. He suddenly squinted as though her unannounced appearance weren't enough of a disturbance. Having literally smelled blood in the air, he zeroed in on the offence and glanced
down at her gloved hands.

"Do you want to come in?"

"My Mom's waiting in the car," she tilted her head over her shoulder, as though she needed to provide proof. Scott glanced over and gave a wave. When he looked back to her, Lydia remained focused on her tall boots as she asked, "Is your Mom home? I need a favor."

Instead of following this up with the slew of questions he surely had, he encouraged her with a brief nod. After waving goodbye to her Mother in the car, Lydia Martin walked into the McCall's home for the first time in 6 years.

Melissa McCall inspected her hand as best she could, disinfected it with a numbing cream and wrapped it up. She kissed Lydia on the cheek and told her how sorry she was these had to be the circumstances under which she got to see Lydia but she was happy to see her nonetheless. She had grown to be so beautiful and Melissa was so glad to hear she and Scott were hanging out again, although in the future maybe with a little less fighting.

"Sure, Mrs. McCall. I promise, no more chances of that," Lydia smiled the tight smile that meant 'sure, whatever you say'.

Then Lydia explained something close to the truth; she had been taking pills because of problems sleeping and recently started sleep walking. She figured stress from mid-terms is definitely an attribute and yes, she promised to go to see a proper doctor afterward but couldn't abide missing another school obligation. She assured Melissa she had her Mom's permission, "she's in the car outside if you want to check".

Mrs. McCall went to go speak to Mrs. Martin outside of the house, not only to give assurances but to give instructions which left Scott and Lydia together, alone.

The room smelled the same from long ago; of polish embedded wood, potpourri and something so distinct to the McCall's as to be nameless. Lydia shifted to the edge of the sofa, her eyes thoughtful while she gnawed on her lip. After a few minutes Scott braved the travel and walked from the kitchen to her side. Hastily put together with hi-tops, jeans and his favorite red hood, he presented himself on the edge of the end table across from her. He wondered if her nightmares were as bad as his, he wondered if her nightmares were the same as his, he wondered if he was a nightmare to her. Instead of asking he said nothing and stared at his hands on his knees, gripping to keep them still while he remembered what they were and weren't capable of and heard Allison's voice inside of his head.

Lydia's eyes were on him when he looked up again. As if reading his mind, she shook off his gesture to reach for her hand and take any of her pain away.

"I'm fine," Lydia reassured him and curled her bandaged hand in her lap.

"I'm sorry your 'Girl's Night' got cut short but I'm glad my Mom could help you out."

For the first time during the whole evening Lydia looked pained, 'more white lies' she thought.

"Do you want to get out of here?" he asked already leading the way outback through the kitchen.
"Yes," she was quick to reply, and for the first time during the whole night Lydia looked relieved.

Before moving Lydia glanced over her shoulder to check and see if their Mothers would catch them sneaking out of the house together. They went quickly through the kitchen door and Lydia realized she didn't remember the sound of creaking floorboards. The creaks went unheard to her younger self's ear because she either ran through the home or she tip-toed, but nowhere in-between.

...They slipped behind bushes in his yard which led onto a dirt path that drew between many of the neighboring homes across their ignored secret pathways. Although equally haunted, neither mentioned their nightmare.

"If we're going to keep being thrown together," she said carefully. Lydia remembered clearly where it was they had let off; with her freezing over and nerves seizing up without her control. All while his eyes turned toxic yellow, his features turning gaunt. As strangeness shared between them she had cut out on him, abandoning him to the Chem Lab. Instead of running away she invaded his space and pulled back his hoodie. He shook the cold off his still dampened hair and blinked owlishly at her.

"We need to agree to terms. Scott?" she vied for his attention, it didn't make him less nervous. Scott twitched between trying to smile, staring at his feet, stealing glances at trees and watching her full on.

When Lydia turned up on his doorstep bloodied but thankfully un-murdered, he had been grateful until she involved his Mom. Then he questioned having wanted Lydia to ever speak to him again. In that moment both Scott and Lydia knew what the apex of their kinship was. They were vulnerable toward each other.

"Even your Mom says, you jumped someone, because of me?" Lydia was determined to clear the air between them respectively.

"I didn't think Isaac should be around you..." Scott didn't finish the sentence, not just because his opinion had slowly changed but because he knew his statement was a pretty foolish one.

Lydia scoffed "Well, I don't think you should be around Allison. You're just not good enough."

Scott eyes narrowed. They did not color and he wondered if Lydia had deliberately tried to get a rise out of him, "what's that supposed to mean?"

"Don't be remedial?" Lydia muttered and titled her head, "Do I have to spell it out?"

"I might be doing a poor job of making things better. But I'm trying to do things better. You keep stonewalling me."

"Are you kidding me? You need get over it."

"I can't just stop caring," Scott seemed both miserable and proud to admit it. He didn't try to listen to her heart rate although he could have. He looked over her face and imposed the girl from years ago on this face, not exactly a stranger's face but a stranger face. He struggled to admit it, the helplessness of it, "Like I can't stop caring about you."

She shook her head, closed her eyes and sighed obscuring a half smile.

"What's going on with you Lydia?" he ducked into her view and forced her to face him, "What
happened on your trip with your Dad? Your Mom said you disappeared?"

"I don't know," Lydia tossed her hands up in a gesture of frustration.

"Don't" he pleaded. Scott rubbed his hand over his face, "you know what I'm talking about--"

"I mean I don't know," Lydia groaned low but sincerely, "There is a week of my life I have no idea what happened." As she paced, despite the bandage wrap she wrung her hands, "I was with my Dad at the stupid Lake House and a week later I'm found wandering the edge of town, monstrous gashes in my side..." her hand trembled when it went to her hip. Not from pain but from the memory of it.

"Lydia?" he reached out and steadied her hand before he thought better of it. She didn't flinch. Stripped of ambiguities, Scott became overwhelmed by the idea of someone like him. It was one thing to suspect it of Lydia. But flesh and bone. Literal. When he realized he had a crossed a line, he looked to Lydia for a sign of what next. More fighting? Yelling? He deserved both. Instead she studied him, her eyes wide almost fearful but he smelled no fear on her.

"It isn't like yours was, Scott," She finally said. She didn't push his hand away but she had snatched something from him. She acknowledged his supernatural claims but she would still cut off his claim of kinship. "I'm not healing. I'm not. I'm not anything."

"You're Lydia Martin," he reminded, his dimple shown when he smirked. With pride his voice warmed and with his free hand he touched her face to continue "You're a survivor. You're amazing."

"Stop it, Scott," she caught his hand. She kept her tone firm but not her grip and her eyes looked foreign. Not foreign, they looked kind. "I'm not trying to remember that week or walk down memory lane with you." she slowly brought his hand away from her face and held it, his palm felt cool against hers and comfortable against the night's breeze. For a little while she would not let go. Growing up, Scott had been the one to lead in tag-races, to help everyone through monkey bars and to lift anyone up from where they had fallen on the playground. Lydia remembered quite clearly when Scott would clasp hands it was better and braver than holding onto an adult's, back then anyway.

"Our best friend didn't survive," she held tight to his hand, even when he flinched, "I didn't, I'm an anomaly." She squeezed, not hard but for emphasis, "and you didn't, you've become a monster with a hero complex." She let him go and gestured to the darkness around them, "This place is a literal Beacon for the bizarre and maybe we're not all meant to survive-- I didn't mean it like that, I just meant; leave me out of it Scott. Please." Lydia's her voice went raspy and Scott? Scott found he had no voice at all.

"I feel like you should be doing something sinister like smoking a cigarette or twirling a mustache."

Scott continued on the dirt path behind the neighbor's properties before coming back onto the main street. Sure he wanted a jog. Sure he wanted to clear his head. Sure he didn't want to have to confront his Mom before the sun even fully rose but even before that thought he had to deal with
Isaac.

It seemed the moment the name entered his mind Isaac appeared outside of his peripheries. He didn't want to fight him, he had in fact begun to like him more and more but things were getting inexplicably complicated.

With Lydia's confirmation; she had been attacked, she had been bitten but unlike what he had sensed off others lately she had been honest about where she stood. Yes, like everything else she was shrouded in mystery and misunderstanding, even in her hostility but at least she was honest.

Isaac however; "I thought maybe a shroud."

The fell into step beside one another. Isaac responded in a joke that wasn't that funny but it was the best that came to mind, aside from an all out inquest.

When they reached a fork in the road that would have led them closer or further to Scott's home they stopped. The lights of Mrs. Martin's car receding went along the street opposite while Scott's Mom waved them off from the curbside.

"Is she okay?" asked Isaac.

Scott nodded.

"I heard her scream," Isaac continued and colored by the admission.

Scott remembered the dream and falling out of bed. He remembered that urgency to run to Lydia and how he had called Allison instead. He pitied Isaac his state.

"I did too," Scott figured what the hell.

Whether by the statement itself or the honesty of it, either way Isaac looked taken aback. He stared long after the car disappeared and then started to pace. He clenched and unclenched his fist when he tried to remain still, and would abandon the effort of stillness to pace once more.

"I have no clue what's happening?"

"I never have a clue what's happening," Scott sagged against a tree.

"Allison told me Lydia was having nightmares. Are they something like night terrors?"

Scott shrugged haplessly. Isaac continued pacing.

"What about when this happens again?"

"If I could figure out how to stop it I would but she doesn't want me anywhere near her."

Isaac stopped, "are you saying you could ignore that?"

"Of course not," Scott sniffed at that. He had a second realization "How did everyone else ignore it?"

Ah. Isaac slowly stepped forward, head shifted to the side to observe how Scott would take it "Because only we heard it."

Just a nod. After a pause "if she doesn't want me to come near her," another pause, "then you can."
"I will," Isaac hoped he could live up to a promise that felt weightier than just words "but we can't protect her from what is inside of her head."

"I guess not. Figuring out the truth of what's going on with her" Scott stood and dusted himself. "It's the only option right, Isaac. Once you truly know, than you can better accept where you are you don't have to worry about losing control so much. Even if you do, right?"

Isaac started to smile until he swore he could have caught Scott's eyes glow yellow as he nodded his head to say goodbye.

Track 04 - Go Outside by Cults

After the many times of late Mrs. Martin had begun to feel neglectful of Lydia, it was easy to feel overwhelmed with every increasing extenuating circumstance. All the textbooks said to try to keep her daughter as regulated as possible to diffuse any long standing trauma. But it felt like every step of the way was a misstep. Instead every impulse she had was to hug her daughter close and to never leave her home.

Trying to stay on track she tied her hair back and dressed in her running clothes. She didn't have the heart to queue up her usual running playlist on her iPhone for fear of missing an emergency call. She paused at her bedroom door and her hand hovered over the doorknob as she reevaluated the merits of staying versus going. All that came of it were shaky nerves from keeping one pose for too long. When she came through the foyer and called to her daughter to say goodbye for now, instead she found Lydia at the foot of the front stairwell strapping on a pair of shape-up trainers.

Lydia grinned to see the surprise on her Mom's face. She stood and presented the whole ensemble, from sports bra to wind resistant running tights. When her Sunday cram-sessions were brought up Lydia waved it away as one would a fly.

"Screw it! Let's go for a run together."

They didn't mention how her hand was taped up like that of a boxer's since it practically fit the outfit.

Mrs. Martin placed her phone on the table by the front door and they headed out for the regular Sunday 5 mile run.

Track 05 - The Calling by TJ Stafford and Caitlin Parrott

As a Hunter Rumy's distinct specialty was invisibility.

When Deputy Haige gave account of the long list of reasons why Fairvale is responsible for their back log of unsolved cases; they commiserated over regrettable choices in youth that lead them to choosing law enforcement.

When Deputy Graeme turned up early for their shift and stayed longer they commiserated over
growing up as over achievers.

When Deputy Cordova grilled him about professional experience, Rumy brought up Argent Arms Intl. then they compared alterations to their glocks for hours.

But when Deputy Parrish asked "what's that accent I hear?" Rumy hesitated.

"When I served in Afghanistan," Parrish explained, "I picked up an ear for accents."

Rumy's smile held no mirth, "from the North."

"It's not Irish exactly," he cocked an eyebrow, his interest double by Rumy's vagary.

"Romani," Rumy winked. He was so used to gaining other people's confidence he knew all the earmarks. "I inherited it from my mother but I only found real family in the service."

It hadn't dissuaded Parrish, "Where did you serve?"

"Serbia, Iraq, Afghanistan, maybe a half-dozen other warzones before I realized the private sector was for me. You?"

"2 year tour," vagary returned with a smirk, but a bit of Parrish's history read on his face.

Four Deputies in and not one had chipped at Rumy's façade. No one questioned his extended ride-alongs and the virtually 24-hour shifts. Only to have sniffed out the ancient rise and fall of tone rubbed out over a million rounds of whiskey with Christopher Argent discussing the stratagem of monsters. As they say, the devils in the details.

"And the private sector landed you here? I guess we're lucky you can apply your experience to Rural Californian Counties," Parrish climbed into the driver's seat of the police cruiser.

"It's not very different." Rumy preferred to listen rather than to talk but as a Hunter his code sat too close to the surface, "People are people. Whatever background, we protect those who needs protecting."

Parrish paused before he turned the car on and considered the statement. His brows went up mildly and he gave it a nod as if he officially approved. From that moment on Rumy knew Deputy Parrish would be problematic. He considered swapping out assignments with Tyhurst, possibly eating maybe even doing that sleeping thing.

Instead Rumy chanced a ride-along with Parrish; Since the "Tip Hotline" had been provided to the town for clues about the dead bodies the Sheriff's department had been kept very busy. Mostly with lots of prank calls.

Lastly for their shift was a noise complaint over by Echo Lane, which brought some sort of interest from Parrish. He explained to Rumy the upper crust moved out of the city and toward the woods, building their property into roads yet to be marked. Echo Lane was one such place; "Lane" was a glorified description for a trail leading out into wooded acreage and home was a polite way of describing "Modest Estate".

A noise complaint from a resident that was several miles away from any living soul was note worthy, although likely another prank worth looking into.
Deputy Parrish was on point about the property. Although 10 minutes from the town center it felt like country onto itself. Even unfinished its nearness to a river brought it grandeur that may as well have been a moat with the way it cut through the lush green. The wood paneled house wasn't vast but it had character with its looping porch and shapely windows presenting different ports climbing all three floors.

A man named Søren opened the door as if he had expected them. Deputy Parrish asked about the noise and Søren didn't act surprised or curious, but he offered access to the grounds if they thought anything untoward.

'Now there is an accent' Rumy thought to himself.

The diversity of the cast within caught his attention. It caught Parrish's attention as well and he asked if they were lodgers.

"No," Søren said with pride, "we have a rather varied kinship amongst our family." He insisted on getting his father.

Parrish gave Rumy a look, their predicament had turned untenable. They were outnumbered and out of range to call for back up. Parrish reminded him the people who lived in the outskirts were a peculiar brood in general and cloistering themselves wasn't out of the norm.

No, no it wasn't. Werewolves Packs often kept themselves under the same roof. Rumy wore glasses with telephoto lenses. Often but not always because they gave him headaches. But more than that, they made the eyes of Werewolves shine.

Rumy said little while Parrish talked to the "Father" whom he understood very easily to be the pack’s Alpha. When he introduced himself as Deucalion, no last name, Rumy shook his hand firmly and studied his face. He looked kind enough. He introduced his partner, a small curly-haired woman named Jonsen; Parrish asked if the elongated scar along her extending from collar bone had been from a heart surgery. She didn't miss a beat when she answered 'yes' but she looked at Rumy when she answered. Rumy complimented them on their home, asked them how long they've lived there.

"Not long," Deucalion answered and the curve at the edge of his lip offered a taunt to continue.

Rumy was a gambling man, "what brought you guys around these parts?"

"Just looking to catch up with some family?" his tone implied that this should have been common knowledge.

Deputy Parrish may not have been part of their smoke and mirrors game but he could play along.

"This place is pretty far out of the way," he glanced through the rooms around, "guess your family has some pretty big needs. All, what, 6 maybe 7 of you?"

"6."

Parrish smirked, "you might want to watch your noise level or invest in sound proofing for all, 6 was it?"

"Yes," Deucalion tilted his head toward Parrish, his attention diverted. Jonsen's brows went up minutely.

"Neighbors around here, they like to talk," Parrish gave a nod as a send-off and with a smile added,
"Who knows what they'll say about you next time the Sheriff's department gets a call."

Rumy decided two things right then and there. 1) He liked Parrish. 2) He needed to keep that guy around and safe from himself.

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An awkward quiet car ride off the property left an air of distress. Rumy wanted to get to the Argent's home and report what he had observed. He wanted to investigate further but knew the Deucalion property was virtually inapproachable. Deputy Parrish was good enough to have gotten a head count but there was more to acknowledging a new Packs presence aside from the 'how many' and 'where' and 'why'. A meeting needed to happen to theorize the 'what are they' and the 'when will they' but Rumy was stuck on Sheriff detail--

"I'm pretty sure we're being followed. No, flagged down." Deputy Parrish stated tearing Rumy away from his musing.

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Track 06 - Light Of Some Kind by Ani DiFranco

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A familiar Dolphin Grey Mazda made a rather broad U-turn from the wrong lane across the double yellow to drive alongside their Crown Vic. Rumy bit down on a scoff,

"That's my god-daughter," he said resignedly.

Deputy Parrish gave him a sympathetic glance and pulled the police cruiser over into the bend.

Had Allison been in a more stable rested state of mind, she might have thought better than to make an illegal maneuver to catch up with an Official Sheriff's Department vehicle.

The sight of Rumy in a police car brought more questions after a night chock' full of speculation. Allison left her car running when she hurried along the passenger side, while the Deputy and Rumy shared a look of concern.

"You finished the shift so effortlessly, it was like you weren't even here," Parrish said, while he examined the dashboard intently. Rumy smirked and left the car, he really didn't like that he liked that guy.

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"What's going on?" she rushed up to meet him.

Allison's face read exhaustion but mostly confusion, meanwhile Rumy, the gentleman vagabond, looked expertly harried, he tended to sport a 5 o'clock shadow even freshly shaven.

"I was about to ask you the same thing," he pet her head kindly. Rumy was a smallish man and with their nearness in height the awkward gesture endeared them. "Allison, what are you doing here?"

It wasn't surprising when Rumy appeared across the road on her way back from Jackson's. He had an uncanny tendency to turn up in times of trouble. He held her shoulder and guided her gently back toward her sedan. She sighed deeply but it unleashed a shudder that started a tremble which
he didn't need to remove his glasses to notice. He took them off regardless.

"You were patrolling?" She shuffled along. The ache to confess her suspicions Jackson Whittemore being a Beta Werewolf weighed heavily on her. But her craving Rumy's comfort outweighed reason.

"You knew that Allison. We're on rotation with the Sheriff's department," Rumy gave her arm a firm squeeze before letting go.

"No! Wait," she blamed fatigue while she furiously wiped her tear moistened cheeks. "Was there a report of a teenage girl murdered or injured maybe?"

Without his glasses, Rumy's grey eyes were brighter and far more penetrating; All the better for interrogation. "Allison is this speculation or do you know something's happened?"

Disoriented, she pressed her hand to her mouth and her brows pinched together as she examined the road, as if the truth lay just out of sight.

"Get in, you can tell me about it on the drive," he insisted. When met with the panic on her face he retracted slightly, "or you can just hint vaguely and I can guess, but you've got to tell me what you're doing skulking around this far away from home this early in the morning."

Allison slumped into the passenger seat without further hesitation. The 10 minute drive home turned to 30 after a detour for breakfast. Rumy didn't press with questions but he bribed with hot chocolate and Nutella covered pastries.

"I have a friend, she just gets into trouble."

"Does that account for the surveillance gear," he tilted his head toward the back seats. Rumy observed but didn't judge as Allison hadn't cleared away evidence of last night's surveillance antics.

They gave each other the same restrained nod over the lip of their take-out cups. A mirrored expression Allison had subconsciously picked up from Rumy over shared years. He winked at her afterward and she gave him her trademarked dimpled grin.

"Allison, are you being safe?"

"Yes, I'm just worried about my friend," she shared a roundabout version of the truth.

"How can I help?"

"I saw you with the police. I don't know what I assumed you would know."

Rumy stretched in the driver's seat for a long moment, stared at the ceiling and then turned the car back on.

"What? What is it? Uncle Rumy, what do you know," she rarely used the term Uncle. Always in private and only when she really wanted her way.

"We can go check on your friend if it'll make you feel better. On the way I will tell you something I do know, but after that we're going straight home and calling a family meeting."

Allison typed Lydia's address into the GPS, sat upright, slurped down the rest of her Hot Chocolate and felt instinctively more awake. The world felt infinitely better to have someone supportive at your back.
For the better part of an hour Allison paced outside of the empty home and Rumy waited beside her without complaint.

"Allison, we can check again later. Just because there isn't an answer right now isn't confirmation that anything is wrong." Rumy reminded.

Allison nodded in agreement. Her mind knew it to be the truth but she hated that she had broken a promise. Twice; she denied taking Scott's premonition seriously and she hadn't protected Lydia after swearing she would.

Before driving home she insisted on repacking the car. She clutched Lydia's phone as a safety net, connecting her to the choices she made, commitments to the path she laid out. It was the last thing she packed away.

"Are you going to ask me not to tell anyone about our detour?" asked Rumy as he pulled into the Argent home.

"Are you going to tell me about what you learned from your time with your new friend, 'The Deputy'?" Allison even used air quotes.

"In the family meeting," he yawned, "after a shower-shit-and-shave."

"Maybe a nap?" Allison chuckled.

"Maybe a nap," Rumy conceded, caught up in a second yawn. Once more he looked her over with those grey analytical eyes. Since he practiced leading by example, "Allison, even if it's important, it'll keep."

When he tucked and errant strand of hair behind her ear an expression of relief flickered across her face. A burden shared is a burden shifted.

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Track 07 - What Do You Go Home To by Explosions In The Sky

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The county was full up with people pulling double and triple shifts, if you counted off duty.

At home Sheriff Stilinski had a corkboard set up in his kitchen. Along with the 8x10 color glossy crime-scene photos were pinned a half dozen maps, some dated, some newer, as well as a few topographical ones of different places throughout Southern California. There were endless observational notes, some in his own hand and those of every noted expert who would speak with him over the past 6 years.

Parrish joined him after the end of his shift and he brought along healthy take-out he referred to as "Brain-Food" and some not-so healthy additions, such as a half-gallon carton of black coffee from Dunkin Donuts. It was at that point the Sheriff shared with him the location of the spare key above the door frame by the back porch, adjacent to the garage.

"The colored string?" Parrish asked about. "Red means unsolved, right?"

"Yeah," the Sheriff responded without looking up, his cheeks full of munchkins.
Parrish took in the board fully and after a moment added, "there sure is a lot of red up there."

"Yeah," the Sheriff snapped casting a warning look over his shoulder, "I've noticed that."

The best he could do to afford an apology was to get to work. There were few yellow strings on the board but one stood out to Parrish. It connected a photo of a Lake House to an old folded, hand noted road map. Near it, yellow string connected the route map the murdered couple had used.

"What's the connecting factor here?"

Sheriff Stilinski looked over and followed the line of sight, "our couple was attacked going north, connecting to scenic 101 via Fairvale. Claudia--" his voice was a practiced steady at saying his wife's name "--had just cut through Fairvale onto the 101, taking the scenic route to our friend's Lake House when the car went over a very scenic Cliffside."

"You can't triangulate a hypothesis with only two examples. It can just be coincidences."

"Exactly," grinning, the Sheriff turned toward the table and retrieved a medical file. He pulled out a page of unimpressive data and pinned it to the board. "About 2 weeks ago a Jane Doe turned up at the Fairvale General Hospital's ER, malnourished, hypothermic and with what looked like the animal claws across her abdomen. Only it had too many digits."

Parrish looked through the medical report, as well as some newly added notes. "It looks like the vet confirmed they aren't just similar, they are identical to the ones from our double-murder."

In step to the Sheriff, Parrish pinned the report to the board and kept the train of thought going. This helped solidify a timeline but the Medical report was inconclusive.

"What happened to the girl?"

The Sheriff sat at the table and examined the board, his eyes went unfocused as though he took in some great expanse of landscape but it was too much to process at once. He sighed and took a long sip of coffee.

"She vanished. Like she got up and walked right out."

Parrish took a closer look at the report as if she would appear in the ink. "Vanished? From an ER where it looks like she was being treated for some severe injuries?"

"She had to have help getting out."

"So, there was a third victim."

"No, there is a survivor," the Sheriff corrected.

"Are we looking for her?" Parrish dropped onto the chair opposite. He grabbed his mug from the night before from where he had left it on the table and barely winced at pungent additive it gave this new serving of coffee.

"With what man power?"

"I think we can figure something out," Parrish dared another sip and reanalyzed the board. "If going north got them attacked, logic dictates she backtracked to Beacon Hills."

"You think she would have run back to Beacon Hills?" while the Sheriff had shot down the Deputy's suggestion his mind still toyed the prospect.
"I think it's worth speculating. She was picked up on the road here," he went over and pushed a pin into the roadmap above the medical report.

The Sheriff moved to stand beside him and wrapped a yellow string connecting it to the Route 101 map. "That makes three. 1's an incident, 2's a coincidence and 3's a..."

"3 is actually 2." Parrish made a gesture with his hand as if asking to touch the cork board. The Sheriff stepped back with a sweeping gesture as if to say 'show me'. Parrish pushed on, "The Jane Doe turned up in the ER around New Years Day." He rearranged the sequence on the board, "Ms. Pelt and her friend from Texas turn up a week later. That makes our survivor 2nd and shows the attacks are getting closer to Beacon Hills."

The Sheriff tilted his head and watched the facts aligned. Aside from the 6 year gap, it read as a text book, the attacks were nearing Beacon Hills central. His city. Even if he couldn't solve the why or who, he had a duty, no, the goddamn paternal instinct to protect his city from this threat.

After a long moment of staring at the board the Sheriff stepped forward and started to remove information from it.

"What's going on?" Parrish caught items before they hit the kitchen floor.

"I'm looking at this wrong, we need to stop following the attacks and start following the road," the Sheriff explained. The photo of the Lake House remained untouched only beside it he pinned a photo of his wife, their son and birthday cake with the number 10 on it. "That's how we're going to get ahead of it find out what it is, why it's here and how to end it."

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Track 08 - Ready To Start by Arcade Fire

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{Monday Morning}

"Welcome to dead week," Lydia grinned.

"You don't have to enjoy this so much," Isaac cocked an eyebrow watching Lydia practically saunter along.

"What? Can't you smell the fear in the air?" she lifted her hands in a gesture a hand model would use to display the newest line of accessories. Isaac hesitated, Lydia shrugged a shoulder and turned back to walk her pathway amongst the fretful. "All those quaking in their boots of the on-coming Mid-Term storm."

"Right," Isaac closed his locker, relieved for the clarity of her statement, "that."

Unburdened, Lydia carried on as if her bandaged hand carried no suspicion. Isaac opened his mouth several times to ask but when she snapped at him to get out with it already, he tucked his hands into the pockets of his cardigan and asked how her weekend was.

"Perfect," her heart rate didn't waver with a lie, "I spent time with my Mom. Undisturbed. No boys, no calls."

"I did try to call," he confessed, his concern after Saturdays' cancelled guilt-date.
"I did lose my phone," she replied, then stopped short outside of her classroom. She watched the twitchy nature of her classmates rushing into Mr. Harris' class, her amusement on full display.

"I could walk you to your classes, we could catch up," he offered, realizing too late he came off as desperate.

"I wouldn't," she petted him on the chest and sent him along.

The second bell rang, it warned Isaac he would be not only marked late for Ecology but during Dead Week where there would be three times as much work with half as much time and the reward would be the weeks' worth of midterms to follow. He wasn't sure which was worse that, or realizing how much harder it would be to take care of Lydia now that he cared for Lydia.

Scott was certain he would fail Human Anatomy. Even when Allison wasn't the center of his attention she still occupied his thoughts. The sound of her heart's rate, the smell of her anxiety kept him from remembering how to sign his name for the first third of the period. By the time he managed the practice test they were collecting the first sheets and starting on the next. Mr. Helisek wasn't likely to excuse him because he felt extra sensitive over his girlfriend feeling sensitive, but man would he win all the boyfriend awards if that were a thing.

Barely through the doorframe after the bell-rang, Allison recognized the sight of his worn striped hoodie through the throng of students, reached for it and Scott reached back to pull her against him. They held onto one another and ran into a corner between lockers.

"I had a family thing yesterday," she rushed through an explanation, "I couldn't call. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry."

"Everything is going to be okay," he cupped her face and kissed her forehead, she eased at his touch.

"I promised to call, I couldn't even check in with Lydia--"

"It's fine. She checked in with me."

Her breath caught for a moment in equal parts relief and surprise, she searched his face and found the only confirmations she needed was the comfort of his half smile.

"Yesterday," he nodded. Somebody passing wooted for them to get a room. The first bell rang to warn for them to get to Homeroom. He placed a kiss at her temple and ushered her beside him.

After a moment the world caught up with her. She slipped into the desk in front of him, stretched back toward him and whispered "why would she go to you?"

Scott shrugged but she sensed he wasn't being wholly truthful. Allison rocked back into her seat, gnawed on the edge of her pencil and waited for Ms. Morell to finish roll-call.

"How did she look to you?"

"My Mom patched her up," he leaned across the aisle but couldn't fully face her, she could see he meant to comfort her with another small smile but it ripped a little piece of her conscience away "aside from that, she was her usual charming self."

Allison stopped asking questions after that.
"Let me guess, you have my phone," Lydia popped up behind Allison. Her normally unflappable best-friend jumped a literal inch into the air. When Allison spun to face Lydia, her own hair smacked in her face. Lydia glanced around suspiciously, as if searching for the prank cameras. "What is going on with you?"

"You startled me," Allison laughed it off but her face held the pink of panic.

Lydia evened out the part in her friend's hair, adjusted the collar of her cropped leather jacket and flashed a smile that didn't exactly even out the worry line between her eyebrows. "Better?"

"Much."

"Allison, don't let dead week get to you. I'll help you study, you know that. I will need my notes in my phone though," smirked as she proffered her own hand expectant for Allison to return the iPhone. And there it was, Kinesio blue medical tape slid around her palm.

Their eyes locked after Allison caught herself staring. Lydia shrugged but it bothered her that it bothered Allison. Still, Allison placed the iPhone into her hand as Lydia insisted. The second bell rang in warning.

"You're late," said Lydia.

"I know," said Allison. After a deep breath she gave Lydia a once over. From stylized curls, to sheer high-low dress Lydia had altered specific to her needs paired to her favorite ankle boots and Allison grinned, "You look great."

"I know," said Lydia with a look that read 'of course'.

4th period chemistry had anything but chemistry going for it. There was the discomfort of Lydia and Scott (once again) avoiding one another. Then there was Allison, still feeling anxious and guilt-ridden over withholding from both her best-friend and boy-friend on behalf of secretly observing Jackson and Isaac for tells of Supernatural agendas. Of course there was Jackson's wonderful demeanor as usual, heightened by his proximity to Lydia, multiplied by sharing air with Isaac and Scott (which Allison had begun to put logic toward). And lastly there was Isaac ping-ponging between vying for Scott's attentions or Lydia's.

Mr. Harris lived for this sort of misery.

After their Lunch/Study period Allison had gone from remorseful to infuriated with Scott and Lydia; the most clarification she would get from either of them about their Sunday rendezvous was "sleepwalking through a bad dream and hit a mirror. Not a big deal."

They both confirmed it in such unison Allison would have thought it practiced had it been anyone else. Lydia might lie, but not Scott... although Scott might not know he had lied. But would he use subterfuge? To what end? Or would Scott's dream convinced Lydia her dream had been a dream?

"Don't worry about things so much," Scott suggested in so light hearted a way it blind-sided her.

Allison's head hurt. No, Allison not everything was as complicated as she had made her own story
"But what about you," Lydia asked, "more family business? Anything interesting?" her brow rose, she sensed a lie before Allison opened her mouth.

"Aren't we supposed to be studying?"

Lydia 'hmphed' with a smirk. The bell rang for next period.

Ms. Blake offered up her double-period Lit students to use the second period for study instead. Classes from then out were for the most part either lumped together or each student for themselves, with the exception of electives. The school allowed for any elective classes to provide their periods as opted study periods, with the exception of Lacrosse.

Coach Finstock had a special and inspiring (if inspiring fear counted as inspiring) message to remind the Lacrosse team that their attendance at the game that evening was still mandated if they valued the livelihood of their balls, their children's balls and their lady's lady balls. Although not exactly articulated as such, it was inferred.

Track 09 - Strange Times by The Black Keys

Later while the Coach rallied the team; by some miracle of majesty, Danny's best-friend finally deigned to talk to him. He hadn't been avoiding Jackson since his disappearing act over the weekend. In fact after a dismissive update text-- "I'm fine. prefer solo training. see you Monday" -- Danny had let the whole incident go.

What he preferred not to let go of was the criticism of his personal hygiene.

"Smell? It's Armani," said Danny as eased on his cleats while having the dignity to pretend to mishear his friend. "My cologne, it's Armani."

"Not that," sneered Jackson, his nosed scrunched up like a sewage plant had backed up and exploded up onto a shipment of rotten eggs on the hottest day of a heat wave, "you smell like you're hanging with an asshole."

"You mean you," Danny quipped without missing a beat. On certain occasions he struggled to understand how he remained friends with Jackson. This wasn't quite there yet. He would have felt wounded if he weren't so worried. Everything about Jackson read off-centered. His best-friend stood around a virtually empty locker room in only half-gear despite the fact that, as Co-Captain he should have already been on the field. Instead Jackson waited around for Danny, he seemed uncertain of the way.

"I mean you're new boyfriend," Jackson came back. He snapped his head around to look back, his eyes intent as though Danny was the only thing he seemed to recognize in the room.

"I mean what's your deal," Danny tried to shrug it off and closed his locker harder than he intended, "since it's not like we double-date?"

"I mean, as your best friend I'm worried about you," he shoved his helmet on and seemed to think
"I mean, you're coming off as a bit jealous." Danny put a hand on his friend's shoulder but Jackson startled to the touch.

"I mean," Jackson mimicked the concern of Danny's tone, "you can call it whatever you want but your secret fuck-buddy isn't so secret anymore."

Danny shook his head and went off toward the field, annoyed that Jackson followed in step. He didn't have time to be goaded into... whatever this was, even though if he were, he definitely had something to say about it. "That isn't the only secret fucking going on."

"What?" Jackson responded in a less aggressive tone. Lightly, Danny touched his shoulder a second time. This time he guided Jackson toward the team, since he seemed unable to focus beyond smelling absent people and staring at dust as if it were tumble weed.

"You're being secretly eye-fucked by McCall's girlfriend," Danny jutted his chin toward the stands. There she sat, sweet little Allison Argent, her scarf curling loops around her neck, it pulled her dark hair forward to spill over her shoulder to where her fingers absentmindedly played while her notes books lay ignored on her lap but her eyes were kept steadily on him. She smiled nervously but didn't seem nervous at the same time and it felt very familiar.

"Interesting."

"As YOUR best-friend, don't go there," Danny cut in and forcefully turned Jackson to face the team. "Friday, McCall nearly took off Lahey's head. And that was just for sniffing around a girl he was friends with in grade school."

Finally Jackson's attention turned to the team.

Track 10 - Gold Gun Girls by Metric (Unplugged)

A mania ran throughout the game as seemed to have difficulty remembering which team they played for. Players were tossed about like rag dolls and Coach Finstock genuinely sounded as if he would have a coronary.

At first Allison cheered on her boyfriend then quickly shouted at him not to dislodge his teammate mid-play. Their rivalry quickly evaporated when a fissure threatened to pull apart the field through confusion and bloodlust. During a brief time out Scott explained their failure was intentional.

"If we don't get these people off the field they're going to get killed," Scott whispered in a loud-ish whisper, his face close to hers trying to pass along some comfort.

"By someone other than you," Allison kneeled behind the player's bench; her eyes were large with shock and concern.

"Something is happening. I can feel it. Isaac can feel it," Scott scanned the field, Isaac gave them a nod.

Allison hated that Scott trusted Isaac before her but once more her instincts were confirmed, with Isaac being a Supernatural it made sense they would be draw toward each other.
"Where's Lydia?"

"What?" Allison hesitated, "she's coming after dinner with her Mom, why?"

Scott shook his head. "No, something is wrong."

Finally something she could do, "I'll find her." She wouldn't fail this time.

Scott looked relieved momentarily. Coach bellowed after him seconds later and made his name sound obscene.

There was no harm in the legalities of texting while driving when you had already pulled over. Lydia clutched her iPhone as if she would choke it, aggravated not with Allison whom she had just assured that she was en route to BHHS but that somehow she had gotten lost along the way.

Lydia was the first of her friends to get a driver's permit, she could have driven to the High School with her eyes closed and she knew the back roads like she knew the periodic table and she had never gotten lost.

Never mind '2 miles out of her way' lost and if her subconscious had anything to say about it 'a few more miles would be tacked onto it through woodland and brush' lost.

With Volkswagen Beetle fully gassed, her iPhone fully charged and GPS coordinated toward the school location preprogrammed she had her bases covered.

After a moment, she straightened in her seat and when she caught her reflection in the rearview mirror and recognized it for fear and she did not like it. When Lydia clutched her phone the Kinesio tape caught uncomfortably on the edge. Although her heart beat like a hammer she felt awake and tore the bandage off.

The Beacon Hill's "Cyclones" would have lost by a wide margin due to unimaginable number of fouls in the shortest game of the season if it hadn't been called on a technicality; a half dozen of Beacon Hills players either turned on each other or collapsed on the field mid-play saying they heard screaming inside their heads. It seemed The Cyclones had come down with some sort of 24-hour encephalitis or so the Coach explained.

Chapter End Notes

**CREDITS/ROLL CALL:**

**Argents - Team1; headed by Victoria, Chris & Allison.**

- **Rumy - [Sergeant]** specialized in Recon; Special Forces and espionage. Chris' right hand man and Allison's godfather.
- **Axel - [1st Lieutenant]** expert tracker, marksman and Allison's 2nd cousin.
- **Bennett - [Field Officer]** specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old and friend to Allison.
Argents - Team2; headed by Kate.
- Livy - [1st Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Force-Orientation, R.I.F. and close-combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's right-hand man.

Hale (Present Day) Pack; Alpha
- Derek - [?] In a very precarious position.

? Other?:
- Isaac - [Omega] abandoned Werewolf in search of a pack.

Twins' Pack; Aiden and Ethan Carver Alphas
- Marta - [Beta] she's an older motor head and their 1st Lieutenant.
- Bridy - [Beta] the packs' spy because she's diminutive and easily underestimated.
- Gus - [Beta] referred to as psychotic now and again, but his very few (and dwindling) close friends' are his touchstone.
- (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, bi and partnered to Naylor, formerly to Bozeman.
- (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
- (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
- (deceased) Coot - [Omega] former Beta, killed by the Monster.

Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha
- (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed 1st Lieutenant, possibly romantically entangled.
- Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali and closely bonded to Huntington.
- Santos - [Beta] while loyal to Kali has mentored many, without regard to packs. He helped the Twins first learn to shift together without losing their identities.
- Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed and with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
- Levi - [Beta] he's neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
- Huntington - [Beta] has strong empathic senses, is very good friends with Gus' from Twins' pack and Lark.

Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha
- Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' Lieutenant, --from wiped out Shapeshifter dynasty.
- Dr. Kane - [Beta] both a medical Doctor and their torturer.
- Quint - [Beta] eager to please teen and Dr. Kane's biological son.

Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha
- Søren - [Beta] 1st Lieutenant, Danish man of even temperament and a skilled negotiator until his temper is peaked.
- Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
Chapter Summary

Struck by another vision, which led to (yet another) dead body Lydia believes she has found a clue that will resolve a long unsolved mystery and maybe prevent the pilling up of the dead that plagues Beacon Hills. Together; Scott and Lydia along with Isaac and Allison plot how to begin but it all starts with breaking into the Sheriff's house.

- Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/05-were-you-here

Chapter Notes

Previously on were (you);

Fledgling Werewolf, Scott McCall continues to find guidance and tutelage from unlikely sources, such as a secret Werewolf and a Hunter in hiding, all while remaining concealed from his public eye and his family... but for how much longer at the rate that strange events gravitate toward him?

Allison Argent's finds her personal code stretched to its limits; "*protecting those who cannot protect themselves*" proves complicated when it means protecting them from themselves, their minds, their bodies, their choice in friends... but from a field of their Lacrosse Teammates? Is it time to call in the rest of the Hunters?

Isaac Lahey's want to desperately befriend another Werewolf, to join up with Scott and blindly agreeing to help Scott proved to be a helluva lot more problematic than he ever imagined. Not just because of the mental siren awaking him over miles distance but there was the Lacrosse game blitzkrieg. What's worse is he doesn't question whether it's worth it, which makes him wonder is this the beginning of what a pack feels like?

Lydia Martin, fueled by reoccurring visions and fugue states, is able to unlock bits of her lost week. Despite that recognition she tells Scott they're too damaged to mend their bond just because of the coincidence of proximity, supernatural or otherwise... or so she claims.

Jackson Whittemore continues to grow supernatural sensitivity and in suspicion as he suffers from both lost time and outburst isn't in control of. It seems that only Lydia and Danny are able to get through to him? But how long before he becomes an uncontrollable danger to everyone, including himself?

Beacon Hills draws in the supernatural and mysterious alike, as several Werewolf Packs have eked in so have Hunters, only there are still more to come.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Track 01 - Signs by Bloc Party
Their secrets weren't remotely as stifling as expected in the confined space of Allison's Mazda. The momentum the ride built drummed out the sound of pulsating blood and racing thoughts.

"Turn here," Scott didn't explain why but added, "please" before Allison could ask for a destination.

Micromanaged through the mirrors of the vehicle Allison monitored where everyone sat and what they were doing and how long they had been doing it. The reason why evaded her.

Minutes earlier, pandemonium had sent their Lacrosse game into the likes of a shattered ant farm. Assistant Coach Helisek had a better understanding of sports medicine than Coach Finstock and was better at calming the masses. In the 2 minute interim it took to get him, things went from manic to manageable but a few key players had disappeared off of the playing field. 2 of which appeared as if from nowhere in the parking lot just as Allison got to her car.

When Allison couldn't find Scott she grew frightened for him, then really frightened, then she remembered herself and headed for her car. More rightly her fully stocked with arms trunk. She dropped from the bleacher-seats and dodged through panicked people. Just as she clasped her compound bow a voice called out to her, which brought her to an even middle, not to high wire tension, not exactly a calm.

"Scott!" she locked her trunk and spun around only to find herself in Isaac's looming shadow. She was startled momentarily but Isaac calmed her with a gesture, pointing toward Scott's drawing nearness. There were no questions, not verbally anyway when Scott caught sight of the both of them.

Just a deep sigh of relief, a glance at the dwindling mayhem around them followed by the instructions "we've got to go."

Through 3.3 miles and 10 minutes of silence, they drove into a neighborhood Allison was aware of by reputation only but it was enough to stay on alert. Scott raced up the steps before she had turned off the car's engine. Allison crossed her arms over the steering wheel and propped her chin atop. Isaac sank into the back seat and they remained in a stupor of absence, absence of Scott, absence of answers and absence of nerves while they looked at one another through the rearview mirror.

"Do you know whose house this is?" Isaac said in a voice just above a whisper.

Allison stared at him for a moment, she tilted her head and wondered exactly why he tagged along. Followed up with a wonder of why she hadn't questioned it earlier.

"I have a good idea," she buried her head further into her arms for a second before gathering up the courage to leave the car. "This is the Sheriffs house."

Isaac followed in suit although he closed the car door softly unlike her indelicate slam. "We are breaking into the Sheriff's house!"

"What breaking? The door was open, plus--" she gestured off to the side of the house, by the garage adjacent where Lydia's VW Beetle was parked. Isaac huffed out a breath more of exasperation than surprise."--we're not the only ones."

"Stiles is alive," Lydia didn't stutter or mince her words. It came very easily for her considering it...
was a name she not only avoided saying but she practically pretended it hadn't existed in her lifetime.

Yet they stood in the Stilinski home among Stilinski things looking at their childhood friend Stiles' stuffs saying Stiles hopeful things they hadn't even dared to speak aloud when the search party had still combed the wreckage for him.

It angered Scott.

"Stop it," Scott heard his tone turn hard in his ears. It wasn't something outside of his control and he was thankful to that.

Lydia stepped toward him. Her eyes looked wild, even her gestures were fast and manic but her voice sounded determined.

"Hear me out."

Less than 48 hours ago, Scott had struggled to hear her when she pleaded "leave me out of it", when she rejected him as a Werewolf but he had accepted it. When another impossible thing presented itself, another thing that made his nerves endings run amuck, if he had to be honest it was easier to choke down rejection than to hold onto hope.

"Give it a rest. He's dead," whatever happened to their unspoken rule to never say 'his' name?

For a second it looked as though she lost the ability to connect words to thought. She shook her head and wavered, not metaphorically. She shifted from side to side gripping into the polyester fabric of the backpack as if it were a safety line.

Scott considered her waking nightmares and worried once more about keeping her safe. If he had been 100% honest Scott would have considered his wounded pride and the juxtaposition he suffered between Lydia's rejection yesterday and his desperation today.

"You barely talk to me except to reject me--" Scott started in an attempt to gain some semblance of this hurtful eccentricity. (She scoffed a little, as though he were unique in being rejected by Lydia Martin.) "--and then you call me in the middle of the night to meet you in Stiles' old room."

There. Scott had said it. A spell had broken. A little wall collapsed inside of him. Lydia had won, again. Her eyes were alight with recognition of it.

"Scott. I found his backpack," she passed it over. It seemed once Lydia had found her voice and ability to speak Scott had lost his. She opened his hands for him and closed his fingers around the arms straps.

Worn and recently used, it had the hand-stitch in the collar hook that labeled it Stilinski' just as Stiles' mother did it. The very same ratty dated lacrosse Maverik equipment backpack which, at the time had been oversized but Stiles had desperately wanted it. It was wholly recognizable as Stiles would pack his world into it and he carried it everywhere, even on their sleepovers.

When Scott looked up again Lydia's mouth twitched between biting her lower lip and smiling in want of confirmation. Her eyes were over bright with excitement and though she had her hair tied off to the side it was streaked with dirt and he could only imagine where she discovered it. And how Scott wished he had been beside her.

With sudden interest Isaac spoke and asked what was going on and it was as though a bucket of ice had been thrown over the proceeding.
Although he thought it as well, Lydia said it aloud "why are you here anyway?" Alright maybe Scott wouldn't have said it as viciously.

At which point, from the other side of the doorway Allison politely pulled Isaac away and wisely advised they should probably give Lydia and Scott a private moment.

Track 02 - Read My Mind (The Killers Cover) by Leif Vollebekk

When Isaac came to the top of the stairwell he noticed Allison lagged.

"You're worried too."

She turned to face him and her eyes narrowed, not in scorn but in thoughtfulness. When she stepped toward him again she brushed her arm against his in a signal to follow.

"Why -are- you here?" Allison asked, only she made it sound conversational instead of like an accusation.

Isaac studied her face while they retreated through the downstairs hall and he thought he could easily dispel her deflection with a smirk "Allison, what is going on -here-?"

When they reached the bottom Allison hesitated as though in thought. She smiled a little, very little and when she did the definition of the word 'sly' came to mind.

"Isaac, what happened at the game?"

When Isaac shrugged and moved away Allison followed as if drawn in by his wake.

"Are you okay?"

"Yeah," he stopped to reassure her, he felt a little surprised that concern was her direction. At his height he had to incline his head to keep her the center of attention.

"I saw you go down pretty hard. Everyone else seemed to just go to pieces. I've never seen anything like it," Allison shook her head while she remembered, disturbed by the vision of it.

"I'm okay," he repeated. After thinking better he added, "Scott's okay, too." This time when Allison smiled her features sincerely softened.

"Why did something like that happen?" when she asked the question she walked on. There was a pressure she put on him in the way she did it, she abandoned him to the responsibility of justification. And of all places, it was under the Sheriff's roof.

"Who knows?"

"Don't you?"

Isaac tried not to respond but saying nothing was agony and so he finally muttered "why would I know anything?"

Allison stopped short by an archway, briefly distracted by what she took in around the bend.
"I don't know, you just get a look sometimes. Like you know more than you're saying," she muttered as she dug out her phone from her pocket. For a moment he thought she meant to call someone, but no, she pulled it up to take a photo. He cautiously came up behind her and looked to see what caught her fascination so utterly.

"Like a conspiracy," he supplied the word she might have been looking for. She was too busy documenting the Sheriff's crime board to answer.

The colored web connecting twine from brutal death to vicious cycles of places to attacks and circumstance to files that he could not begin to process. Yet Allison looked famished for it.

They locked eyes on the photo of the Sheriff's wife and son. They hadn't understood the context until they recognized the people in the photo pinned just beneath it. The birthday party looked the same instead the boy was with 2 other children that, despite the age of the photo, bore the undisputed likeness of Lydia and Scott. The 2 boys obviously danced, awkwardly with limbs and fists thrust in the air. The girl caught between them, with eyes screwed shut, grin hidden behind a sheet of long bright hair. A hand written note beside the photo read "Juvenile. Unreliable Witnesses. Post-Traumatic."

Isaac swore quietly and Allison's free hand went to her mouth. A very large question regarding the connection between her boyfriend and best friend had finally been answered but it only served up another mystery. Allison stepped backward, instinct made her want to go to them, to comfort and help them instead she backed up into Isaac.

"I'm sorry," she spun around and fell further into him. Allison gripped his coat to keep from falling. Her mind reeled at the idea of her friends' hurting, years of pain down to a pattern Hunters should have picked up on earlier. "Sorry," she could have caught it quicker, seen it earlier had she been transparent with her ambition and less juvenile.

And without time to process, without a means to keep them safe--

"Allison, are you okay?"

"I'm so sorry," she apologized again. Wait. She heard her voice from very far away. How many times had she apologized?

"It's okay." Isaac rubbed her arm, as if it were warmth she sought, "It's going to be okay. I'm pretty sure all of this is what Scott and Lydia are talking about right now."

Allison nodded but inside something shriveled up. They had no idea what was really going on.

"Let's go see if they're alright," Isaac suggested. She nodded again like a bobble head and held onto him part of the way until she felt her thoughts were her own again and not "Argent" only.

"First the field" she brought up again, "now this. It's like Scott is never going to get a break."

"He'll be fine," Isaac insisted.

"How do you know?"

"Because I know."

"But -how- do you know?"

Isaac stopped along the way, he sensed Allison's heart rate and the way it changed from the panic
by the kitchen to something all together different. The look she gave him in the dark, her eyes were tender and penetrating.

"What he did in the field, it took strength," he assured her.

Isaac tried neither to relive nor reveal too much of what had happened earlier in the evening. He didn't know how to describe the sense of threat through his nerves that got him hot and bothered. It unlocked something in him, not the way his Alpha used to awaken something in him and caused him to want to change or to submit. But this sense, it threatened like the wind had caught fire and it resonated through him. Scott felt it too. And there were others in the stands, they felt it too. It created pandemonium. How many people would have suffered if there had been an attack? If Werewolves had changed that didn't know how not to? But Scott knocked down Greenberg before Jackson got to him and nearly took off his head. It was a desperate, basic plan and worked for the most part until he heard Lydia's screaming in his head. It was a desperate, basic plan and worked for the most part until he heard Lydia's screaming in his head.

Then everything had gone dark.

When Isaac awoke Scott stood over him, a hand offered to pull him up before staff collected him with the other injured. Scott handled all that without breaking a sweat.

"Allison, I think Scott has got this figured out better than the best of us."

It must have been the right thing to say because she stopped looking at him as a mark. As she ducked her head turning to go back upstairs, her smile was hesitant and eyes were soft in gratitude.

Isaac cast the pin-board another look, longer and harder than the first. Places that seemed both familiar and unfamiliar burned against the back of his mind and worried at him. He didn't understand it as clearly as it seemed Allison had but he knew a threat when he saw it. But he had a lifetime of experience at being a little behind the others and having to work at trying to catch up.

Track 03 - Fear and Loathing by Marina and the Diamonds

"What do you mean you found a dead body?"

Lydia sighed wearily; if he couldn't handle the term "A dead BODY" she couldn't imagine how he would process "SEVERAL dead BODIES."

Her exasperation read clearly and Scott recanted. He clenched his hand and placed it over his mouth in thought, as if he could hold in the breath of genius through his fingers. Lydia pitied his suffocating airways.

"Where -did- you find a dead body?"

"In the woods," she repeated, consciously unrushed. Lydia maintained eye contact as she tacked on the important bit, "about 20 yards from where I found the backpack hidden."

Scott shook his head again. This time he clenchd the straps of the bookbag. It offered him as much comfort as it had her, which was enough to keep him grounded to the present, that is to say barely enough.

"Why did you go out there?" Scott stopped mid-pace and spun to face her but Lydia looked unphased with each demand. "Did you alone?" she nodded. He looked saddened instead of angered. "Why didn't you at least call Allison?"
She rolled her eyes as if it were the most obvious answer in existence, "I don't want to freak her out with this stuff?"

Unused to the consequences of his actions falling on shoulders other than his own, Scott felt the crush of guilt shock him into silence. If he hadn't asked for Allison to keep his secrets, would Lydia have ventured off into the Preserve in the middle of the night, especially after she had express such discomfort with it? When he reverted to pacing Lydia caught his arm, dragged him to the bed and brought him to sit.

The mattress gave a woosh under their weight; where Scott struggled to not cross the invisible barrier between real-life Stiles and real-dead Stiles Lydia didn't seem to have that problem.

"You are gonna think I am crazy," her brows pinched together and she groaned.

He briefly recalled the very first time he woke up naked in the middle of the woods and had to walk home. Then reminded that thought of waking up naked in the woods was preceded with the word 'First Time'. Scott almost laughed, "Lydia, if you trust me on anything, you can trust me on this. There's nothing that you can say to me that'll make you sound crazy."

As Lydia started to shake her head in a nervous dismissal Scott tilted his toward her, one brow shot up on a playful admission, "Literally, nothing!"

When Lydia breathed in sharply to refocus her thoughts, the polyester of the backpack made stretching noise rubbing under where their knees met.

"I was parked by the side of the road and I heard children," she chuckled apprehensively, her reluctance to move forward made her urge to laugh grow. "That's crazy, in the Preserve in the middle if the night, right? I use my phone as a flashlight and tried to follow. Part of me knew they weren't really there. But they led me to what looked like a hideaway fort. Exactly the way we used to make it when we went camping, that's where I spotted his backpack. I stopped thinking about the children and when I did I stopped hearing them. I didn't even question it once I saw the bag. I wanted to examine it back at the car so I grabbed it and ran. I didn't see the body until I tripped over it," she broke for a breath to catch up. Scott looked to be on the edge of his seat but he didn't hurry her. There was more concern in his face than anticipation.

"I was so...", Lydia wouldn't use the word frightened. It wasn't in her verbose vocabulary. She pressed her lips together and her voice came out quieter as she spoke "I just had to scream."

"I know," he answered. "I know!" he repeated more animatedly when he realized from the docile way she nodded she hadn't understood him at all. "I heard you at the school."

Lydia looked a little bit surprised but more than anything pleased. Her smile only dimmed a little as she braved onward.

"It wasn't him," she wasn't angry but her voice held the sort of conviction meant to rally forces. "I had to check, you understand." Scott nodded, he understood. "Whoever that was, it wasn't Stiles. I would've known," she wrung her hands despite her certainty.

It only took a moment to relive it, to close her eyes and see the leaves scattered haplessly, underfoot and over his misshapen face. Like a rabbit she had scurried away after tripping, she screamed and screamed and rushed backward far enough and fast enough to practically clamber up a tree. But seeing the backpack on the ground between her and the man, it brought a dire perspective to light. She backedpedaled till she could get the bag looped in her arms as a safety clutch, her touchstone, while she kneeled beside the carcass in the wooded dark. While she brought the light of her phone
close to his face and tried to make out years added to a friend by pressing her breath near enough to have their hair entwine, to have pulled away his dirt onto her.

"Did you know homo-sapien isn't descendent from cro-magnon man? The pronounced ridges on the forehead broader faces make for a bit more muscle and a slightly larger brain. They're actually cousins."

"You lost me?"

"The body in the woods, I was meant to find him."

Scott looked baffled, even more than usual, "Lydia, what does that mean?"

"When I found him, I understood it because it changed like your face in chem.," Lydia talked deliberately slower, almost dragging him along her train of thought. Her pauses were long, not only from worry of losing him but from fear of losing nerve. "He didn't stay that way for long, Scott. Right in front of my eyes, his facial structure reset." The word 'strange' was avoided because that term didn't exist in science, not that Scott considered that. But a longstanding faith in Lydia felt justified, he shouldn't have smiled a little but he did. Lydia gave him a warning glare, "If that's a post mortem reflex he would have only just been killed. And he was killed, Scott." Scott's sense of relief was short lived.

Once detached from the bed, from the backpack, from Scott, Lydia collected her thoughts and put everything impossible into a systematic narrative. She described the signs of a struggle around the body, as well as obvious signs someone had poorly tried to obscure evidence, likely in a hurry. On instinct she had called the police but her screams would have attracted the attention of anything living for at least a ½ mile around, maybe more. No one would have returned to the scene of the crime after that.

Left alone with the scene she doubled back to the hideaway, which lay within 20 yards. But the hideaway, the much LIVED in hideaway, was sophisticated. It remained camouflaged to perfection and unaffected by events.

"Lydia, just because Stiles backpack was found there doesn't mean he was involved," Scott comforted. They were admittedly biased in their hopes and denials but it couldn't be helped. They were labeled as 'Juvenile' and 'Unreliable' and 'Traumatized' after all.

Fearful it meant Stiles could have killed the man in self defense, Lydia withheld the backpack as evidence when officers arrived on the scene. It was a more audacious move to withhold the only evidence that would have given the Sheriff hope his son might live but she accepted the responsibility of it.

When the Sheriff's department asked how she ended up there Lydia had the prepared excuse of "my GPS must have been out of whack. I got out to get a phone signal and stumbled onto this." Lydia seemed to make the officers uneasy as of late, in eagerness to dismiss her, the Sheriff asked her if she wanted wait at the station for her Mom. Fat lot of good, since after dinner her Mom left town for a seminar. She would be back late but late meant the next morning. When the Sheriff offered up kindly any other place, relative, grown-up she could stay with he hadn't expected her to jump at the opportunity to ask to stay at his home.

"I just know I'd feel safe there" she didn't even need to ham it up too much. Lydia knew it was one of a handful of places her Mom would likely say 'yes, my daughter can be kept safe there' and the Sheriff was likely to feel the same. That was actually really sweet on their part, naïve but sweet. More than that, Lydia wanted to be at the Sheriff's house afterward knowing he would be too busy
at the crime scene. If Scott were to shoot her down, if Scott were going to hear her out Lydia wanted to be surrounded by all-things-Stiles.

It should have been more off-putting, surrounded by items he hadn't seen in 6 years but felt like he'd played with just 6 minutes ago. He chuckled softly, closed his eyes and gave the bed a test bounce just to feel the realness under his weight. Swept up in emotion, his eyes colored mildly and he felt amused that felt very comfortable. Lydia breathed in sharply but she smiled gently.

"The bizarre is becoming pretty standard in this town," Scott returned the smile.

"Scott, you let him go then," she crossed the few steps divide and lingered near him. Her fingers dangled over his, over where he gripped the straps. "You've never forgiven yourself for it." She wasn't upset but she pressed her lips together in that way Lydia often she did before she gathered together for a big delivery. Her voice was small instead, intimate. "How are you going to forgive yourself if you let him go again?"

Admittedly Scott wasn't really good at the whole scenting something out yet. He wasn't even sure it was something he could do but the backpack had a strong hold to it, he recognized that same Stiles-likeness clung to the room. He wondered if Lydia conspired to ambush him when she came to the Sheriff's home. No, the Stilinski home. Scott wasn't sure how long he had been staring at her hand. It had only been a few hours since he conceded in letting go. Where he kept the nightmare in mind and decided Lydia deserved to grow away from him, to be safe.

"Lydia," Scott started. He had no idea how to proceed. Scott wasn't clear on how he came to be holding her hand once more but he stared at where their fingers wrapped. It looked fierce but felt good and firm and comfortable, not crushing at all. She must have snatched him back again.

"Help me look for him, please Scott?" Lydia had asked Scott for help.

"Lydia," his tone was very different. Stiles' backpack lay settled, between them. He didn't offer an answer aloud but shook his head side to side, with a crooked smirk, not in negation but in defeat. "Where do we start?"

Lydia sighed in relief but her face showed no signs of it. She sank beside him on the bed and held his hand in both of hers as if to keep hold of him, to prevent him from retreating.

"We start by going back to Stiles' fort," answered Lydia with a slow drawn smile.

"Track 04 - Dirty Paws by Of Monsters and Men"

There were ways to handle things during times of tribulations because of that Kali aimed to come to Deucalion's alone. In accordance to that she arrived practically alone since during time of tribulation you also kept your family close and annoying younger cousins still constituted family. Barely healed up and sporting a few new scars along her neck-base and left arm, Lark hung back on the outskirts of the property to watch out for the so-called neighbors.

As Kali neared the homestead she sensed the friction among its people. It was no satisfaction their pack was in as much disharmony and it was no surprise when Deucalion met her before she stepped foot onto the porch instead of at the door. They walked the grounds as they spoke, an even keel despite the infrequent sound of someone crying out from inside of the house.
"Another murdered. This time an Alpha just like the Twins said," from beside him, her eyes and feet were steady on. Despite bare foot and with claws extended she left no prints on the ground, like all true predators.

"Can you be an Alpha without a pack?" his voice was thick with a roguish cynicism. He ignored her concerns and planted implications.

"The better question is how long you can be a pack?" she inclined her head at the sound of another yell. They waited for the echo to subside. The fight had ended and their packs were still at the threat of death, why else would she have agreed to meet him?

"Longer than you think," when he started to walk again, she followed.

"I have a refugee on my border," it was another moment where as an Alpha, Kali was proud. It meant she was strong but as a person felt virtually inhuman.

"A refugee? Don't you mean a victim of Stockholm syndrome?"

"I have a reserve of wealth," she stopped following, "and what do you have?"

"I've the same. Only I call them loyalist," he smirked. "And Kali, I always have room in my ranks for more."

The night's events played in her mind's eyes. More so the events of last few weeks; the slow decline of trust, of friends and loved ones while violence rose. Loyalty was a complicated word. With her second in command, Marsten, likely counted among dead she was left feeling abandoned. With Quint, the youngest in Ennis' pack, likely added to the list of dead with the blame on her head. No one would let her live that down anytime soon. Their packs commonality vanished in the hysteric of a few youths and they were a hare's breath away from all out war. Exposing her neck to Deucalion, submitting, aligning packs would be sign of acceleration.

Another cry rang out across the landscape. Kali quickly looked from the house to the border and caught sight of where her little cousin stood with eye's that glowed blue and anxious for her Alpha's signal. And Lark didn't even like her. Straightened to her full height, with down cast eyes it created a dark humor in Kali's expression to rival even Deucalion's.

"Such a very gracious offer. I can only think to extend the same."

After a calculated pause, Deucalion chuckled and started toward the house, "I'd invite you inside..."

"...except I'd rather run myself through with a rusty pipe," smiled Kali as she ambled along the path.

Track 05 - It's Out of My Hands Now by Dave Mathews Band

Allison considered what to respond after her phone lit up the second time. There was urgency to the text but was no alarm in her face.

The first was from her Father;

- Were you at the game?
Her family was bound to hear about that, they had connections in the Sheriff's office after all. And they were bound to suspect she had been in attendance.

Of course she hadn't anticipated a customary follow up of, 'Are you okay?' Gee, thanks Dad. Uncertain as to whether that was faith in her or neglect on his part, either way she wouldn't reply. There wasn't a good reply. If she said 'Yes' a report would be expected. If she said 'No' she would still be expected to report as to why.

The second text was from Tyhurst;

- Where are you?

Tyhurst was worse than her Father in a million different ways. Especially in regards to timely reporting despite the fact that he reported to her Father.

Allison had run out of time playing around with her friends. No, not playing. Protecting. They needed her but apparently so did the family. More so now that she saw the direction of the Sheriff's private investigation.

Isaac hovered over her shoulder, "what are you going to say?"

"Nothing," she flipped over her phone, pulled it apart and took out the sim card.

Isaac had a particular expression she had begun to recognize, those cool clear eyes, partnered with the sharp rise of just one brow. That intrigue she normally only saw him aim toward Lydia he now aimed at her. It said 'you lead the way, I'll definitely follow'.

They inched along the hall that lead back to the bedroom where they left Scott and Lydia, this time they examined the possessions closer. As if subconscious they turned their heads toward looking for childhood clues. There were none.

"Did you know they were close as kids?" Isaac whispered.

Allison nodded, after a moment she tossed over her shoulder, "are you jealous?"

When they arrived at the bedroom door it was obvious the conversation between their friends had gotten intense. Their position looked oddly like a marriage proposal with Scott sat in front of Lydia holding her outstretched hand. Allison balked. This time around Isaac pulled her further along by the arm. They ended up in a bedroom that obviously belonged to the Sheriff.

It wasn't a second before Allison continued to snoop. Isaac sat on the corner of the bed and watched her.

"Why aren't you jealous?"

She shrugged and answered "jealousy comes from a place of ownership. I don't own Scott or Lydia." She found a photo and lifted it. It was a wedding photo. The couple looked loving in the way that all wedding photos do. She had never seen the Sheriff smile like that. When she thought about it, she had never seen her Parent's have a wedding photo.

Isaac asked "Don't you feel like you want to belong?"

Allison carefully placed the photo in exactly the same dust slots they were at on the bedside table, "owning and belonging aren't the same thing." She stood straight and walked around the bed to stand beside him. With him seated, Allison stood maybe an inch above his height, two when he
slouched. And he did slouch when he felt bad about himself. Which was fairly often.

"Sure, I want to feel a 'belonging'. It wasn't too long ago I was the 'New Girl' in town. Right away, Lydia gave me a sense of belonging and I loved her for it. Everyday Scott gives me a new sense of belonging and I'm--" she paused and struggled to find the right word. Her face closed off while she relived a time that brought her peace "--grateful to him for that too." Isaac watched, captivated and smiled, nearing her. They bumped shoulders and she encouraged him to lengthen his grin. Both their eyes caught a school photo across the way, among the children lined up smiling at the camera were three friends.

"Somewhere long ago, a friend of theirs gave Scott and Lydia a great sense of belonging. A part of them still belong to him," Allison sounded tender.

"Even when it hurts," Isaac pointed out, "even when there is loss, you would still want to belong to that? Look where it got them today."

"Yes," Allison agreed and smiled softly at the photo as she came nearer to it. "Look where it got them today."

Isaac followed. They stared at a girl with a photogenic grin, sandwiched by two boys practicing their best fish faces.

This time Allison left the photo alone on the dresser, where it remained dusted over and ignored for years discarded behind socks, t-shirts, colognes bottles, combs and a half full bottle of sleeping pills.

"I have a best friend and a boyfriend who will always, even when they hate each other which they mostly do, belong with me. Even when it's hard," her dimples shown.

"It's time to go," her voice sounded raw with exhaustion but her expression was strong, her chin held high. Stood in the doorway Lydia left no room to argue. Despite having led the entourage into the Sheriff's home it seemed she strongly felt they outstayed their welcome. Scott stood at her back, his face was the epitome of concern but his energy wreaked anxiety that mirrored Lydia's.

Throughout the conversation Isaac couldn't shake a feeling that, although he had never stood in the Stilinski's home before, he felt a sense of familiarity. He tried to remember something close to the surface but Allison tilted her head in a gesture that meant 'follow' and when she moved toward the door Isaac knew inarguably to do so.

Track 06 - Drive You Home by Garbage

Although a third less people, the car built up three times as much tension while Isaac accompanied Lydia. After her Mom called panicky and cut off, Lydia hurried home and it was as though her unease swallowed the air. Not to mention Isaac already had a problem with small places.

The route from the Sheriff's home in the walled community onto the main road then back off of it, took ridiculously long considering the construction on the highway. Taking the back roads had a difference of 5 minutes give or take. Fortunately, it provided enough time to work up the courage to ask, "You didn't have to go alone into the woods. I'd've come if you called."

"I bet," she sounded moody. Her demeanor hadn't changed from the house into the car only with
the occupation of driving she had an excuse not to make eye contact. Without having to say it aloud Lydia couldn't have made her feelings clearer; Isaac had wedged himself where he wasn't welcome.

"I don't know who messed with your head," Isaac started, which obviously had been the wrong thing to say. Despite her tiredness, heat fueled her and she glared at him. Yet that heat drew him in, "Lydia but I'm not like that. You can rely on me."

"You're right, you're not like that," her voice turned bitter-sweet. "You're not a boyfriend, you were a distraction."

"Ouch," Isaac mumbled.

"But now you're becoming more than that," she pulled the car curbside but didn't switch it off. She turned toward him, leaned in and brought their faces close, close enough to prevent him from taking in air.

"Yeah?" Isaac tried not to get too hopeful.

"Yeah," bright eyes looked up from beneath long lashes, vulnerable for a second before armor slid into place. "Now you're becoming a pain."

"I think I should walk home."

"I think you should," Lydia reached across his lap, unlocked the door and pushed it open.

"Lydia," the air was a relief certainly. But he had fought his way into Lydia's car more than once and for what he felt was good reason.

"What?"

Braving the hazard Isaac kissed her on the cheek, "I meant what I said. Call and I'll be there for you. Okay?"

Lydia's eyes narrowed and her mouthed pulled into a smirk that translated into her patented 'that would be [expletive deleted] ill-advised' Isaac pulled back and felt miles away.

When he climbed out of the car he realized she had, in fact, left him miles away from where he now stayed which was probably for the better. Maybe Lydia was right and it only took one kind gesture to leave you fully exposed.


Track 07 - Love Will Come Through by Travis


Deliberately slow, Scott and Allison cleared evidence of their presence from the Stilinski house. A task made harder by Scott's need to touch particular items and try to collect impressions. Allison had better visual memory than most, not to mention she had traced their movements since they had entered the home.

Starved for information, Scott touched a skateboard, some photos, trophies, action figures but he grabbed up a baseball. He rotated it against his palm and considered not letting it go. Allison observed and didn't judge. After a moment he returned it to its spot on Stiles' headboard. When he
looked up, his breath came through in thin shudder. She rushed over and wrapped her arms through his. Scott buried his face in her neck, his hands slid from the small of her back, along her spine until they locked at the V between her shoulder blades. After a smile and an abrupt sniff, Scott broke away to straighten the bed sheets. While the 2 worked to spread the blankets flat and leave them seemingly untouched, they communicated epic exchanges with brief looks.

"If it's not enough to keep sensing things you can talk to me Scott," she said, as she handed over a backpack. Allison recognized it belonged with him; it stood out among the personal effects, ragged and worn as opposed to preserved.

"I want to tell you everything," Scott's smile never reached his eyes. He carried the backpack without putting it on when he turned to walk downstairs. Unsurprisingly he lost momentum when he moved toward the front because every item along the way distracted him.

"okay..." Allison pulled him through the front door and made certain to prop the coats in the same haphazard order she remembered them before they dropped to the floor upon their rushed entrance.

"Maybe later," mumbled Scott.

"oh," Allison missed a step on the way down. It was Scott's response and not the terrain to blame. When Scott caught her she gave a thin-lipped smile as he helped set her right.

They walked silently to the car; at the passenger side door Scott shuffled the weight of the backpack, to assess the contents without viewing as if figuring how it would dictate his future. On the drivers' side of the car Allison did the same as she reassembled her cellphone.

Track 08 - Sad Dream by Sky Ferreira

"Jackson," her voice was sharp, although more annoyed than angry "please give up my spare house key as we are no longer dating."

The sense of familiarity kicked her in the heart before her brain caught up with her. There were times when she felt validated to come home from shopping with Mom or staying at Madison's or studying with Sydney to find a strapping lacrosse player at the foot of her bed. But there were also times where she felt validated she owned a Mace pepper spray keychain in pink.

"I--" he jumped to his feet, startled she had arrived at all. Despite it not being his home Jackson looked as though he was the one being intruded on, hands up in compliancy and blue eyes wide in surprise, he stuttered, "--I was worried about you."

Too tired for another altercation with another guy who was just not willing to listen when she spoke, Lydia ignored him. She dumped her purse and jacket on her bed and moved onto detangling her hair. Her Mom being in the shower prevented her from getting cleaned up right away but afforded her a good 2 minutes to eject this unwanted visitor without drama.

"I'm happy to see you're safe--"

"If you're satisfied with your invasive investigation than--" she spun around to see him holding her jacket, clutching it in his hands. She called out to him but he only wrung it tighter. In an attempt to rescue her wardrobe, she walked over and peeled it from his grip. At her touch his tense stance eased and Jackson began to come back to himself. He stared at her as if he just noticed her
appearance in the room.

"You're here," he said quietly.

"Yes," she sighed. "I'm here. You're here, in my room." She pitied him, he didn't seem himself but it wasn't her place to care for him anymore, he wasn't hers to love. "And one of those things has to go," she said softer still as she pat his arm.

"I know," Jackson yanked his hand back as he shook off a lingering thought, "I just had a feeling something terrible might have happened."

"That seems to be a popular statement," Lydia smirked. She stepped back and noticed where his jacket hung on the back of her chair. She grabbed it and pushed it into his hands while she pushed him through her bedroom door and down the steps toward her front door. She reminded him "Jackson, you can't just come to here like this anymore."

"A popular statement?" he muttered as he passed the threshold.

"What?" she paused and listened.

"You are pretty popular lately, Lydia." Jackson felt the words form in his mouth, like the grainy liquid before it coagulated into cement. As much as he wanted to prevent the flow, it spilled over and would build a wall, "First you stink of McCall, then Lahey now some new asshole."

Fearless against the flood Lydia raised her chin, "you checked out of our relationship long before I called it quits." Her glare was cutting as she hissed, "I don't owe you an explanation for who I smell of."

"Even if you smell like a slut," with one step he towered over her.

"At least I don't smell like pepper spray," she retorted.

With the muscle memory toward monsters, her hand came up before he came into step. She had even pressed the button before she finished her sentence. Jackson's quick reflexes had him backward and down the steps in flash but not before a portion had gone down his mouth and in his eyes.

While Jackson stumbled to the curb, coughing, unable to cry out for help, Lydia bolted into the house. Minutes later she returned with milk of magnesia in her hands. Two feet between them, Lydia sat on the curb. She watched him grunt and struggle with the cap for a few long seconds and it didn't make her feel any better to see him miserable and in pain. He hadn't meant to scare her, she reminded. Jackson tried to show concern just in a horrible way. Lydia snatched back the bottle and urged him to tilt his head back. As she poured the fluid over his eyes, she noticed when they blinked clear they were serpentine and yellow. It didn't scare her. Nothing scared her these days. She gave thin-lipped smile, "thank you for checking up on me but next time, Jackson just text."

"Yeah," he choked a weak reply. Jackson took back the bottle and downed some to breathe and speak clearer. Despite the act itself, not once did he take angrily to Lydia for Macing him in the face.

After moment of calm while he waited for his vision to clear and listened for his voice to come through, Lydia tried to communicate one fact; "I do remember the good guy, but this isn't okay."

He grunted in reply.
"Just try sometimes to recognize it, there is a good guy in there, too."

Jackson wished his sight had healed up enough to see her, just to be certain of her welfare, just to see her face one last time as she spoke before leaving him curbside. In reality if he had seen her face, it would have been the last thing he wanted because there was nothing Jackson Whittemore hated than people feeling sorry for him.

Track 09 - Time of My Life (Patrick Wolf Cover) by MSMR

"Pull over pull over pull over pull over here!" Scott protested.

Allison had already started to with the first demand but there was something jarring and amusing in the swirling gestures of Scott practically swimming through the air.

"Your mom?" she mused.

"My mom," he gave her a strained look across the aisle, a plead not to laugh.

With the engine off they waited for his Melissa McCall to wander up the steps and make it into the house. At her leisurely pace it would seem. If she went straight upstairs and to bed she would walk pass his bedroom before he had a chance to sneak into it. If she stopped to eat or check up on mail than he had a few moments to clear the porch overhang and into his window without her noticing his absence. That was unless she called out and asked if he were home. Of course there was the unlikely probability she wouldn't bother calling for him out loud.

"Hey Mom," he answered after the first ring.

"You're not home," she sounded that professional combination between sweet and tired that wasn't exactly either. It was a tone that meant 'you are THIS far down on my crap list and rising'.

"I'm on my way home Mom. I promise."

"Scott, I don't like you riding your bike this late."

Relieved that had been her worst stress, "I'm not Mom, Allison's driving me."

Allison's eyes went wide. She waved her hands back and forth, she gestured wildly to be no part of this sinking ship. Scott shrugged in apology and then pressed the speakerphone option.

"Hi, Mrs. McCall," Allison continued, flailing and waved at the phone. When Scott laughed she hit him in the arm.

"Hello Allison. How are you tonight? Are you keeping safe?"

"Safe?" Allison barely kept the squeak out of her voice but her brows shot high enough to reach her hair line. Meanwhile Scott somehow managed to slip and fall further into the passenger seat.

"I heard things got rough at the game. I even treated a few people from the bleachers."

"Yeah. We were out of there without a scratch but uhm, we lost though. So, we went out for fast food."
"Thanks for watching out for the knuckle-head but it's getting kind of late, do you think you can get him home soon?"

Allison hit the horn twice "we're right on the corner. Just saying goodnight."

It was Scott's turn to answer in a bit of flailing to the likes of 'what are you doing?' Allison shrugged haplessly to which Scott hung his head in miserable defeat.

"Wonderful. Could you send him back in 10? I think I'd like to say goodnight to my son before he gets to bed. It is a schoolnight," her tone promised more than the words 'Good' and 'Night.'

"Absolutely Mrs. McCall,"

"ohkaymom," added Scott in a tiny voice, before he slid in the words "iloveyou," and hung up.

"Scott, she was going to ask for you to come home no matter what," Allison rubbed his arm in comfort. Then after a thought she slipped across the divide and slung his arm over her shoulders.

The childish anxiety washed away, Scott smiled and curled her tightly against him. His eyes caught on the backpack on seat beside him, pressed underneath her and crushed against his thigh. There were worse worries on the horizons and he wanted Allison just like this, to hold onto, to trust, to value. And time seemed to always chip away at what they had together.

"You seem anxious," he started backward.

Allison made a noise and closed her eyes. It wasn't the usual way someone sent off signals that they were lying or nervous about a test but something that Allison hummed of sometimes. Like the after tremors of an earthquake, seismic and virtually undetectable.

"I'm worried. I want to help you. I don't know how," she shifted to spread herself along the flat of his chest, to hear his heart closer than he heard hers.

"Let me tell you about my friend Stiles," he started after a drawn out pause.

"You don't have to," she stopped him gently.

"I want to. I think I've wanted to for a long while," he nuzzled the side of her head and when her phone lit up he looked at the time although he tried not to.

"Ignore it," she struggled against his impulse to politely offer to reach for it. "It won't make a difference to my Dad if I get back to him now or in 10 minutes. Let me stay here, please?"

"Okay. Okay," he pulled at the lever under the seat and eased it back so they would lay easier, so that they could stay safe for a little longer. "What's a word, like one word for saying 'joint at the hip'?"

"Entangled?"

"Entangled. That's what we were; me and Stiles and Lydia. We practically lived in each other's houses. Lydia's house had the pool. Stiles' house had all the toys. My house had the best places to make forts and secret hiding places. Our parents gave each other break's so no one went too nuts from dealing with us."

Scott waited. Or he paused. Uncertain whether it was for her to respond or whether he had gotten caught up in the memory, either way Allison squeezed him gently as if she needed to keep hold of
him. Scott held tight to Allison before he dared to continue.

"We were maybe eight or nine and Stiles' Mom had been driving us to Lydia's family Lake House. And this animal ran into the road, like right at the car. Mrs. Stilinski swerved to avoid it but it didn't matter because we hit this sharp ridge. There are a lot of those by the cliff side and Stiles had to have us drive the cliff side, because it was scenic and you could not argue with Stiles. I mean, you just--you just-- never mind." Scott seemed for the most part happy, unburdened to retell the story. Dark in parts but not exactly sad, not until he concluded, "The car bounced off a few ridges before hitting the side face and sliding to rock bottom. We woke up on the second ledge, Lydia and I we were able to climb out because it like wavered for a maybe minute. But Stiles' Mom must have died right when we went over the lip of the cliff. Some part of all of us knows it... none of us should have survived."

 Track 10 - Kids With Guns by Gorillaz

{Tuesday; Early}

After she collected her morning coffee Mrs. Martin walked upstairs to check in on Lydia. Normally the girl would have already been buzzing along and dragged the rest of the house with her but the unexpected was expected these days.

When she knocked on her daughter's bedroom door, she was welcomed in but not with the uppity-ness anticipated for an after-game day.

"Does that have milk and sugar?"

Mrs. Martin nodded.

"Can I?" Lydia asked after she had already pulled the mug from her Mother's grasp. She took a number of long sips before she returned it. There was barely enough left to still call it coffee.

Mrs. Martin placed the cup on the book shelf nearest and followed after Lydia. Lydia, who wore a layered camisole with a silk cardigan paired with pajama shorts and fuzzy slippers while her hair still hung moist from a morning shower. Mrs. Martin sat beside Lydia at the vanity and watched her daughter stare at the tabletop blankly.

When Lydia refocused, she noticed that her Mom settled beside her, smiled and said, "I didn't have another nightmare if that's what you want to ask."

"You didn't get any sleep either," Mrs. Martin touched her forehead lightly and drew a path along the hairline to the back of her ear, "you're never late. Does this have to do with the incident at your Father's? You know if you need more time to rest--"

"No. But thanks," Lydia sighed.

"Do you want to talk about finding the body--last night?"

They had the practice of reinventing their family after the divorce. This would just be another new phase, Mrs. Martin told herself. The night before, when Lydia hadn't reached out but instead Sheriff Stilinski had, Natalie Martin anticipated a daughter in shambles and fear-stricken instead there was only a sleepless and mildly tardy one. That was hardly a shift in dynamics.
"I'm not scared of dead bodies, Mom," Lydia felt in part relieved and nervous. The fact that her mother knew about the corpse in the woods was one thing. Somehow she managed to keep her Mom blissfully ignorant of the other 2 and intended to keep it that way.

"No, of course you're not," Mrs. Martin smiled. She didn't doubt that. There were certainties about her daughter; grace under fire was one of them, flawless aesthetic armor was another. She straightened out Lydia's hair in preparation of the waging world. "But you were scared it was his?"

"No," Lydia closed her eyes let out a slow breath. Her Mother touched too close to the truth without actually hitting upon it, "because then I'd have to think of him as dead."

"All these years, you're too stubborn for that," Mrs. Martin grinned, she sounded wistful and a little grateful even.

"--I'm stubborn?" Lydia hastened, clearly caught up in an argument her mind started without her. Her eyes caught her Mother's in the mirror. "He was so sure and someone that obnoxious, that annoying, just that--" she groaned but it felt lighthearted, "I still miss him, Mom."

"I know you do, sweetie," her Mother smiled softly. Even as Lydia touched up the last of her makeup and she pinned back her daughter's hair, nothing made the girl light up quite like talking of 'him'. A rare chink in the armor.

"I'll be 5 minutes," Lydia assured her Mom, in a rush to get fully dressed and passed the topic. Mrs. Martin made a show that she was nice enough to leave her daughter the rest of the coffee (not that there was much to part with). Before Lydia gained her bearings her cell alerted her of a text from Allison.

- "meet @ track competition; new afterschool club forming. Fort Explorers United!"

With that her unrest washed away.

Chapter End Notes

CREDITS/ROLL CALL:

**Argents - Team1; headed by Victoria, Chris & Allison.**

- Rumy - [Sergeant] specialized in Recon; Special Forces and espionage. Chris' right hand man and Allison's godfather.
- Axel - [1st Lieutenant] expert tracker, marksman and Allison's 2nd cousin.
- Bennett - [Field Officer] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old and friend to Allison.

**Argents - Team2; headed by Kate.**

- Livy - [1st Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Force-Orientation, R.I.F. and close-combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's right-hand man.

**Hale (Present Day) Pack; Alpha**

- Derek - [?] In a very precarious position.

- Isaac - [Omega] abandoned Werewolf in search of a pack.
Twins' Pack; Aiden and Ethan Carver Alphas
- Marta - [Beta] she's an older motor head and their 1st Lieutenant.
- Bridy - [Beta] the packs' spy because she's diminutive and easily underestimated.
- Gus - [Beta] referred to as psychotic now and again, but his very few (and dwindling) close friends' are his touchstone.
- (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, bi and partnered to Naylor, formerly to Bozeman.
- (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
- (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
- (deceased) Coot - [Omega] former Beta, killed by the Monster.

Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha
- (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed 1st Lieutenant, possibly romantically entangled.
- Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali and closely bonded to Huntington.
- Santos - [Beta] while loyal to Kali has mentored many, without regard to packs. He helped the Twins first learn to shift together without losing their identities.
- Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed and with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
- Levi - [Beta] he's neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
- Huntington - [Beta] has strong empathic senses, is very good friends with Gus' from Twins' pack and Lark.

Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha
- Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' Lieutenant, --from wiped out Shapeshifter dynasty.
- Dr. Kane - [Beta] both a medical Doctor and their torturer.
- Quint - [Beta] eager to please teen and Dr. Kane's biological son.

Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha
- Søren - [Beta] 1st Lieutenant, Danish man of even temperament and a skilled negotiator until his temper is peaked.
- Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
Chapter Summary

Pooling their resources and skills, Scott, Lydia and Allison together connive their way into the Preserve to uncover where Stiles is, if Stiles still lived with the Monster still reigning within the woods and Hunters on their way.

- Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/06-were-you-caught/

Chapter Notes

Previously on were (you);

Fledgling Werewolf, Scott McCall has learned to rely on the guidance for lone Werewolf!Isaac and Hunter!Allison to control his outburst but without them around could he manage?

Lydia Martin, not only had another fugue state guide her to a dead body but this time she believed it brought her evidence that a long missing person might be alive.

The rift between Scott and Lydia began with the loss of their friend Stiles but could it be mended with the closure of discovering whatever happened to him 6 years ago?

Allison Argent's finds her Hunter's code constantly tested; "protecting those who cannot protect themselves" and with every new piece of information her loyalties are tested. But she sensed that would come to a head all to soon-- when her friends brought to light more than just secrets from their past. They brought bait.

As Beacon Hills draws in the mysteries, Monsters, several Werewolf Packs as well Hunters there only promises more to come.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Track 01 - The Theory of Relativity by Stars

The track team occupied enough sound and Coach Helisek had them occupy enough time to grant them cover but the Lacrosse team drew in the crowds, so they had the high rows of the bleachers to themselves. It helped that the tradeoff of Greenberg as an alternate with Yukimura was up-and-coming star runner brought in a competitive appeal; they would have cover for hours yet.

"It's called a round-robin," explained Scott.

"Like the bird?" Isaac's head turned toward the conversation from where he leaned over the seats.

"Sort of I guess," Lydia boots made an authoritative tap-tap on the metallic bench that grabbed their attention "It's a thing kids do."

"I thought it was a hotel chain?" blinked Allison, tilting her head up into Lydia's shadow.
"Didn't you have any other kids around growing up?" Scott asked from beside Allison, he grabbed her attention when he slipped his hand into hers. They bumped knees and she turned around to smile, still a bit confused.

"No, I travelled."

"That's okay, I thought it was a restaurant," Isaac raised a hand from the bench bellow.

"What's your excuse? Raised in a box?" Lydia bit out, with hands on her hips she stood mid-center to where they sat.

"No," Isaac grinned up at her and looked a bit too devilish for anyone's taste, "I'm actually from a pretty large family."

"I thought you were an orphan?" Scott wondered aloud.

"I am," Isaac smiled over at Scott, a little less wide.

"Is this important?" Lydia groaned and dropped on the other side of Allison.

"Who knows, you might quiz later." Scott joked. Lydia glared over at him until he felt the need to ease off an inch. Allison shook her head and gave Scott a little smile that meant 'you're doing fine' and then he pushed on. "So, a round-robin; basically Isaac will convince my Mom I'll be studying at his house, and crash there because we have more early drills and he could use the ride."

"Which isn't exactly that far from the truth," Isaac shrugged.

Lydia ignored him and picked up where Scott left off, "I'll let my Mom know I'm staying at Allison's. Allison, I'll tell your parent's that you're staying with me--"

"And Isaac?"

"Isaac doesn't have to tell anyone anything 'cause he lives with wolves," snapped Lydia sarcastically.

Allison obscured her laugh behind a hand only it came across as a small snort. Scott tried to glare in warning to tread lightly instead it came across as though he had trapped gas. If Lydia had stepped into a topic no one wanted to talk about and they wouldn't say so, than she had no reason to feel bad about a thing she can't know she had or hadn't said she said. End of.

"Funny," Isaac smirked at her, the first sign of genuine warmth between the two. Lydia returned it, her nose even wrinkled a little at the end.

"Very tactical," Allison thought aloud.

"What's the point?" Isaac nitpicked.

"'The point' my friend?" Scott said smugly, bragging to Isaac and Allison alike "is we steal away the night."

Track 02 - Circumambient by Grimes
In Beacon Hills the winter weather was best described as "capricious". The air remained dry but the sun beamed down like a hammer, especially during the zenith. On some days the sun's rays were hot enough to bake a potato yet the wind would felt brisk enough to shatter bone. God forbid it would rain. Nothing startled SoCal's more than rain, with their roads so dried up from old ignore grease stains and untreated tire ware, one drizzle and the roads were like roller coasters.

Fortunately, it seemed the winter's fickle bits had passed. A "Fort Exploring Club" didn't seem too preposterous. Stupid, yes but it was feasible. Why "Fort Exploring"?

"After our family meeting on Sunday, they're watching all my texts now," Allison explained in a rush as she shoved supplies into an overnight bag. And then tossed it out her bedroom window.

After Lydia had appropriately schmoozed Mr. & Mrs. Argent, they insisted Allison should have 'quality average teenage girl' time (as in not 'sneaking off and doing hunter-things on her own' time) and with regards to Allison's shaky grades her Mom's virtually shoved them out of the front door. As long as they got Allison's special window-dropped supplies and left before things were questioned too closely they would stay golden.

Lydia bounced at the foot of her bed. "I wouldn't exactly call this lying," she grinned. With Allison in the lead of their expedition she felt at ease. Lydia had experience camping and hiking but none of that held up against her unease when it came to those same damn woods. Her spine curled every time she so much as drove past, when she walked near she felt watched, drawn toward, manipulated and virtually haunted by. With Allison beside her though, preferably armed, it wasn't quite so severe.

"I wouldn't exactly call us a club," Allison smirked at Lydia while she switched from a cropped daytime jacket to durable raw khaki jacket.

"An expedition?" Lydia offered up.

"A hunt," Allison admitted with a grin synching her tall wedge boots into place.

"Now that," Lydia's pursed her lips and looked on, unconvinced "definitely sounds tactical."

Track 03 - Rivers by Kankouran

With a need to have directions to the 'dead body'more precise than Lydia's vague recollections, Scott had to return to the Sheriff's house. Only this time he would have to be on his own. Allison explained the Sheriff seemed to kept some of the more vital investigatory files in his home and Scott needed to get those before they could move out.

Scott parked his bike out of sight from the community and figured walking through backyards would be easiest way to pass through unseen. If the spare key remained by the garage like he remembered than breaking in wouldn't have to be an option. He should have considered checking in front of the house than he would have seen the Sheriff's SUV tucked under the shade of a tree.

Considering the Sheriff's reputation as a workaholic it shouldn't have been a shock to find him sat at the kitchen table, staring on bemusedly as Scott tip-toed in.

When Scott smelled a wave of alcohol on the Sheriff's breath and listened to him complain of how he thought Scott might have been another punk kid messing around with the house, Scott felt a
wave of guilt. He walked further in, sat at the kitchen table and admitted he had come over and messed around a little bit when he picked up Lydia. The Sheriff hadn't asked one question but Scott tended to over-explain. He said when he walked through the halls he just liked everything, that he sensed warmth and goodness and he hadn't wanted to leave. After babbling he tacked on "I didn't mean to be rude, I just meant"-- but then drew a blank.

The Sheriff handed Scott a beer with a hard-pressed smile. Scott hadn't had many father/son moments throughout his life and those he could remember he shared with the Sheriff. Scott drank the beer while the Sheriff drank his Bourbon and then another and one more. Any guilt over his supernaturally high alcohol tolerance was assuaged with the sight of the reports on the table. He committed to memory recognizable features on the Preserves landscape. Only once he saw photos that showed evidence of werewolves, (obscured footprints with extended claw marks through solid stones and black blood on tufts of animal hair) he knew those he couldn't leave behind. When the Sheriff drifted off Scott shoved the photos down his jeans.

Just as he tried to make a polite excuse to leave the Sheriff mentioned Natalie, how worried she was, how he knew what it was like to lose your kid. Scott ignored the discomfort of crumbling photographs and sat back down. Before Scott could ask for specifics the Sheriff cut him off; he clasped Scott's hands across the table where the photos should have been. He gave Scott a penetrating look and slurred a little when he said, "don't you disappear on us, kid. You got me?"

"Sure," promised Scott and meant it, even though he knew the Sheriff wouldn't remember it. When he offered to clear away the dishes he took the bottle of Bourbon with him.

The Sheriff thanked him in a reply that was barely words. Afterward Scott decided to wash all the dishes as an act of attrition and when he turned to leave he found Sheriff had fallen asleep with his head pillowed on his folded arms.

Track 04 - The Crooked Kind by Radical Face

At the Police Station, Lydia hovered in the entrance and strategized how to be just charming enough. They found out through Allison's family resources there would only be one officer on duty. Allison and Isaac only needed a few seconds and Lydia could do 'Nice', just as a distraction.

Considering Lydia's recent frequency amongst law enforcement no one would be suspicious if Lydia strolled in all loose hair and short skirts. Parrish smiled and greeted her officiously; both asking and answering a question in a single breath.

"How can I help you, Lydia? Sorry, I can't talk about the bodies you uncovered, if you're curious--"

She didn't like it when people caught her off guard, it already made it harder to be 'Nice'. She narrowed her eyes, placed the small cardboard container on the counter and figured that would be answer in itself.

"--Did you buy me coffee?"

"Actually," she said sweetly. "I went out to buy me coffee. I just brought you one too."

'Nice' she sometimes had difficulty with. 'Charming', no problem. When Parrish's eyes darted back and forth between the container and her bright eyes, he hadn't noticed Isaac and Allison slip passed.
Lydia hardly noticed herself, flirting was every bit as interesting if not more so than espionage.

"To make up for the lousy coffee from the other night," she snatched up one cup and pushed the other toward him. "And to say thanks, I guess."

"You didn't have to buy me coffee. We have coffee here in the station."

"And the thanks?" she pushed farther.

"You didn't have to do that either," he accepted the cup. "It's part of the job. But it's good to see you. How're you feeling?" he smelled the coffee the way people smelled flowers. It made Lydia smile.

"Still having trouble sleeping," she answered and popped the lid of her coffee cup. She sipped slowly, peered over the cap, an urge for him to speak.

"I hear coffee helps," he slurped intentionally loud. Can someone slurp sarcastically, because if you could that's what he'd done.

"You're a riot. Maybe I came to check on you. It was a pretty garish scene. You sure you're not having any nightmares?"

"I'm not. (another slurp) Not over this."

Lydia said nothing, drawing people in wasn't a skill that needed words. It could be done with a shift in position, a lean on the desk, a tilt of the head. An appealing forte with a varying aptitude. Deputy Parrish had no problem at all keeping Lydia captivated.

"But after I left the Army," he eased and leaned against the counter. His voice became calmer. Not the same officious calm he used when he tried to get her back in her car the night on the Industry Bridge. A different tone, like they could have been friends sitting off nowhere near here. They would have confided in one another, "At night, when I closed my eyes, I'd see buddies from my company that didn't make it."

"What did you do?" she stopped drinking and listened.

"Talk to them," he smiled coolly, as if it were the most obvious answer in the world. "When else are they going to get a chance to say something? 'you having nightmares?'"

Lydia shook her head in negation during a sip. She licked her lips thoughtfully then answered, "Only when I'm asleep."

His brow lifted a tick of acknowledgment but he didn't pry, "I should say thanks."

"It's just coffee."

"I meant the other night," he leaned forward, like conspirers do. Lydia met him part way. "You were a big help. Plus, we were able to connect them to extended family in Texas."

"I know my leather..." Lydia felt herself out of her element suddenly. "That sounded less naughty in my head." She dropped her eyes and finally noticed in her purse, her phone was alight but for how long? Had Allison texted the "ALL CLEAR" five seconds or five minutes ago?

"You okay getting home?"

Lydia looked up from her phone into sharp eyes, flashed a smile and handed him her empty cup.
"I know the way. No need for a police escort tonight but I'll let you know in the future."

"Goodnight, Lydia."

"Goodnight, Deputy."

Track 05 - Count Me In (Feat. Thomas Meighan) by Dark Horses

"How do you know how to do this?"

"Shh."

"Ok..... but you know what you're doing?"

Allison glanced over her shoulder. Isaac followed at a crouch; it was a wonder with 6-inch reach over her how he squished under the windowsill.

"Yes, I know that not getting caught means being silent. I figured that didn't need explaining, Isaac."

"Oh," he looked to the floor, efficiently chastised.

Lydia flirted with the officer at the desk and they knew the signs; she had him caught in her web. Allison raised her hand and gave a tiny wave for Isaac to follow. They were like a shadow, silent and pressed along the walls through the corridor of the Station.

They didn't stand upright until the door click shut with them on the inside of it. Allison slipped the keys back into her jacket pocket.

The curiosity on Isaac's face looked about to burst into a tirade so Allison cut it off. She commanded him to watch the door while she searched the room for the papers she needed. Scott had given the head's up that the Sheriff would be out for the night, which made the job a little easier but did not give them more time to get things done. Isaac pressed himself flat against the doorframe, intense and business-like. She shook her head amused at his seriousness.

"My family helps the station with some investigations," quietly she explained while she circled the desk, eyeing its contents. "It gives them temporary access to department facilities like this office and the records room."

"Your family just let you have the keys?"

"Oh no, I swiped them," she grinned while she shifted through papers. She jumped to attention when she caught sight of a folder shelved in a hanging compartment beside Isaac's head. She rushed over to him, yanked out sheets and leafed through them.

"The location and date matches when Lydia found the body," Isaac read off the exterior of the folder.

Allison snapped the folder closed to prevent him from snooping further. She pointed to the label on the shelving compartment. "It's out boxed for the mornings closed cases."

"What does that mean?" Isaac whispered close to her ear.
"For us?" staring up at him, she wondered if he took this all too seriously or not seriously enough. She jutted her chin toward the door and implied they should head out. "It means we're going and we're taking it with us."

Isaac hadn't opened the door a few inches before Allison dropped to the ground and pulled him by the collar to follow. With a point she sent him toward the back of the station while she tried to lock up. Between locking the door and holding the folder, Allison couldn't quite get a grip on things. When Isaac offered to hold either the folder or to lock the door, Allison wasn't comfortable with the options of what to let go of. But pressed for time, and knowing Lydia's charm couldn't work forever, she decided the more vital of the two to hold would be the keys (and onto the trust of her family already mostly broken). Reminding him not to open it, she handed over the folder and watched as he disappeared around the corner. Making certain to leave things unmarred, she locked up the office and caught up with Isaac at the rear of the station. Since the officers popped out through the back exit for smoke breaks, it wouldn't be too suspicious for them to find the fire alarm left detached. After all, to human error is divine.

They coasted around the street corner with the car's lights off before Allison pulled into the shoulder and texted Lydia with the all-clear. Although she wouldn't, all she wanted to do was snatch the files from Isaac's hand. Although her adrenaline was high she still wanted to make clear-headed decisions.

"Thanks for being a look-out," she said sweetly, meaning it while still putting out her hand expectantly.

With eyes alight Isaac smiled in return. He gave her back the folder without hesitation.

"Does it have like official government secrets in it?" he stretched in his seat, his long legs had to adjust and readjust.

"Nope, just maps." she lied and her eyes were hidden by her falling hair while she stuffed the folder deep into her bag.

"That was awesome!" he crowed and the ends of his mouth curled up.

Allison sat back and watched him.

"I mean, terrifying, completely terrifying... but kind of awesome," when he tried a calmer voice he finally settled in the seat.

Her face scrunched in amused scrutiny, her arms crossed her chest.

"I've never done anything like that before. Have you?"

Allison bit her lip, another lie would be too obvious so she righted herself and turned the car on.

"Let me drive you home at least," she offered. And it was as if she stomped out a flame, his eyes dimmed and smile faded slightly.

"Sure," he said. "Sure. Drive toward the Aires West. You'll have to let me out once we get near to Spaulding."

Allison side-eyed him through the mirror and thought to herself 'whose lying now'?

Sure as shit, once they reached the outskirts of the "Spaulding" closed community Isaac made an excuse (something about Noise Disturbance Ordinance) for him to head out on foot. Because of
visiting Jackson' she knew he was right about the ordinance but also knew it wasn't that strict. After putting a pin in that thought, she refocused on meeting Scott and Lydia before daylight.

From what she gleaned in the crime-scene (being declared and incidental death by animal mauling) would be released in the morning to an independent cleaning company (conveniently owned by the Argents). If they didn't get there before her family did, they would never be able to prevent Stiles from being hunted down like a criminal.

Track 06 - Where the Fence is Low (Acoustic) by LIGHTS

Squeezed into Lydia's VW Beetle was the scariest of all transportation options. There was no way Scott could get access to his Mother's car since she took it to work. Allison preferred to have access to one of her families all-terrain vehicles but it would have brought too much attention if she snuck home to get one. Plus they were loud, very loud. This left them headed toward the woods with Lydia's small car.

Lydia loved her car and fretted about every ding and scratch, a fact which kept them in high humor. Despite their anxiety, between Lydia's high-maintenance backseat driving coupled with Allison 'intense driving' training and Scott's keen eyesight, they found their way easier than expected.

At an intersection where the creek moved under a road where students from the High School and University ran innumerable times unharmed, but Scott ran the one time he'd gotten bitten. He pointed in the dimness toward the greenery west, off the joggers path into the dark.

"There," he noted. Neither sad nor scared, neither shy nor impudent, just a sort of recognition. Lydia eased back in the seat and wondered if she would carry the same dignity had she remembered her missing week. If not would she be able to fake it?

"And I found you right here," Allison said in earnest, her face turned from open concern to cheeky, "and I put you in my car and I wrapped you up and kept you in bed."

Lydia rolled her eyes and reminded "and there is where I went into the woods and found a dead body." She leaned forward between the two front seats, ensuring to block whatever awkward lovebird moment was occurring. "This is more than a suspicious incident. Twice makes it a pattern."

They didn't want to get caught lurking on the property edge which meant taking extra (stupidly dangerous) measures. With the light off they drove from the asphalt, through the foliage and by some miraculous effort (unfortunately for Lydia's nerves) mounted a few bumps and moved onto the joggers path. Allison drove as Lydia's instincts directed until they could go no farther on 4-wheels.

The temperature had changed.

"It's warmer now," Allison had rolled down the window.

A mist made it difficult to see more than a few feet in front of them, difficult but hardly impossible as the sun started to pierce golden through the grey. It wasn't just warmer; it was 'Not January In Beacon Hills' warm. There was stillness that was scarier than the drive up there. A wood should move with creatures, there had to be a cause to the stillness.
Lydia shifted uncomfortably out of her wool coat and propped it under her for a better view. The leaves created pockets where the seeping mist made eyes and hands, she stared it down in full knowledge that figment people weren't what looked back. The threat of police officers and cleaners urged them on, but a murder and a Monster could also be in there and then there was Stiles.

When Lydia looked to Scott he nodded in articulation, he also felt someone near. Whether friend or foe he couldn't decipher but he didn't want to get anyone's hopes up. He pointed in the direction where he sensed it strongest.

Lydia asked "does it seem anything like the back pack?"

"The backpack had dirty socks, a pair of...uhm, and a pair of jeans. A notebook but I don't--", he shook his head in defeat. Lydia gave him a faint smile in gratitude.

After sifting through the files she collected combined with the crime photos Scott collected, Allison noticed the particular markings that told her instincts to move South to South East, along the creek and toward the direction of the body. Despite her insight to start at the crime scene, Scott's instinct told him to head toward the hideaway, South West. Given their limited time they would have to split up. Allison reminded Scott, it would be fine at all times they would only be a few minutes from one another.

"It just makes sense," she started to explain although no one argued, "we have two locations; I need to see if there discrepancies in the photos. Maybe your friend went back? Or worse, the murderer? Plus taking the backpack and stealing some photos isn't enough if we can't disturb the evidence before my family gets here. We're going to need to split up." Her voice trailed, when she glanced over Scott and Lydia looked at her with amused and eager faces. She didn't have to justify it, whether she deserved it or not they trusted her explicitly and she'd rather die-- no, she'd rather kill than let anything happen to them. "We're on a time limit, not just because of cleanup but because we've got to somehow get this Beetle down that trail before sunrise."

"Yes sir," Scott grinned.

"You think I'm kidding," Allison placed her hand firmly on his arm, "if you're not back in 2 hours I'm coming for you." The tremor in her voice must have conveyed something dangerous and Scott's brows went up, his mouth opened in a little 'oh' but his eyes lit up in excitement.

"Got you," however his voice was steady.

"Good," she grinned.

No one discussed aloud why Isaac was excluded. It was an unspoken agreement; he didn't warrant being part of this. The confidence in Allison's eyes promised to keep for Scott devotion. The squeeze from Scott's hand when he helped Lydia from the backseat promised to keep faith. A prim nod when Lydia glanced between the two promised a sealed trust.

First out of the car was Allison, she collected her compound bow and an over-sized quiver 'just in case' from the trunk of the car. Scott looked impressed, Lydia looked relieved.

When Scott used his unnatural speed in front of Lydia for the first time and it made the hairs on the back of her neck stand. As Allison came beside her to urge her to stay in the car Lydia came to a conclusion, a delayed and obvious one she probably had always known.

'Allison knew.'

Nothing had fazed Allison, which now amused Lydia a little. While anyone else might have felt a
betrayal Lydia felt challenged; she flipped her hair over her shoulder and marched ahead into the woods. Impressed but confused Allison shook her head and followed one step behind.

"Lydia, what's going on?" Allison cast a side-eyed glance, her concern exceeded Lydia's mood. Things were already intense. A new mood would tack on a few decibels, she was curious just how many.

"What's going on is Scott has his special senses, you have weapons and you stolen maps but I have voices in my head. As a race to see who's the craziest who do you think is going to win?"

"I wouldn't be out here if I thought this was crazy," she insisted with a smirk.

Mid-step, Lydia swung around to face her and Allison stood still. Lydia's expression was unguarded, she bit her lower lip as if she meant to say something instead she gave a slow nod. Wherever she stood in her conflict, Allison couldn't reach it.

The one step that pulled Allison from Lydia opened room for a rift on a breeze that echoed loud enough it obscured sound but harsh enough it covered up tracks. In a shift of Beacon Hills' capricious weather Allison and Lydia were divided.

It is an ironic habit, despite how clever or aware of the absurdity, everyone runs faster when lost.

Track 07 - Follow by Crystal Fighters

The crime scene photos were gruesome. Before that Scott had only seen a dead body in his nightmares but he hadn't flinched to look at the photos. He felt like he should have. Lydia wouldn't look at them, the whole time she kept her eyes on the woods. And Allison had been ferocious and unaffected, he wondered if her families' work in security had desensitized her.

Either way he couldn't help but continuously feel a little out of his element.

When they arrived at the Preserve Allison said it felt warm. Lydia said it seemed still. Those words paled in comparison to what he felt. The woods felt devoid of life, like an aurora would sooner touch it than twilight would. But Scott figured it wouldn't seem that way to anyone other than a Werewolf. Well, probably.

At first he ran along then slower, cautious as all hell. The nearer he got to where he suspected Stiles' den the more he sensed someone following him. Just a vague sense of it, like the anticipation of when you walked into a room a second before everyone jumped from behind couches and screamed "Surprise! Happy Birthday!" only it grew to the anticipation of "Surprise! Sheriff's Department! You're under arrest for obstruction of justice and lying to your Mom, Again!"

Okay, maybe not the last one but without the ability to focus he felt paralyzed. He tried to move passed the oppression of the wood, then he realized the option of sitting and waiting gave him something more than learned patience. It gave access to Stiles' hideout.

Without realizing it Scott had tripped and landed right at the entrance of it and not very gracefully at that. He wasn't sure which had left the bigger impact, the bruise on his head from the fall or the bruise on his heart at the realization that Stiles had cleared out.
It had not only been a rite of passage but an obligation to direct Hunting parties among the 'Argent' family. Allison was not only brilliant at it but she reveled in it. But when she developed personal stakes she understood how Hunters became jaded. Instead it doubled her focus to have her strategy ruined, and she felt it would even tarnish the value of what was at risk to complain. Despite Scott and Lydia's claims to not get along, Allison would lay even money they would have gone on this expedition together. She could only imagine how much worse things would go without her, so now their priorities were her priorities.

With each swift measured step it furthered 'their' shared goals, she reminded herself. And when she found the first coil spring trap in an underbrush she realized the Sheriff's department must have placed them around to keep the crime scene clear of wildlife. And when she uncovered the second trap less than a yard off she realized how vital it was to get hold of them. How the hunt went from finding a missing person to finding three missing people evaded her but it surely wasn't outside of her scope of expertise.

Her friends were clever enough to get out of tight spots, certainly but this was a different matter. She tried to think unemotionally and clinically, so she rationalized that Scott would heal if he got hurt not that she wished him pain. But her promise to a very human Lydia had become a factored priority to her strategy. Allison reached for her cell phone and started to dial.

As Lydia moved through brambles, drawn forward by dizzying colors it seemed a path cleared for her. Her speed picked up and up. She knew herself to be on the course with such certainty she didn't stumble but in her head inertia made a tornado of her senses. The sound of laughing children drowned out all else, she felt as though her skin turn to marble and she became impervious to the elements. She smelled berries and sun, everything summer.

The children, she told no one, she trusted because their voices were her own and her friends and they teased and chased and she remembered that game. It ended in tears, exhausted and laughing and she knew if she told anyone she would undoubtedly be labeled 'disturbed'. But how could she be blamed to want to tag along to a time when the worst outcome was "you're it!"

The temperate woods were a greater threat than she gave it credit, her waking mind warned. But caught up in blind anticipation, she feared for nothing.

Until the vision abandoned her, when it snapped like a twig and her senses returned. Alone, in the pale dawn light, miles from anything familiar and frozen still with a coil spring wolf trap triggered underfoot.

Remain immobile; Lydia's first clear thought since she had left the car. Keep calm and even breaths, were her second thoughts. Her third, she prayed she could find her cell phone.
When a buzz burrowed through his brain everything went to hell. Scott believed there should have been an agreement for radio silence. At least that's what they did in the spy films. He regretted not asking about those rules explicitly when his Werewolf hearing was assaulted by Lydia's ring tone. It sounded as near as if somebody placed it inside of his skull. Caught mid-run Scott pin-wheeled into a lump and he had to roll onto his back as he tried to get the stars out of his eyes.

While stunned to have his sense of hearing returned, he listened to Lydia's breathe sharply, her fingers falter, her phone slip from her grasp to the ground and the wretched whimper that followed. Far off but of equal distance N.West, he heard the hammering of Allison's heart in her chest. He heard her fingers tap at her phone, tap again and again. And Lydia not pick up. He listened to Allison's panic when she begged her to pick up all while Lydia's struggled not to cry. Swearing, Allison finally gave up and demanded of no one "she better be OK!"

Scott let out a breath he hadn't realized he'd been holding. That connection, the first sense to cut through the mist overwhelmed him, he had to let go of the thread. He hated to admit it but he had to abandon his search for Stiles. There was no room to resent this choice again; whatever phantom possibility he could track was nothing compared to the real possibility his friends were in need.

By the sound of things, he feared it would be too late. Uncertain he could track them without backtracking to the car, Scott rolled onto his hands and knees and sensed out with renewed conviction. Inside of his core he felt an uncoiling, not like any time before. Not uncontrolled or angry, he felt every cell in him under his command and when his teeth extended into fangs against his lower lip and his claws dug into the ground, he felt good and he felt powerful. And he found it easy to pluck her voice out of the air, to hear her whisper his name like a chant.

"Allison, I-I can't reach... Scott, I don't know if you can hear me-- God. Come on, don't screw this up. Please."

His glowing eyes narrowed and he took off in dash because that was all the direction he needed.

Track 11 - Groenland by Immune

After the 3rd phone call Allison began to lose heart, she couldn't fail Lydia again. As an unfamiliar panic rose in Allison's throat, she closed her eyes and remembered her promise.

From the outside pocket on the strap of her over-sized quiver she withdrew a slim clutch purse (a gift; Raspberry python Gucci, with gold detailing on the inside that that read "In Case of Fashion Emergency. xx Lydia"). Inside were a set of spare keys with the glittery initials L. M. on a keychain, custom collapsible night-vision glasses, a plastic probe full with gelatinous liquid, three hollowed out arrow tips and a slim clone beacon of Lydia's iPhone.

Allison used the clone phone, typed the username "LydiaM" password "MAΘ". She pressed the command to 'find my phone' and a map popped up instantaneously. It gave a soft sound and a bright throbbing light straight up a hillside, across the Creek's third turn and shot through the clearings, several hundred yards off course directly South. Allison grinned at her cleverness. Her pride was short-lived.

Further North West, diagonally opposite Lydia's location and parallel from the direction Scott
went, she heard a trap snap and a howl of pain. It sounded neither animal nor man. It sounded like both; it was closest to her and the nearest thing she had heard to a violent threat.

Allison slipped the cloned phone safely back into its hiding spot. For Lydia's sake, Allison had to have faith that together, her friend's would take care of each other. She had no room for doubts, otherwise she couldn't move forward.

Along the hillside she moved low and quickly, her stealth training made it easy to come across without being seen. When she sighted what the trap snared, a smirked slipped across her features and relief washed over her. Remembering herself, she snapped closed her compound bow and swapped it for her tranquilizer rifle from her over-sized quiver. Once she replaced the tranquilizer with the gel from the probe and took aim, a realization hit her and that feeling of relief became quickly replaced by foreboding for them all.

Track 12 - Here With Me (Tinlicker Remix) by Susie Suh X Robot Koch

Lydia hardly ever suffered ironic process theory that was when math served her best; life's problems vanished when you drowned them out with the 1's and 0's around you. Whenever the trap underfoot sounded as if it were about to squeak to life or her leg trembled she searched for the Golden Sequence in the leaves of the trees or the wings of a firefly.

As her safety net evaded her she closed her eyes. "One, Small, Precise, Poetic, Spiraling mixture..." she muttered under her breath subconsciously. Steadier, she opened her eyes and felt with absolute certainty everything would be fine.

"Lydia, think." she said firmly, "you are not one those hysterical girls who screams and flails for someone to save them. You are here for a reason and you are not leaving without a suitable result. This is just a setback."

"Hey, so if I promise I wasn't here to try and save you" started a deliberately calmed voice from the clearing behind her, "is it okay if I help anyway?"

Lydia's back straightened minutely.

"Or I could just hand you your cell and you could call som--"

"Get me off the trap get me off the trap get me off the trap," hissed Lydia.

The guy in the hoodie sounded young, around her age. More than likely a jogger; it had gotten early enough or late enough depending on the point of view. He came alongside her and dropped to his knees to examine the trap.

"You're doing great. Don't be nervous at all. Just keep steady."

"I am steady," she snapped.

"I was talking to me," he chuckled nervously. His hands wiped away the leaves and he took his time to examine the trap.

"Look for a warning label," she told him.
"A warning label?" he asked in disbelief.

"Instructions on how to disarm it."

"Why the hell would they put instructions on the bottom of a trap?" he asked, face further to the ground as if he could sniff it out.

"Because animals can't read," she offered, mildly annoyed. He sniggered a little at that.

"You can do it. You can figure this out," he muttered to himself again. He pushed back his hood and focused. After a moment he leaned back just behind her line of sight and contemplated a decision. When he spoke again his voice lost its joviality and regained the thoughtful calm he had started with.

"Okay, I've got it. I'm going to reset it then pull you off. I need you to trust me or I don't think it will work. And I really want this to work. So--"

"I trust you," she cut in, her sincerity surprised them both.

The anticipation wore worse on his nerves than hers. He didn't wait a moment longer to twist the locking mechanism. Lydia blindly reached back for him and threw her weight in his direction. He was there to catch her quicker than humanly possibly, one hand cradled her head and the other braced her waist as he yanked her to safety.

In shock, she rationalized, that tore through she had clutched to him and buried her face in his collar. Behind her the sound of the trap snapping shut reverberated through the air. They stared at it and the place where the metal teeth would have rendered her leg in two. He held her upright when her legs went weak and when all the calming numbers slipped from her mind he soothed strokes along her spine.

Track 13 - All The Lines by Fleurie

"Lydia!" Scott's shout tore across over the horizon and they both turned toward the sound.

"Scott!" she called back, her voice full of mixed emotion. He no longer looked the wolf, the sound of her voice eased off his distress.

However quick an observer Scott was it still took him more than a moment to assess the scene; when he slid into the clearing where an animal trap lay sprung within a foot of her, where her fallen cell lay on the wrong side of it and where Lydia stood grasping onto a familiar face glued to a stranger's body. 16 years-old instead of 10, with a face longer like his Dad's, with eyes wiser and more determined but still soft like his Mother. Stiles looked a lot taller than Scott had expected, almost like he suffered from a growth-spurt and a half.

"Lydia," Scott said in a low but emotional voice, "you did it. You found him."

"I-- What?" her mouth gaped, Lydia found herself at a loss for words so she internalized. Surviving unscathed was only mildly more believable than finding herself held safely in Stiles' arms. She blinked away her disbelief and disentangled. In fact she thrust herself out of his hold.

With eyes wide and unblinking Stiles stared with similar concerned fascination only he seemed to
smirk without meaning to. Perpetually.

"Stiles," Scott called out to him in quiet surprise.

Stiles focused shifted and the warmth in his eyes shimmered in a way that could only be matched by Scott's. The smirk on his lips turned into an outright grin, hesitant at first but irrepressible.

A perfect package unexpected but anticipated, they were arguably the best thing that ever happened to Beacon Hills. But that much Stiles hadn't needed to come out of hiding to confirm.

Stiles imagined Scott to be weedier. He had had asthma after all yet came sprinting into the clearing like a bat out of hell. Scott took after his Father in a lot of ways, in his higher cheekbones or recklessness maybe. But his want to help others That was his Mom. And that was great and everything but that roguish grin, the glint in his eyes that said it was perfectly natural to tear through the Preserve in the middle of the night and expect to find a long-lost friend... that was Scott.

Lydia was different entirely. Tenacious, livelier with flowing hair, flawless face and everything perfectly stylized down to impractical footwear to run steadfastly toward him. She looked like she belonged on a pedestal somewhere not in the woods, definitely not caught on a hunter's trap, calm as a cucumber while Stiles observed and tried not to piss his pants.

Sure, periodically people would pass through the woods but he couldn't leave it up to chance that someone else would come to her aide. Without a doubt he would definitely save her (that is if she would let him it seemed) and Stiles assumed, after his good deed done he would slink off. Maybe after so much time had passed Lydia wouldn't even recognize him. He never got that far. He had only gotten to the bit where she had knocked the wind out of him. He hadn't calculated for how she would cling to the fabric of his hoodie or how it looked to stare into green eyes.

A split second later, when Scott called him out like someone on a lineup he felt really fine about it.

"Stiles?" she whispered, as if asking confirmation. He nodded without looking.

"Stiles!" Scott sounded happier.

"Stiles!" Lydia sounded irked.

"Stiles!!" Scott said loudly before he rushed forward to pull him into a proper hug.

Lydia ambled back and forth, clasped and unclasped her hands in nervous contemplation. She collected her phone and muttered his name to herself. She thought of texting Allison and then went back to pacing. And muttering.

"Can't you talk?" she accused in rasp, her emotions left her voice raw. He nodded. "And you don't have anything to say?" she sounded outright exasperated.

"I'm just shocked Lydia Martin remembered my name."

At that she huffed in annoyance and punched him in the arm.

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Track 14 - You Should Know Where I’m Coming From by BANKS
"Shit, can we be done with the dramatic," Stiles released Scott from his hold. He was more tentative to let Scott out of his reach than Lydia. They dragged their arms along as though electricity had run through them.

"You guys okay?" Scott tried to clear up. He help couldn't but clap Stiles' shoulder opposite to the one Lydia hit, almost as if to make certain he was real.

"There must be hunting traps around," Lydia stepped around it, hovering just shy of nervous pacing. "Stiles got me out though. Ironic since we came to save him."

"Save me?"

"Screw them. We're ready for anything," grinned Scott. His body language changed again, in that way Lydia knew, in that no longer clumsy but fluid way when he was ready to take a decisive action. Scott had come up with a plan and Lydia was surprised to find she had become eager to follow.

"I'm lost," Stiles interrupted.

"Wait," Lydia forced room for her keen mind to cut through, "Were you?"

"What?" Stiles backed up toward the woods.

"Lost," Scott caught onto her wave length.

"It has been years, Stiles. 6 of them," Lydia neared him, her stare narrowed.

"Where've you been?" whereas Lydia sounded accusatory, Scott just sounded troubled.

"It's complicated. You wouldn't believe me if I told you," Stiles wasn't aimed to run but his nervous energy kept him moving in concise circles.

"Stiles," Lydia's face didn't reflect the calm in her tone, "what wouldn't we believe?" She looked close to skeptical, if it also broached on sincere.

Stiles worried his lower lip. Without meaning to his movement mimicked hers from earlier but exaggerated; clasping and fidgeting just shy of flailing. Lydia glanced at Scott, wordlessly communicating what they both came to assume. Her look said with a distinct disbelief, 'not this again'. Whereas Scott's look answered with hope that said 'this, again!'

"You're a werewolf," Scott offered up an olive branch. If the woods messed with Stiles' senses the way it had with his than the most fortunate thing they had to feel instead of the distracting supernatural was awkward delirium and happiness. That was perfectly fine with him.

"Yeah. That." Stiles stopped on the spot. He took a breath and spun around. There were many scenarios he played in his head about this moment (if it ever happened) where he would track them at their school and caught them preferably together, or if he had to approach them separately at their homes and stood on doorsteps like something out of a romantic-comedy but exposed in the midst of a creepy-ass woods had not been one of them. What of course happened was they found out first, and then patiently waited for his shocked response instead of his rehearsed reverse. They did always keep him on his toes. "How're you guys not freaking out about this?"

"Because I'm a werewolf, too," Scott supplied then looked more nervous than Stiles.

Instinct told Lydia this was why she had come, why she felt bold enough to march into the woods
and to walk among the company of wolves. For safeties' sake she had assembled her friends because things were about to get more disturbing.

"What?" Stiles sounded upset at first and then "what?" sympathetic.

"So is Isaac." Allison announced as she sent him stumbling into the clearing, with a gun to his head.

Track 15 - We've Got A Big Mess On Our Hands by The Academy is...

"I wish it were more of a shock," Deputy Clarke started off, 15 minutes into her shift and the oppression of desk duty was regrettably cut short by an alert from Fairvale. "Well, it really isn't an option is it?" She knew the right answer, she had even said as much but her voice lacked the confidence needed.

"The Sheriff isn't even in yet," Deputy Haige had an arch to his voice, an officiousness that came with proficient boredom.

"Just because he isn't overseeing it, doesn't mean he doesn't have an interest," Deputy Parrish interceded. He had just clocked out, his shifted having ended at daybreak but the uncertainty in Clarke's voice called back to him. He reached out a hand for her intake document.

"Does that mean we wait for his direction or does that mean we go directly to Fairvale?" Deputy Clarke looked to any senior officer for guidance, it was an unfortunate circumstance some were more positive than other.

Parrish read the fax over twice, his tiredness washed away in a sense of duty and shame. He had sorted all the intake sheets but hadn't stopped to review it close enough.

"Go to Fairvale," a Jane Doe II, under similar circumstances. "I'll run this to the Chief myself," Parrish gave Clarke a pat on the shoulder for catching the detail he hadn't.

"Yeah?" she grew more certain. Her brow went up with the cockiness she deserved for such good instincts.

"Yeah," he walked over to the copy machine and made one to take to Stilinski. "Give them assurance Beacon Hills will give them all the support they'll need. And more just for keeping us in the loop. You did good Clarke." He felt like tacking on 'where I didn't' but self pity wasn't going to get him as far as good police work would.

"How many pieces of paper are you planning on sharing Deputy?" another crisp voice of officious disposition caught Parrish in an onslaught.

Jordan Parrish turned to find a gentleman, by the stretch of the definition, named Tyhurst waiting behind him. With a grin that looked drawn on in the way children struggle to keep colors in the lines of the coloring books, in that his smile barely fit on the lines of his face.

"Beg pardon?"

"Sheriff's Department is supposed to release reports to our service. Officially opening up the crime scene in the Beacon Hills Preserve... but if you have anything else that needs help?" Tyhurst tacked
Parrish smiled a decent smile, he was much better at it.

"I'm sorry, I'm off duty or I'd help you find those documents I heard were misplaced last night. And 'this'," Parrish folded the paper and handed it off "Deputies Clarke and Cordova are off to perform the usual interdepartmental exchanges. Now I'm sure Deputy Haige over there would be happy to help you out but in the meantime the Sheriff's department sure does appreciate your support."

In the contest of whose smile could last the longest the answer was Clarke's in relief as she cleared out the office to investigate a dead body, ASAP.

Chapter End Notes

"It is an ironic habit of human beings to run faster when they have lost their way."
— Rollo May

__________________________

dear ","
your comments are utter motivation, they're the coffee to my sugar intake. thanks, bunches.

dear readers thus far,
thanks for your faith on a fic that up to this chapter had no summary. that is a LOT of faith and I appreciate that. I was determined for surprises to come along and BE surprising but especially THIS. Why? Because of the original motivation for this fic. You want a peek at the gif set that started it all. =]
http://scottmartinski.tumblr.com/post/76795532190/au-stiles-scott-and-lydia-were-the-best-of
isn't it grand! I asked to use the summary from there & got an OK. so, with some tweaks yay! for finally getting a summary.
Now, there are enough (things I hope to be) surprises ahead to keep your interest. thanks for braving it so far, I hope you're brave enough for what comes next.

__________________________

CREDITS/ROLL CALL:

Argents - Team1; headed by Victoria, Chris & Allison.
• Rumy - [Sergeant] specialized in Recon; Special Forces and espionage. Chris' right hand man and Allison's godfather.
• Axel - [1st Lieutenant] expert tracker, marksman and Allison's 2nd cousin.
• Bennett - [Field Officer] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old and friend to Allison.

Argents - Team2; headed by Kate.
• Livy - [1st Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Force-Orientation, R.I.F. and close-
combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's right-hand man.

Hale (Present Day) Pack; Alpha
• Derek - [?] In a very precarious position.

? Other;?
• Isaac - [Omega] abandoned, in search of a new pack.
• Stiles - [Omega] also abandoned, in search of any existing pack members.
• Jackson - [?]...
• Lydia - [?]...

Twins' Pack; Aiden and Ethan Carver Alphas
• Marta - [Beta] she's an older motor head and their 1st Lieutenant.
• Bridy - [Beta] the packs' spy because she's diminutive and easily underestimated.
• Gus - [Beta] referred to as psychotic now and again, but his very few (and dwindling) close friends' are his touchstone.
• (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, bi and partnered to Naylor, formerly to Bozeman.
• (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
• (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
• (deceased) Coot - [Omega] former Beta, killed by the Monster.

Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha
• (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed 1st Lieutenant, possibly romantically entangled.
• Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali and closely bonded to Huntington.
• Santos - [Beta] while loyal to Kali has mentored many, without regard to packs. He helped the Twins first learn to shift together without losing their identities.
• Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed and with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
• Levi - [Beta] he's neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
• Huntington - [Beta] has strong empathic senses, is very good friends with Gus' from Twins' pack and Lark.

Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha
• Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' Lieutenant, --from wiped out Shapeshifter dynasty.
• Dr. Kane - [Beta] both a medical Doctor and their torturer.
• Quint - [Beta] eager to please teen and Dr. Kane's biological son.

Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha
• Søren - [Beta] 1st Lieutenant, Danish man of even temperament and a skilled negotiator until his temper is peaked.
• Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
Chapter Summary

Rejoined with Stiles and Isaac the possibly maybe friends leave the woods more bedraggled than how they entered and with Hunters at their heels. Worse than the threat of the chase, though is the prospect of reentering the light of day in Beacon Hills.

• Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/07-were-you-staying/

Chapter Notes

Previously on were (you);

o Into the Preserve; Scott, Lydia and Allison head out in an endeavor to pool their resources as Visionary, Werewolf and Hunter to find a missing friend Stiles before Hunters do, or worse yet the Monster.
o Allison used her family's resources and Isaac as a look out to collect data and possibly modified evidence over the murder in the woods. Her hunting skills again come in handy when she caught Isaac in a hunters trap and revealed him to be a Werewolf tracking her friends.
o Scott senses were distorted in the Preserve but in the mist he found a way to break through and reach Lydia in a time of need.
o While Lydia was drawn up in visions that pulled her from one reality to the next connecting her straight into Stiles arms. Or more rightly straight into bait that would lure Stiles into her arms
o Beacon Hills continues to draw further mystery there only promises more to come.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Track 01 - Everlasting Light by The Black Keys

As ATV's went the KingQuad didn't make much sound, not on the asphalt and not until they were right on top of you. Especially not when they were customized but not all of the household ATV bikes were special edition. In fact there was only the one in the Argent's arsenal and it was first-come first-serve with regards to who got which.

"It's not fair man! Favoritism gets you everywhere," Bennett yelped as he pulled on the brake when Rumy came alongside him, virtually silent.

"No junior, my ATV gets me everywhere. Not 'sleeping in' just got me there quicker," Rumy sped up and crossed Bennett's lane before slowing onto the left of him.

Bennett laughed or at least allowed himself the indulgence of it since Rumy couldn't well hear him
over the sound of his crappier ATV.

"What extent parameter are we meant to run?" Bennett asked when Rumy finished gloating.

"Don't know. Axel didn't say," Rumy shrugged. Rumy and Bennett were assigned grunt work.

Everyone else would be in the woods 'cleaning' the scene while they would be running the parameter. Meanwhile the Preserve had their park patrol and Rumy had enough recent ride-along experience it stood to reason they could outsource this sort of work. But he wasn't the head of this hunting party and also wasn't a bad morning for a ride around a park.

"Of course he wouldn't. Because it isn't a long-ass run of woods connecting straight back into a National Forest at any point at all," Bennett grumbled and made certain his dripping sarcasm could be heard over both bikes.

After grinning for a minute Rumy revved his beast to head into the foliage, reminding Bennett to follow because despite their central insignificance to the case they should still get some sort of move on. They weaved between low slopes and trees that lead from dirt paths back and forth to the main road. There was nothing of note although Rumy stopped time and time again to do things like observe the sunrise, watch a passing Robin all the things mountain men were prone to do.

When Bennett opened his mouth to complain he knew Rumy would just smirk and nod. When Bennett ignored and drove ahead he knew the boredom of riding alone would turn him back, so he took to riding near enough and either observing the observer or testing the capabilities of his particular RTV.

"How's our Mistress in the making?" Rumy asked suddenly breaking a sort of silence.

Bennett sniffed the air and thought about it. Sunday's family meeting was a weird one. Monday's wasn't made any better considering every time Allison spoke up of late she had more investigatory work to show and less explanation to say. It may have gotten them results as a group but it wasn't getting her brownie points as a future leader.

"Pretty impressive," Bennett answered and spit extra saliva that had accumulated. When he looked up again Rumy had that face, the one that reminded Rumy was psychic. Okay, Rumy was in no way psychic but he had an unnerving knack at being right a lot of the time and a tendency of staring people down until they confessed all of their sins. "She's been up to some things but they're the usual teenage things. Secret boyfriend. Sneaking off with her best-friend."

"That is how she got into the Sheriff's place?" Rumy's gaze was steady and even across the distance of several yards penetrating. Bennett nodded his concession under their weight. "If it's the same friend than this is a marriage of convenience all of this--" he made a face of discomfort and waved his hand around like he could wave away the smoke of it "--stuff she's getting involved with. This stuff with the body and stuff with the Sheriff. That same girl found it." Rumy squinted and took in the scenic view again. He seemed to never tire of it.

Bennett shrugged. He wasn't always on Rumy's wave length, the fact is few realities could exist on that plane but it was best to try and take it as it went. He did want to learn to be a better hunter, Rumy was one of the best he's met. Strike that, Rumy was by far the most efficient he's ever met but also the weirdest. He had Chris' unquestioning trust and was undoubtedly closer to the family than most of the Argent's actual blood-kin but that didn't mean anything Bennett could learn from him was the sort of thing he could pick up from books. Field work was then ideal, only it just kept getting him blackballed by Axel and grunt work like baby-sitting a park.
"Her friends are weird, I think." Rumy said then laughed. He ambled his way back to the bike and as he passed Bennett, slapped him on the shoulder hard enough to leave a bruise, "Not that I would know I never had any friends. Aside from Chris."

"Surprising no one," Bennett called out after him while he drove to catch up. This time laughter could definitely be heard over the sound of the crappier bike.

After they rounded a bend and came over a joggers trail that crossed a thin bridge with a creek running under it Rumy pulled over to take more pictures. When Bennett asked 'why?' again Rumy explained he was interested in the way the light bent. When Bennett reasoned the light bent the same way several minutes ago, why is it so different over here; Rumy looked straight-faced with grey penetrating eyes until Bennett backed off. Eventually Rumy said something along the lines of it's different over here because over here is different.

Bennett's jaw dropped open, his brows crushed together and his hands clenched in absolute incredulity. But by that point Rumy had already moved on "the students use this to practice," he observed and took a picture of the bridge and then a picture of Bennett leaning on the bridge, "you're young enough. You could have enrolled in the high school. You would have been a senior right? Why didn't you?"

"Why? To spy on Allison full time? No thanks," Bennett smirked, and put up a peace sign as Rumy took a selfie with him, "There is nothing I can learn there that is going to further my future career." He didn't sound enthusiastic about it, he sounded embittered. "I mean being a hunter is where I'm headed, right. So, home school like the rest and just get out there, am I right?"

"No, you're Bennett," Rumy quirked a smile. He managed to somehow mumble louder to be heard over the water. "And that's alright. Allison will probably go to an Ivy League. That will be alright too."

Bennett had a father. He reminded himself he had a father, a proud beautiful black man who had a lot of things to say about a lot of things but why did he never have these talks with his father? Or when he had these sorts of talks with his father why were they always at top notch volume and with more declarations than anything else? Bennett liked where he was because he had earned his placement with this facture, and at a pretty damn young age but it would be nice if he liked that he liked where he was. Rumy took enough pictures to seem to like where he was, Rumy seemed like the sort of person to like where he was 24/7. Maybe that was a skill set Bennett was meant to learn.

"Vickie went to some swanky-ass Uni, too." Rumy pointed out as he turned the bike on and pushed it slowly onto the path. "That's where she met Chris. And me, but I was peddling," he grinned such a wide grin, proud of his criminal enterprises however small and launched along the road. Bennett rushed to keep up. "To each their own, we've got paths man, like that one right there!"

"What is that?"

"It's a path," Rumy stopped short and hopped off his bike. Bennett didn't bother turning his off if he intended to catch up with Rumy. "Someone made that," Rumy said from about 10-15 feet up a steep slope, only obscured behind the bushes was patched-up green that had been pushed darker from fresh tread embeddings. "And Recently."

"How did you see that?" Bennett tried but saw no sign among the greenery leading up to the bush. But the prints left behind treads deep enough to be recognized as ATV tires. If it belonged to the Parks department, why hide it? If it belonged to the Argents, Rumy would have damn well known about it.
Rumy pointed to the pavement off of the green. The bike had been parked and re-parked behind the bush often enough for the exhaust to have left grease stains on the crummy SoCal' asphalt.

"What do we do? Report back? Track them?"

Rumy shrugged casually and placed the bush back where it had been. He ambled toward his bike, sniffed toward the horizon and hadn't bothered to take one photo.

"Right, so they won't know we were here. Are we going to stake it out?" Bennett hopped down to land beside Rumy. He scrambled onto his bike and pulled up ready to follow.

"What?" Rumy blinked in surprise almost as if he barely recognized Bennett. After a brief hesitation he walked over to Bennett and turned off the kids' bike.

"No. Listen little man, there are things home-school, no-school and high-school can't teach you. That is family."

"I don't get it," Bennett groaned.

Rumy rubbed Bennett's head and grinned cheerily the smile rounded all of his features and made him look too young. He answered "you will m'lad" with an exaggerated accent of Bennett didn't even know what and then he offered to get them both breakfast. A 2nd breakfast he corrected. When Bennett asked about continuing their duty, Rumy shrugged again, probably his 2nd most common response his 1st being an inarticulate mumble.

However disobedient to Axel's instructions, Bennett obediently followed. He was led off-road over an Industry Bridge and into a rundown gas station where Rumy pulled up too-close to a Silver SUV with out-of-state plates and an ATV rack strapped to its tailgate. From the rear end of the SUV Bennett noted the carrier rack meant to carry 2 bikes had only the 1. Bennett turned off his bike and Rumy motioned for him to stop when he opened his mouth to ask a question.

The doors to the store attached to the gas pumps swung open, from within stepped out a statuesque woman in a floor length white coat with dark sunglasses and darker hair. From the angle she exited she couldn't have seen their bikes over her vehicle. They might even have had a proper surprise reveal if she hadn't sensed something off and stopped still part way across the walk. She edged back, her posture turned easy and misleading and her hands dug deep into her coat pockets in reach of a weapon. When she started to walk again it was slower, ready for confrontation.

"Cousin Livy," Rumy cleared his throat while he walked around the front of her SUV with his arms spread wide. His joy was feigned and for a normally jovial guy Bennett was discomforted by the fact.

"Christ," she stopped short. She heaved a sighed and looked around as if she were ashamed to be seen with him. When she spotted Bennett she gave a nod of acknowledgment that left a chill.

"We're not cousins Rumy," she started again toward the SUV.

"But we are related," he added smugly.

"By marriage," she hissed.

"That's beside the point," Rumy's grin started to turn genuine, all teeth, he even had a bounce to his step as he placed himself strategically between Livy and the driver's side door.

"And it was annulled," she slipped off the oversized sunglasses dark coal eyes had a stare so
oppressive it was any wonder Rumy didn't lose height beneath it.

"Is that why I don't get invites to family reunions?" instead Rumy stood straighter. It helped that his hair never seemed to stay out of his eyes.

"Darling," her demeanor changed entirely, she turned from hazardous material to a honey trap "I expect we'll be seeing a lot of each other soon enough."

"Oh, issat right? You know the 24 Hour Diner right across the intersection, we're just headed for breakfast right now," Rumy never sounded so cool and in control for as long as Bennett had known him. When he stepped aside to open the door for Livy there was no room for argument on her part. Now if he could learn that as part of his interrogation skill set, Bennett knew he would have leveled up.

"I'd be delighted to join you," her brow arched elegantly and she sounded anything but.

Track 02 - 15 steps by radiohead

The niceties of life began to trickle into the preserve with the dawn, robins swooping in to catch up worms, brown hooded beetles making their paths above ground and werewolves and hunters came to a head.

Isaac Lahey, sixteen years young werewolf waved off any attempt to rush forward on his behalf when he fell to his knees, all while Allison Argent seventeen years old hunter never took the aim of her weapon off of him.

"Well, I'm delighted to join the club here but if anyone has cared to notice Allison is a freakin' paranormal Hunter," Isaac growled. Blood seeped through his right pant leg from his calf to his ankle.

For the 1st time since Lydia said she would 'trust him' and meant it, she second-guessed looking for Stiles when he made an unsettling noise at the back of his throat. It was the sort of sound her Papillon puppy made when the mail carrier came up the walk and she really didn't like it. And like she would with her dog Prada, she snapped at him to stop it. When he looked on reprimanded, with a face that open and earnest she wouldn't second-guess coming to collect him ever again.

"Let's just let everyone speak first," Scott hadn't liked the noise either and it showed in his face, a delicate display of stern disapproval and pure concern.

"It's not like a chosen profession or anything." Allison's hands were steady but her words were less so. "'Hunter' is just a title like a sort of traditional Matriarchy...which it kind of a little bit is."

"Oh" Scott and Stiles said in unison both impressed and confused.

"Well," Lydia interrupted mildly, "while we're here confessing, turns out I sometimes scream when people die."

"Oh," Scott, Stiles and Isaac added. Allison lifted an eyebrow.

"I don't exactly know how all of it ties together but it's definitely supernatural," Lydia said with building authority, "and with the looks of things we should probably get more familiar with the
"Like X-Men?" Scott supposed. The building tension hit a pause button.

"No! Be more realistic, come on," Stiles corrected irritably. "Like Avengers; less mutation, more average people rising to greatness."

"God, it's like nothing's changed!" Lydia threw her hands up in exasperation.


Lydia moved through them and knelt beside Isaac. She pulled aside the torn fabric from his calf and revealed the wounded area. She recognized the signs of a coil trap, same serrated teeth that would have snapped through her calf. Her expression darkened when she noticed the punctures still bled openly. She saw none of the same sort of healing like in her kitchen the way Scott's wound melted away within seconds.

"This is getting worse," she observed.

"It's not healing?" Scott moved instinctively behind her. He quickly removed his jacket, pulled off his over-shirt and handed it to her to stifle the bleeding.

"What were you even doing here?" complained Lydia, her usual objection to Isaac's ears. He practically grinned to hear it while she tore the sleeves and ripped them into halves creating bandages to stave off the bleeding.

After a pause "that's my fault," Stiles conceded from Lydia's left and just over Isaac's shoulder, well out of sight from the wound.

"Yours?" asked Allison. She lowered her weapon when Scott made a placating gesture for her to.

"Back at the Sheriff's house," Isaac grunted against Lydia twisting a bandage in place, "I thought I heard you say the name Stiles. I wasn't sure if you were tracking the same Stiles from my pack."

Scott stepped back, physically as well as mentally. He thought about the word 'pack' suddenly. He had wondered exactly what that sort of thing meant for months, he knew it meant to something like family but he only had in his mind what perspective that could have meant to him. He never put it in the perspective what that must have meant to someone else. Watching the way Isaac looked at Stiles, there was familiarity in it, a different sort of look of want and mistrust than the way Lydia looked at Stiles. And Scott wondered how everyone would fit because in his mind there wasn't a question of 'IF' everyone fit only how and possibly when... preferably soon. And the feelings it brought up in him, was that 'what pack meant'?

"You thought there would be another 'Stiles'Stilinski?" derided Lydia, her face was very close to Isaac's. He had to back off an inch for fear of her.

"One and only me, man. You though, I can't tell you from a lunchmeat. Suppose it's a step up from thinking you were dead," Stiles tried for levity. It was met with the most severe eye-roll he had ever received. Scott shook his head and smirked, ill-timed indeed. Stiles would not look in the direction of the Hunter who put down a member of his pack, no matter how much it seemed his friends trusted her. And Isaac, well Isaac never appreciated his humor anyway. Sure enough, in that direction he was met with a sort of glare.

"Gratitude, man," Isaac glanced toward Stiles, eyes were unfocused, words came at a slur but his mind seemed to barely be there though. "I saw your hideout. I tried to throw them off your trail."
"Thanks," Stiles gently squeezed his shoulder in a show of sympathy.

"You didn't want us you find you?" murmured Scott in disbelief.

Stiles glanced from Isaac's glazed over expression to Scott's wounded one toward Lydia's tight one then to Allison's firm one. He opened his mouth a few time before he could muster up an honest answer.

"This was just supposed to be a couple of days. I was looking for some people. It wouldn't have been fair to stick around," Stiles sounded tired, he looked tired even when he tried to pull together a more confident expression that seemed to tire him further.

"After all this time, if you were just passing through? Why not meet somewhere else? Why come back at all?" In Lydia's fury she yanked harder at the bandages and caused Isaac to wince several times.

"These people, my pack have gone missing. Come on, try to understand, we're just trying to find our friends, Lydia," a pleading in Stiles' voice bent the ears of everyone involved, the bleeding sincerity of it and had he chosen his words more carefully it might even have chipped away at Lydia's soul instead of her shoulder.

"No!" she lashed out at him. "I'm a raving lunatic in the middle of the woods, nearly getting my leg snapped off because I don't understand that impulse."

His face crumbled a little, as if her words were a direct blow. Of course she knew the loss of kin, of course she'd fight for it, fierce as ever and it was practically impossible to argue with Lydia Martin especially when you weren't exactly in the right.

"Guys," Scott interrupted because he was one of the few who would dare to..."this should really be healing by now."

"That's my fault. I, a little bit, poisoned him," Allison explained.

"Poison?" Stiles recoiled, wide-eyed. He came around Isaac to stand behind Scott and put as much distance and people between him and Allison.

"I say poison. Not 'poison' poison, just a very mild diluted paralytic I've been working on. See, I've been experimenting with this material--"

"Allison!" sternly Scott warned but he didn't know where to go from there. As often since the day he met Allison, Scott wasn't certain whether he should be frightened or impressed by her.

"Scott, he was tracking my friends. He's half a foot taller than me and a werewolf. I'm a Hunter. This is what I'm trained to do..." she brought her tone down from haughty and became the Allison that he knew again, not meek but hesitant, she tapped her weapon against her thigh as though she weren't sure what to do with it anymore despite her experience. Her brows came together in a small pinch and her mouth pressed in a timid smile, "Plus, it wears off."

After a moment, "can I get some?" Lydia asked delicately.

"Does it?" Stiles ignored Lydia as his temper snapped "Does it really? When will that be?"

"When it...does," Allison bolstered her conviction. She readjusted her quiver and posture for assurance. "He'll be fine."
"Can we do something about the bleeding?" Scott leaned over further. Lydia waved off his offer of more fabric and pushed for him to put his jacket back on, which he dutifully complied.

"It's not like, open or anything? Is it?" quickly Stiles octave changed, he sounded like he could hardly keep down his lunch.

"It's braced and tied off but--" Lydia shook her head in exasperation.

"Screw it, shove over!" Stiles took a big gulp of air and averted his eyes.

Everyone yelled in a panic when Stiles leaned over, gripped Isaac's leg high above the wound and twisted until the knee snapped. Isaac sobered with a roar and quickly collapsed, Lydia jumped to grab him before he hit the ground full weight only to get half-pinned under him. Allison shouted 2nd loudest after Isaac as she dropped her weapons and raced around the scene to help Lydia. She pulled Lydia out from under Isaac's weight and assessed the damage only to discover the bones had already retaken their natural shape. Aside from being knocked unconscious Isaac was healing.

Meanwhile Stiles swooned. He reached out for support and to wipe his hands off on Scott's jacket instead.

"Why did you almost rip off Isaac's leg?" asked Scott while he propped Stiles up.

Stiles blinked back in reply, he looked too green to even acknowledge the present tense.

From the ground below Allison waved off Scott's inquisition. The girls pointed out Isaac's leg, the abrasions from the trap had already closed over.

"Can we be done with the fucking dramatics," Lydia interjected in a tone that wasn't a question at all and left no room to argue.

Track 03 - Keep The Car Running by The Arcade Fire

Together they obscured the bloody leaves as best they could; Allison got onto her knees and dug down half a foot and pressed the bloodiest ones deepest. Lydia helped tore the leaves up and when the dirt was passed over she covered it up with new leaves. When they started to catch up with the others Allison dusted dirt off Lydia's skirt out of habit. Lydia remained still and waited but when it looked like Allison's nerves stemmed her on she caught hold of her friends' hand.

"I'm okay now," she smiled stiff-lipped with confidence.

"Are you?" Allison struggled for eye contact.

The last time Allison had seen Lydia before running into the clearing with Isaac, Lydia had been reaching out to her for help.

"mm-hmm," Lydia said pertly. She dusted off her friend's shoulder, in doing so she admired her quiver. She made sure her friend noted that she noted it. Hunter, indeed. "Are you okay, Allison?" she caught hold of friends hands and rubbed remnants of practically invisible dirt off of her forearm but in reality she rubbed warmth back into them.

"Yes, of course," she smiled and when she turned to leave, she led Lydia away by the hand. Her
family would flood these woods soon and it would be best not to be tangled between them.

"Thanks," Lydia said a bit further along the way, "for protecting me from the big evil Isaac." Her voice was thick with irony. Allison didn't answer but her grin translated in the air. "You have been keeping an eye on him, don't think I haven't noticed. You shot him."

Allison focused on not tripping, on following the boys trail and on not saying 'but I left you alone'.

"He would have kept me from finding my friend," a little levity left her voice. "Thank you for keeping your promise." Lydia gently pulled back on her hand, intent on getting a response.

"Always," Allison looked back and found it easier to smile than she thought. "Come on" she rushed them to catch up.

"How far is the car?" Stiles complained.

"How are you possibly tired?" Scott questioned. He tried to shift Isaac's dead weight further onto his shoulder.

"I'm not tired," Stiles mumbled, "I just don't want to carry him s'all."

"Half mile maybe," Scott smirked.

"Why would you park so far?" Stiles whined a little.

"Why would you hide so far in the woods?" Scott rebutted.

Stiles quieted after that. Scott hadn't meant to upset him but between the two of them there weren't many topics that didn't weigh. Not that it was the only thing.

"You broke his knee to heal him?" Scott finally burst out with.

"Pain," Stiles replied in quick defense, "It triggers the healing process. It's something our Alpha, our pack leader taught us."

"Your pack leader..." that was as far as Scott got. He had so many questions about his own Alpha he wasn't sure where to start questioning Stiles about his.

But Stiles offered up some insight, "it wasn't like everything was running from Hunters or fixing gashes by breaking bones."

"I wasn't going to ask that actually," although it had begun to pique his interest. It was worth noting, "Isaac looks healed but he's still asleep."

"I don't know," Stiles stumbled in an attempt to step around and look at Isaac while still carrying him. Scott stopped still to keep from falling as well. "I think it's the poison."

"If she said it's not poison, it's not poison," Scott asserted and he didn't come off as preachy. "Trust me."

"I do trust you, Scott" Stiles looked at him in doubt for a moment which gradually turned into a smirk.

"He just doesn't trust me," Allison piped up from behind them. Without the added weight of an
Isaac she moved quicker and with her training she moved quieter, even weighed with her weapons. Stiles turned up his nose at that, "which is totally understandable."

"No, it's not," Lydia stepped up behind her. "If we trust you, he should too."

"Really Lydia, how does that work," Stiles snapped. Not angrily, their rapport between the two was stilted but familiar.

"Because if she doesn't get us out of here in the next few minutes before her Hunter family shows up to investigate last nights' murder then we're all screwed, especially her," Lydia stated the obvious. Scott looked to the ground and failed to hide his amusement. With her chin held high, Allison looked to her best friend more proud of Lydia than the words she said. "Now if you focused more on where you put your feet, you might not find them in your mouth so much."

Stiles mouth dropped open wide as if he were truly pained. He continued onward for several minutes with that expression pinned on him. Finally it was Allison who came to his defense.

"Lydia it isn't always that simple, people are just wired differently. He's just the sort of person who can't get past me being a trained Hunter trying to protect my friends, that's cool. I don't hold it against him that he's been hiding out here for weeks spying on his friends with no intention of bringing them peace of mind, but whatever. To each their own," she walked ahead further "I'm going ahead to go start the car and try and shift it toward the road. And if I don't leave without you it must means I'm a more evolved person. Maybe." She winked at Scott and hurried on.

They stopped in their steps and stared after her, Lydia was the first to move and she turned to look at them, with Isaac dangling in-between. She shook her head the way disappointed teacher stared at a failing student "don't you know better than to mess with the designated driver." With that Lydia darted after Allison.

Scott looked on and seemed very confused. Stiles shared that sentiment and then had to ask "let me guess, you're dating the Hunter?"

"Oh, yes!" Scott said with a mixture of pride and awe.

"Cool," Stiles nodded and pulled for them to move along (at a faster speed).

After another minute or so, when they had enough distance between them and the girls and where Werewolf hearing would be the only way someone could overhear, Stiles asked if they could take a break. He said he was out of breath and Scott smirked his disbelief but gave him the break anyway. They lay Isaac on the ground between them and Stiles made a show of stretching his legs, rotating his arms and turning his neck from left to right and back again.

"There was a murder here last night?" Stiles finally asked.

"You didn't know?" Scott stood from where he leaned against a tree.

"No," Stiles paused mid-stretch, "I should have known. It's the forest."

"Something is wrong with it." Scott looked around as if there were something physically they could spy that would explain the phenomenon. "I kept getting lost going in a straight line. If Allison wasn't here with her maps to leads us in and out, I don't know how we'd manage--"

"But you found us." Stiles bound nearer. "When Lydia called you, you found her." His voice
sounded concerned if nothing else, "How?"

Scott shook his head, "I don't know. I guess I can always find Lydia." He smiled slowly and put an arm around his friend's shoulder, "And she finds you."

"Yeah," Stiles smile lengthened. He breathed in the scent of his friend. Yes, all these years it was as though very little or even nothing had changed, even to have their sweaty foreheads pressed together and say nothing. To take a minute and not worry, about hunters, murderers, missing people, being hopeless, careless or lost because in Scott's presence there were none of those things. He could just be Stiles.

"Allison, what will your family do if they find us?" Lydia sucked her finger where she tore out a splinter.

"I'm not sure." Allison didn't slow down as she used a long branch with large swooping leaves to wipe their footprints as far back as they could back-track along the joggers path until it hit the green patches.

"I didn't get to the crime scene in time, so I don't know what they found," she sighed in aggravation and stomped back with the branch. She laid it flat on the trunk of the car and started to remove the covering bushes and leaves from the windshield. Lydia did the same for the front windshield, only with more caution this time around.

"Lydia for what it's worth," Allison said over the length of the Beetle, "I don't believe there is anything they could find incriminating about your friend Stiles." Lydia smiled her gratitude.

Allison nodded and went back to work. Once she finished she yanked out the stone wedge from behind the front wheels she had used to keep the car from rolling back downhill. She came up beside Lydia and yanked open the driver's side door, they assessed the damage. Superficial scratches were fairly obvious but as for damage to the frame, Allison hopped inside and turned on the car. It came to life easily and when she put it in reverse it moved further up the hill with a jerk. Lydia gasped and jumped back a foot but Allison gave her the thumbs up and put on the parking break.

"But you were right," continued Allison, she dusted off her hands as she climbed out of the car. "About getting him out of here," she clarified before Lydia let it get to her head, "This might be traumatic for all of you but it's for the best. I mean I hope it is," Allison reassured Lydia with a half-smile.

"That is not what I mean," Lydia shook her head. She looked nearly pained, "Allison, this hunter thing... if your family finds you with them, what will they do?"

"I don't know," she hadn't actually thought about it. With all her concern of how to care for everyone else it was a question she had yet to ask. Of course Lydia would be the first to do so. "It's never happened before."

"I'm sorry you're in this predicament," Lydia leaned toward her. She looked unsure of whether Allison might want to be left alone or held.

"I'm not," Allison breathed in deeply. She wasn't lying, she wasn't sorry about her predicament but she would need time to process the rest. "You want to drive?"

Lydia closed her eyes, sighed and groaned "yes" as if she were the more tormented of the two.
Allison laughed.

This time with Lydia in the drivers' seat, the morning provided sufficient light where to move over the hedges onto the road, Allison gave her what insights mirrors couldn't. When they hit the asphalt Allison doubled-back to erase any evidence leading in and out of the Preserve.

It took a great deal longer for the boys to get to the car then they had expected and Allison had to leave Lydia alone on the side of the road while she went to find and bring them back. Before she left, Allison went around to the driver's side and quietly reminded Lydia of their promise.

"I want to keep you safe, that means if I'm not back in 5 minutes you leave."

Lydia rolled her eyes and flicked the tip of one of Allison's arrows. "Of course you'll keep your promise that's why you'll be back. With our boys."

Lydia tapped out the seconds on the steering wheel and with more than a minute to spare Allison returned with three struggling werewolves, stumbling through the forest like the most warped modern fairy tale ever written.

After an uneasy time they passed Isaac's unconscious body through the small doors and it became a balancing act to prop him, how and where and why, without hitching, sliding or snagging in the back seat. Allison and Lydia would afford no front seat, so Scott and Stiles eventually figured out how to prop Isaac's body between them.

Stiles sat behind the driver's seat, behind Lydia to watch the direction, to keep an eye on the Hunter. Scott sat nearest Allison, behind the passenger seat, were he could slide his hand through the crevice between the door and the chair and squeeze her hand for calm and comfort. Isaac was unconscious and smooshed between them in Lydia's tiny scraped up Volkswagen Beetle.

And so began their second most awkward car ride of the day.

Track 04 - Flaws by Bastille

Once comfortably off the side roads, Scott built up the nerve to ask about being a pack only it occurred to him, Stiles didn't seem to have a pack. "So you came here to find your pack?"

"What? Yeah," Stiles blinked back his attention from wandering over the speeding landscape.

"But you said you thought Isaac was dead. And he didn't know you were here," Allison connected facts.

"And Isaac has been here for weeks," Scott supplied. He didn't add the growing sense of betrayal tacked onto the fact that he had just begun to really like that guy.

"If members of your family and your pack member weren't why you were sticking around, who are you here to meet?" asked Lydia, with her eyes on the road her words came across colder but had were she more focused they would have just come across probing.

"Technically it is preferential treatment," answered Stiles. He tried to catch Lydia's eyes through the side or the rearview mirror but she kept them pinned on the road. "We're all looking for the same person. Our Alpha." If she tried to understand that, he couldn't tell. If she were still angry
about his neglect he couldn't tell that either. The car had too many heart rates going 'jumpy' including his own it was impossible to gauge any one person's temperament clearly. He would have to take them at face value and that just made him more anxious.

"That is a pretty important person to misplace," Allison half-turned to get a better look at Stiles. She had no humor in her voice and when she spoke again, she made sure to keep her eyes intent and kind, "I'm sorry for your pains."

Stiles swallowed and looked away. He bit his nail as he looked over the landscape zipping through the window and wondered exactly how a Hunter could come to care about something so foreign.

"Oh. Your whole pack--" Scott had the good sense not to finish that particular sentence.

"We needed to come to Beacon Hills," Stiles spoke to the horizon, "we needed to find Derek." From the tone with which he said needed, the desperation devoid of want and how intently he gnawed his thumb nail it seemed obvious Stiles became trapped in a guilt-trauma he was not ready to confront.

Afterward things went into an awkward silence again... which Scott again interrupted.

"So, you like know things?"

"Things?" Stiles turned his neck toward Scott (twisting around how Isaac had leaned) as far as he could manage.

"Werewolf-- Supernatural things?" Scott shrugged.

"Yeah man. You don't?" Stiles nodded.

"No," Scott and Lydia said in unison.

"But you do," Stiles whipped his head around to look at Allison and stated it as clear as an accusation.

Allison nodded uncomfortably.

Stiles examined her for a moment then nodded slowly, as if he pitied her.

"That sucks," he said resentfully and turned his attention back to Isaac. Scott watched the way Stiles searched from person to person in the car the way a parent would want all their kids to play along well. Somehow Stiles subconscious mind played into that. "I mean where do you even make something strong enough to put someone like us down?"

"Probably from someone like you," Allison's lips twitched into a smile that disappeared just as quickly.

Scott ignored their one upmanship, "when you mean someone like us, you mean like a pack? What's that like to have an Alpha?"

"I don't know an Alpha is more than someone who turns you. If you're lucky they're more than just a leader. We were a family," Stiles jostled Isaac in a display of affinity "and it stems from the head. But losing a pack member isn't like losing family. It's like losing a limb."

Stiles looked around the car and watched the way Scott stared at him, eyes narrowed with concentration but this wasn't the sort of lesson that could be taught. Sure, they had experienced
loss, great loss at that but nothing like he had. And as much as he wanted understanding he would
never wish something like this... well, maybe on his enemy because they of course deserve bad
things, they were his enemies.

"I can sense him here somewhere, either by choice or by force. I know the Hale property is
somewhere on the Preserve and I've been looking for it for days. Either way I need to find him
because everyone of our pack is in danger without him," the severity in his voice betrayed his
character, even Isaac stirred a little at the rise in it.

"We can help you?" Scott offered.

"Yeah?" Stiles said in a voice of disbelief, he went back to look through the window.

"Yeah," Scott insisted and pressed a hand against Stiles' knee.

Stiles smiled half-heartedly and when he looked up again Lydia watched him through the rearview
but quickly glanced away.

In another awkward silence that rose Scott felt the need to fill it but instead of prying questions
they caught up with town gossip.

Yeah high school is great. Scott's grades can use some work but he just made first line. Pretty soon
after being bit, couldn't be helped. Yeah he's totally into lacrosse the whole town is into it, even
Lydia is a big observer. She is really into the stats apparently. Allison is catching up after all she
just moved to town. Coincidence. Change of subject. Stiles' Dad made Sheriff a few years back.
The town elected him in because he's really reliable, seriously well liked. Always on task, it's like
he lives for his work and nothing else. Anyway he looks great. Pretty fit, going salt and peppery a
bit but you know if I were like twenty years older don't you think Scott. Yeah. I mean you know
what I mean. He's awesome. I mean he's a great guy still. You should see him. Change of subject.
Mrs. Martin's divorced now though. God, Change of subject, so what did you do for winter break,
change of subject, change of subject.

Track 05 - Halfway Home by TV On The Radio

{Wednesday; Morning}

The Stilinski house seemed a little changed but not by the light of day. Of course Lydia had seen it
2 nights ago and Stiles several years yet there were measurements to be made from the mind's eyes
to the present tense. Even when the morning turned from grey to yellow and blue, while awash in
human traffic and nature noises there was still the more realness of yesteryear.

Yet since they had separated cars with Allison and Scott they hadn't made conversation.

While Stiles remembered details along the drive and mentioned each of it when they were blocks
away and when they were pulled up the drive until they were parked out front.

Lydia said nothing in reply.

Isaac didn't have a reply because he remained blissfully unconscious in the backseat.

Finally they waited in the silence of Lydia's Beetle and watched the sun drag rays across the
Stilinski rooftop the birds became the loudest sound in the world. When Stiles spoke again it startled Lydia so much she swore.

"There's no one at home."

Sighing, she released her death grip on the steering wheel. "How do you know?"

"No heart beat in the house," Stiles tapped by his earlobe, implying his heightened hearing.

Lydia took a measuring glance of the distance from the car to the house. That was the sort of thing that might have impressed her a few many minutes ago before her butt had gone numb.

"Great!" she announced, frustrated with their stillness she pulled the keys from the ignition. "So the Sheriff's probably at the station" She stepped hastily out of the car, yanked forward her seat for best access and ordered Stiles to come around and help pull Isaac out.

Between the 2 they dragged Isaac around to the back of the house. Stiles commented wistfully on every creaking board and dusty window ledge. After he retrieved the key from his Father's secret place above a window frame, they slipped through the garage and dropped Isaac onto a discarded lawn chair (not quite long enough to catch all of his legs).

In the dimness they walked through the kitchen, along the hall by the family room and toward the front door; Lydia walked with the ease of native while Stiles showed the stilted awkwardness of visitor at a museum. Stiles hesitated at the murder board in the kitchen but Lydia ushered him along, reminding this was neither the time nor was that his place. It was far easier to get him away from the gruesome than the nostalgic. He commented on virtually every object, about what had changed and what hadn't.

Lydia waited beside the front door, silhouetted by the morning light with her hip on the door jamb and eyes carefully focused on him. She look troubled then softly reminded what remained the same probably would have changed had Stiles stuck around.

Stiles shut up after that and came up beside her. His mouth worked around several words at once but eventually chose not to reply and agreed to lock up. It was impossible to argue with her when she was right.

"Lydia-- the hell," he prepared a statement but once he turned to face her she cut him when she grabbed his hand, forced it open and dropped her car keys into it.

"Stiles, I have not slept..." Lydia marched off and called over her shoulder, "and after all of this I am not driving us into a ditch."

"So Ma'am, where to?" he tried to mutter a joke, while he walked over shuffling through her keys until he found the car key.

Stiles searched for her eyes but Lydia instead she made tsking noises while she inspected the damage done to her car. When he opened the passenger-side door she didn't follow, he turned to see her watching practically inspecting him from where she had stopped half-passed the car's hood. They stared across the divide, still getting accustomed to the presence of this person, this very familiar foreign missing present person.

"Were you having Isaac spy for you?" she asked in a steady voice but she struggled to keep an even temper.

The air left his lungs and he was grateful that they hadn't gotten in the car to drive yet or he would
The whole time, the whole time he didn't drop the slightest hint that you-- that he even knew-- that the two of you even--" her voice gained speed but her words no direction. Stiles reached out and caught her nervous hands.

"Isaac never knew about this place, about any of us," Stiles whispered, he tried to guide her calm, to keep his calm, steadying his hands by clinging to hers.

Lydia stared at where their hands clasped, dragged her eyes up to his face and narrowed them. "Can he hear us?"

Stiles paused, "No, he's still passed out."

"Good," she yanked her hands from his, clutched the fabric of his hoodie once more, her face colored and grew intimidating as she drew their faces nearer. "I could punch you in the throat."

"Is that it? Okay," he grinned nervously, stunned by her fierceness.

Her tone turned icy "It? Did you want more?!"

Stiles stood straighter, stiffer and ran a hand frustratingly through his hair, "Kinda yeah. Yell at me. Hit me, just--"

"--Just what?"

"Just don't ignore me," he put his hands on her arms, not shoving her off, just lightly steadying. Lydia shook off his hold once again.

"Ignore you! I want to scream this house down around your ears!" despite trying not to she was shouting.

"Great!" he shouted back in her face, then quieted. "I was afraid (deep breath) if I ever came back you'd be so disappointed in me (another deep breath) you'd all turn your backs on me. You'd just shut me out. (and another deep breath) That scared me the most about coming back."

Lydia tilted her head and biting her lip she measured him with a look, suspicious at his sincerity. He was a goddamn supernatural being but having a childhood playmate ignore you threw him? It sounded too stupid to be a lie. She rolled her eyes. "That did?"

He chuckled, relieved, "Well, that and seeing my Dad."

"Yeah. That's understandable," she ran out of steam and slumped against the car.

"Well," Stiles decided to test the water, determined to keep her talking. "It rotated day to day. If you'd ignore me or you become a conceited social pariah or liberal arts major or some combination."

"Okay enough," she cut him off and tried not to laugh at his lameness. "Let's get on with it."

"With what?" Stiles grinned, pleased with himself.

"What you're avoiding asking?" her eyes seemed larger or to shimmer unblinking, when they stared at him in a way that made whatever she said next an unarguable truth, "Yes, I will help you go and face your Dad." She snatched the keys out of his hand and walked back toward the driver's side.
"Whoa, whoa, whoa," Stiles skidded in front of her in an attempt to prevent her from getting into the car. "I never decided that's I want--"

"Of course, you did." Lydia insisted smugly. "It was written all over your face the moment you stepped into that clearing."

He swallowed too much air and when his words came out they were a squeak. "You don't know that?"

Lydia's eyebrows lifted, condescending in the slightness of it. "If you want to stand around and argue what I do and don't know about you Stilinski it would be a real waste of it."

"Waste of what?!"

Lydia ducked under his arm, through the driver's side door turned on the ignition and stood back up.

"Waste of the 8 minutes you and I have between here and the station." Lydia jingled the car keys like bait for him to jump at. Stiles groaned in defeat and snatched them. Lydia smirked, spun around and slid over the driver's seat into the passenger's with ease.

"What about Isaac?"

"What about him?" she shrugged.

Stiles struggled inwardly; he looked around and fidgeted. Lydia sat with a look of determination on her face, the tilt to her head that said 'get a move on'. He erased the destination from his mind for the time being, trusted his co-pilot and launched himself into the car. Werewolf or not, his cockiness was never exhibited so brilliantly as his wink and grin when they peeled onto the road. Lydia failed to hide her smile when she rolled her eyes. Even when she turned her head away but his finely tuned ears heard her laughter in the wind.

They hopped over the curb at the end of the drive and headed down to the station, quickly at first then slow. But where Stiles' confidence grew Lydia's slipped away in a shaky breath, without anger to bolster her she lost conviction. Lydia reached out at the first red light and touched Stiles forearm, settling just below his elbow. He glanced at her sidelong and followed her lead, dropping his arm from the wheel. He caught hold of her hand before she could pull away. They clasped hands the way children do when they followed one after another through the dark.

"Alright," said a more relaxed Stiles, "I know you have questions. Where do you want me to start?"

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**Track 06 - In The Woods by White Arrows ft. Sky Ferreira**

"Alright," said a more anxious Allison, "I know you have questions. Where do you want me to start?"

As much as he hated to admit it, whatever anyone said, even if they said nothing someone would be upset and Scott didn't know how to fix that. Before tonight, he thought finding Stiles would resolve all of their problems but it only served to create layers of new ones. Allison glanced over at him and gnawed on her lip while Scott struggled with how to begin, so simplest seemed best.
"So, what does 'Hunter' mean exactly if you're not, you know HUNTING?" Scott tried to sound light about it but his face carried a wounded confusion. Allison's brows knit, she looked injured already and she had yet to clear her mind to think of a reply.

"I think you're inferring killing," Allison said tightly from the driver's seat. After a pause she sighed and glanced again at Scott. "It's just a thing we're raised up to be, like being Amish," she reached. "Then there's rumspringa and you know; freedom to choose how to use the skills we've learned. Which path to follow; there's a new code and an old code. Questions?"

"Everything you just said, just about everything," he smiled out of nervousness. He kept glancing over his to shoulder toward where she had tossed her weapons in the backseat.

"I'm sorry okay, I'm sorry!" she gripped the wheel. "I don't know what to say! I screwed up! I feel like I screwed up but I don't know for what!" Her eyes teared up and her voice hitched. "For being what I am! I'm good at who I am, Scott! I've saved lives, I'm a good person! So what's happening, what am I sorry for?!"

"Pull over." Scott said calmly and put a hand over hers to steady her swerving. "Allison, pull over before you get us both killed."

She swore when she noticed they were nearly 10 miles over the speed limit, she slammed her feet on the brake. It sent them skidding into the shoulder of the road and jolting to a halt.

"I'm not like this," she muttered to herself. "I'm not this-- this--" she used both hands to swipe at the tears sliding down her cheeks. She could not stop thinking about the woods, the sound of the traps resonating, the panic in Lydia's voice when she reached out, how she feared her family might hunt her boyfriend if they hadn't gotten out before dawn and her tears wouldn't subside.

Scott leaned over, turned the car off and pulled her into a hug that was more clumsy then tender but still intense. "I'm sorry."

"No, I'm sorry," she muffled into his shoulder, "for lying."

Scott considered all the times she went out of her way to care for him, to rescue him from an outburst, from his disorientation and she never feared or questioned him, "you never lied Allison."

"A lie by omission is still a lie."

He leaned back enough to press their foreheads together. "You knew I was a Werewolf and you loved me." With the slightest tilt of his head hers moved with him, when he looked into her eyes, she wavered.

"I did, I do!" she tightened her hold.

"So," he drew out a pause, grinning and goaded, "maybe it's just you were waiting for the right times to tell me both those things."

Allison blinked slowly, her stared turn wide-eyed and her smile was a new one, "Scott McCall! Did you just steal my first I love you?"

"I love you, too?" he offered lamely.

"You bastard," she leaned forward and stole a kiss. "You jerk" stole another deeper one "you animal!" and stole another one, deeper still.
"But you love it--" he attempted but she cut him off with another kiss.

"I do, I do," she said more forcefully, snapped her seatbelt off and crawled across the divide. "Scott, seriously, though." She whispered as if the car were bugged, which she doubted but it wasn't outside of the realm of possibility. 'Hunters have sort of don't ask don't tell policy when it comes to our identities.'

Scott slid an arm around her, pulled her onto his lap and shifted around to make enough space for the both of them, legs tangling until they settled into warm knots. He looked at her face, deep into her eyes and over her mouth for signs of ease and drew a breath seeing the edges of a softer smile settle in. He said to her "didn't you hear, that's been repealed."

She glared but the smile didn't wither. "What I mean is you can't tell anyone what I am. Ever."

He nodded "Ok."

She squeezed him, "Promise me."

Despite her death lock, he managed another nod. "I promise."

She let go a little, ducked her head to the side as she looked him over, her eyes lingering on his lips. She felt conflicted as she pleaded, "Scott, it can put us in a lot of danger."

"More danger?" he doubted things could possibly get worse.

"Yes. A lot more," she tried to convey seriousness but it came off as amused. "My family came here because there is something wrong with this town. But we didn't know, I didn't know it would affect kids."

That struck a nerve with him. "Did you mean infect?"

She sensed she said the wrong thing and struggled to walk the line cautiously. "I didn't know about you if that's what you're asking..." she stroked the side of his face and admiring the way the muscles move along his jaw. She thought about him attacked, alone in the woods that night last October; if she had driven along the road moments earlier she might have prevented Scott from being bitten. Had she driven along moments later Scott might be dead. All of her skills gone to waste when an act of chance could turn Scott from being victim to Werewolf. "But if I had known I would have come running," she swore and kissed him to seal it. "Whatever's going on we've got dumb luck on our side. Stiles and Isaac are right about needing a pack. Someone unaligned like you is exposed. But from what I've seen with you, you've never had an Alpha... you have never known who bit you?"

"No."

"I'm sorry. That's crappy, Scott." she apologized and considered all the options. "And Lydia doesn't know who attacked her."

Each statement brought him sobriety. "You know, when I hoped not to be alone-- I never meant I wanted her to go through something like this."

She moved almost astride him, settled her weight against him. "Its okay, Scott. There are worse things to happen. Some people don't survive being bitten. Their bodies reject it or they can change into another transitional form that isn't wolf and lose their sense of self altogether. Lydia at least is still Lydia. I've seen someone transform who didn't even know he'd turned into a monster...Jackson."
"Jackson!" Scott eyes widened. Another secret dropped. He didn't know whether to feel privileged or pressured. "He's never been exactly stable. What is he now then?"

"Dangerous." She shook her head slightly, her brows drawn together in uncertainty. "This Alpha is creating an army of children. They aren't given a choice or time for conversion-healing. There's no sense of selection... it's like a chessboard of only pawns. It doesn't appear to be slowing down either so it's up to us to stop him."

"Us?" he gulped.

"What?" she caught herself and squirmed a little, "no. not 'US' my family's us. Us."

"Really?" his face brightened. Her conviction fired him up. He wasn't a coward but having her with him he felt limitless.

"Really. That is if you want to--"

"Your Parent's will be distracted by this other strange killing--" Scott felt a certainty build in him for the first time in a long time. He couldn't answer for the others but he imagined if they were as affected how could they not want to get involved? And he was tired of sitting around and waiting for the next side-effect to come along and knock him down.

"Killings."

"Right. While you and I get this S.O.B. who is trying to use us like dingy jock straps."

She cocked an eyebrow "Ew, not the analogy I'd go for."

"Have you checked to see if it is Coach?" he glanced through the windshield, dramatically.

"Yes, all the Coaches actually, don't make that face. They're AGRO-personalities."

His eyes darted back and forth, admiring her thought process. "You're really smart."

"Yeah?" she half-grinned.

"Queen of the Chess Board. I bet you know all the moves," he smirked.

"Scott, when Lydia was on vacation I knew something was wrong and not just because she stopped instagroomming her outfits. I wanted to do something but I couldn't go to you, I couldn't go to my parents. Just like when you were attacked I felt incapable."

He wished he could convey, even without his supernatural strength that he could be strong, strong enough so that she didn't need to worry. "Allison that was a long time ago."

"No, it was 14 and 1/2 weeks," since he had been bitten, like a calibration point from which to spiral outward she had it locked in place.

"It isn't your job to save everyone Allison," he stroked her hair, trying to sooth away that sound of hurt from her voice.

"Maybe not," she said obstinately, "but don't we become a little more monstrous if we stop believing there can be saviors?"

There was no arguing certain facts. "Holy Crap, I love you."
Drawn together, eyes closed they found the easy motion of mouths and tongues sliding along each other. The earth moved for them. She pulled herself closer between his legs, creating friction in her wake. He dragged his fingers along her flanks, once in a long pressing stride, a second time through the fabric of her dress gripping against her bra.

Allison pulled away abruptly and launched herself back into the driver's side seat. Her eyes dilated, she gave him a look of regret and shook her head before she twisted the ignition. The car roared into life blocking out the noise of stray thoughts. "I need to get something."

"Does it need to be now?" Scott shot straight up and readjusted.

Allison started to drive, hitting just above the speed limit and hoped the early hour kept them off any police radar. They wavered in their seats as she turned corners and launched from back roads onto the main street. "Yes. It needs to be now while my family is in the woods. There is something about Lydia I need to figure out. She said she screams when people die."

Scott gave it some thought. "You didn't hear her scream during the game?"

"No. You did?" she swerved slightly when her focus was on him.

Scott noticed and buckled her seat belt for her. "Yes, and Isaac. Probably Jackson. This explains why we lost--"

"And Lydia swears she doesn't know why or how she ended up in the woods."

"That's just like after she was bitten. She swears she can't remember that time wandering in the same woods."

"A fugue state. I read up on this but I know it has to mean something more," in her frustration she hit the wheel.

Scott placed a hand over hers. "-- and we'll find out what it is. We'll do it together."

She slowed when she neared her home, edging around corners. She double and triple checked to see if any familiar faces were around. "How? How exactly is this something that we do together? How? I mean how?"

Track 07 - A Better Son/Daughter by Rilo Kiley

"How? How exactly is this something that we do together? How? I mean how?" He leaned his head into the headrest and stared at the roof of the car as if it held the answer to the world's problems.

"Stiles," Lydia scoffed "if you're going to keep sniping--"

Sarcasm dripped from his every words while his hands flittered through air as if her were miming the scene before him. "Hi. Heey, Dad. We wanted to catch up on how I've been living on the road with a Werewolf pack. Dad, we should also periodically take turns reminiscing, hugging, crying and muttering in disbelief. Also if you weren't an alcoholic already you might be one by the end of this conversation!"
Lydia steadfastly ignored his tirade "--then I'm going to hop out of my car and speak to the Sheriff without you."

"Lydia, how--"

"Well, that settles it." she swung open the car door, whipped out her cell phone and started to dial. "Hello, this is Lydia Martin can I speak to Sheriff Stilinski?"

"Oh Man!" Stiles panicked, kicked opened the driver's side door and stumbled out of the car. He rushed to double-back after he realized he'd forgotten to close it behind him.

While Lydia strutted along diverging Stiles swinging arms she kept her tone firm. "Hello Sheriff, I've been very good, thank you. Can I ask you something for a personal assignment it'll be brief and you're the only person I can ask? Actually I'm in front of the Sheriff's station if you have a minute?"

When she turned the corner Stiles didn't follow. He dove behind a police van, dropped to the pavement he fidgeted and he shifted sideways to overhear their conversation. She looked back, eyes wide and mouth pressed in an insistent line that said silently, 'get your ass out here.'

Stiles answered in almost the exact expression but his meant 'are you freaking crazy?' When the glass doors open and Stiles vanished from sight.

"Hello Sheriff," Lydia swung around and flashed him a trademark grin.

"Hey, Hi Dear," Sheriff Stilinski had a look of concern in his eye she hadn't expected. He spoke stiltedly after a second of hesitation then he leaned in for a hug. "It's really nice to see you."

"Is it?" Lydia patted him on the back in return, grateful that he was at least in a receptive mood.

"It is. It is. What can I help you with?"

Suddenly the task felt so much bigger than her. "This is a bit sensitive and I'm sorry but I think you can understand why I'd come to someone with your experience--"

"--law enforcement?"

She went to something she feared tapping into. "It has to do with when I went missing and how you handled my Mom?" her voice went unstable. He nodded for her to continue; she smiled and took that as permission to cross a line into uncharted territory.

"My Mom must not have made it easy on you," she began to wring her hands, she wished she hadn't. "And you were good with her Sheriff. But I need to know how did you-- how do you say a missing person been found without causing more trauma?"

"Oh, wow, Lydia." he rubbed the back of his neck, a familiar gesture. She wondered if it was hereditary.

"I'm sorry if this is sensitive..." she stepped forward, hesitated when she realized there was nothing she could do to help and then she stepped right back. She made a concentrated effort not to fall into pacing.

"No, I think I understand--" he rubbed a hand over his face and started. "You take them somewhere private and let them know there is news. Tell them their loved one's status straight away, don't overwhelm them with details like physicality because you don't want to make empty promises. Just
let them know, dead or unknown. And say you will reunite them as soon as humanly possible and follow that up."

Lydia took a deep breath and looked him over, "is that what you did with me?"

Stiles had moved to stand up against the van, he slid closer to get a better view; she had expected it somehow and showed no surprise in her continence. What went through his mind when Lydia exposed her personal experience? Or that his Father stood older, wiser and a few feet from him on the other side with shared struggles?

Sheriff nodded in thought, "something like that but in addition to a few late night drinks and sometimes a ride along."

"I like the sound of that," she imagined her Mom sleepless, not cooped up in the house but sat in the Chief's car, talking through the night and it eased something in her. Her body language changed, she edged toward vehicle, like a string pulling them closer and tied onto the topic. "That sounds simple."

"It isn't."

"Why?"

"Because you're a conduit of information; it's massive, emotional but not your experience. Your emotions are not meant to get caught up in it."

"Not even a little?"

"No, because you're coloring can change the truth of it. In that moment, they need your support and clarity of thinking. Not your affection."

"I see," Lydia tilted her head to catch where Stiles hid. She couldn't imagine not being emotionally invested. She let Stiles drive her car and the Sheriff drove her mom around for days. Who were they kidding? "So, if I got this right." Lydia straightened herself to her highest height and watch Stiles over his shoulder as he failed to keep back tears. She shook the Sheriff's hand firmly and she placed a second over it to keep it steady.

"Sheriff, thanks for coming out to meet me. I really just wanted to tell you Stiles is alive. I promise you he is well, I'm going to prove if you would just turn around."

Lydia watched the color drain from his face, felt his fingers tense and his pulse quicken against her wrist. She could not imagine how he done this for her Mom, she pressed her lips together to keep from saying anything or asking what he must be thinking. She rubbed the back of his hand mostly to keep her own trembling in check, she only broke eye contact when the Sheriff cheated and used the reflection in the van's window to defuse the tension.

The Sheriff made out the shape of a man behind him but took his time to turn around. She glanced over and caught Stiles' eye, the perfect wondrous expression of awe and gratitude gave Lydia permission to breathe again and she allowed herself to grin.

Finally, the Sheriff spun around and caught his son up in his arms. Lydia understood exactly why this wasn't her moment but how fortunate she was to be a conduit.

Track 08 - Tightrope by CHVRCHES
Jackson understood why this wasn't his moment and how fortunate he was not to be involved because his temper would have overtaken him for sure. He reminded himself, over and over, just because he heard it from 2 floors away, it wasn't like it was important.

He watched the Deputy walked from the office down through the main stairwell and out of the school like he owned the property and Jackson assured himself that was fine, let it be that little man's place. Let him do his job.

It wasn't like he wanted to get involved, he reminded as he moved along through the hallway to the locker rooms for an after practice shower. The officer hadn't said they were certain. It wasn't like they said the mutilated teenage girl was confirmed to be Lydia. It wasn't like it was Jackson's job to find out; it was just the officer's job to check if she had been in attendance today. Just because she wasn't didn't mean she would put herself in danger, again. It wasn't like he was really worried. These days it wasn't like an extra long shower was uncommon. And it wasn't like it was becoming uncommon to demand of himself "Come on, don't lose it!"

Track 09 - This Isn't Control by MsMr

"Come on, don't lose it," Chris comforted. His cheery disposition might have been born of frustration but that didn't make it any less authentic or his eyes any less clear. He was simply a morning person and investigatory work had always been the sort of thing to get him bright. Sure, conclusive results would make him positively bubbly but Axel's grumbling would not ruin his morning in the perfectly pleasant although infested with ambient interference trapse through the woods.

Axel gave him a glare that would have scared children but only made Chris' grin lengthen. That wasn't to say he didn't share the man's concerns.

Despite their best efforts and the shared resources with the Sheriff's department they couldn't get ahead of the Monster. His murders not only increased but increased in the diversity of causalities.

The best his people could supply at this point were the identities and categories of victims before the Sheriff's department. Victimology aside, the newer bodies provided the triangulation of a sector but the Preserve was too broad a site to investigate even for his household. This meant of course, calling in for reinforcement, which Axel saw as a failure on his part.

Well, it's a good thing it wasn't up to Axel to make the call. Plus, they needed an expert for the Beacon Hills area and there was only the one everyone knew of even though they hated to admit it.

They had spent hours tearing up the murder scene, strike that scenes, plural, and there were too many ear marks of packs running the woods. A turf war was in progress; if the Werewolves were trying to clean up a mess they were doing a piss poor job of it.

The clean-up had easily verified 'a gored and mutilated victim was not only a Werewolf but had been tortured elsewhere before brought to the kill site' which while essential, wasn't much more than what they started with.

Axel kicked a tree in his frustration, it left a crack. Both of them stood back, Axel alarmed at the intensity Chris in a startled pause. After a beat Chris took out his phone and took a photo of it, then
sent it. Everyone knew the point of clean-up was to leave the place erased of any sign of affect, even their own.

"Tell me you didn't send that to Rumy," Axel groaned. His annoyance cut through his fury. The best way to deal with his over-seriousness was to remind him there was humanity under that blood-thirsty Hunter façade.

"No," Chris Argent scoffed, "I sent it to Vickie and Rumy." He shrugged and moved passed, toward the road. He gestured for the rest of the clean up team to move with him. "Oh, and my sister."

"God damn it Chris, shouldn't you take this seriously," Axel walked up beside him. In a rare state of affairs, Axel hair fell into his eyes rather than its formatted slicked back position. Despite his sense of failure they were able to uncover the scene had been infused with Trailing White Monkshood, an entrapment particular in that it caused hallucination in Supernaturals and in small doses disorientation. Unlike with the other bodies this scene had been staged. Either they had a second murderer on their hands or the Monster had grown an intelligent trapping method, the second being the least likely.

"I'm taking this very seriously Axel," Chris called back, while he gave a more insistent gesture for his friend to keep up. "There is a way these things are done," he said smiling but he had changed his tone into one that meant things were inarguable. The day had come on fully bringing their cleaning to its close; the hunters had collected the last of the traps the Sheriff's department laid down, removed all signs of animal claws and defused the remnant of the Trailing White Monkshood. Next they would have to attend to the body in the city morgue. They needed someone the Sheriff's department wouldn't recognize to gain access, claim it and clean the mess. Chris was right, an expert was necessary. Which meant more people to deal with and Axel hated that fact.

"We need to keep moving!" Axel turned and snapped at the stragglers.

Track 10 - Hearts Like Ours by Naked and Famous

"We need to keep moving," whispered Allison.

Only Scott stared down at his phone instead. Allison inched to his side across the study, peered over and looked at a text he received from Lydia. There was a photo of Stiles and his Father together, grinning like goons.

Allison smiled and kissed Scott's cheek. "I'm really happy you found your friend alive. He seems... he seems nice."

With a bend of delicate disbelief to eyebrow Scott leaned into the crook of her neck. After he sighed, "Lydia knew. She hash-tagged it "#Magical" but it's not. She's known for 6 years."

Without trying to make it look obvious she looked at the clock on the wall and took a moment that they might spare, "Is that why you've been arguing all this time?"

"It's complicated." Scott continued to stare, "She never believed he was dead."

"And you did?"
"I never said that" he looked a little offended and she looked a little contrite, "I just needed an answer. There was no hope."

"Scott, that's not true, you went out there," she slipped her hand into his and slid herself alongside him onto the one seat. "You've always hoped," she beamed at him.

"I see that now," he nodded, trying to convince himself, "I just-- I didn't want us to hurt anymore, I shouldn't have given up."

She sighed deeply, with time fueling a little she took to her feet again and stood front and center. She cupped his face and reminded kindly but determinedly "You were 10. And you didn't know any better."

"She did," his eyes penetrated "she never forgave me."

"What are you talking about?" she pleaded mildly, "There is nothing to forgive."

"No, she was right." he leaned forward, coming nearly to stand but mostly to lean into her, to wrap himself in the sense of her and the strength he pulled from her solidarity "Lydia is always right. I need to forgive myself for giving up on Stiles."

"You brought him back safely," she snaked her arms around his neck and smiled with a tilt of coyness, the time limit forgotten for the moment, "plus Scott. Everyone is safe now. Anyway, Lydia has an advantage over us there."

Closing his eyes, he tried to move past it, he shook his head but there was little room for it, "I know that. I mean I get it I just don't get it, why didn't he try to come home?"

"Scott, you'll figure it all out." Allison assured in a hushed tone.

"Right" but he didn't sound convinced.

"We will," Her face became hard in that way it did when she was conniving. Her focus returned to her. "I just need one more thing. I need a copy of my family's bestiary."

"I think you mean beastiality--"

Her hand went to her mouth as if she could physically restrain her laughter. "I really, really don't. It's a book, like an encyclopedia of mythical creatures and occurrences because we need to be ready. I need to be ready."

"Hey, we will be," he stroked her hair to keep her calm.

In a renewed sense of hurry Scott and Allison searched the room for the Bestiary but after going through all the books, they came up empty handed. An idea came to her and she pulled him across the hall to her parents' bedroom.

"I realized something," she said shifting through her Mom's drawers. "My parents aren't traditionalist. They wouldn't have a book that can be damaged or lost. They're going to have the data on the server. Which means somewhere in here they're going to have something, a laptop or a tablet, some personal device they wouldn't carry around with them."

Running his hand along shelves, along counters he passed over the vanity and felt warmth, warmer than it should have been which meant something had been concealed. He 'psst' for Allison's attention and she rushed over. They found a tablet secured strapped into a compartment
underneath. She grinned and kissed Scott's cheek before she slid her fingers along the screen.

"Now Dad isn't always the best resource but Mom however..." the password and username pop through easily."...her baby girl's birthday." It lit up and opened easily Allison grinned in that contagious way she does. Then she froze up, "of course it's admin access. We need to remember to submit the password logging in and logging out or it's going to send an alert."

"Your Mom has administrative access to the whole bestiary?" Scott worried.

"I told you," she answered, "Matriarchal. My father trains us up but my mother leads. Everything goes through her especially our secrets."

"Oh," Scott sounded impressed, especially moved at how proud Allison sounded.

"Oh, is right" she conceded with less enthusiasm when she refocused onto her task. It seemed gaining access to the information needed was not as straightforward as anticipated. Her fingers slid around the interface with sleek speed and increasing anticipation but the screen gave several options over directories and verifications, time consuming agitations that caused Allison's face to crumble in concentration.

"Double-oh" his entire demeanor changed, he stood upright and tense.

"Hmm?" she did not look up, she barely registered his existence from where she sat cross legged on the carpeted floor.

"Do the right-side brakes on your dad's car squeak a little bit?"

"Yes," she clung to the tablet, barely having gained access she slid through archives contents as quickly as possible but not fast enough.

Scott urged her toward the door, "then we have a problem."

"I can't leave yet, this is a massive amount of data. I can't upload all of it. The best I can do is assign myself 'privileged access' and hope no one notices the activity." She paused and that expression came into her face again when she was conniving. "I have an idea. Scott, can you sew? Like thread a needle?"

"Sure," he answered feeling very uncertain as she ran a finger along his collar. He had already ruined one shirt tonight but he anticipated the demise of another one. However he assured her anyway "my Mom taught me."

"Good," she tore open his shirt, split it through the center half-way to his naval and mouthed the words 'I'm sorry'. She placed the tablet precariously on the edge of the vanity running a profile re-assignment protocol. She hefted herself atop the vanity, the tablet settled gently framed by her legs and her skirt veiled it perfectly from sight. "Just remember I love you. When it pings sign out," she ordered then yanked him close to her, placed one of his hands on her hip and the other between her thighs before she locked her ankles around his waist. "Be brave."

Throwing her arms around his neck, Allison kissed him deeply and swayed with the force of it. She hoped her fear would turn into enough conviction to carry them both. It took less than a second for Scott to catch up with her and kissed her back with fervor while all thought lifted from their minds; so caught up in their misdirection they became distracted from her arriving family.

"Well, Damn. I'll just leave you to it stud."
"Oh My God!" shouted Allison in not at all feigned surprise, she practically jumped onto Scott.

Ping.

"Aunt Kate?!" Allison's hands flew to her mouth; Scott's hands went to her waist to keep her from falling off the vanity or crushing the tablet. Not that he wasn't traumatized.

10-16. Scott would never forget Allison birthday after this.

"Surprise!" Kate Argent's grin was devilish if not a little unsettling.

Track 11 - Tomorrow Never Knows by Carla Azar

"Surprise!" Lydia's grin was devilish if not a little unsettling. From his expression, eyes wide and mouth gapped, she could tell her presence was indeed that.

"I am not exactly sure what to say next," Deputy Parrish hadn't meant to make a big deal of it but his astonishment had gotten the best of him. He could blame the dehydration from over-caffeination that lead toward jumpiness with the addition of a general lack of sleep. But somehow his relief was the best reason for his red-faced surprise.

"I'm not going to say I'm sorry to have startled you by being alive," she paused and considered her location. The Sheriff's station, again. She might as well get a time-share there. "That seems to be going around a lot today."

"That's not it. I just--" Parrish rubbed a hand along his face. "It's been a long night."

"Yes, it has" Lydia noted the civi clothes and the 5 o'clock shadow that had come in. She nodded in empathy; she didn't know where this was going.

The Sheriff had bustled Stiles off to the medic station in the rear offices for the basics, temperature, pulse, etc. She wanted in there but it was small plus she hadn't wanted to infringe. She wanted to find a place where she could settle, not be in the way but still be a part of things. Instead she waited in the bullpen in plain sight of all the Officers, most of which were (not) delighted to see her again. Parrish however, came into the Station and he looked like he had seen a ghost.

"I should have driven you home," Parrish said quietly. Apologetically. He had dropped to sit beside her on the bench, a comfortable presence in the stilled office of impatient airs.

"What?" that pulled her from her thoughts. Her mind had travelled down the hall to the rear of the station into a small room, pressed to the door and wanted desperately into the medic station.

"I guess you weren't going home though," whereas Deputy Parrish had been transported to the night before. Lydia took pause and listened, she felt obligated somehow when she realized it was her lie from earlier, her offense he wanted to account for. "Fairvale sent over that Jane Doe description about a half hour after you left and I missed it. I kept doing the math in my head. Could someone have gotten you up there? Why didn't I just escort you like I should have?"

"Should have?" Lydia's brows went up mildly but her tone went stiff in warning. Parrish smiled and sat a little taller.
"We've dealt with these sorts of cases before but when you were a missing person the Sheriff had a sort of way of moving," Parrish looked off for a second and pursed his lips as he tried to conjure up the right adjective but there wasn't one in the English language to describe the sort of anguish, "I think I get that now. Like you can't think through anything else until you get this one thing sorted."

"Or maybe you should head home, Deputy," Lydia squinted in thought then yawned, not to be dramatic or fake. She just yawned right on time and tried to cover it with her hand but it was a fairly big yawn.

It was contagious. He turned his head and yawned. He shook his head and chuckled.

"I hear there is coffee here," she supposed.

He nodded, "somewhere."

"Thanks, I'll go find some."

"No," he put a hand on her shoulder, "let me. I owe you one."

"Deputy Parrish, you seriously don't owe me anything," she dismissed him and pulled herself upright, and lifted her chin in masterful command.

Jordan Parrish looked her over and noted the way the wind had tousled at her and brambles left barely seen lines on her legs and forearms, and the way adrenaline kept her bright eyes wider and even in their tiredness intelligent and clocking at 10 times the speed it should. The way her hands tremor while they clutched her coat and the stiffness in her neck and shoulders said soon, yes, soon she would topple over despite how hard she fought. And she had fought, though not a soldier she was a fighter who struggled and won. He gave her a small grin, "no, I owe you this at least."

Track 12 - Breaking Into Houses by Edmund

"No, I owe you this at least," Kate laughed and edged out through bedroom door, "a minute." She eyed Scott as one would a meal after time of fasting, "make that 5, after all he is gorgeous. Plus, I mean in your parents room that's kind of hot."

Allison's face started to turn red. "OH MY GOD, Aunt Kate!"

"Hey, you're just lucky your parents let me drive ahead of the gang while they went to pick up supplies for our big family dinner. Can I leave my bags in your room instead?" she asked sliding the door closed.

"Sure! Whatever! I mean yes!!" then Allison hopped off the vanity. "We're in trouble."

Scott dropped down and slid the tablet back into the hiding place while Allison ran to the door and listened to hear if her Aunt moved away.

"This is the worst..." she swung around and raced back to him. He looked equally panicked. "Or the best," she theorized after some consideration. She fell into silence and sat at the edge of the bed obsessing, while Scott paced. 5 minutes was not a lot of time. Scott heard her parents arriving downstairs in separate cars. And there were more cars than just the one Kate insinuated.
"Oh great," Allison finally conceded. "A big family dinner. Remember what I said about women being leaders; if Kate is here it means more hunters."

"What does 'more hunters' mean exactly?"

Allison shook her head miserably and her shoulders slumped under the time sensitive pressure. "There are just too many threatening variables" she clutched her face, she needed to untangle hazards. To take out some of the worst distractions.

Track 13 - Your Life Your Call by Junip

Stiles shook his head and his shoulders slumped under the time sensitive pressure. "There are just too many variables" he muttered and shook his head while he mentally tried to untangle hazards. To take out some of the worst distractions.

Lydia slipped quietly into the Sheriff's office and dropped into the chair beside him. "I brought coffee from the breakroom." She handed him a mug that had stains from excessive use but somehow made him feel comforted. Hers was much cleaner which made him smile. He took a big gulp before talking.

"Coffee? Really, not some unpronounceable special flavored tea?"

She shrugged. She smelled it deeply before taking each sip, like each sip held a new experience. "Studies show," sip, "that coffee decreases risk of depression and improves," sip, "cognitive function. Even special flavored coffees," and sip.

A smirk appeared at the edge of his mouth. "Oh. Thanks." gulp "Lydia, you're really smart." another gulp.

"It's just coffee," she shrugged, another longer sip as she studied him over the edge of her mug.

He squirmed a bit under her gaze, tilted his head and as if a new approach would help. "It's just on top of everything. You're probably missing school for this. You don't have to stay."

"I don't have to do anything I don't want to do," Lydia went rigid. "You don't want me to stay?" she asserted, her voice cut.

"I don't not want you to leave," he contested, feeling very fidgety and uncomfortable under her gaze. "But it's apparently really time consuming and complicated proving you're not dead after 6 years of being dead. Plus, they're probably going to want to have you not stick around," he rambled, his words picked up speed as they lost sincerity.

"You are getting get rid of me?" Her voice did not betray her, her face only looked irritated. She would never admit how wounded she felt but her heart rate, the smell she gave off, she felt wounded. She felt betrayed.

"No!" Stiles shot up in his seat almost as high as his voice.

Lydia calmly leaned toward him, pulled the mug from his hand so he wouldn't break it and placed them both on the desk. She used her nearness as advantage to get right up into Stiles face, an unfortunately frequent habit. "Are you lying to me right now?" she muttered.
"That depends on how you define lying," he practically whimpered in return.

"Well," her voice gained a significant heat as did her eyes, "I define it as not telling the truth, how do you define it?"

That smirk crept into his features in an unconscious way that followed with nervous hand gestures demonstrating his explanation. "Pfft... reclining your body in a horizontal position."

Lydia pressed her lips together and narrowed her eyes; she thought about those moments when she feared his death and tried to remember why that was a bad thing. "I found you in the woods in the middle of the night and I have no clue how. With what you understand of preternatural things, you probably already know more about me than I know about myself. But you don't trust me? Stiles," the way she said his name carried a special tone and a budding new breed of intimate exasperation he would grow to be very familiar with, "I haven't even spoken to you in years and you're getting on my nerves."

Stiles gnawed on the side of his lip and squinted in thought; specifically he thought about the car ride to the station, he thought on how much time he spent fantasizing how he could drive passed the station and keep driving with her until they ran out of road. "Lydia, I may not have spoken to you in years but a noble lie doesn't always feel that way. Right now, I've got to sit in this room with my Dad for I don't know how many hours and explain where I've been. I don't want to spend another minute lying to you."

It took all the measure of a man he had left in him to stare at the floor, "Thanks. For everything."

"You're blowing me off--not funny." She glared at him, daring him to look her in the eye. He didn't. She gripped the arm of the chair as if she would rip it off. Lydia hissed in disbelief. "What, seriously?!"

Track 14 - Teenage Crime by Adrian Lux

Scott hissed in disbelief. "What, seriously?!"

5 minutes later in Allison bedroom, she whipped through her closet with the speed of a demon and pulled on a long sweater over a slip. She stared at her mirror in brief approval, pulled her fingers through her hair then styled it into a braid over her shoulder.

"Yes, I haven't seen her in ages. Plus I know I can distract her. I'll tell her you're finishing off but you can just go out through the window--"

"What?!" Scott turned red-faced and Allison blushed as well.

"--and I'll make an excuse. Go home, download everything onto this."

Allison pulled an item from her desk drawer, a pendant. Silver, Old and intricate; it detailed a scene of a distended wolf walking beneath a full beaming moon. Allison flipped it over; soldered onto the back was a thumb drive. She carefully unraveled the chain and placed it over his head. She touched the pendant and pressed onto his chest delicately.

"Take care of this for me," she said gently.
Scott placed his lightly over hers. "I will," he promised.

"It'll sign onto the server the moment you attach it to a computer, be quick about it before someone catches my on-line activity. Text me when everything is done." She pulled closed his jacket over his torn shirt and pushed him toward the nearest window.

"You are lucky you love me," he opened the window and noticed people had started to arrive which left him abandoned to wait out on her roof for god knows how long.

She smirked "I said that did I?"

He grinned in return "Yeah, more than once."

"I do."

"You better go before my irresistibility makes it impossible for you to leave."

"You think you're joking but-- I'm going now," she slipped out through the crack in the door. Scott watched her go with a sigh.

After he climbed along the overhang he waited on roof adjacent and wedged himself into an awkward position to remain unseen. As time rolled and people rolled in he realized it could be hours yet...

"Unbelievable," he muttered. "You just left me," Scott muttered to no one.

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Track 15 - Buzzcut Season by Lorde

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Barely awake, Isaac stretched, twisted and fell to the ground. Within a moment of recollection he envisioned Allison, no! The Hunter had drugged him, and about Stiles finding him and about his wounded self and Lydia holding him as he hit the ground, vague recollections of Scott carrying him through the woods then... then this, abandoned in a garage, in the goddamn Sheriff's house falling off a lawn chair that was 2/3's too small for him.

"Unbelievable. They just left me."

Chapter End Notes

CREDITS/ROLL CALL:

Argents - Team1; headed by Victoria, Chris & Allison.
  • Rumy - [Sergeant] specialized in Recon; Special Forces and espionage. Chris' right hand man and Allison's godfather.
  • Axel - [1st Lieutenant] expert tracker, marksman and Allison's 2nd cousin.
  • Bennett - [Field Officer] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old and friend to Allison.

Argents - Team2; headed by Kate.
• Livy - [1st Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Force-Orientation, R.I.F. and close-combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's right-hand man.

Hale (Present Day) Pack; Alpha
• Derek - [?] In a very precarious position.

? Other:?
• Isaac - [Omega] abandoned, in search of a new pack.
• Stiles - [Omega] also abandoned, in search of any existing pack members.
• Jackson - [?] ...
• Lydia - [?]...

Twins' Pack; Aiden and Ethan Carver Alphas
• Marta - [Beta] she's an older motor head and their 1st Lieutenant.
• Bridy - [Beta] the packs' spy because she's diminutive and easily underestimated.
• Gus - [Beta] referred to as psychotic now and again, but his very few (and dwindling) close friends' are his touchstone.
• (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, bi and partnered to Naylor, formerly to Bozeman.
• (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
• (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
• (deceased) Coot - [Omega] former Beta, killed by the Monster.

Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha
• (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed 1st Lieutenant, possibly romantically entangled.
• Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali and closely bonded to Huntington.
• Santos - [Beta] while loyal to Kali has mentored many, without regard to packs. He helped the Twins first learn to shift together without losing their identities.
• Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed and with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
• Levi - [Beta] he's neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
• Huntington - [Beta] has strong empathic senses, is very good friends with Gus' from Twins' pack and Lark.

Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha
• Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' Lieutenant, --from wiped out Shapeshifter dynasty.
• Dr. Kane - [Beta] both a medical Doctor and their torturer.
• Quint - [Beta] eager to please teen and Dr. Kane's biological son.

Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha
• Søren - [Beta] 1st Lieutenant, Danish man of even temperament and a skilled negotiator until his temper is peaked.
• Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
were (you) really

Chapter Summary

When one of your best-friends has come back from the dead, the other is isolated and your perfect girlfriend has turned into a perfect mystery, it seems the only thing average for Scott McCall is his failing grades just in time for his nearing midterms.

• Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/08-were-you-really/

Chapter Notes

Previously on were (you);

 o Out from the Preserve; Scott, Lydia and Allison head out in an endeavor to pool their resources as Visionary, Werewolf and Hunter to find a missing friend Stiles before Hunters do, or worse yet the Monster.

 o Beacon Hills continues to draw further mystery there only promises more to come.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Track 01 - The Mother We Share by CHVRCHES

{Late Wednesday Afternoon}

The plan seemed like a good idea at the time. He had no idea why it seemed like a good idea at the time. By process of elimination Scott assumed Stiles would be at the Sheriff's department with his Dad for the rest of the day. And seeing as how things like the Sheriff's long-lost-son-returning-from-the-dead isn't the sort of gossip that would stay quiet for long, going to school to use the computers there wouldn't be an option. For the sake of both privacy and not wanting confrontation Scott made a bee-line home. Melissa McCall had a scheduled morning shift and wouldn't be there for hours which gave him free reign; he would have access to the home computer (because he didn't want to mess up his laptop in case anything went wrong, not that anything would cross his fingers), access to the shower, a bed to get rested up before his Mom could see the state of him, all bedraggled, doubly-shirt torn and muddied up.

Only he barely got the thumb-drive attached when his Mom walked in on him, startling him with how stridently she came at him and yanked him into a hug. She asked him if the reason he had cut school was because of the whole 'Stiles' thing. He nodded silently in shock and she replied with a smack to the back of the head followed by another bone-crushing hug.

"Mom," he had to repeat a half-dozen times before she would relent. Her expression was pinched with distress that he needed to diffuse. "How did you know?" he asked although part of him really
wanted to ask 'is this really how we're going to say hello all the time?' From her marginally amused expression he could assume she was psychic.

"I heard it from the source when they brought him into the hospital," Melissa eased off for a beat she tried to suss out Scott's demeanor. More importantly if he was okay? If anyone understood the impact Stiles' loss had taken over the span of Scott's lifetime, the sleepless nights, the guilty-trauma, it was her "when I should have heard it from you first."

The "oh" from his lips was tiny but poignant.

The group decided to stay uninvolved from Stiles’ 'discovery' story but IF found out they would stick to a brief and mildly believable story that Lydia suggested. That she'd received a mysterious e-mail, that she'd reached out to Scott to go with her to see if it was a prank or not and that explained away their spontaneous socializing.

Scott finally whisper-asked how she found out, his Mom explained of course she was the first person the Sheriff called to have ready at the hospital when Stiles was brought in for a full-physical. She had half expected Scott to turn up with them or at least pick up his phone when she called. That's when Scott realized his phone died while in the Preserve, the dead zones there zapped up all its battery strength.

In detail she described meeting the Stilinski's at a Hospital side-entrance and escorting them personally to a Doctor she arranged, someone who would be discreet. When Stiles had his vitals taken she had been the nurse to do it. How he thanked her profusely for making the act of taking his blood quick and painless and away from his sight because it made him queasy. She had only come home to grab Stiles clean clothes and home-cooked food. Stiles nearly wept at the idea, well he said as much as he babbled thanks for 5 minutes but it had been Melissa who teared up with relief and amusement.

When she asked Stiles if Scott knew he had come back home and Stiles suddenly clammed up. That of course made her suspicious so she asked if Scott had anything to do with sneaking Stiles back into Beacon Hills and Stiles firmly said 'no'.

"You know he still gets that bulgy look in his eyes when he's lying for you," she grinned.

"Yeah?"

"Yeah," she said as she rummaged through the refrigerator for leftovers.

Scott laughed.

While Melissa spoke she tossed him Tupperware container after container which he fumbled to catch. After he settled them on the counter and turned to say something but she caught him up in another hug. She called him so stupid and noble and brave and stupid again. She kissed him on both cheeks before she eased back and held him at arm's length. She analyzed him, her eyes traced over his appearance his bedraggled clothes, tousled hair and shining eyes. While all he saw in her was tiredness, she looked as tired as he felt but she smiled brighter than the sun.

"Get some rest, that's an order. Unless there's some other magic stunt you plan on pulling off I expect you at school tomorrow."

Scott tensed at her wording but her humor wasn't lost on him. "I promise, I'll be there unless something magical comes up," he quipped.

"Funny," she smacked him lightly on the arm as she turned to leave. She piled the food into a
duffel bag on top a clothes, a few thermal tops, t-shirts and an extra pair of his Nikes. Scott tossed her his red hoodie from the back of the kitchen stool to add to the bunch.

"And Scott," Melissa added at the door, "I'm serious. Don't ever disappear like that again; we don't want any more missing kids." She ducked away before he could answer, which was good because he had no idea how to answer that one.

Scott didn't like to lie, especially to his Mom but when he thought about what he talked about in the car with Allison. If this Monster kept targeting kids there would more hunted or missing and even dead. He went to the computer and detached the thumb-drive on Allison's talisman. It was up to them. They were the first line of defense and were very little by way of defense.

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**Track 02 - At Home by Crystal Fighters**

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Mr. Martin stood in the vestibule and pulled the door open before Lydia could put the key in the lock. They looked each other up and down. Lydia wore the same clothes from the morning before and looked bedraggled. Her Mother still wore her jogging outfit from earlier in the day, no make-up and a layer of sweat dried on the layer of Lycra tight against her skin.

"I've been waiting a while, the Sheriff caught up with me on my morning jog," Natalie said, looking terribly sad and not relieved at all.

"Well, I had a Deputy to escort me home. What a pair we make." Lydia said, sounding leaden. Then they stood in the hall unmoving for a long time.

"He asked me if I knew where you were; I told him she's not a lost little sheep, she's a snake in the grass. She'll pop-up when you least expect it."

"You were right," Lydia laughed weakly slipping out of her wool coat, folding it over her arms to hide nervousness.

"I often am," her Mom came to stand beside her, took the coat and hung it up for her. "They called less than an hour later to tell me you showed up at the station after you found someone lost in the woods," they shared a familial gesture of frustration, small hands upturn in feigned dismay. Only her Mom had years of practice with giving it levels, this one meant 'explain this to me' "is this another thing like at your Dad's--?"

'please god, do not talk about dead bodies?'

"--or because of your nightmares?"

'right. forgot about that.'

"Maybe," Lydia answered honestly. She closed her eyes and focused on her Mother's voice. "I really don't know, Mom."

"Oh." Natalie thought about it for a Moment and grabbed Lydia's shoulders firmly, she braved to stare and saw clear-eyes staring back at her. "Okay," she smiled pleasantly. "That's alright then."

At a pinch her Mother would deny anything happened at the Lake House if she could. She changed the topic if and rarely brought it up and never admitted any reality behind it. Until suddenly she
had. Acceptance as easy as that and Lydia was speechless; she bit her lower lip then broke into a grin.

"I'm not too gross to hug am I?"

"Not if I'm not too smelly to cling to?"

Lydia clung to her Mother and breathed in every sweat moistened strand of her hair. Natalie hugged her daughter tight enough she was certain she could have broken a rib.

"Listen, I know with everything that happened the other night, and with the corpse in the woods, you've gotten pretty shaken. You've been stronger than anyone should be."

"Thanks, Mom," Lydia lay her head on her Mom's shoulder into the crook of her collar. She felt like she could fall asleep standing right as they were.

"No, I mean it," her Mother said softly, moving her arm around to reach and stroke Lydia's hair. "Take a minute to be proud of yourself. When anyone else would have called it quits you threw yourself back into schoolwork. And when that wasn't enough you gave answers to the families of those bodies you uncovered. Not just once but three times."

"You knew about the others?" Lydia flinched.

Natalie squeezed tighter. "You're a hero."

Lydia closed her eyes. She thought about how helpless she felt each time she found a dead body, how she screamed so hard it left her feeling empty inside. She thought about running through the forest away from Allison when they should have stayed together. She thought about going to Scott for help but feeling mad at him instead, when she resented him for adjusting to all this supernatural stuff while she just wanted to cry into her Mother's arms. "No, I'm not a hero, Mom."

"Say that to missing kid you found last night or the family who were probably crazy with worry."

"I'm not--" Lydia's negation died on her lips. The Sheriff must have last spoken to her while they still thought she was the missing child. The Department hadn't told her Mom about Stiles. She thought about how determined she was heading into the woods to find Stiles and how determined she was now to never see him again. She was not up for that conversation. She might not be up to that for hours, if not days. "I'm just tired," she finished lamely. Her Mother nodded, kissed her on the cheek, said she loved her and gave her another squeeze before letting go.

As Lydia ambled up the steps and she could hear her Mom threaten to check in on her every hour on the hour. The thought warmed her.

... Track 03 - Of Moons, Birds and Monsters by MGMT ...

Summoned up from the ether Kate clung to the kitchen doorway, popped her head in and greeted her kindred with smiles "Hey, big Brother!"

"Littler Sister?" Chris grinned from over the kitchen counter where he stole food from the containers he unpacked.
Kate winked, slinking further into the room, "Vickie and my favorite niece."

"Katie," Victoria Argent turned and with one smooth gesture laid out her freshly cut Herbaceous Peonies as a centerpiece while juggling glassware through the fingers of her other hand.

"I'm your only niece," Allison smiled while she counted plates for guests and attempted to pile them without having them tip.

"Alrighty, so what's the plan?" Kate came forward, smacked her Brother's hands away only to stick her fingers under the lid and taste-test dinner. "We've got 5 extra heads," she licked at her finger tips "and I'm pretty sure you don't have 5 extra beds." She lifted a few of the container her Brother left behind and followed the trail Victoria led to the dinner table.

"Tyhurst has been staying in town," Victoria settled down the last of the glassware and started to lay out the silverware.

"Figures," Kate snorted. She had enough trouble keeping him in line when he was underfoot. "That guy doesn't like to associate with anyone who isn't part of his tribe."

"Roman and Norm can head out to the garage and tuck-in with Axel," Chris offered blithely. He had finished settling all the aluminum trays on the table and a beer materialized in his hand. "Leveque and Ulrich have been switching off between there and the main house." He explained between sips until Victoria took the bottle away and encouraged him to try again. He sighed and started to rearrange the trays like a Tetris champion. "Axel can get a real sausage fest going on out there if everyone doubles up. He has converted the garage into a Lodge."

"Oh man, Axel must love having that many people around. Seriously, how many times has he threatened to burn the place down while they slept?" Kate laughed and opened up a beer bottle herself.

"Every morning, noon and night. Rumy and Bennet are already in a guestroom. You and Livy can have the other," after taking a draught from her husband's beer Victoria returned it to him as his just reward for a job well-done.

"Yeah, no." Kate nearly choked than readjusted to lean on the wall nearest Allison, "Have you ever tried to share a room with Livy? I can bunk with Allison. Is that okay." It wasn't even stated as a question.

"Sure." Saying no at that point would have been way too obvious. "Of course," Allison shrugged and gave her Aunt the sweetest smile she could manage, "I mean, your stuff is already there, why not?"

"So, that sorts it out," Chris clinked the top of his beer bottle against his Sister's, "It's going to be interesting having a full house again. I don't think we've had this full of a house since we teamed up with the Calavera's over that borderline Berserker infestation 3 years ago."

"Dark days, big Brother," they took a long swig together. Even Victoria made a pained face at the mention of it. She went to pour herself a glass of red wine.

"In case he hasn't thanked you--" she lifted her glass.

"I was getting to it," Chris sputtered and glowered toward his wife.

"We're grateful you could instantly turn up. These are... strange days." And she took a long sip. What a strange cheer, Allison thought to herself but everyone drank to it. She held up a glass of
water and did the same. Her Mom smiled and winked at her, unnoticed by the others.

"Yeah, really thanks," Chris walked closer to Kate. He seemed to convey nearness in words as well as proximity. It only made Kate drink a little faster, "considering the criminal threat you're under just entering Beacon Hills. I just figured if there is an expert on this it's going to be you."

"So, how soon can I see the body?" Kate finished the bottle, nodded and put it down on the table just a little too hard.

"Tyhurst says he can get you in as soon as tomorrow," said Victoria.

"Aunt Kate is banned from Beacon Hills?" which right after she said it Allison realized she probably maybe should have asked Aunt Kate in private. And she should have definitely not asked about it in such a scandalized gossipy movie teen girl tone.

"Banned isn't exactly the word, exiled might be closer to it--" when Chris gave her a warning look Kate changed her demeanor altogether and hugged Allison around the middle, squeezed her just a little too tightly, "--but if you want to hear about why I'm banned from Boca Raton sometime that might be a sit down conversation worth filming."

Victoria cast Chris a warning glance then cut in with that Mother tone that warned everyone in the room to let the topic die. "We should probably have a real 'Argent' meeting first thing in the morning, tonight what's say we catch up?"

"Come on little Sister," Chris finished his beer and settled it down beside hers. "They're already setting up long range targets."

"Are you challenging me?" she cackled. She didn't get one foot before she eyed her fellow challengers, "You 2 coming or what?"

Victoria polished off her glass, Allison left hers behind.

Following in their 'Pick and Choose' traditionalism the Argents held a family meal for every home coming; Kate's entourage rejoining their household doubled in size.

There was Tyhurst whom Allison had heard from earlier with his uppity reports from the Sheriff’s station. Tyhurst was a tryhard and thanks to his legit CIA background gave them easier access to government services but made his attitude impossible.

Livy, an Amazonian Queen, the field's officer and Kate's 2nd. She held an expertise in practically everything and rarely carried a weapon because her favorite arsenal was whatever inanimate objects nearest. Livy taught great hand-to-hand but had the personality of a bloodthirsty wet blanket.

Fry, who didn't have a talent for arms but everyone fought to keep him close because he was a brilliant Tactician. Fry was pretty great when he wasn't working, all stories and jokes except his expertise had him in such high demand he was always working.

Norm and Roman, were Uncle and Nephew, (they seemed closer to Father and Son) and they were Longbowman and Marksman, they said they had trained up that way because they like to have their bases covered. And Norm and Roman were too boy's club to be much of an interest.

Lastly Leveque and Ulrich who were floaters and she liked working with them best, aside from
Aunt Kate, because she saw them most often floating between their 2 teams as back-ups, messengers, trainers, trackers, over-all ne'er do wells.

As for her household; (Uncle) Axel even came up from the converted space on the edge of the grounds. Not because he felt social but because he liked to make it seem no one should head down to the Lodge anytime soon.

Bennett and Rumy shared the upstairs guestroom and it seemed had their own idea of welcome home plans for the Big-Ass Argent family meal. They brought out more customized artillery than Allison even knew they owned.

It took somewhere near to 7 hours for everyone to actually get to the house, another 3 for them to stop racing their ATV's back at the Preserve and showing off their shooting techniques, another 2 for them to settle down for their actual meal. It almost went 12 hours without notice that Allison had snuck out the night before. Almost, until Tyhurst opened his big fat mouth. Who talked about business over a family meal? Argents, that's who.

Tyhurst asked Kate if she would come into the Sheriff's department in the morning to get appraised on the Preserve killing ("it's dissimilar from the others. There's staged violence. It looks like there was feigned mutilation intended to match the others but the murder was disturbed partway through setting up the scene. There's severity but no real violence." Unsurprisingly the details did little to curb appetites.) He added as a point of interest, it would be easy for Kate to pass without checking her paperwork too closely; the department would be distracted with return of the Sheriff's long lost son.

"I didn't know he had a son," Victoria inquired, looking insistently across the table from her husband to her daughter.

Allison nearly gagged on her lettuce. "Uhm, yes. I don't know his full name but his nickname is Stiles."

"So, you know him?" her Father looked doubtful, under his steely gaze she readjusted her seat.

Bennett laughed a little "are you practicing your interrogation techniques before desserts been served?"

"Yeah, come on Chris. Are you holding it against the girl that she's doing better recon than you?" Kate leaned forward onto elbows.

"Is that why you skipped school today?" Victoria added primly, wiping her upper lip of red wine in a manner that made it look like blood.

"What?" Allison blinked at the illusions, she didn't know how but she was certain her Mother did that on purpose.

"Don't think it went unnoticed, Allison."

"Yeah, babe. They've been pouring in since 9am," agreed Ulrich.

"You've been here all day, running around underfoot just like when you were little." Fry took that Fatherly tone that was factually more Fatherly than her own Dad. It was too endearing and impossible to argue.

"Traitor," she stuck her tongue out.
"Did you help find the Sheriff's lost son?" Livy asked and her voice weighed down any levity the conversation might have had. Allison nodded. "That's good." She looked to Chris and Victoria for confirmation, and then around to Kate. "That's smart."

"I wasn'--" she began to explain to a table full of Hunters that she wanted to find Stiles for personal reasons and a reason not having anything to do with leverage over the Sheriff but she knew they wouldn't get it. "I was just trying to help."

Rumy clapped a hand onto her shoulder with pride, she liked when he did that. Norm and Roman raised their beers to her, in mocking cheers (the silly boobers). Kate gave her a wink and urged the conversation onto greener pastures.

When they were clearing dishes later Bennett patted her twice on the arm in condolences.

"Hey, if we're not grilling each other over big Family meal than we wouldn't know it was a family meal."

"You're comparing my cutting class for bringing in a missing person, to your weapons misappropriations for impressing a townie?"

"Yes. Yes, I am. And I think we did well."

Bennett always did make Allison laugh. They cleared the rest of the dining room together while the older (e.g. inebriated) adults hung out in the living room. The familiar faces, sounds and smells brought a coziness that pressed up against her sleepless-night and made it impossible for her to keep her eyes open. Allison felt like a child again and grinned happily when Aunt Kate tugged her arm and brought her up to bed. She fell asleep as soon as her head hit the pillow despite it being 8pm. It would have been restful under any other circumstance, except it wasn't till that moment she realized by agreeing to share a room with beloved Aunt Kate she'd kissed goodbye any chance of sneaking in and out of her bedroom window ever again.

Track 04 - Wolf Like Me by TV On The Radio

{Late Wednesday Night/Early Thursday Morning}

While he laid awake Stiles stared at the shapes in the ceiling. When he was younger he would make stories out of out the outlines of the staccato; from the corner of the ceiling where his parents had decent arm strength to a third of the way where it turned to swirls he concocted it into adventures of pirates versus aliens versus Ninja Turtles. (However EPIC were the sleepless tales he and Scott told each other about the ceiling, it didn't matter. Batman always won.) Not once had it occurred to him the ceiling was mostly boobs. Years later, sleepless and antsy and trying to reacclimatize he didn't see epic adventures. He only saw boobs. He wondered if growing up under this ceiling the observation would have been gradual or a snappishly quick. Would he have shouted it out at Scott or vice versa? Either way it was not helping him sleep. He lie atop the bedspread, he couldn't fake sleep enough to get under the sheets. He stopped unpacking all the gear his Dad had bought for him all day. It made him feel guilty; guilty his Dad spent so much money and felt like he had to spend so much to make up for so long, guilty all his own things were so far away and he still wanted them and he wasn't sure he was supposed to, guilty his restlessness might keep the
house up and someone deserved to sleep even if he couldn't.

Yep. Boobs. He wished Scott was around so he could tell him about the boobs. Everything was the same but just strange.

He sensed a shift in the house. More than his Father's restlessness. Something ominous. He shot out of bed and feared his Father would be exposed to something abnormal. He skidded over to the bedroom door and listened to the house. A noise came from the window instead so he grabbed the nearest object as a weapon and flew toward it. Scott threw his hands in the air and yelled in surprise. Stiles waved the bat aimlessly in the air and yelled in return.

"Scott, what the hell are you doing?"

"I don't have your phone number." Scott's voice quivered, he lowered his hands slowly. "Why do you have your little league bat?"

Stiles looked at the bat in dismay then back to Scott in confusion, "I thought you were a predator!"

"Why would you need a bat? You're a freakin' Werewolf!" Scott whisper-shouted while gesturing at him.

"Oh." Stiles placed the bat gingerly on the bed as if it would explode. "Right. Why are you here?" he whisper-shouted back.

"Better question; why haven't you asked me in already?"

"Ah, right. Scott, would you get inside already before my Dad sees you."


Stiles shook his head and took a seat beside him on the sill. "What are you doing here?"

"I came to bring you this," Scott shrugged off Stiles' backpack and handed it over.

Although delighted, genuinely bouncy excited to get something 100% his back he doubted Scott's sincerity. His squinty-eyed expression said as much.

"Plus, I couldn't sleep," he admitted sheepishly. "I wanted to see if you were awake."

"Definitely awake now." after clutching his backpack to his chest he tossed it aside. "Wanna go for a walk so we don't wake up my Pop?"

"Sure." Scott paused climbing up onto the sill, "by walk you mean run?"

"--by run you mean last one to the river is a big fat smelly loser-- dude, you didn't even let me finish the sentence. Not cool."

The Mad River ran south from a mountain range through Fairvale into Beacon Hills and splintered into several running creeks through their area of the Preserve. But whenever kids in Beacon Hills referred to 'The River' they specifically meant where the Mad River turned just after a bend of the 101 where it was widest. It's where all the kids snuck off to dare their daringest dares, dive their highest dives and leap their farthest leaps. Of course it would be the first place they would race.

They sped through urban greenery; skirting backyards, jumping over pools and skidding around
hedges until they made it from pavement to soil. The game wasn't just to get there fastest but to get there unseen. Aside from cataract riddled Mrs. Catrina on her late night dog walk, with one yelp loud enough she confused them for an animal, they went pretty much unnoticed. At the topmost part of town they soon ran out of path, while they stood on a rock face over the river and the starless sky swayed above them.

They hadn't kept track of who was fastest which hardly mattered with the view and the company.

"Do you ever just look out on a crazy view like this," Scott gestured to the puffs of clouds encapsulating the pale waning moon. "Out here where almost no one ever gets to and think 'nah man, I just see boobs."

Stiles barked with laughter. 'Scott McCall, ladies and gents. Keen observer of nature and his best friend.' He'd never been more proud, he would have said as much if he could have caught his breath. Scott's laughter died sooner and he watched Stiles with something close to concern.

Stiles smacked away Scott's offered hand of help to stand upright. Scott smacked his arm back. Back and forth they smacked at each other for a few minutes before the realized how close was exactly too close to be horsing around at the edge of a cliff.

"Remember when we were too scared to even get a third of the way up this hill?"

Scott nodded. "After you left I was frightened of hills man, 'til I got my bike."

Stiles grinned and shook his legs out one at a time. "What changed?"

Scott glanced at the horizon for a moment then watched Stiles move around "I don't know. I guess I thought speeding past the edges made me less likely to stop and look. You know and just keep looking."

Stiles knew Scott meant 'searching'. After a moment Stiles squinted at Scott in disbelief. "I can see that."

"What?" Scott laughed.

"Without someone to show you the ropes, somehow you got great control."

"I had Allison." Scott grinned and moved around like talking about her made his inside writhe. "She brings me back, she's been my anchor."

"That's great," Stiles adjusted his neck, somehow this made Stiles uncomfortable.

"That is great" Scott asserted.

Stiles took a deep breath, not a sigh but an inhalation like a deliberation "I'm really sorry I couldn't be here for you. Can I ask how'd it happen?"

Confused, Scott simply shrugged "isn't always the same, with a bite?"

"--nah, it's always different even when it's a bite. You've got to be very healthy to be bitten but sometimes very near to death. You can drink rainwater from the puddle of a Werewolf's print or sometimes ingesting the blood of a natural born Werewolf. You can be born into a pack, even than you might never change--"

Stiles droned on ticking items off of his fingers and Scott eyes widened with each example.
"That's a lot," he interrupted when a particular item piqued his interest. "You can be born a Werewolf? That sounds a lot easier than attacked and left at the side of the road."

"shit."

"Hey, at least I had Allison." Scott hadn't meant to upset Stiles only it seemed once he started he couldn't stop. "Lydia was left for days."

"Lydia?" the breath Stiles took earlier left him, whatever bolstered him went out. His eyes turned small and intent.

They said little after that. They took in the view and shared each other's restlessness. Finally Stiles burst to his feet and suggested a run home in hopes of burning away some anxiety. It didn't.

"Hey, Dad how you doin'?" Stiles barely made it under his covers.

His Father (the now Sheriff, Stiles reminded himself) leaned in through the bedroom door grinning sheepishly as he knocked after having slipped in.

"Great, just checking in. Making sure you're comfortable. Getting a good night sleep your first night back."

"Yes. Excellent." Stiles words were clipped. "Still here. Brilliant. Just dead leg you know how it is... then off to dreamland." To exhibit as much he kicked around under the blanket and smacked his leg over the bedspread in an attempt to the sounds from climbing through the window.

"Sure it isn't too warm in there? I can adjust the heat," his Dad made a step toward the heater.

"No! Not too warm or too cold. The temperature is just right! So, goodnight."

"Goodnight, oh and son. Can you tell your friend to use the front door? He doesn't always have to break in."

"But we lock the front door," Stiles whined and threw off the covers along with the guise."He wouldn't be able to get in!"

"Yeah, exactly" his Dad walked off with a grin and shut the door behind him.

From beneath the bed Scott rolled out, his lungs burst from the breath he held. The sight of him caused Stiles to nearly swallow his lower lip to keep from choking on his laughter.

"You're not underwater, Scott" Stiles scrambled to the edge of the bed and Scott crawled to the corner of the floor nearest and when he could breathe again, he laughed too. "Dude, you broke in here before?" Stiles leaned over Scott's shoulder.

"I had a key the last time..." Scott disputed while he wiped moisture from his eyes.

"Last time?" Stiles grinned.

"The time before that Lydia let me in. This is just making me look bad." Scott struggled not to laugh all over again.
Stiles settled down and stared around the room. He had trouble imagining what sort of reason made Lydia come into his childhood 'no girls allowed' room until he remembered what it is his best-friends had grown up to do; Scott's hyper-sensitivity and abilities to run faster than the fastest animal while Lydia weird sensing of places and people.

"Sooooo," Stiles failed at casual, "Lydia was bitten?"

Scott nodded while he pulled himself further up, "Not that she would talk to me anyway. We're not exactly friends."

With a look of great offence, Stiles plummeted the 1½ ft to the floor to sit beside Scott, "How the hell did you let that happen? I mean she was always a bit 'Aloof', 'Unavailable'" he changed the pitch of his voice as he said so and batted his eyes to boot "but now its more 'Ice-Queen.'" He pouted his lips and raised his chin in mimicry.

"We grew apart I guess," Scott leaned his head against the bed. He wanted to try and assure him it wasn't as terrible as it seemed although he wasn't certain how one night camped out on the bedroom floor would cover the social situation of 6 years. "She started hanging out with the cool crowd. After a while we only had one thing in common. You."

"What a fail," Stiles buried his face in his hands, "Totally not doing your job, man." He groaned and rubbed his face hard enough to take off a layer. "You were supposed to help keep her happy but humble, dragging her down to our nerd depths. Scarlet-nerded by us."

"I don't know. She looks pretty happy up there herding together with the beautiful people."

"Seriously? Seriously! Seriously!! I'm going to have to do some learning on you people. This is no way for best-friends to be acting."

"And you would know because?"

"Because your space needs invading by the mighty that is my person, that's all I'm sayin'." Stiles practically proclaimed, kneeling and getting into Scott's face. After a pause he realized how close their noses were and he added. "In the non-porn variety."

Scott smiled. "I'm pretty okay with this."

Stiles smiled "Alright?"

Scott then grinned "Alright!"

"First my digits," Stiles hopped up and grabbed his cell phone off his computer desk.

"That's pretty wise," Scott stood and pulled out his phone as well.

"Second, I've got to say. Us both being Werewolves together, pretty bad-ass. Amiright?"

"Hell, yes!" They simultaneous jump up, around and try to shush the other.

"Third, you gotta be okay with Isaac being around."

"What?" Scott fumbled putting his phone back in his pocket.

"Come on don't 'what' me with those gorgeous chocolate brown eyes of yours. They kill me, I mean they're working some voodoo and I can see why Allison couldn't resist your wolfie charms but this is important to me. The guy's like a brother. Admittedly a Brother who I a-little-bit can't
stand, maybe served him cake filled Alpo on his birthday, but," he shrugged catching a breath mid ramble, "he's got his claws into me in a pack-like way. I don't need you guys to be in love but I need you guys to be in a congenial way."

Scott struggled to follow along. "Okay, but I do have a girlfriend. I think she'd something to say about quote-un-quote prison visitations--"

"Congenial, not conjugal, Scott." Stiles rubbed at his temple. "Just try and get along, I know a guy who can score us Scooby treats," he bribed. Scott laughed at that.

"He's was a pain to me but he did want to keep you safe. Plus he's cared about Lydia. I respect that."

"cool" Stiles sounded less convinced of his own argument.

"and it will be easy to do that since you'll be trying just as hard to get along with Allison."

"right" and less convinced.

"exactly."

"totally."

"uh-huh."

"of course."

"awesome."

"not a problem."

"Can't wait," they both said.

{Thursday; Morning}

The BHHS school day moved along like a well-oiled machine;

Isaac turned up for practice early, anticipating a confrontation with Scott, only to find that their attempt at nicety almost came across as flirty. Isaac had no clue how to deal with Scott's newfound fondness; abandonment, vulnerability and bitterness at being drugged didn't wear well the next day. Isaac didn't have to use words to say so.

Scott rushed late to his 1st period class Human Anatomy, which he shared with Allison. To their benefit Mr. Harris had separated everyone into groups for drill testing and they were forced to sit in absolute silence. Scott could hand the talisman back unseen and spend the next 42 minutes in the company of the one person he wanted most to share words with and if that had to be denied, share his world with. They held hands between their seats for the better part of the class.
During homeroom Allison used all of the time afforded to transfer data from the flash drive onto her tablet.

Lydia skipped zero period and managed to slipped from room to room unmarred, surrounded by an entourage of popular kids. Isaac tried to catch her eye during homeroom but could barely get within 50 feet. Lydia waited for Algebra2 to begin before she slipped into her assigned seat beside Scott. He stumbled for words to say before deciding on "Hi!" When partnered up they were grateful she took on all the work, leaving her too busy for them to talk.

On their way to chemistry Isaac had had enough. When Lydia closed her locker and he stood behind it, a few lockers down Madison shrugged in meek apology at not being able to hold up Lydia's blockade.

Lydia rolled her eyes and continued to swap out her Algebra2 book for Chemistry.

"I woke up in a garage," he griped.

"Yes, you did," she slipped the textbook into her purse without making eye contact.

"It was humiliating."

"Count yourself lucky," Lydia slammed closed the locker, "You didn't wake up on woodland floor, Lupin."

"You are mad?" his face got nearer, voice lower. He hardly recognized Lydia from his memory of the girl who rushed to catch him when he fell in the woods. Only he certainly believed her to be the girl who was most likely to push him out of a moving car.

"I think so, yes."

"Why are YOU mad?" he caught up to her in two strides. He continued to have to walk in reverse to keep up with her storming off.

"Because while we were whatever we were, you were all Werewolf," she did not whisper but she didn't quite shout. "You knew things but were perfectly content keeping me in the dark."

"Lydia," he stopped short, he kept his expression cocky. She would have to slam into him if she continued, "everything we did was in the dark. You preferred it that way."

Her stare radiated and her smile became tight. "Don't try to be witty. You're not good at it. For your information I'm having trouble reconciling that we were hooking up before I got attacked by one of your kind and only then started hearing voices."

"Yeah, So?" an edge grew to his voice.

Her tone became haunted, "I have questions that need answering. Like who can I trust?"

Isaac stood back, he felt hurt. Lydia sincerely felt he took an active part in setting up her attack. It's true he hadn't warned her off the supernatural and her nearness to Scott was attractive at the time but he never had any malicious intent toward her. "Do you even want to trust me?"

Lydia looked down, hesitant in her conviction. "You are so far down the list Isaac."

"But I'm on the list?"

Without looking up Lydia nodded. "But you're on that list," she conceded. She saw Allison from
the corner of her eye, Isaac followed the line of sight and got a hint he should move on. She looked at Allison critically "It's a pretty long list."

Allison slid up alongside her and Lydia smiled brightly. Isaac opened his mouth to say something else but nothing came out, instead he backed away without taking his eyes off the Hunter until he got to the end of the corridor.

Track 06 - String by MsMr

"I don't think he likes me anymore," said Allison.

"It's not that he doesn't like you, it's just your very presence makes him 'Quiver'."

"Archery puns?" Allison smirked in amusement, "Nice. I think he's out of hearing range now."

They looked to each other and their smiles faded while they waited for the other to speak first. When that didn't happen they turned and walked toward the chemistry class in synchronicity.

They crossed into the lab when Allison finally had to ask "you're mad at him?"

Lydia hmm-ed passively.

"Because he didn't confess his identity but you're not angry at me?"

"I've got a method to my madness," she said matter-of-factly. She sat primly and tapped the seat beside her with a sweet smile but a subtle demand.

Allison hesitated before she sat "you can be scary sometimes."

"Yeah?" Lydia's voice peaked as she smirked, "You texted me that you found something at your parents?"

Allison whipped out a tablet and swiped through data at blurred speed. She stopped at a page in the bestiary at an image of several women wailing over a field of dead bodies.

"Something you said in the woods reminded me of this."

"Nice," Lydia commented dryly. "Is that meant to put me at ease?"

"Look here. There are some additional notes from my Grandfather on the side. 'Banshee screams before supernatural related death. As a premonition.'"

"'Not,'" her head tilted to the side with interest.

"I'm sorry?" Allison's eyebrows shot up.

"It says NOT as a premonition. - 'A Banshee screams preceding a supernatural death not as a premonition but to highlight the likelihood of supernatural events that result in deaths.' - It's a bit different. Your Grandfather mistranslated it."

Allison's jaw dropped, "You can read Latin?"
"It's Archaic Latin." Lydia looked up, bright-eyed, as if it were the most common thing. "What? I got bored with regular Latin."

"Exactly how smart are you?"

"Very," she delivered with a shrug and smirk combination. "So, Banshee?"

Allison nodded.

An identification; Lydia felt a loss move through her, carrying not just burden but a language she could not describe. She felt something similar to peace within, too confusing to say aloud only it had to be endured and explored further "Can I make a copy of this?"

She gave her tablet to Lydia, "Sure. Are you looking for something specific?"

Lydia looked sad for a moment and tried to smile. "Yes, people to trust."

"You think you can find it there?"

Under the table between them, unnoticed she took Allison's hand in her own and held it, "Already started."

Allison's mouth lengthened into an easy smile "Thanks, but why me?"

"Because you just handed me an ancestral manifesto on how to track and kill supernatural beings but you want to use this to save them instead. You didn't blink an eye when you put it in my hands."

"Lydia, what's going on?"

"This describes here how I hear things, things no one can hear. Like with schizophrenia."

Allison squeezed Lydia's hand. "You're not schizophrenic."

Lydia considered that. "Sometimes I'm not going to know that, Allison. I need to believe in something and it can't be me."

"Sure you can..."

"No," she bit her lip "I can't." She stopped talking as if a stray thought caught her up but it hadn't formed a sentence yet. She shook it off and looked to Allison, willing herself not to cry. "I'm really scared. It's happening more often. I don't know what's going on. I don't know where I am or what I'm hearing. At least now I know for sure I'm not schizophrenic, so that's a step in the right direction. Thank you for that."

"We'll figure it out Lydia. I promise you."

"I believe you."

Even when Allison lied Lydia sensed an honest to god good reason for it and she needed that. She leaned in and Allison wrapped her arms around her.

"Lydia," she let her go and smiled eagerly, a plan forming in her mind. "We should research more of this after school today?"

"Sure, I'll come to your house." Allison faced forward and Lydia followed, sliding the tablet into
"Ah, no actually. My Aunt Kate is in town visiting. We won't have privacy." The thought of her Aunt caused Allison to stiffen up like a statue.

Lydia leaned over in concern, "That's good?"

"Maybe," she clutched her chem. book, her hands strangling out her anxiety. "I love her. She's my favorite Aunt, my only Aunt but-"

"But?"

"She's part of something bigger I've got to figure out exactly what."

"Oh, isn't that nice," what started as sarcasm drifted into something like interest.

Allison followed Lydia's gaze to where Scott lingered by the classroom door.

"Oh, that's great." Allison ducked behind her book.

Curiosity piqued, "Trouble in paradise?"

Allison shook her head in misery. "No! Everything is good." She sounded very much like it wasn't. "I only tricked my boyfriend into coming out as a Werewolf. He tricked me into saying I love you. We tricked my Aunt into thinking we weren't stealing ancient family secrets by faking a hand job on my Mom's vanity."

Lydia outright laughed "Well that sounds downright cliché. A Werewolf boy from other side of the tracks and his hunter girlfriend from a posh family; How will their love survive?"

Allison glared at her.

"In all seriousness Allison, the question that needs to be asked right now; were you pitching or receiving?"

"Lydia! Oh my god oh my god oh my god," and she hit her head with her textbook, repeatedly.

"Asked and answered," she tittered.

"Until I thought of my Aunt I'd forgotten that even happened," her face continued to redden, "I can't see him right now."

"In the afterglow of a successful covert mission?"

"I'll see you later," Allison snapped closed her book and shoved it in her backpack. "I've just remembered I've got to see Morrell about a Language Art make-up exam. I'll leave you to spend time with your friend." She bolted from her seat, leaving it available for the choosing just as class began.

Lydia's eyes went wide, "No. No we used to be friends... Used to. Never mind."

As she suspected Scott had taken note over the distance. He gave that dimpled, knowing smile and Lydia felt mildly responsible for Allison abandoning him. She quickly hid her face behind her textbook.
In the courtyard of Beacon Hills High School, Sheriff Stilinski marched toward his car with his son behind him. Stiles bounced on the balls of his new Nike SBs (thanks Dad) and he looked distinctly triumphant. Determined not to leave he prepared to make the perfect argument.

"Mrs. McCall and Dr. Geyer helped prove I'm not dead."

The Sheriff shook his head, didn't stop his stride while he clarified the statement. "Melissa did us a favor to rush the hospital's verdict. It's not up to us to abuse it--"

"Exactly!" close enough. "So, I'll stay here while you head back to the station and investigate investigatory things."

The Sheriff stopped and turned to face his hard-headed son. The argument was on. "You're not a student yet. You start tomorrow."

"Although aren't we all students, of life," he gestured vaguely toward the air.

"A 'Registered Student', wise ass." he grimaced, "You may want to think twice about sassing the man with the gun."

"No sass. If you leave me here I'll stay out of trouble." Stiles' eyes went wide in an attempt to look innocent, but instead he looked a little crazed.

"If I leave you here you will not stay out of trouble," his Dad tried not to laugh.

"If you leave me here Scott will keep me out if trouble."

"If I leave you here you will get Scott into trouble."

A stalemate; annoyed, the Sheriff intently looked on while his son desperately grappled for logic. Finally he sped through a monologue "Well, if that's your argument than if you took me back with you to the station I will probably just get into big trouble. Little trouble just leads to big trouble. I might even get you into trouble. But here? Half the day is over. I'll just shadow a few of classes, meet the staff. It's pretty much just lunch, a couple of classes and lacrosse practice left. Then Scott can give me a ride back to the station. You will hardly notice I'm missing."

That was poorly phrased. The Sheriff crossed his arms and frowned at him. "I always notice when you're missing."

It was meant in jest, which was clear as day but it hurt both of them. His Dad reached out and squeezed his shoulder like he had to make sure Stiles was still real. After a second he smiled. "Hell, with your mouth the whole station will notice you're missing. Fine, but there's a few rules first."

Track 08 – Back From The Dead by Sklyar Grey
{3rd period, Mr. Harris; Chemistry}

Scott jumped to his feet, "Mr. Harris, can I be excused?

Every student in the class startled upright in their seats. Mr. Harris turned away from the board where he'd been scribing off facts from his brain like a Dictaphone (which everyone was expected to either know by heart or have it down by the time he'd finish writing it because he would then erase it and quiz on it.) His patience wore thin on the strained bit of chalk in his hand. "Do you need to go to the restroom?"

"- no," he started with much less conviction but continued anyway. "I just... there's a new guy, not dead guy... I want--he's new--so because."

"McCall, pick a sentence and go with it."

He shouldered his book bag on, assuming 'No' wasn't an option and cleared his throat. "There's a new student; I signed on with Coach Finstock to show him around. I just saw him arrive."

"As always athletics takes precedence over academics, I can understand your neanderthalic intensity," he added bitterly and returned to the board. "I'll allow it since it's unlikely to affect your D average, McCall."

"Thanks for understanding," Scott said sincerely. He made it 2 feet before he swiveled around "Lydia?"

"Huh?" Lydia and Mr. Harris looked over at Scott with the same gap-mouthed expression. Scott stared pleadingly at Lydia. He even made little not-too-subtle waving gestures for her to follow.

"Can she come to represent Academics? Since it's unlikely to affect her A average?"

"Ms. Martin?" his tone had a nasal warning edge.

After a 2 second glance shared between them both, Lydia scooped up the tablet and books from her desk and shoved them into the depths of her purse.

Track 09 - New Theory by Washed Out

{During 3rd period, Courtyards.}

"Try to make a good 1st impression," said the Sheriff with a deep sigh.

"Really?" Stiles jumped on him with a hug, which was new. He jumped back quickly and they both looked around not commenting on it.

"Just try not to bite anyone," he wouldn't break contact anytime soon, he would up the challenge
instead, so he put an arm around Stiles' shoulders.

"What? Right, of course! I'm not 5 anymore Dad."

"No, you're not. So try not to burn the place down either" the pressure around his kid's head went from affectionate to threatening.

"Got it. No arson on the 1st day," grinning, Stiles wriggled out of the hold.

"Good," his Dad waved while turning to walk off. "There's Lydia. When in doubt ask her; she smarter than you and less likely to incite a riot."

Track 10 - You're A Wolf by Sea Wolf

{Still 3rd period, 1st Fl North Hallways.}

As time went on Lydia lagged behind. Scott led on but he hesitated constantly, stopping to look in different directions before he turned down a hall or went through a door.

"You're being weird," she muttered behind him.

"This IS weird," he whispered excitedly and hurried around another corridor.

"--Obsessive thoughts--" she sighed in a mumble, knowing he could hear her over the distance "--ability to focus, inability to sit still, rapid breathing, hyper awareness. Sounds like you're suffering from GAD."

"Is that bad?" he stopped finally at the doors leading to the courtyard.

"General Anxiety Disorder. Yes, I'm officially diagnosing you as being weird about spending time with Stiles. Why did you pull me out of class? I don't even see him anywhere."

"I heard him with his Dad," he gestured with his head toward the door, "from out there. Except it sounded like they were in the classroom with us."

"Incredible," still not 100% onboard with what being a Werewolf meant, Lydia looked on in awe. Only not favorably more analytical. Although they were still on odd terms, when it came to people to trust Scott hadn't lied to her. Not once. Not one annoyingly boisterous well-intentioned overwhelming time. She remained unfamiliar with how to handle that, never mind whatever data he gave her to process next.

"Yeah?" Scott looked uncomfortable under her analytical eye. "To hear things like - like my Mom telling people that she doesn't trust me anymore, my teammates plotting against me and my girlfriend's heart rate every time she lies to me! It's ruined my life." He hadn't noticed his voice get louder.

The more intently she listened the more her face closed off, her lips pressed into a bitten line, her eyes narrowed, her hair in her face as though it prevented her from exposure. She stepped half-onto the courtyard, leaning her back against the doorframe while her heel tapped; she had not enjoyed
that fact. "Scott, it ruined your life? You can heal in seconds. You can see further, hear anything and run faster than humanly possible. Sounds like a real hardship."

"I didn't mean to--" her tone brought him down. It hadn't occurred to him these were the first words they had shared since their daring rescue of their precious remembered-Stiles followed by their most awkward car ride with embittered secretive-Stiles. If he had a chance of forethought he might have planned better. Scott was not very good at coming up with the plans.

That was not their way of sharing; even when furious, she had a way of watching him that said he had all of her trust. Whether she wouldn't tell his secrets because he really mattered or because he mattered little, either way what he said stayed locked away in the secret places they locked everything in the dark.

"It's just I can't talk to Allison about how mad all this makes me. It makes her worry I might lose control."

After Lydia considered it she shrugged, "that makes sense." Whether she agreed or not would take her longer to decide on but either way it made sense.

Scott drew closer, bringing his voice low enough for her alone to hear. "I just thought I need someone to share this with. If we're being honest, I've never sensed anyone as angry as you."

"You're an idiot. It's not all that bad." Lydia smiled a little and tilted her head toward him. She had never advocated toward her supernatural status before, their shared one at that. But standing beside Scott in their little bitter bubble felt a little like that safe space where they came together and finally knew they could do something, they could do good "We did find Stiles."

Scott grinned, turned and looked through the glass window of the door, "his Dad is telling him not to burn down the school?"

"Good advice."

The bubble burst apart when Stiles barreled through the door.

The bell rang announcing the change of periods; when Lydia turned toward her English Lit class her purse swung heavily and the tablet stabbed at her side. She could barely handle talking to Scott. She still felt angry toward Stiles for blowing her off the day before and under that she felt an unearthly confusion at having him back. There was no way she was prepared to handle that. When she paused and turned briefly back she saw the way Stiles clung to Scott, they were already attached at the hip and the warmth it brought to her made her smile despite her discomfort. She couldn't see a place for herself in their bubble.

"Oh, god, this is freakin' awesome!" Stiles leaned in on Scott.

"Yeah man," Scott pushed back, "I don't even know where to start!"

"Hey Lydia!" Stiles called loudly when he noticed Lydia disappearing among a sea of students "It looks like you're gonna ignore me... Can she just do that? I'll get her back," Stiles insisted.

"Looks like it. Man, maybe you have got to give her some space." Scott laughed and tried to pull him back. It didn't stop him.

"Nope, what we need is a plan."
{4th period, Lunch}

Allison ate her lunch on the front benches of school because she assumed 1) the weather was brisk enough that students would prefer to eat in the lunch room, 2) the few strays or PDA-ing couples would want privacy by the tables in the courtyard and 3) whatever rebels who dared to would maybe catch snatches while studying in the library.

Parking lot curb meals were in no way appealing which is why Allison thought she would be safe alone and never anticipated finding herself sandwiched between Stiles and Scott. She nearly choked on her water when Stiles excitedly pointed her out and ran up to plop down on the bench beside her. His attempts at being the 'nice guy' were overt, a little discomforting but better than nothing. Meanwhile Scott's silent-shy guy routine on the opposite side was enough to run her off again. But she wouldn't.

Stiles asked a lot of questions about their schedule, what classes they had together, she and Scott, she and Lydia, Lydia and Scott, she and Isaac, Scott and Isaac. Allison nodded sipping her water patiently and finally handed him her class schedule. She pointed out the periods.


Stiles handed her schedule to her and thought about what to ask next for a moment since his original intent got derailed it would seem. He noted how many classes they had together. "Do you get along with Isaac?"

"I do," she answered before thinking, "I did." She tried another sip but ran out of water. "Do you get along with Lydia?" she tried at an angle.

Stiles made a face, "I will." She smirked and offered him part of her turkey sandwich. He took it as a peace offering.

Allison wasn't opposed to psychoanalysis or interrogation techniques, she was just used to a better form of decorum.

"Hi, by the way" she continued awkwardly, since neither of them had actually started a conversation with a greeting. "It's soon to be integrated don't you think?" She immediately regretted how it came across as less curious than critical.

"Not really. Scott's--" Stiles tried between bites.

Scott finally spoke up, assuming it was his place to keep the peace when it wasn't "My Mom was at the hospital to help check him out." He sounded overly excited, like a dog waiting for a treat.

"I'm in the pink of health!" Stiles stepped forward putting his friend at ease. "Physically. They'll probably be poking for a long while, psych-eval, forensics, personality adapt--"

"Have you considered you may have AD/HD?"
"I did," he beamed at the recognition, "I do."

"Allison."

"What? I've never meet another one of your friends and I've never actually hung out with any Werewolves besides you. I'm curious?"

"I've never met Scott's girlfriends before except he tried to win my friend Heather in a game of cards."

"It was over a game of Uno, we were 6. And I didn't want to win her, I wanted to beat you. You shouldn't have bet her."

Allison laughed into her hand and tried to not interrupt their game of one-upmanship.

"Of course she beat us both... with a wiffle bat when she found out what we did. Which in retrospect I shouldn't have told her."

"Because you had to brag that you'd won her. This technically makes her your girlfriend, not mine."

"Exactly, that brings me around to the point of how rare this is for me. I've never hung out with one of Scott's girlfriends before. Plus, I've never hung out with a Hunter before."

Things stilled after that, not intense, just still.

"Well," Scott started quietly, "I've never had a chance to introduce my best-friend to my girlfriend before. So that's new."

They both turned to look at him.

"The rest is just stuff," he added, a smile tugging at the side of his mouth.

Allison took a cue, turned back to Stiles and nodded. She asked him how was it like to be back at Beacon Hills, how he liked BHHS so far. And when she spoke she held Scott's hand and sounded more like a girlfriend.

"Weird, cool. They're moving along, pushing through agencies, I've settled on immersion therapy, instead of just waiting around the station all day for him to get off."

Scott laughed loudly and though she tried not to, Allison followed.

"That came out wrong," Stiles swatted at Scott behind the head, while giving her a judging look as if to say 'I expected better of you.'

The bell rang. "Listen, you 2 are going to attract attention and make Scott late for English Lit," with that she marched off leaving only the sound of small grey suede boots.

They struggled on the bench to get the other into a headlock until Stiles fell out and onto the floor.

"Did she say English?" he sounded too eager.

. .

Track 12 - Eyes Wide Open by Gotye
Either surrounded by people. Or arriving to class too late. Or leaving class too early. Each
deflection had worked to a measure so far but Jackson stood closest to getting Lydia's attention
when he texted "thank god you're not dead," just before she crossed the threshold. She would have
ignored him, she meant to ignore him when he texted, only he had bribed Danny for the nearer seat
behind her.

Only the worst scenarios to try and talk through would have been during Ms. Blake's English Lit.
class. She looked sweet and spoke kindly but took their cells and she glared unwaveringly. She was
heavy handed, unyielding and held more than Lacrosse careers in the palm of her hand.

Lydia glared at Jackson as she went past. He gave a sheepish look and she rolled her eyes,
determined to ignore him. Not possible when he scraped the desk closer to hers.

Lydia whipped around quick enough so that her hair hit him in the face. 'What' she mouthed.

Jackson reached forward, lower than desk level but not so low it could be seen as suggestive or
forceful or intimate even. When he touched her, carefully as if afraid she might shatter, a shiver
went through them and Lydia pulled further from him. Jackson looked like something swinging
between relieved and afraid.

"There was a girl," Jackson started.

Lydia shook her head. She knew the rest and didn't want him to continue but aside from yelling she
wasn't sure how to make him stop.

"Red hair, blue eyes, 5'5. Just like you and--"

"No Jackson!" she found her voice and it was low and angry. "That is not 'just like me'."

"A Deputy came to the school yesterday and you weren't here."

"Well, I'm here now--"

"Yeah," he gulped. After straightening up he seemed more like himself, rigid and taciturn in every
way but the eyes. Through the doorway Isaac had muddled through and went toward their
direction. "I figured considering the company you're keeping these days--?"

"Jackson," she groaned and spun back toward the front.

"How well do you even know these people? Do you even know who to trust?"

Lydia clutched her pencil as one would a knife. Across the aisles, Isaac sensed something wrong
and straightened in his seat. She splayed her pencil evenly on the desk before her and smiled at a
joke far off in her mind. "It would be easier to trust someone that you'd been with for over a year
who knew the difference between 5'5 and 5'3. Or that your eyes are green and not blue or that it's
strawberry blonde goddammit," she breathed out, "without having to be told. And it would be
easier to trust you, if you didn't ask me why I have to trust them."

When Allison walked in waving at Lydia, Jackson eased back, her expression hardened at the sight
of him crowding Lydia. The bell rang and Ms. Blake went to close the door to lock any late comers
out permanently just as Scott slid in with Stiles in tow.
"We have a full house today," said Ms. Blake after collecting the last of their cell phones. "Try and squeeze in where you can."

A commotion ensued toward the rear where a couple of boys tried to fit into one chair. She snapped her fingers and pointed toward the wall where an additional desk sat unused and festooned with a layer of century-old dust. He looked displeased and displayed it by a sneezing fit as he settled it down, ill fitting between two other students' desks.

"We're going to jump back into our discussion from last time on comparative writing; when is it derivative, when is it plagiarism, when is it homage or when is it an adaptation of a body of work? Okay guys, if you've been paying attention you should be able to tell me when these are okay and why?"

"Ms. Blake, wouldn't that be subject to taste?" Isaac spoke after she pointed at him. He seemed a bit surprised to be picked.

"That's a good argument Isaac but it isn't an answer. Come on guys, we're only reviewing. This is literally middle school stuff. I know you guys are burnt out but you should have better answers by now, Allison?"

Allison seemed startled to find herself in a class. She flipped through a few loose pages on her desk that had nothing to do with the topic than remembered "--If you use direct quotes --if you cite them, I mean. It isn't plagiarism. It can be derivative but that's probably intentional... The author might try to hit the same themes but can come up with different results." Stilted but she got there.

Scott spoke up and she encouraged speaking up but Scott was a reluctant speaker. It was obvious he felt most comfortable speaking over Allison. Allison over Scott. Peas of a pod "--my Dad once told me that there are no original stories left. He gave me his old Superman comics when he said that." There was some tittering.

A new voice added "I think I remember that!" Ms Blake looked up from her notations. A dark horse in the running. "Wasn't he also trying to get you to go to Sunday school?"

"Oh, god." Lydia cut him off, "Stiles, that's because you two wouldn't stop talking. Still won't stop talking."

Undeterred Scott caught onto Stiles' thought, "and then Mom told me Superman was a retelling of Moses."

Followed by a doubtful pause in the air.

"I can see that." Danny added, "The last of his people. Prophesied savior, bundled, sent adrift until he became of age. Then he would rise up and save the people. All people."

Under the thoughtful murmuring was the not so thoughtful bragging, "I totally stole his comics every Sunday--"

To which Scott replied "--which Mom would only give me if we were quiet."

"So, at one point," Isaac started critically, "you were capable of quiet? The two of you? Together?"

Ms. Blake laughed and knew it was a good time to rein it in. She moved along the aisle and cut a physical line across their tensions, "they bring up a good point though. There is a finite amount of
words. Stories are going to be retold."

Stiles asked, "What if it's meant ironically?"

"Why did I get the feeling that would be your soapbox?" Ms. Blake smirked at him from where she stopped. She leaned against her desk, "I'll up you one, what if it's self-referential? Can you be witty without being sarcastic?"

Scott hid behind his hands, "Don't make a comeback, Stiles. Please, don't make a comeback."

Lydia leaned forward and spoke up, "And it's cross-referential or out of its original contexts. Does it then lose validity?"

That caught Ms. Blake's eye, "Ooh, care to expand?"

Lydia tapped her pencil in tandem, faster as she caught momentum, "added influences can obscure the original source material, jumping off point for secondary work."

Allison caught her meaning, "Like music remixes?"

Lydia squinted and nodded, "like with Mozart, when his mentor tried to pervert his work for personal benefit." She hesitated when there was an obvious lull that no one followed, "Salieri, I think his name was." That had not helped.

Ms. Blake stood and started pacing again, listing their example on the blackboard "Yes, but only to gain lesser recognition. To create lesser works."

Scott suggested, "Evil remixes."

Stiles concluded, "Like Conan O'Brien!"

The class erupted with laughter.

Ms. Blake smiled, her hands waving at people to calm themselves. She sensed somehow he was in earnest. "Pardon?"

Stiles rushed forth, "He does this skit, where you have to guess the song but they don't have the rights to the tune. So the band plays the song but up a key and the singer sings the lyrics just slightly off key and off topic."

Ms. Blake dismissed him and went back to the board to write. "I think we've gotten a bit off topic. We've talked about Parodies and Plagiarism. We began to talk about adaptation. There is no end to adaptations available out there but can any outstrip their Originals?"

Stiles piped up, "Like The Lion King versus Sons of Anarchy; that is one serious showdown."

Lydia rolled her eyes. Scott scooted further down into his seat.

Ms. Blake grinned, "I have got to hear this one out."

"Well," Stiles continued, "Lion King; you got Simba -- golden maned, prince to inherit the kingdom. Then his Dad is murdered by his Uncle and his driven away by guilt or something while his Uncle has everything. Then Simba has to get it together and Hakunamatata it up to make with the Nala and save pride."

Jackson snapped, his tone beyond displeased, annoyed, put out, any combination of the three "save
"The Pride," he corrected, correctly.

Scott tried to put together, "save "The Pride" because of having same sex parent and being raised vegetarian?"

Danny looked a bit annoyed that Scott turned to him to answer that. "Not exactly. And with Sons of Anarchy?"

Isaac looked at Danny with a look of betrayal, "please. Please, don't encourage him."

Stiles preened, "well, SoA; you have Jax -- golden maned, prince to inherit the biker club, after his Dad also died but was really murdered by Hellboy. See, so you can't mess with him. After he killed Jax's Dad he married his Mom and ran the club. That drove Jax away for a year but he came back for his kid and Tara, then they made with the "Nala" but then the NRA stole the baby and Mexicans ran the guns and Jax got it all sorted but he wasn't able to keep it cool. Cost him his kids his Mom. Tara. So he took out Hellboy. He even tried to give up the club but he can't, the club is the kingdom, man. The club is the kingdom. No Hakuna, No matata."

Ms. Blake watched mouth gaped. "Well," she had to take a moment to blink and take that deep breath Stiles had not for the past three minutes "by that statement you're arguing Lion King is the better adaptation of Hamlet then Sons of Anarchy?"

Stiles shrugged and plopped back into his seat, "who said anything about Hamlet?"

Allison chuckled and took her hand away from her concealed grin, "both of your examples were adaptation of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet'. Really good examples."

Ms. Blake's brows drew together in thought, "Young man, are you even in my class?"

Stiles looked around, pantomiming deep thought. "I seem to be. Right?"

Lydia glared at him until he had the decency to turn away from her, "Please. Do not look at me. We are not friends."

Scott genuinely asked, "Which is the better one then?"

Stiles whipped around to look at him "What?"

Scott looked around the room, as though since there was a class discussion going on someone might know the answer to his question, "Between Lion King and SoA?"


Ms. Blake came up beside him, "No, we're trying to explore that. So why don't you explain it clearly?"

Stiles jumped and grabbed his chest. "Christ, are you a witch? Did you just teleport? Would you consider investing in cowbell ornamental jewelry or something--"

Ms. Blake smiled, clearly amused but unflappable nevertheless, "you can answer the question or you can leave."

Stiles fumbled, discomfited by her sudden nearness, however charming "Adaptation; only takes the good stuff it wants. Nala and Tara are versions of Hamlet's Ophelia. She spurs him on while
making sexy eyes. Except Nala lives because it's a kid's happy cartoon and Tara gets martyred like in the play."

Scott harsh-whispered at him, "Dude, spoilers."

Stiles felt genuinely bad, "aw, sorry man. We can totally Netflix later."

Scott said, "No, I meant Hamlet. I haven't gotten that far."

The room got so still as to hear a pin drop. Ms. Blake stopped mid pace and spun around to openly stare at him in bafflement.

Stiles exhaled "Whoa" which was as close to stunned silent as you would get from him.

Isaac was moved from utter dismay, "I don't think," he stammered "you can call 'Hamlet Spoilers'. And not in the middle of your English class. In front of your English teacher."

Stiles leaned back into his chair "I--I agree with what Lydia said earlier." he dramatically mouthed the words 'Don't look at me. We are not friends'.

Ms. Blake snickered, trying to keep things light, "Okay, but how is Sons of Anarchy for example not derivative of The Warriors or say the Untouchables. Or any other organized crime movie or TV show made before."

Stiles said snidely "because it isn't."

Allison said just as snidely, "isn't it though?"

Stiles' voice lost all humor, "you really need to take that back though."

Ms. Blake came back to the board and wrote down the sentence she spoke, "So if you were the author of your life's story would you consider it derivative?"

An awkward lull settled over the classroom; a room full up with people on the cusp of rewriting their life stories.

From the way she paced, Ms. Blake acknowledged each and every insecure head in the classroom to see what they would consider, "because of the clothes you wear or the quotes you use? The music you listen to? Would you choose instead to write an adaptation, where suddenly everyone is magical or musical?"

The room was a low buzz of thoughtful nothing. With Allison's tablet tucked low against her elbow Lydia finally raised her hand with an answer, her voice lacked levity; she looked around before answering less as an apology more by way of warning.

"The outcome is always affected. The moral of the story remains but what was a lighthearted comedy, now a tragedy. It's just become influenced by the desire of an audience. Everything is subject to external forces."

Allison looked at her consideringly then sounding put off she cut in sharply "or the story can be affected by what you want to get out of it."

Scott realized it had become something of an argument and felt on the losing side, he attached onto Allison's argument "okay, maybe in your version everyone is turned into monsters but you can still get the happy ending."
Danny answered, "Simba" tired of the pretense. He was certain they all lived fruitful and fully fleshed out three dimensional lives outside of his English Lit class, but sometimes when you're asked an opinion just give your opinion. "The answer is The Lion King I mean. In my humble opinion; Charlie Hunnam is pretty great but vengeance is a dark enough theme already. We need Hakuna. We need Matata."

Ms. Blake started to laugh. For the time being, whatever tension there was in the room broke. "Food for thought," Ms. Blake called out before someone, surprisingly not Stiles started to hum the song rather loudly.

Track 13 - Sinister Kid by the Black Keys

{6th period}

- Ms. Ramsey; Physics

"Do you ever feel like your school experience is just not the same one everyone else is attending?" Danny said shaking his head.

Danny Māhealani may have walked alongside Jackson but Jackson walked someplace else altogether. Upset and unfocused, he thought the knowledge of her alive and safe would have calmed his nerves. It hadn't. Instead it brought into focus how vividly he saw her death in his mind's eye.

"Do you ever think you have no business telling other people how to feel, Danny?" Jackson restrained himself, trying not to growl.

"That's not what I'm saying, Jackson" Danny watched the distraught way Jackson sifted through his locker contents rough enough to tear a notebook in half. Danny took hold of Jackson's hands and pulled them close together, "Alright man, I'll give you my notes. Don't worry about it. It's not that serious." He reached over and handed Jackson the World History book he wanted.

"I'm headed to Physics, but at practice later you can tell me what's going on," he smiled, assuming Jackson would like the idea of getting his aggression out on the field.

However well intentioned, what cut through Jackson's distress wasn't the kind words or the soothing tone but the trail of black blood he felt sliding from his ear down along his neck. He wiped it away before it could be seen. When he turned back he locked eyes on Danny with a fierceness that knocked him back a step.

"You know what sounds like more fun? Stabbing myself with a lacrosse stick." He slammed the locker and marched off.

While Danny watched him go, Lydia came up beside him and closed the locker gently until it locked. They shared a look of shock and kept each other company on their way to Physics.

Track 14 - Tacking Chances by Sharon Van Etten
{6th period}

- **Mr. Yukimura; World History**

For World History, they had Mr. Yukimura, who happened to be laid back enough to let students trickle in minutes after the bell. Normally. During dead week, he paced from his desk to the door like a Mother hen, panicked his students might not find their way in. It seemed he didn't have a prepared stance for someone to turn up early begging to bring even more people in despite having a full roster.

"Mr. McCall," and again calmer, "Scott, I appreciate your enthusiasm," he stepped back to deflect their eager begging bouncing faces, "but it's World History. The class will be here when your friend attends as an official student and we have the time to get him not only a desk, but a seat and even a textbook."

"He'll have all those soon. He just finished registering today--"

"Totally, I just crave knowledge--"

"Plus, I can share my textbook--"

"Scott," Mr. Yukimura put his books down onto his desk forcefully, which caused Stiles to jump back into the doorway and Scott to jump back, landing on Stiles' feet. Mr. Yukimura wasn't angry, he just wanted order. "I appreciate your friend's passion for learning, but he would still have to have a seat. And you can't share that. No!" he cut Stiles off when he started to argue the contrary, "you can't."

"s'fine, s'fine," Stiles shrugged, chewed the inside of his cheek and massaged at Scott's shoulders. "I'll just wait over-- over-- over there?" it didn't matter how far Stiles gestured along the hallway Mr. Yukimura shook his head in negation.

"He can have my seat," someone mercifully offered up.

Stiles rushed into the grabbed the girl by her shoulders and thank her profusely, "you wonderful human being. You're good people. You were raised right, you know."

"Kira, you can't do that," Mr. Yukimura groaned.

"If you give up your seat, where will you sit?" Scott stared awkwardly from his best-friend to the poor girl still trapped in his best-friend's claws (metaphorical, of course). *Let her go!* Scott mouthed, his expression pained. Stiles slowly relinquished his hold.

Blinkingly she resettled onto her feet and regained her balance. "I hadn't thought of that." She looked away from the eyes aimed toward her, down to the desks, where hers remained unfilled and nearest to Scott's, an aisle over and row back-- "I can sit over there?"

"No, this isn't musical chairs," added Mr. Yukimura. With an even greater groan he decided that was a sign to close the door and start class. As he did so he pushed Stiles toward the only empty seat left, that of Jackson Whittemore.
Although it had been an excuse earlier, it hadn't actually been a lie. Allison had been slacking off in Ms. Morrell's class. She assumed her background in French gave her wiggling room grades-wise but it had caught up to her. If she brought in an extra credit paper and aced her exams next week she could bring up her average from a struggling (C+) average into a (B). Maybe (B+) if you squint. After that, she could possibly, maybe find a way to convince her parents that her Hunter's activities weren't distracting from her scholastics. If she toed the line, then they wouldn't have her choose.

'I've been cutting school and missing exams to help with my boyfriend's super-developmental Werewolf process. I can't study afterschool, at nights or on the weekends because I'm sneaking around solving missing-persons and hooking up. Priorities, really.'-

Argents were built of stronger metal and she just needed to focus. At least, she thought with great relief, she didn't have Scott as a distraction in French. Hunched over her desk, onto her elbow she settled to the task of schoolwork and only schoolwork, except she realized too late she didn't have a pen. "God" she groaned repeatedly into her hand, who remembered to pack concealed daggers on their way to school but forgot their basic black or blue ink bic?

"Here," Isaac twisted around in his seat and handed her a pen.

Startled out of her preoccupation Allison's head snapped up and she accepted the pen with a confused grin. She had forgotten they shared 6th Period French. Unsure of how to respond, by the time she opened her mouth he had already faced forward.

Later;

There were 23 other students in the classroom but he happened to be sat smack-dab in front of the Hunter. No labels, the person who 24-hours ago shot him with a magical-sedative while his leg had been clamped up in iron jaws. No, the person who 48-hours ago uncovered the first clues in weeks he might still have a pack. No, Allison a week ago knocked on a car window said hello and invited him to come along with the rest of them to go bowling.

Isaac groaned and twisted half-around again, "Do you mind, I'm trying--" and she sat straighter and nearly dropped the pen from her grip. For a Hunter Allison spooked fairly easily. "I'm trying to pay attention more," he pointed toward her doodling out of nervousness.

"Oh," she stared down, surprised to discover she had driven markings along the margins through several pages. Without apologizing, before he could turn his attention back she started in "Can I ask you a question?"

"Do you have to?"

"I guess not," Allison shrugged, lifting the pen to her lip in thought she glanced over at him "I'm going to ask anyway. Would you have told anyone you were looking for your 'foster' family it
hadn't been for last night?"

It was the sort of question that made your skin itch, like a scab had come half undone because he had already been scratching at that same question for too long, "Wasn't planning on it--" Isaac only sort-of lied.

She wasn't buying it. After a pause, "did you think we wouldn't have helped you look?"

"Well, your sincerity is less convincing since you poisoned me while my leg was crushed in a trap and then aimed a gun at my head," he snapped. When he tried to bring up memories of what happened in the woods, things were less vivid than they should have been. His confrontation with Allison had been in fact the least upsetting thing to happen, all things considered. In fact, if he stopped to think on it he doubted he would have gotten out of the woods without her, never mind that trap. Not that he had given it any thought.

"Sorry, but it was a paralytic actually." Haughtiness crept into her tone, into her spine actually.

"Is that an apology?" Isaac smirked, he nearly snorted actually.

"Would you accept an apology?"

Isaac scoffed and dropped back into his chair facing forward.

"Good," Allison snapped the back of his seat with the pen.

"When it's one of your friends out there--" he turned his head and mumbled over his shoulder.

Allison hunched further over her desk "--it was all of my friends out there--" she argued.

"--well, you didn't act like it."

"Swapping silver bullets out for sedatives is acting like it," she breathed, then sat back in her seat before she added "while you weren't exactly very quick to retract your claws." Knowing she didn't have to sit forward or raise her voice for him to hear.

Ms. Morrell reminded for the second time instead of discussing gossip with one another, they should be working on correcting their oral presentation. Their practiced silence lasted less than 30 seconds.

"Exactly how many weapons did you pack to school today, Hunter?" Isaac attempted to mutter derisively but it came off sounding silly.

To which Allison scoffed, she had more experience at mocking.

"Let me ask you a question," Isaac half-turned to which Allison shot up in her seat. "How soon did you figure me out for a Werewolf?"

"Soon," With her eyes alert and her arms up, crossed almost like a shield as she twiddled the pen just under her chin, she seemed to think about it as if it were the most amusing prospect on the planet. "It didn't seem important enough to bring up. Should it have been?"

Then Allison's eyes flicked upward when the teacher walked past and the both of them jumped back to their work but when she continued her work she kept scratching the pen against the paper. Only harder than before.
Mr. Ramsey; Algebra1

"You're getting along, that's great!"

Barely out of French Stiles had pounced on Allison and Isaac.

Allison looked at Isaac and wondered if getting along well meant passive-aggressive digs towards one another aimed around a borrowed pen. Her smile was so awkward and over exaggerated it only made Isaac uncomfortable.

"Yeah, conjugating verbs and everything," answered Isaac.

Stiles smirked at that then started in on his true purpose. It had been too long and too weird since he had a chance to harass his friend and pack member Isaac Lahey. "I bet you get hungry," was the worst segue ever used to invite someone to dinner to meet the folks. At first Isaac was sulky and reluctant, but Stiles was tenacious.

Allison stood between the two, trying to edge out peaceably without saying a word, but that felt all too weird. Each time she opened her mouth to say something like "see you later" it felt rude.

"Come on, we need to catch up and don't you want to hang out at my house, not drugged up or breaking in this time?"

"Not the best selling points," Isaac lightly kicked the tip of one boot against the back of the other.

"Well, I would say let's catch up at your place but you're probably up in a tree outside of Lydia's house," Stiles said after a seconds consideration.

"Well, it was either that or a cave in the middle of the woods, but you'd already taken that spot," Isaac smirked.

Stiles answered with a waggling of his eyebrows at first, amused his friend actually made a quip worth acknowledging and then insisted on dinner once more. His Dad would like to meet his foster brother after all. Isaac had trouble saying no after that. Isaac had trouble saying anything after that so he only nodded.

Meanwhile Scott had come to Allison's rescue and escorted her to her next class. After she thanked him and asked how Stiles was in class, if they were managing to stay out of trouble. Scott said everything was actually going pretty alright but the one thing that had stuck out to him was that Jackson hadn't turned up in History. She didn't like it.

"I haven't seen him around either but Isaac and I have Ms. Ramsey's for Algebra1. You'll probably have a better chance of knowing if Jackson makes it to Econ if you get moving," she said and started to push him toward Coach's classroom just as the bell started to ring.

Coach Finstock; Economics
"Stiles," Isaac warned "you can't just shadow all of Scott's classes."

"Of course not," Stiles beamed, "I'll go to some of yours too! Plus, I think I'll be taking Lacrosse--"

"Seriously," Allison hurried them along their way, keeping the lead by shoving Scott by the tail of his spine, "it will get the both of you in trouble."

"I am thinking of him," Stiles interceded, throwing an arm over Scott shoulders. Allison stepped back with amusement, happy to give up the load. "I'm not going to let anything happen--" he added "--anything else, now that we're together."

"Exactly!" Scott grinned.

The halls held a false calm in their emptiness until a voice came booming.

"McCall, are those your dulcet tones! Because you had better be an angel of death to be haunting these hallways after the bell!"

"Coach," said Scott, worriedly. The back of his brain calculating how quickly he could dodge into the class before Coach could make it from his office at the end of the hall; he had a few decent seconds to say goodbye. It wasn't THAT big of a deal.

"After your predictable detention," Allison kissed his cheek and slipped up the stairwell backward on step at a time looking remorsefully at him.

"Why would you even say--" Scott's brow furrowed. Scott looked around to Isaac for backup but the guy had already disappeared.

"Coach, is it?" Stiles spoke up from just out of Scott's reach, "I think you meant specters."

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Track 17 - Fourth Dimension by LIGHTS

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{7th period}

- Mr. Harris; Genetics/Biotech

Unsurprisingly Mr. Harris took special care to notice when Lydia took her seat. She couldn't tell whether he was being sincere or condescending when he asked her if she needed to leave early or needed extra time, and if she did just to let him know. Admittedly she was his prize student but sometimes his sarcasm could be so vague even he didn't recognize it.

Given his vying to be the center of her attention she was grateful Jackson had cut class again, Lydia wasn't sure she could deal with 2 big-head egomaniacs once. Harris recirculated personalized packets with the labwork of other students, names removed, to prove why they were wrong... because high school wasn't humiliating enough. It was intensive work because half of the class hardly understood the work to begin with. Lydia was excused and exalted/ostracized because she would have no problem correcting anyone else's work plus she never made errors.

She had hoped for something to keep her thoughts from obsessing but classwork wasn't up to snuff.
While all the 'little lambs' students went bleating off to the slaughter Lydia could easily sing-song, ~lalala junk DNA or noncoding DNA, ladeeda can transcribe into functional non-coding RNA lalaladeda~~

Unfocused her bright-eyes drifted over the blackboard to her favorite Stephen Hawkings quote that she read often and questioned never, " THE EUREKA MOMENT SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY; I wouldn't compare it to sex, but it lasts longer."

Lydia sat upright and let out a sharp gasp, the classroom took notice.

Excited, she finally had actual academic work to pursue and that Hawkings guy, oh that guy, he sure knew some things. She turned over a fresh page in her notebook and wrote across the top; "Gene Coding Ignition—(bite) infection ≠ deviation stimulate = bonds noncoding DNA..." She then began to sort through the data on Allison tablet and looked for anything that carried the earmarks of turning by way of a "Bite". If she could find the causation then she might be able to bring about a way to reverse it.

 Supernatural be damned; she was not crazy, her friends were not fodder and she would make this madness make sense. And it was going to be sooo satisfying.

- Ms. Ramsey; Algebra1

"I think you're the only one who shows up at zero period as often as I do," her voice wasn't small at all or soft even but it carried a steady calm with it that had a rare timidity.

Allison looked up from hunched position, folded over the textbook and pilfered composition notebook full of Lydia's notations. She smiled up into the familiar face of a Japanese girl with the misleading body language of a frightened doe. Sure, she noticed her at the start of the year, daughter of the new World History teacher Mr. Yukimura, not to mention in PE on track where she gave everyone more than a competitive run for their money. Yes, Allison noticed everyone.

"Curse of the new kid, we're always struggling to keep up," Allison gestured to the seat across from her, a lifeline in the storm. Ms. Ramsey had everyone pair into 2's to cross-examine one another to death for the extent of the period. With her late-night dalliances there was no way Allison was prepared enough for this.

"Thanks!" she dove into the seat, dropping her bag and books around her like anchors in a storm, "I'm Kira."

Allison knew better than to say 'I know'. "Allison," Ms. Ramsey glared at them for socializing. "We should get started."

Kira groaned softly "ok, don't be too hard on me."

"I won't make it too painful, I promise," she started to settle in but they were both distracted by Isaac exaggeratingly loud gagging chortle from 3 tables over. No doubt for Allison's benefit. She threw him a glare but he didn't look up.

After a few harder questions back and forth, it seemed as though Allison had a better grasp of the work, but Kira bemoaned her situation. Allison admitted she only really got ahead because she had her best-friend's notes rely on, and at that Kira begged "from one New Girl to another, couldn't you stay for a little while after school?"

The bell rang for the change of class. Allison felt a press of compassion and pressed for time.
{8th period}

- **Mr. Harris; Biology**

"I'm getting along with Allison."

Scott looked up from his text book. He glanced across the table, up toward the desk where Harris poured all of his aggravated attention over the edge of his glasses and down at ungraded practice tests he seemed to want to burn rather than to read through.

"Yeah, cool."

Stiles grinned, shuffled his whole desk a little over. Harris looked up to decipher the noise but by then everyone had their nose back into a text book. Where Stiles had acquired a textbook, Scott wasn't sure he wanted to ask.

"She used her family connections in the Sheriff's office to get the maps last night, did you know that?"

Scott nodded without looking up.

Another scrape from the movement of desk, Scott dropped his head onto his desk.

"If she's able to get info from the Sheriff's office, do you think she'll be able to give me pointers?"

Scott looked over with a quizzical expression on his face.

"What?" Stiles defended, "as the Sheriffs' son," he said sounding haughty as he propped the book up like a blockade and hid his face behind it, "I think I've earned the privilege."

"Why are you trying to break into the Sheriff's department when you just worked to sneak out of our homes. Seriously, pre-teens have been doing that since before the dawn of Disney channel."

"1) 'though this be madness, yet there be method'--"

To which Scott had an even more confused expression.

"2) Read your goddamn Hamlet 3) you should probably learn how to hone your Wolfie skills and not get caught while sneaking in and out of our homes. Seriously, pre-teens have been doing that since before the dawn of Disney channel."

Scott's grin started to widen but his expression remained that of confusion.

"4) This could be quality Hunter/Werewolf bonding time, I mean come on. And finally--"

Stiles slid lower into his seat, lowering his voice and leaned toward Scott with the intimacy of the matter.
"--5) I've got to get access to that dead body."

{8th period}

- Ms. Ramsey; Art

During Art Lydia tried to bring up Jackson as nonchalantly as possible, only it didn't matter how delicate she meant for it to be. The topic genuinely concerned Allison.

"This is the second time in 2nd day I've heard his disappearance brought up," Allison settled down her paint brush.

"It's just that the last time I saw him," Lydia started and stopped talking. Her insistence at stabbing at the canvas said a lot more than her words could.

"Was he doing that bad?"

"Worse," Lydia tried to keep her face straight but the too-tightness of her expression said a lot. When the bell rang she dropped her supplies and headed toward the door without as much as making eye contact.

"I haven't seen him since English, Lydia. I'm sorry," Allison said in an attempt to call to her but Lydia wouldn't slow. "I can go look for him," Allison offered but Lydia attempted to move around her and in doing so bumped into Isaac hard enough that he doubled back.

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Track 19 - She's Hearing Voices by Bloc Party

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{9th period}

- Going to Coach Helisek PE; Girls

"It's alright," Allison assured Isaac, "we have PE next. I'll keep an eye on her there."

Only it never turned out that way. Lydia ditched PE and went to the Library to get some privacy. Not to her usual nest of a table but further up into the balcony, into the shelves, into the hideaway places and found a new place to disappear into. She dropped her bag onto the desk and pulled out a notebook with equations that were lyrical in formation. She whipped out Allison's tablet and slid through the bestiary and with the other hand pulled out her iPhone to tap out her back up notes. If she couldn't hunt or track down her subject than she intended to find another means of working things out, permanently.

Determined to help her friend, Allison crept through the locker room only to chance upon a very aggressive Jackson with a towel wrapped around his waist instead.

"You shouldn't be here," Jackson's words were a warning but sounded like a threat.

Allison knew to take them as much and she reached into her purse and threaded her fingers through the rings of a Chinese dagger.
"You're right and I'm sorry. I just came to see if my friend is okay. Jackson--" he didn't like the sound of his name from her voice, but she continued anyway "are you okay?"

The steam of the hot water flooded the showers in a heavy steam and compromised Allison's field of vision, but the heat and the burning was necessary for Jackson to keep the change in check. And when he turned toward Allison at the sound of her voice and walked from the showers to the lockers the cooling air took away the extreme temperature that had kept him in check.

"Why're you keeping tabs on me Allison?" he drew slowly toward her, "Shouldn't you be watching out for your idiot-hero boyfriend off in detention somewhere?" he said snidely.

It wasn't that his barbs were bitter or correct or even that she didn't like someone mocking her boyfriend, what bothered her most was Jackson's awareness of things he couldn't have been aware of since he hadn't been anywhere near when they happened.

"Jackson," she snapped before she could think not to, she couldn't help it. The proximity made her tense. She brought the dagger to her side, between her purse and her person and it kept her calm "you don't have to get defensive."

"Alright then," he responded, his eyes turned gold and slit when he blinked and his hand came up as if to stroke her face, only claws extended from his fingertips "then offensive it is!"

Allison shoved the heel of her shoe into his barefoot, knocked back the wrist of his hand nearest and shoved him back holding the dagger to his throat. He stumbled backward till he fell to the floor and she knelt over him, her knee into his sternum. He gasped for air and gripped at the tiles beneath him. When he blinked up at her in shock, his eyes returned to blue.

"Jackson?" she eased back. He wheezed something that sounded like an apology until the sense of impending danger cut off their exchange.

Allison rolled off only seconds before Isaac intervened and pulled Jackson up from the floor like a rag doll and flung him hard against the lockers, crushing the doors inwards. Allison screamed for Isaac to stop before Jackson or rather the change rose from within him. She had only heard Isaac roar once in the open field but in the echoing confines of the locker room it ran chills through her. As they grappled for one another Allison tried to warn Isaac when she saw Jackson's claws extend but he couldn't hear her over all the noise. Then everything went quiet as Isaac collapsed to the floor when he felt a familiar paralysis set in. It felt twice as strong but lasted half as long.

*Ms. Blake; Comprehensive Reading/Writing.*

*(Cancelled)*

Scott and Stiles' cell phones went off simultaneously with a text from Lydia. It seemed despite her unsociable tendencies she demanded their presence. Mrs. Blake had (yet again) cancelled English and Scott thought he would never be able to make up his 2nd English credit. But hanging out on the Lacrosse field with his best-friend and tossing around the ball (before the Coach caught them and reminded them about their detention) was a good enough trade.

They never got a chance to reply, because the sound of Isaac's roar reached Stiles' ears and Scott sensed Allison's distress. After that, Lydia's text went unanswered.

When the steam cleared and staff arrived in the locker room, with all of the mess it came across as though Isaac and Jackson had a jealous fight over Allison. Because of that the 3 of them also
received detention with Stiles and Scott.

"How do you even get detention when you're not a student here?" Isaac muttered into Stiles' ear while he turned in his cell phone at the library door.

"Talent," Stiles dropped his into the box Mr. Harris shoved into his rib.

Allison tried to go through the messages on her phone as quickly as possible but Mr. Harris' face warned that he would only give her a 2nd day if she continued. She made a meek noise of dismay as she dropped it into the box and hurried after Scott.

Jackson walked in last, his hair still wet and his face stone set in disquiet.

"The sooner we begin, the sooner it will end Mr. Whittemore, don't you worry," he assured Jackson with a pat on his back. Jackson tensed up when touched and didn't respond. He also didn't hand in a phone.

When he sat down, Stiles quickly changed seats to sit beside him.

"Hey, compadre," Stiles started in when he edged his chair nearer, "not sure if you remember me from elementary school but I'm going to make sure you remember me--" he grinned and let his canines extend "-- if you put your hands on one of my friends again."

"Stiles!" Scott quietly called for him to stop from a table away.

"No talking!" Mr. Harris voice boomed with exasperation as he groaned and left toward a stock room.

"Stiles, right. Right," Jackson smirked and eased back into his chair. He barely noticed the fangs, "I remember you, hiding in your little sandbox waiting for McCall to fight your fights and crying to your Dad. I bet you still do that, cry to your Dad."

"Yeah, you still think you're something big and flashy but you were unstable then and you're unstable now--"

"You don't know what you're getting into," Jackson warned Stiles.

"Maybe not but do you?" Stiles backed off and he watched wide-eyed at the sight of Jackson's hands scaling over and his fingers disjointing, extending into claws.

Track 20 - Under The Earth by Yeah Yeah Yeahs

{Late Thursday Afternoon}

Time sped faster forward from when school let out while Lydia paced her room unhappily and watched the sun dip under the skyline.

With their equally invested interests in the bestiary, it didn't seem likely for them to stand her up without calling or texting. At least, not without good reason, the dumbasses. It gave Lydia too much time to over-analyze certain unsettled feelings, which only led to her feeling the need to take
an Ibuprofen. She sat at the foot of the bed, with her head in her hands and waited, trying desperately not to look at the time.

At the end of her full-size bed, among scattered notes of random observations and a tourist map she picked up at a gas station on the way home, she used a comforter to prop up the tablet beside her chem. book. After so many scribbled notes over time her steady handwriting became incrementally weary gibberish. As she struggled to stay awake for when her friends arrived, exhaustion caught up with her. Heavy restful sleep blew her over onto her hill of paperwork, until a somewhere far off a thread cut her off from the universe. Lydia felt it snap through her soul. The force of the blowback and the fright of it, the violence and the sight of it, the sense of every inch of her burst from her as a shriek.

Chapter End Notes

CREDITS/ROLL CALL:

Argents - Team1; headed by Victoria, Chris & Allison.
- Rumy - [Sergeant] specialized in Recon; Special Forces and espionage. Chris' right hand man and Allison's godfather.
- Axel - [1st Lieutenant] expert tracker, marksman and Allison's 2nd cousin.
- Bennett - [Field Officer] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old and friend to Allison.
- Leveque - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Terrain-Orientation. Mechanics, driving countermeasures the means to mobilize heavy firepower to engage opposing forces including other combat vehicles.
- Ulrich - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation.

Argents - Team2; headed by Kate.
- Livy - [1st Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Force-Orientation, R.I.F. and close-combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's right-hand man.
- Tyhurst - [Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation, Cyberwarefare, has CIA background and is ranked with state detective credentials. Referred to as 'try-hard.'
- Norm - [Sergeant] specialty in Medical Intelligence and as a Longbowman; an archer who uses the longbow, w/ various arrowheads. He' JR's brother and Roman's Uncle.
- Roman - [Field Officer] specialty as a Marksman/Sharpshooter, 19yrs. old and a weapons expert skilled in precision shooting. He's JR's son and Norm's Nephew.
- Fry - [Field Officer] specialty as a Tactician is and general officer, while his marksmanship is low he is still in high regard for his brain.

Hale (Present Day) Pack; Alpha
- Derek - [?] In a very precarious position.

? Other;?
- Stiles - [Omega] also abandoned, in search of any existing pack members.
- Jackson - [?]...
- Lydia - [Banshee] 'A Banshee screams preceding a supernatural death not as a premonition but to highlight the likelihood of supernatural events that result in deaths.'
Twins' Pack; Aiden and Ethan Carver Alphas
• Marta - [Beta] she's an older motor head and their 1st Lieutenant.
• Bridy - [Beta] the packs' spy because she's diminutive and easily underestimated.
• Gus - [Beta] referred to as psychotic now and again, but his very few (and dwindling) close friends' are his touchstone.
• (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, bi and partnered to Naylor, formerly to Bozeman.
• (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
• (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
• (deceased) Coot - [Omega] former Beta, killed by the Monster.

Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha
• (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed 1st Lieutenant, possibly romantically entangled.
• Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali and closely bonded to Huntington.
• Santos - [Beta] while loyal to Kali has mentored many, without regard to packs. He helped the Twins first learn to shift together without losing their identities.
• Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed and with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
• Levi - [Beta] he's neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
• Huntington - [Beta] has strong empathic senses, is very good friends with Gus' from Twins' pack and Lark.

Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha
• Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' Lieutenant, --from wiped out Shapeshifter dynasty.
• Dr. Kane - [Beta] both a medical Doctor and their torturer.
• Quint - [Beta] eager to please teen and Dr. Kane's biological son.

Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha
• Søren - [Beta] 1st Lieutenant, Danish man of even temperament and a skilled negotiator until his temper is peaked.
• Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
Chapter Summary

When the identity of the body in the forest is revealed, it turns out to be the least shocking thing in the evening. Sparks fly when Jackson discovers he can find control of his raging change when accidentally influenced by someone unexpected; Kira Yukimura. Back at the Preserve; Scott and Stiles are led blindly by Lydia across invisible lines that lead to places uncharted with explosive results. Meanwhile; Allison and Isaac are left to analyze the murderers of Beacon Hills before realizing they have to add their friends onto the list.

- Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/09-were-you-brave

Chapter Notes

Previously on were (you);
- Scott escorted Stiles around his school to better acquaint him to both the place and the people, to also rebuild bridges in relationships that were tested recently.
- Stiles was horrible at school and got detention before he was even enrolled. Seriously.
- Lydia took on the task of translating and converting the bestiary files that Allison retrieved from her family's server. True to form, Lydia is determined not only to learn what makes each of their 'types' tick but how to possibly develop ways to control their changes.
- Allison's tried to put her status as Hunter aside and perform as a better girlfriend toward Scott as she properly meets his best-friend, Stiles, which only ended in interrogation. She tried to perform as a better best-friend to Lydia, which led to taking her for granted yet again. She tried to make amends to Isaac that resulted in her stealing his pen and she tried to play nice with Jackson, which resulted in nearly destroying the school. Nobody said making friends would be this hard.
- Jackson finally lost all control during school hours when antagonized by the likes of Allison and Stiles. The result of which left Isaac doubly wounded, the locker-room showers destroyed and the library shelves shattered. After displaying his super strength and reptilian features he hasn't been seen from again.
- In the locker room Isaac took a hit for Allison that leaves him temporarily paralyzed, yet again. Later in the library Isaac took a hit for Stiles. While it didn't leave him paralyzed, it did leave him with a bookshelf cracked over his head. Fitting in has never been this hard. Nobody said keeping friends would be easy.
- With the growing threat of murderers Beacon Hills and mystery on the rise there only promises more to come.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Track 01 - Fear and Resilience (Danger Mouse Remix) by Pedro
{Thursday; Late Evening / Evening}

"I'm pretty sure your Dad won't be happy you got arrested."

"Detained," Stiles clarified holding a single finger up, "Not arrested. Detained and this is just a formality."

"Okay," Scott shifted uncomfortably in his seat under the watchful eyes of yet another pacing Deputy, "but this feels a lot like being arrested."

Stiles gave him a weak smile, "has your Mom called back?"

Scott shook his head, "I've called her twice. She might be assisting with a procedure but I'm pretty sure when my Mom gave me a pass for 'magical stunts' she didn't mean to demolish the school."

In the gap while they waited for Deputies to move out of listening range they smiled awkwardly, in that they looked only mildly guilty. It helped that the damage done to the library was subjectively minimal; as a result of a few shelves (granted, very large shelves) cracked apart from the force of Isaac having thrown Stiles through them. To be fair, it had been for his benefit when the sight of Jacksons' fangs extending and his fingers curling into claws triggered the instinct in Isaac to avoid those particular set of sharp pointy digits. Unfortunately, it cracked apart a number of bookshelves leaving Stiles, Scott and Allison with a few injuries, mostly Stiles and fortunately blockaded Mr. Harris in the storage room. But when the dust literally settled Jackson had gone.

The Argents had someone on the scene as soon as the officers started pouring in and Allison was whisked away without so much as a goodbye. Sealed away into the back of her Father's Hatchback less than 30ft away, the men who came to collect her and analyze the scene (the men Allison warned were 'Cleaners') were exactly what he had grown up envisioning Hunters to be; burly, brisk and intentionally intimidating.

Scott looked miserably down at the ground when he was trying his best not to look toward the Hatchback, trying not to stare and memorize the make, a Mazda or the model number; 3i in dark crystal or even try and stare through the tinted windows... No, because something like that would make it obvious had a connection with the girl inside. And if he kept staring as if he could see straight through the metal of the door they would know something tied the two of them and things would end up more tragic than an awkward family dinner.

Just as the vehicle carrying Allison pulled out, the Sheriff's Cruiser pulled in. Stiles shot up in his seat and hadn't noticed in his fumbling to get over Scott he tripped harder against Scott's shins. He winced in pain but held onto Stiles' arm, carrying him across because if one of them deserved to be united with their loved one right now it was definitely Stiles.

"Where's my Son?" the Sheriff shouted. He had barely turned off the car and though he called out at the top of his lungs, somehow it didn't seem loud enough.

"Dad!" Stiles stumbled to his feet and pushed past a Deputy, using a little more force than needed. "Dad! I'm over here!!" He finished his sentence wrapping his arms around his Father's shoulders.

For a man who had no supernatural power in him he certainly exhibited supernatural strength with how fierce he clutched his son.

"I'm alright Dad," Stiles reassured a few times, "I'm right here." Whatever reservations they earlier felt burned away with need to assure them of the other's security. When he struggled out of his
Father's death grip he explained "and the school didn't burn down."

Tyhurst drove her home. She was uncertain if this was best. Her Father staying behind at the school left the Sheriff's department in the best hands, however that left her in the hands of the least sympathetic person at a rather vulnerable moment and where she felt least likely to come up with a decent cover story.

"How many students were there again?"

"Mr. Harris has the whole list," she stared out the window. She ignored the glare she felt toward the back of her head. "I feel pretty out of it from being knocked around, there were at least three. Maybe less, maybe more." They, the 'US' they, the non-Hunters, they needed Isaac to recover, and unseen from Hunters' eyes or he would be outed as a Werewolf in a second.

"And the locker room incident?"

Alright now there she couldn't cover for Isaac, Allison thought. And she couldn't stall the next 5 minutes it would take to get home. Not without being obvious and faking a coma.

"I went in to get prepared for gym and one of the students, the one suspected before of developing abilities, showed aggressive behavior. When I defended myself-- well, some stuff happened."

Tyhurst grunted. Well he hadn't exactly grunted; it was more of a low release of breath like the deflating of a tire that meant he was revving up for being passive-aggressive. Well, two could play at that game.

"I'm sure I told Rumy about this student before," she made a sound like a grunt while readjusting in her seat. "We might as well have a Family Meeting and talk about it." There. She put it out there.

"As soon we get home."

That would be in 3 minutes. She needed to get a hold of Scott and Stiles and get their stories straight and she needed to get a hold of Isaac and see if he had healed up and gotten somewhere safe.

"As soon as my Dad gets home," she sat up to look him in the eye and corrected his statement.

He nodded stiffly. That would buy her some time. Then she would report on Jackson in full, report to the 'Them' not the 'Us' and she didn't feel very sorry because he had put her friends in danger. Rumy would support her but he wouldn't cover her ass so there would be some eating crow. The Meeting wouldn't be half as bad as the anticipation toward it.

1 minute more till home. She could see Bennet in the driveway and she could swear Tyhurst had slowed down. It was agony.

"Who's Miguel?" the Sheriff asked for the second time.

"I am," Stiles answered for the second time.

The Sheriff rubbed his neck. The sign in sheet for the library read like a who's who of a Three Stooges script; From 'I. P. Freely' to 'Deez Nuts'.

"Why're you Miguel?"

"I didn't want to bring shame on the family," Stiles explained as if it were the simplest thing in the universe. "You know, getting detention before I'm even attending."

"They will recognize you once you're in their class," the Sheriff reminded.

"Yes, but will it be me or my evil Spanish cousin from down south, who was responsible for tearing up the library," Stiles' hands gestured in a tight clasp, then in small nervous rotations while he spoke but his eyes were intent on his Father's face.

"Have you been hit in the head? Is this a concussion?" his Father licked his lips then nodded in deep concentration.

"Yes. I don't think so."

"Totally. Probably"

Stiles and Scott gave the Sheriff different answers. The Sheriff shook his head in relief. He gave off waves of dismay but far less than moments earlier. Whether Stiles' babbling had been intentional or from nerves, either way they did wonders for his Father's temperament. Not his nerves but they brought down his distress.

After Stiles assured his Dad that he was perfectly safe, practically across the school in the library when the incident happened the babbling started. He seemed to fairly okay at lying but the sitting with the lie afterward made him twitchy. Regards to the destruction the in the locker room, Stiles tried to excuse the destruction as faulty fixtures. Weeks earlier, when Scott had some difficulty during the full moon, he had made false complaints about faulty structures in the locker room. Fortunately those held up now and Scott pointed them out to the Sheriff.

"Alright, alright" Sheriff Stilinski conceded with a sigh. Whether he accepted their reasoning as fact would stand to be seen but until then "this is going to take a while to clean up. I'll see you two safely home in a few. Why don't you sit in the car."

It was in no way a question and Scott was too intimidated to say 'no', Stiles started to but his Dad placed a hand on the back of his head and lowered him into the back seat. He gave them a kindly smile before closing the door behind him.

"The doors don't open from the inside, do they?" Scott asked.

Stiles rattled the handle several times. Nothing. He shrugged over at Scott. They were confined to the back seat of the Sheriff's Cruiser unless they broke the door, which neither would dream of doing. Stiles' Dad would kill them.

The Sheriff put his mind to the task and with his observation that even the school was not a safe place he placed both Scott and Stiles in the back of the police car. He marveled that he couldn't leave them alone for one day without the two of them getting their hands dirty. Although they both protested the Sheriff insisted they stay in the car until he could see them home himself after he finished taking statements. He didn't say it aloud but it was obvious he wanted to take Mr. Harris' statement in person.

"Who's that?" Stiles mumbled into the curve of Scott's ear. He didn't take a liking to the man hanging off of his Father's arm, much in the way he hung off of Scott's.

"That's Allison's Dad," Scott's frown deepened while they both over heard the report between the authorities.
"So, he's not just any Hunter. He's the boss."

Scott nodded. From across the parking lot they heard the Sheriff tell Chris the shattered door at the Library's rear entrance wasn't surprising since there had been several other recent break-ins. It could have been part of today's damage or done weeks ago. The same M.O. had been seen at the First National Bank, the second at the "Municipal Records" building, then in the administration office at the high school, the middle school and the elementary school.

Scott turned to Stiles. "Do you think we should text Allison?"

"I don't-- I don't know! Don't they report to each other?" he turned from startled to very quiet and thoughtful. Scott stared at him expecting an answer but Stiles stared at the floor of the car intently.

"Stiles? If the library door is shattered the exact same way as these other places than that means Jackson is breaking into places... is he like some super-powered burglar?" Scott shifted around to face Stiles fully. "He didn't know what he was doing in the library. I saw the way he changed and I've seen how out of it he's been around school. Could he be stealing for someone else and not know it?"

Stiles shook his head slowly, when he looked up again he twisted his neck around to look over at his Dad and keep as many Hunters in his eye line as possible. He narrowed his eyes, intently analyzing, memorizing faces while he pursed his lips in thought. "It doesn't sound like he's trying to steal something. It sounds like he's trying to find someone. Everything else is collateral damage."

Scott leaned back in the seat and put an arm along the back of the head rest, his posture was easy but his face said otherwise. He watched his friend's face, the way every muscle ticked away in thought and it made every possibility seem easy where as the world often froze for Scott, things slowed to a crawl when he realized control was so far away from him, safety was so far gone that it seemed hard to hope. He liked having Stiles around and envied that ticking nature even at its most overbearing because from time to time he could borrow a little and felt a little more real, feel a little more human.

"You mean everyone else," Scott corrected quietly, rubbing a thumb across his lower lip.

"What?" Stiles spun to face his friend. He noted the demeanor change and took a moment to reevaluate. Admittedly, if he did put more thought into what he said before he said it, there would be significantly less foot-in-mouth disease to suffer but then he would also speak significantly less altogether. Stiles slid back into the seat across from his friend, propping his feet up on the combination of their backpack on the floor and curled into something of a pupa. "I'm sorry, Man," he stared up at the ceiling for the right thing to say, then back at Scott then back at the ceiling, "You are not collateral damage. If anything you guys are collateral homage."

"Don't be sorry," Scott chuckled and he lightly shoved at Stiles' shoulder and pulled him closer. Or rather factually Stiles toppled against him. "We're going to stop him. But first, we've got to get everyone working together."

Three chinks, the sharp unexpected sound of Lydia's ring lightly tapped against the window. Her face dipped into the view, the sudden appearance made the both of them nearly jump out of their skin. A moment later she was back, there came a loud click followed by the door opening a few inches for her to peek her head through.

"Do you want to stay in there all night?" she asked with a smooth inflectionless voice but an expression rift with suggestion, "Or do you want to come with me to find a body?"
Stiles had already detangled, strapped his backpack on and had one foot out of the door when Scott asked "like a dead body?"

Lydia and Stiles looked back at him incredulously "no, a body of water." He grabbed at Scott's arm to start moving his ass, "Yes, a dead body!"

All they had to do was to walk with silent and steady conviction and they wouldn't attract attention. They had to remain unremarkable.

"How do yo--?" Scott marveled after Lydia's feat at releasing them without breaking the car door.

"It opens from the outside, genius" Lydia explained with a strained expression, shoving his free arm through the strap of his backpack. And she reminded herself not to strangle him because that would bring attention to them. She looked to Stiles; from the roll of his eyes she could see he shared her sentiment.


Track 02 - Honest by The Neighborhood


"You could hold me here until my parents collect me but that would be a bit morbid" Isaac suggested ironically.

Deputy Parrish picked up quickly on the implication, "care to expand?"

"Orphan, me" Isaac thought of going for the 'who has 2 thumbs and no living parents' joke but that felt like it might be a little bit over the top.

Isaac let the medics get a hold of him once he had healed up enough that his scraped open face and cut up right arm had closed over. At worst it looked colored over and bruised instead of massive internal bleeding or a dislocated jaw.

He'd hauled himself away in the girl's bathroom which, thanks to Lydia, he'd become familiar with the access in and out of. With his name and student OSIS added into the Library sign in and it would be stupid to run off once he had healed up, so he slipped off to the medic van pretending he had been there the whole time before letting the Deputy take his statement. Apparently he hadn't been the only student to claim a knock on the head skewed their recollection. He stood among the illustrious ranks of Allison Argent, Scott McCall and the artist known only as Miguel.

"Well, we've reached an impasse," the Deputy smiled and shook his head "We can't release you without a parent and I won't be ushering you off to meet your folks in the afterlife anytime soon. I guess I'll check with the Sheriff and see where we can place you in the meantime."

"Not a problem," Isaac gave an exaggerated shrug because it was very much a problem. This was not the right way to make a first impression on his foster brother's Dad. "I'm supposed to be at his house for dinner tonight anyway," at that he wished the floor would just open up and swallow him up before he opened his mouth again. The Deputy explained exactly what Isaac explained over the walkie-talkie and Isaac felt something akin to 'first date; meeting the folks' anxiety, except everyone had guns and he realized he might never get out of there alive.

The Sheriff, in no short supply of shyness, demanded that Isaac was kept where he was. Scott and Stiles had a better go of escaping the establishment. Unfortunately for Isaac this meant he would be saddled with a babysitter until Sheriff Stilinski had a minute to question him directly.
Fortunately the babysitters rotated from one Deputy to the next. Some were more attentive than others. With everyone's attention invested in connecting the library break-in (or technically 'break out') with other break-ins throughout town the past couple of months all Isaac had to do was wait for one careless cop.

Once Haige turned his back on him Isaac bolted. It wasn't classy or smart but he panicked. The longer he sat around waiting for the Sheriff the more Hunters he counted with the officers and the more he sensed all of his friends were gone. Then he was off like a shot.

The idea of dinner with Stiles stayed fresh in his mind, not that he anticipated a sit down three course extravaganza but he couldn't think of where to start looking for anyone. He held onto the hope that when he agreed to meet Stiles at his home afterschool it held fast even after 'evil hybrid snake man attack'. He entered through the garage, a thing he was getting used to and realized the place felt way too empty. When the landline rang he was frightened out of his skin. He only picked up because the caller ID said "Beacon Hills Dept." and he wasn't brave enough to tempt fate much farther. His ear filled with the dulcet tones of an irate Sheriff demanding to know where his son and idiot friend disappeared to. Isaac would have given so much to know the answer to that.

Isaac faked a cough, banged on a cabinet door and shouted hold on a sec after he dropped the phone. Then he dropped the phone to be authentic. Isaac yanked his cell phone from his jeans, hoping the water damage from his earlier grapple in the locker room had abated, tried to turn it on. When it finally lit up and he attempted to start a text to ask Scott or Stiles what had happened, instead he received an urgent message from Lydia. The first message he read in an inbox full up was the one he decided to go with.

"Lydia's! They went to Lydia's," he explained. "We were all supposed to go there afterschool for studying. After everything that's happened, we just figured we might as well go there anyway, eat some of her Mom's cooking, catch up with some work until all that stuff blows over."

"Then why are you in my house?"

"Smart question. Good question, I'd be asking that too..." Isaac smacked himself in the head with his cell phone and thought what would Stiles do? Than remembered who he was thinking about, "unless I had a son like Stiles and figured he wasn't exactly the sort of kid who thought ahead. He heard I got turned around and headed here, so he told me I should grab a couple of essentials."

"I see. Hey son, while you're at it," the Sheriff said it so casually. Isaac's spine stiffened ramrod straight. Was Stiles' Dad always this nice even when he was pissed off? Were Dads like that? "He has trouble sleeping, could you bring him a pillow from home."

"Yeah," Isaac quieted significantly, "Will do, sir."

Isaac hung up and leaned his head against the doorframe while he calmed his breath. Lying to the cops was a thing he didn't altogether have a problem with but lying to parents always made him go cold all over.

When he could think clearer he went through his texts and caught up with things. Such a great big mess of things.

Track 03 - Who Are We by Imagine Dragons
And to Allison's joy Tyhurst was disinvited to dinner. Unfortunately so was Rumy and Bennet. It was an intimate and not a meeting at all; immediate family only. Allison was even less prepared, the strained joviality gave her a headache and she already had a head wound. Okay, not a wound exactly but there was a bump.

Victoria and Allison were left to set up the table together which felt stilted in their anticipation for the others. Chris turned up bedraggled and upset but mostly bedraggled. They still had to wait another 10 minutes for Kate. Kate tried to make light of it, she made light of everything and brought dessert and drinks and teased Allison relentlessly with sexual innuendoes at every opportunity.

But Victoria Argent was quick to cut to the chase, not that she wasn't happy to have Kate around but they needed her insights.

"Especially on your expertise; Chris' personal history made him ideal for working the Beacon Hills angle but we thought your history towards a specific pack would come in handy now. The Hales."

At the mention of "Hale" Kate became incredibly sedate.

"Well, I didn't think you would have summoned me for anything less," she smirked, lifting her wine glass at the stem between two fingers and shifting her hand around like she could hold the room in her crosshairs, "if even one of them turned up at their Beacon Hills properties, then they've broken my treaty." Victoria broke in with a delicate clearing of her throat, "if they’ve broken our treaty than I'm duty bound to break some heads."

"We've been going through this looking at causations. It seemed territorial at first but no one lay claim. The victims started to narrow down to two fields: Werewolves and Children."

Allison started biting her nails. She knew all this; most of it she uncovered on her own but it disarmed her to watch her Father speak candidly. It must have been a sibling thing. Victoria watched her from one seat over and after a moment set her hand down on top of the table palm up so that Allison could settle her nervous hand on top. She flashed her Mom a quick grin of thanks before sliding her hand on top.

"I think we're done with dinner Chris," Victoria said with a forceful kindness, "maybe we should take this to the study." By study she of course meant the panic room they used for meetings.

"I have to confess since we've come here it hasn't been nostalgia that's kept me here," Chris heaved a sigh and finished his glass of wine.

Kate scoffed, "Jeez, Chris, I would hope not."

"We didn't want just any amateur coming through here missing the details. And I've been trying to prove this suspicion definitively wrong especially after the last bloody mess we had to clean up." When Chris talked across the table he spoke as if only he and Kate were in the room.

Kate lost all false cheer as his words continued and she downed her drink before he had even finished speaking.

"Aren't you supposed to say 'find the hard evidence', not 'prove the suspicion' or has someone at this table got a furry friend out of the deep dark night," she laughed with no humor in it, Chris smirked in return. With a sigh Kate pushed out from the table and got to her feet, "lead the way Victoria."

They left their dishes alone and meals half eaten.
Once the doors sealed off any sound or cell signal, Kate turned all business and asked to see what proof they collected. With trigger words like 'Hale' now familiar to her ears Allison paid more attention.

"Just sticking to Beacon County; 10 confirmed dead. 7 of which were confirmed as bi-pedal shapeshifters. 8 if we count this last one-- which right now we don't since the MO is vastly different--" started Chris.

"The first person of interest's method of murder has proven consecutive going back further than these past few months. Allison has collected evidence that the Sheriff has investigated similar events going as far back as 6 years possibly but the details are sketchy." Victoria pulled open compartments along the length of the conference table. She laid out several dossiers written up for specific incidents. "But this is of note; the body yesterday," she pointed out the location where the body was found, "this is why we called you in. This new person of interest, their MO; they staged this scene to look like our first PoI. Not only wasn't it finished but the area was dusted over with Trailing White Monkshood. A perfectly mixed airborne mist; only Hunters and Emissaries know how to make a combination precise enough for it not to be lethal to us but for it to only be a hallucinogen to them. Our corpse, he didn't have any of it in his lungs. He was murdered, brought there and someone not of the supernatural disrupted the area before they could make it look like our first person of interest had done it."

"How many more murders do you think could have been hidden underneath this other murderer's trail?" Allison came forward, she leaned over, straight-armed and hands planted on the edge of the table, her hair fell forward while she searched thankfully masking the fever of panic that colored her face.

"One? All of them? We don't know, but now that we know about the second murderer, we can dig deeper--" her Father always had a steady calm in his voice, comfort and control. He had appeared somehow behind her and had a hand on her shoulder to help steady her on.

"--now I go deeper. I get to identify this guy here." Kate tapped the screen on Victoria's tablet and spread the crime scene photo, past the clutter of officers and lookie-loos to enlarge. The image was far too grainy to help by way of identification.

"And since your Aunt Kate is an outside guy, we know we can trust her because she is not an inside guy," Chris said quickly but not too quickly. Allison played the sentence several times over in her head to really catch it.

"Because a Hunter might have helped the second killer?" Allison felt like she suddenly knew what Lydia must have felt like to stand on that spring coil trap.

"Or an emissary. Or anyone who has a dangerously minimal knowledge of the extraordinary application of herbs," Victoria looked up from the paperwork and eyed her from across the table. Her words sounded soothing but the rest of her said 'Just do the work. Get results. Then it will be better. Not that it will feel better, but it will be better.'

Allison took a breath and stared back down at the work in front of her, maps and murder, more maps and more murder.

"Hello handsome," Kate smirked regardless. After a moment's pause she stood up and crossed her arms, her focus regained, 'I'm going to try and get the guy a pauper's grave if I can't convince them to release it to me. I'll get the I.D. you need and clean it up, big brother."

"You sure?" Chris asked as if there were another out.
She winked across the great oval divide that was their mahogany conference table, "I've got this. I am the expert on Derek Hale after all."

Kate took an extended pause before she pointed out "it is less likely that the Hales broke a treaty and more likely someone used Derek's death as a sacrifice to create a new treaty among packs." Her tone was chilling and she asked what other evidence they collected front the scene to support their claim and Allison's mom produced her personal tablet.

Victoria smiled at her encouragingly and brought up another folder on the tablet for her to peruse, when the thing promptly died. She looked down at it startled as though the thing had exploded as opposed to having not been charged.

"Did you charge it?" Chris suggested.

Victoria glared at him, "I haven't used it."

"Something drained its battery," he walked over and tried to look it over for a defect. Victoria slapped his hand away and grabbed a charger from the drawer.

"I used it," Kate lied and grimaced in apology, "it was right there on the table. I thought it was Chris' I'm sorry, I logged onto the server earlier because I was curious to keep track of Chris' personal observations on Beacon Hills. I must have not turned it off afterward." She glanced toward Allison in sheepish false recognition, but Allison just looked down at the table.

"Why do you keep hacking my things?" Chris tried for a straight face, then gave up and groaned.

"Think of a password that doesn't revolve around your fantasy baseball league and I wouldn't have to," Kate grinned. Quite soon afterward she pointed out Allison had school in the morning and probably needed to call it a night.

Victoria hugged her daughter lightly and kissed her forehead. Chris kissed his daughter's cheek. Kate squeezed Allison good and long and promised they would need to have a real catch-up soon, where they could talk about boys and everything. Allison had forgotten how to say the word goodnight.

Track 04 - Werewolf (I Like You) by Sky Ferreira

Once they managed to slip into student parking unnoticed they split into two groups; Scott for his bike and Lydia for her Beetle. She had just turned the car on when the passenger side door swung open and Stiles filled in the seat before she thought to use the power locks. It was hardly the time to discuss invasion of privacy pending the priority of escaping police custody unnoticed. Maneuvering the car through alternative routes from the school and onto the highway ran smooth, but there was of course Stiles to contend with.

He could have ridden on the back of Scott's bike; they seemed cozy enough in the back of the Sheriff's Cruiser. Instead she endured Stiles' distemper with the dashboard, tapping in tandem, adjusting and readjusting his seat, fussing with the seat belt and having it nearly snap him in the face, fighting with the radio.

Finally Lydia reached over with a steady hand and turned off the car radio "--or you can ruin the settings in your own car."
"Why--what?" he looked offended at the suggestion she might not covet his attention. When she didn't smile he righted himself and added sincerely "I just wanted to make sure you got there safely."

"Scott is exactly 50 feet behind on his bike," she pointed to Scott through the mirror without taking her eyes off of the road.

"On his donor cycle?" Stiles whipped his head around to look through the rear window at the dodging silhouette then toward Lydia, his expression unconvinced, "He doesn't even know where we're going. Plus, teen drivers these days are statistically the least reliable to find their way in the dark."

"He says to the teen driver," she muttered "driving without direction in the dark through a Nature Preserve with the goal of meeting up with a dead body." She tapped the forefinger of her right hand on the wheel with the rise of her tone.

"Right," Stiles readjusted in his seat and looked toward the ceiling for a proper rebuttal but none came.

"Then," Lydia's voice took a superior pitch coming to an inarguable conclusion. She even took her eyes off the wheel to glare a little bit, "wouldn't it have been smarter to follow in your Dad's car to make sure I didn't drive into a ditch?"

"-well, I..." Stiles exercised his jaw, his neck, his mind but no answer came forth, "uh, yeah, I did not think of that." Then he grinned hoping charm would win him brownie points instead of fury. She rolled her eyes and went back to staring straight ahead.

They zipped down streets, around corners while the street lights made their profiles strange and colorful. She refused to be distracted from the road while Stiles aimed faces at her (instead of words) expressing with narrow-eyed, deep breath and lips-pursed sort of intense thoughts. On Repeat.

"Are you really not going to ask me?" at a red-light, Lydia bit her lower lip and hit the steering wheel lightly in frustration.

"Well, I'm not... no, what?" Stiles looked around the car as if someone were about to jump out at him. Then followed that up with another opened mouthed, narrowed eyed look.

Lydia glared "the question that you've been dying to ask me?"

"Pfft," Stiles looked off to the side, followed by another deep breath and lips pursed in thought, "Well, I'm not... I haven't been dying to ask anything. I... no questions here from Stiles. Nothing."

"I can see it on your face," Lydia shifted in her seat to move a little closer so that he had to face her. The light changed and she ignored it.

"Maybe my face just has, like," he turned to face her and tried for a smile but it turned into a partial smirk, "a naturally interrogatory exp... expression."

"Well," she shook her head and with a grunt went back to driving, "your interrogatory expression is getting on my nerves."

Once they got away from the street lights and there were less houses and people, she tried again.

"The answer is; I don't know why I am the one that keeps finding the bodies. I'm figuring it out."
When she turned the cars direction and her hands moved one over the other, once, then twice, she didn't place them back at ten and two. She let her right hand fall balled up in her lap. Her thumb rubbed circles against the pinched fabric of her skirt.

He watched as her voice came across a little softer and her eyes seemed a little wilder in the dark. He had thought with his keen senses he could understand her better, and that if he continued to let her speak something mystical would manifest. She just sounded like Lydia. Which he liked the sound of, so he turned his head against the headrest, leaned toward her with every sense and kept listening.

"Maybe," she said the word like a wish, "if I stopped trying to fight it, I'd find them with enough time... like last time."

"Because the last time something like this happened...?"

She looked over at him for a split second, smiled very quickly before looking back to the road "It was you."

Stiles beamed "and very not dead, which I'm grateful for."

"You could have fooled me," she scoffed softly, with her free hand she reached across and shoved playfully at his arm. He caught her half-hearted gesture, held her hand and placed it on the armrest between them. Running his thumb along her knuckles he coaxed her from shaky to stillness.

"What was different?" he asked after a little while when he felt her heart rate steady.

"It was you," she breathed out and the car slowed incrementally.

"Right?" Stiles confirmed with a grin. He urged her on with an emphatic pat on the hand, "We said that, keep up with me now."

"No," Lydia said and rolled her eyes, "that's what I heard in the woods." He could not know the weight that admission cost her. She waited for the sarcastic comment but there was none. She looked over to see his absurd face but found openness awaiting her lead, it moved her. "So I followed. Us, I mean. Voices from back when we were little and playing tag and keep-away with your backpack."

Stiles smiled excitedly. A little too excited. "What do you normally hear?" he watched her intently and bounced a little in his seat. He had never dealt with someone like this before, he suspected to be a Banshee but much more importantly Lydia confided in him, which meant some part of her deep dark subconscious still wanted him around.

"I don't know, Stiles!" she reclaimed her hand as she turned the car into a bend. "This is untested territory for me. There is no normal!"

"Alright," Stiles threw his hands up in frustration. "Okay you didn't have to stop the car!!"

"I did!" she groaned and yanked the keys from the ignition. She opened the door and climbed out. "We have to walk from here."

The woods. Again. Not the same entry location as before but that didn't give her anymore confidence. She wrapped herself tight in her wool coat and paused to text Isaac one last time when she still hadn't heard from Allison.

"Alright. Fine." He flung open the door and stumbled out after fighting with the seatbelt. "No more
"God. Stiles, what?" Barely stifling a grin, she came around the car to stand beside him while he battled with his backpack to give over a red hoodie from its death grip.

"You said the last time we were here," he muttered zipping himself up against the inclement evening air, "all of Beacon Hills turning bizarre and this is untested territory? When did all this start?"

"4 months ago," Scott answered as he pulled his motorcycle alongside them and unclasped his helmet. "It all started that night, the night I got bitten."

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Track 05 - Nitesky by Robot Koch

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"How many of those do you own?!" Isaac complained in surprise when Allison appeared beside him with Chinese finger daggers in hand. Her raised eyebrow reminded him eloquently that he was hardly in a position to complain of surprises. She'd come in to her bedroom to discover Isaac sat casually on her bed meanwhile her parents were right down the hall. She absolutely meant to spook him, so she'd instinctually armed herself as she crossed the floorboards and sat down silently beside him before he noticed she entered the room.

"I can watch out for myself," her grin strained when he explained that he came to check up on her.

"I've noticed, more than once," blinked Isaac as he conceded and pointed to the weapon still aimed at his rib.

"I'm still not leaving," Isaac cleared his throat when her grin turned to a smirk and her grip changed on the weapon, amused that he might have thrown down a challenge. "Lydia's instructions."

He waved his cell phone in the air, a text from Lydia on display-- "They shouldn't be left alone."-- Allison put her weapon down and snatched his cellphone taking his singular defense away. She scrolled through the rest of the text where it contained a screenshot of a page from the Bestiary and translations of the text.

"Lydia says she's been texting you for hours," Isaac gestured for her to hand back the phone. She ignored and re-read the information in hopes content would change.

Firstly; Lydia wanted everyone to check in and let her know that they were okay, since she sensed someone died earlier. 'Messily' she described it.

Secondly; with newly uncovered information everyone's 'alleged' innocence with regards to the body in the forest would be called into question.

The bestiary excerpt went into detailed explanation on an Alpha ability (up to a point) to enforce their will onto their Betas. More rightly their 'Bitten'. While dependent on varying stages of evolution (the Bitten can show parasite-induced behavioral changes enticed by Alphas. The younger/weaker the more susceptible to suggestion.)

"Lydia thinks it's inadvisable to have our bitten and unaligned friends left unmonitored." Isaac quoted from memory when he snatched the phone back while Allison stared through the window.
"Doesn't that mean" she whispered in a thought, "without an Alpha Stiles is as likely to be controlled by this crazy Alpha as you are? Or as Scott?"

Isaac had exactly 1 minute more to process that information before she found him in her bedroom. It didn't make it any easier for him to mask his dismay. Despite how determined his eyes were when he tried to convey with a nod 'yeah, but things would be okay, somehow.'

Allison's expression grew pinched with discomfort "are we supposed to just babysit each other?"

"Pretty sure it's just Lydia's working theory." Isaac hoped. And he 'hoped' his hope didn't show so much Allison would doubt his intentions. "This stray Alpha has barely had influence over whoever it's bitten but then we don't even know how many it's bitten..." 

She groaned at first but a moment later absent-mindedly ran her fingers along her lip in thought, "It's a smart tactic but not ideal and not in the long term. If we don't know a 'vector'; like a motive or a range of control over our best-friends this is just a powder keg."

"This is from your books. Didn't you know that before?"

"Yes. Sort of." She thought about it and shook her head, her fingers kept tandem with her thoughts along her lower lip. "When you had an Alpha didn't you learn about this before?"

"Us? Not for sure." Isaac croaked at being addressed. He had gotten quite used to sitting on the side commiserating with Allison, and it was unburdening to have his status as a Werewolf known. But talking about his pack? Especially to a Hunter? Conflicted wasn't a big enough word. "Our Alpha is big on need-to-know but we could sometimes sense... like a push in our gut when he wanted us to see clearer or help us change. But this describes something like mind control."

"Maybe like vanishing," Allison's hand dropped with weakness and anxiety her expression clouded over with uncertainty. She looked like her thoughts frightened her enough they had to be words so he could take them off of her. "And maybe showing up a week later with no memory of it or wandering in the middle of the woods, to discover secret hideouts and dead bodies."

"Or," Isaac cut off the accusation with a hand on her shoulder. His mind latched onto something more promising, something Allison (especially as a Hunter) would prefer "Like crashing through walls, tearing through doors of seal records of kids and possibly killing dozens of innocent people along the way, but showing up for class everyday utterly unphased."

Jackson She sighed heavily, her weapons were easy to reholster and set right again. Her twisted wrist and mixed feelings were less so.

"Not to mention" she added and rubbed at the pain in her wrist for focus, "possibly murdering Alphas to start a clan war, for this wackjob."

Isaac stood up abruptly. "They murdered an Alpha?"

"The body Lydia found in the woods," Allison edged toward him and kept her voice low. It was her mistake in assuming he should have known everything when everything was still a mess anyway. "The day before she found Stiles. It was less than a meter away. That was why we found him."

"Do you know the name?" He shivered when he asked the question. And though his eyes didn't change color and fangs did not extend a certain menace came when he asked.

"They think someone named Derek, Derek Hale." She reached her hand toward him hesitantly; she wanted to keep him from spiraling out. "Did you know him?"
"He's our Alpha." Isaac growled.

"But you're not a Hale." She didn't exactly ask but she definitely demanded it of him.

They swiveled around to face Aunt Kate in the doorway.

Track 06 - Final Warning by Skylar Grey

"Why has no one texted back?" Lydia muttered bringing her iPhone down from the air where she waved it around like an antenna.

"Why is that the important question?" Stiles stared owlishly around looking for bad guys in the shadows.

"What is the important question?" Scott asked from a few feet ahead where he held up a flashlight and ensured there weren't any traps or holes in the direction Lydia led.

"Is it smart for us to keep wandering the same place the authorities were crawling all over just yesterday?"

"Why not?" Scott shrugged "they're not coming back. The Sheriff's Department is done with it. The cleaners cleared it." Scott took a deep sniff and nodded appreciatively. "It even smells clearer."

"Exactly!" Stiles pounced after him, "isn't that suspicious? Doesn't that make it seem like anything can be living out here?"

All three stopped and turned toward each other. Scott smirked, Lydia's eyebrows went up, and Stiles looked sheepish.

"Yes, I realize what that sounds like coming from me but you know what I mean! We can't just wander for hours--"

"We aren't wandering," Scott reassured cheerily and pointed at Lydia "we're following the leader."

Blinking, Lydia glanced up from her iPhone to find Stiles staring at her blankly.

"What?"

"Nothing," he mumbled, looking incredibly focused as he shoved his hands deep into the pockets of his hoodie "lead the way."

Lydia looked dubious and turned to Scott for an explanation. He only gave an awkward shrug and aimed the flashlight toward his feet. She rolled her eyes and continued to seemingly wander with Scott and Stiles trailing behind.

"It isn't here," she said low.

"Is it supposed to be?" Scott asked.

She shook her head "that's why it's not here." She groaned a little in frustration "what I mean is I think it's supposed to be near here but then..."
"Why are we here instead?" Stiles drew the conclusion. Lydia nodded. "Believe me, I know that feeling. I felt that endlessly when I stayed here. It sucked."

"So do you think it's someone from your pack?"

Stiles made a face as if Scott had suddenly gave off the stink of all stinks.

Scott had no idea how to translate that "what?"

Stiles pulled the hood up over his head in a dramatic gesture of 'I'm not talking to you' before he continued to talk "of course I think it might be. I also think it might not be. What is really bothering you?"

"I want to help you and I want to help her--"

"Of course you do Scott. You want to help everyone."

"I just mean what if it's not from your pack and it's just some person, is Lydia going to be drawn off to the woods because of every accidental death?"

"Scott," Stiles sympathized with his friend's earnest confusion "I don't think that's how Banshees work," he added with an uneasy smile.

"What did you say?" Lydia froze at the sound of the word and turned on the spot, nearly dropping her phone.

"How did you do that?" asked Scott dumbstruck as he waved the flashlight back and forth. Stiles blinked several times trying to focus and shuffled his feet, as if ready to walk but didn't make to move. With their heads together, they spoke in congress in that inseparable way they had a habit of doing and Lydia saw the color drain from their faces.

"What?" she snapped. They could be really worrying sometimes.

"Lydia," Stiles said slowly and made a gesture with both hands, the sort a parent did when they wanted and infant to come toward them and away from a ledge. "We can't find you."

She laughed a little. They were less than a foot apart.

"You can't see me?" she asked, waving both hands in the air.

"Yes," Scott answered and they both nodded. "It's just we can't sense you at all," Stiles finished explaining. Lydia's breath caught in her chest and she froze on the spot. Down at her phone she memorized the time and the location on the geoMap. Not one damn unique thing, (though she finally had a signal and a reply from Isaac; "Allison's in with her family guests. I'm just standing around"). Glancing back up at Scott and Stiles, at the way they tried to come to her but seemed incapable of approaching. She could sense their panic, maybe not in the supernatural way they sensed things but it made her too frightened to move. Maybe whatever caused the deadening could worsen if she moved. Looking around for causation and saw nothing of note; more clearing, more trees, very far off in the distance she could make out property, possibly an estate but it looked uninhabited. On a second round, closer she tried looking closer at trees, bushes and saw nothing except leaves, bare wintery blackened branches and shedding. Her eyes locked on a thick black that traced through the bushes in a steady semi-circle so wide it could go unnoticed but she noticed. She followed its path until it came directly underfoot over a flat rock that read, "Hale Property."

On the deadened side of the black line, Lydia kneeled and wiped the ash away. Immediately the senses flooded back to both of her friends.
"What the hell just happened?" gasped Scott and he carefully stepped over the flat stone like a man would step over a live wire.

Stiles rushed forward and knelt beside her to help her stand but she brushed off his hold.

"Holy-open sesame batman," Stiles finally looked around once he knew Lydia was okay, once he sensed she was 100% okay however annoyed, "I laid low here for days and I didn't sense any of this. How is there possibly any 'over here'?"

"Because it's over here and not over on that side," Lydia pointed to the divide of the ash along the slab that announced they arrived on the edge of the Hale's old estate.

"Stiles' right," Scott continued to move forward feeling very distrustful of every leaf and shadow, "when we were here the other day, I kept running right up to here and sensed nothing."

"That's a property line that slab right there, "Lydia gestured emphatically," See the stone on the ground that reads 'Hale'. Can't you see that?"

"Oh, I see that," Stiles had lost track of their conversation and became incensed over something all together different. His face had started to turn as red as his hood as he stomped away.

"Stiles?" Lydia called after him then she hesitated and turned to Scott.

"Stiles!" Scott called after him. Scott looked at Lydia with a concern in his face and took a deep breath before taking after Stiles as if going in for a dive.

Lydia stayed back for a little while at the slab on the property line. She toed at the dust and watched it dissolve wherever she tapped and wondered at it and how it differed to when the guys got near it. She brought up her phone and took a few photos.

The nearer they got to the property the stronger an acrid scent filled the air and despite his aversion to gore Stiles was wound-up about to search for the dead body.

Finally Lydia caught up and she pulled up the cuff of her coat to cover her nose and mouth, it only helped to breathe a little but the smell caused her to choke up. She couldn't imagine how hard it was on Scott and Stiles.

"Thanks for coming to get us." Scott wavered in her peripheries. "Stiles' is beginning to worry the next dead body you find will be someone from his pack. So, thanks for coming to get us."

Lydia stopped in her tracks and looked at Scott. "Sure," she said curiously. The thought hadn't occurred to her. But it hadn't occurred to Scott that it hadn't occurred to her. It hadn't occurred to Scott that the only reason Lydia went and collected them before finding the next dead body was because she was frightened. And when they were around, she was less so. Not that she would admit it. "Of course," she shrugged and started walking again. If Stiles was convinced the next cadaver was his kin, then she was doubly grateful Scott was there. She barely had enough of a mind to look for a strangers' corpse, emotionally detached as it were, she had no idea what words of comfort to drum up for Stiles of all people.

"Anytime," she peeked around her cuff and smiled, Scott returned the grin.

They walked over a patch of newly turned earth and Scott and Stiles sensed it as if they walked over their own graves, just under the surface lay a dead Werewolf. They never knew it would feel like that but it answered the question whether or not the dead body was a Werewolf or not. Stiles grabbed up a shovel leaning beside the porch and started at the ground with feverish intensity,
Scott gave him room. It didn't take more than a few minutes before indecipherable charred remains lay on the ground before them. Despite the rush to find it Stiles did not unravel it from its covering, Scott stood beside him and Lydia stood very still across from them feeling very torn between. Sure, she brought them there and sure sensing death was a terrible burden but not being a Werewolf meant she didn't feel things the way they did, she didn't feel their intense emotions, she didn't sense their intense connection towards Pack members and as much as she wanted to go over and stand beside them it wasn't her place. She took another step away and another and another until she inched her way onto the steps of the porch.

Scott put down the flashlight and put his hand on his friend's arm but Stiles' eyes turned yellow and he threw him off. They fell to the ground and it took them both a moment to catch their calm afterward. Lydia bravely asked what was going on, she wanted to understand.

"Doesn't this all seem a bit too," Stiles made a shrugging gesture and started to pace, "dicey?"

"It's the Hale House," Scott reminded "after the fire this place has been dangerous since before I can remember. I mean look at it," he gestured around and tried to smile a little but failed at it, "rumors about how creepy it is here didn't do it justice."

Stiles breathed a little calmer, he licked his lips in thought and nodded. They stood on opposite sides of the body and analyzed the body wrapped in a tarp and both were too intimidated to remove it on their own. They looked at each other, gave a silent nod of agreement and grabbed an end; they pulled at it until it spun out and left a burnt body behind. They went quiet looking over the charred remains barely recognizable as a man.

Stiles gULped to keep down his food but looked upset.

"What is it?" Scott tried to see what his friend saw.

Stiles shoved the corpse over with the edge of his sneakers, rolling it along from the tip to the end. The corpse's face was crushed partly in and piercings in places over the eyes and crushed into and dangling where the nose would have been. Skin was melted but it was still recognizable as skin.

"There isn't any tattoo--It isn't him."

"Tattoo?" asked Lydia.

"Of a triskelion." Stiles tore his eyes away, grateful to look toward something pleasing instead.

"A what?" asked Scott.

"It's a triple spiral," Lydia tried to explain and traced her finger through the air, Scott shook his head only more confused than when they said the word to begin with.

"Like this," Stiles pointed to faded marks on the burnt blanket. They inched toward the corpse where marks could be made out in the burlap wrap. Scott focused and made out the feature pretty well on the black against brown, funny how despite the burn it was left recognizable almost like it was intentional.

"It stands for different things to different people," Lydia explained, "the past, present, future."

"It also stands for Alpha, Beta and Omega," Stiles explained as well sounding very similar in tone and Scott looked up from one to the other.

"We should report this," Scott said quietly knowing there would be some sort of harsh reaction.
Lydia looked disappointed and Stiles upset.

"No," Stiles answered sharply. "We're not getting the Sheriff's department involved. We're going to handle it."

"What? How?" Scott knew there would be backlash but he had not expected that. He felt shocked and couldn't keep disgust from his voice, "that makes no sense."

Lydia pulled her hair away from her face and looked around, she felt confused and dizzy. She wanted to really discuss this further but felt a pressure for time and a pressure against her chest and wanted to get through to them, "none of these facts make sense. I feel like I remember this place."

Lydia cut in and the boys spun to face her. Lydia had moved further into the doorway of the ruined structure. She had tiptoed along the rickety and shattered boards.

"Lydia, be careful," Scott felt short-winded, if he didn't know better he would have kept his asthma in consideration.

"No, no Scott," Lydia sounded severe. She remembered why they were meant to come to her after school. She remembered how vulnerable they were to the Alpha who destroyed their lives once already, how vulnerable they were to one another, "you're going to need to be careful." She edged further and further back, frightened suddenly, she imagined their falling apart quickly after working so hard to find each other and it caused something inside of her to go to pieces.

"What do you mean?" Scott stepped forward with a hand out. He sensed her panic and felt as though he could pull her back, he felt as though he needed to pull her back before she pulled them all apart.

"See, that symbol? I just read about this," She pushed the door backward. It screeched along its hinge and showed a circular mark, obviously carved with claws. Lydia stood high above, her red hair a deep contrast against the shadowed doorway.

"It means 'Revenge'," Stiles cut her off, his face read some of her fright and he stepped carefully alongside his friend and looked to him for a sign to move.

"It means things have escalated," Lydia's voice trembled, "War has begun in Beacon Hills. The lines have literally been drawn."

As the door swung forward it gave a barely perceptible click and for the second time in a decade the Hale House went up in flames.

Track 07 - Storm by Broxxie

A burst went off, an explosion near to him, not warm exactly, but fierce enough to send vibrations through him and lift him off of his seat, sending him sideways. Jackson woke to a start with blood on his hands again, warm and seeping from his forehead, across the back of his hands on to the steering wheel. He looked around, he looked through the windshield when he felt he could focus and knew he was miles away from home, he only began to hear again when crying and her screaming filled his ears followed by the rush of water.

"I said so, I told you!" she seemed less frightened, less frightened of Jackson's eyes when she
watched them return from serpent yellow to their natural blue. "Please! Please, I'll go with you, wherever I won't fight. Just please, get us out of the water."

It took Jackson a few more seconds for him to realize his Porsche teetered against the rock face of one of many run off creeks, weighed down with water. Jackson reached over and used his slowly retracting nails to unsnap the cable ties that held her wrists. He felt sharp sparks pass between them when he touched her skin and the more he focused on her the more he noticed her aura glowed orange and brightened with her anxiety. Normally others fear or struggle would add to his strength but this time it weakened his resolve.

They scrambled over the passenger seat and up the rock face toward the bridge while the car collapsed underneath. But when Kira made it to the top she clutched her hands to her chest and swooned.

"Oh god, stay back," but she hadn't meant it out of fear for herself but for Jackson.

"No!" Jackson said, excited when an idea occurred to regain ground.

"It's too late!" Kira cried out. Her hands dropped from across her chest and they flung out toward the ground with her fingers splayed. Jackson ran at her full pelt, his sneakers sizzled while the pavement sparked beneath him. He held onto her hands and pressed their foreheads together. Kira watched, amazed and unafraid as gratitude showed in his face. The last of remnants of discoloration peeled away from his skin, his nails retracted and with a hiss he collapsed to the pavement at her feet. And power went out for 50 miles around.

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Track 08 - ZVVL by CHVRCHES
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The lights blinked out and the sound of power going out through the home made Allison, Isaac and Kate jump to alert.

"I have to go--" Isaac moved to leave.

Kate cut him off and pushed him back against a wall.

"You're right Isaac," she smirked, one eyebrow rose with a malevolence that might as well have been a certified weapon of its own, "you need to find your friend Stiles before the others do, and I know Allison" she glanced toward her niece, "isn't going to let you go alone. But if Bedlam's breaking out, here's what we're going to do--"

Kate reached into her jean pocket and tossed Isaac a set of car keys.

"We'll head out," she referred to her and the rest of the Hunters, "through the front with the all-terrains, in 5 minutes. You take my Range Rover out back. Procedure dictates we head to the source of this incident, to observe and secure the site. You better hope your friend isn't there."

"Aunt Kate, thank you." Allison stood and grabbed her jacket and quiver once more.

"Don't." Kate's tone turned dangerous, "Don't thank me. This is... a stupid. Reckless. Mistake. Again."

"I don't know what you mean," said Allison.
"Kate!!" Chris Argent called from downstairs.

"I'll be there in a sec!" Kate shouted back over her shoulder then looked back at the two of them, "Just fair warning Allison, don't follow my example. I mean it Allison; I know you look up to me, but don't you follow in my footsteps." Kate shook her head, already disappointed in Allison for what Allison didn't even know.

"O-okay." Allison promised and hugged her Aunt goodbye.

"I love you," she said wrapped up in her niece's embrace, "Isaac, I don't love you," she said over Allison’s shoulder.

"O-okay," Isaac could think of nothing else to reply.

Kate stopped hugging Allison but kept hold of her by the shoulders and glared at Isaac, "If you let anything happen to her, I'll find you and turn you inside out and then kill you. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, ma'am," Isaac squirmed a little and took a notable step back. Allison looked to the floor to hide her expression of dismay. She had no doubt her Aunt intended to carry out on that threat.

"If you watch her back," Kate released Allison and stepped forward between the two of them and held her chin high, she spoke with a tone again that laid out a challenge, "save people that need saving, defeat bad guys and bring 'Laura' back fully gassed--"

"What?" Isaac fiddled with the key while he struggled to remember what replying actually meant.

"'Laura' is the Range Rover's name" Allison explained.

"--and I'll let you know if the I.D. on Derek is positive or not. Is it a deal?" with a finger Kate stabbed at him in the chest.

"Yes!" Isaac nodded emphatically, "Hell yes!"

Track 09 - Die Slow by Health

While at the school the Sheriff had only just wrapped up their investigation of the destruction of property when the lights went out. Mr. Yukimura, the World History teacher appeared as if out of nowhere beside the Sheriff side to ask if the Argents were still around.

"They concluded their investigation here and moved onto the source of the blackout," answered Sheriff Stilinski.

"Is it possible to get past the barriers here and follow?" Ken Yukimura asked in all sincerity.

The Sheriff looked at him as if he were a three headed Dolphin walking across a desert.

"Mr. Yukimura the Argents are professionals. They moved onto the source of the black out. It's probably best if you stay here with the rest of your students until the parents show up."

"Honestly," Mr. Yukimura pointed out smilingly, "a lot of the parents already showed up. The stragglers are waiting for the domestic help to come get them or social services is already waiting with them until their parents come back from wherever business has kept them. Plus, I don't like
them very much." His grin lengthened a little.

The Sheriff blinked in disbelief but the man's smile didn't waver and it just made him laugh, he rubbed his forehead pushing back a headache, "the roads are open for emergency vehicles only, due to the power outage."

"All the more reason for us to go together!" he didn't lose his cheer but he seemed a little upset in his persistence "like a police escort. You're going to be on the road either way."

When the Sheriff was moved to ask why Mr. Yukimura simply introduced him to his wife.

A small Japanese woman with a determined jaw with fierce eyes that stabbed through him when she explained "either you spare an officer to have us escorted or bring us into custody, either way we will be on the road."

The Sheriff no longer felt amused but he felt compelled to ask why.

"Our daughter, Kira, isn't among the students in the school," Mr. Yukimura explained. All the humor had gone from his face, "she was meant to be studying with Allison Argent."

"She has never disappeared on us before Sheriff," said Mrs. Yukimura in a tone straightforward, respectful and an uncompromising sort of pleading. "You know what it is like when you can't find your child."

The Sheriff shook his head in frustration. Sure they were manipulating him but that didn't make it not work, "why would you think Kira would be--"

He didn't get the chance to finish before Mrs. Yukimura answered "I have a feeling."

"I've learned not to discount my wife's feelings, Sheriff." Mr. Yukimura delicately added.

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**Track 10 - Hoppipolla by Sigur Ros**

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The distance between the High School and the crash site would have been 6 minutes on a good day with no traffic and clear skies. 8 minutes with construction. But a night with panicked citizens, no power, dark skies and a laser lights show threatening worse there was no negotiating how to get to the end of the street, even with the police sirens.

Unfortunately for the Sheriff's Department, it became evident early on the Argents weren't going to be as helpful as they first implied. Certainly they were determined to head toward the blackout site but when the department needed assistance closing roads, not so much. Fairvale was happy to assist when they finally got word out but that took more time than they would have like and caused a few fender benders. From the South it was easier since construction closed down the highway periodically but that left their side-streets. And residents of Beacon Hills loved their side streets. There simply weren't enough officers to cover enough of them, this left first responders at the scenes of fallen utility poles to park their Cruisers across the busy intersections as human barricades.

Things grew complicated when emergency vehicles started to have power problems, each time one tried to approach the blackout zone it dropped dead. Their batteries gave out the nearer they advanced. The Argents all-terrain vehicles didn't have the same problems, or if they had power
problems it wasn't to the same extent and they insisted on being allowed onto the scene without police escorts. It was only after they were warned explicitly they would have charges brought against them that they offered to bring their utility vehicles around to assist the officers.

The Yukimuras who followed were patient even though their car remained unaffected.

Grabbing the supplies from emergency kits, the Deputies split up. One remained at the car near the radio, the others laid out flares along the road. Deputy Graeme stayed close to the vehicle when Deputy Parrish intended to head out along the road when he invited someone from the Argent crew, any Argent that could be spared to keep him company. A man named Norm turned down his nose as if Parrish offended him utterly by having suggested it.

"I could just commandeer the bike," Deputy Parrish reminded.

Norm's face looked intrigued but not all that fazed.

"You know," Parrish started, "as a clean-up crew, what is your interest in this? It isn't any animal incident. You seem almost creepily invested to the point of obsessing."

At that Mr. Norm parted easy with his vehicle.

Deputy Parrish took the ATV along the thin white line of the road and focused the little it reflected of the peeking moon that came out thought puffs of clouds. At a dangerous and dark curvature of the road, where a blind spot was at its worst, he intended to block it off entirely. Parrish had to dismount and walk through the stand-still traffic. An oversized Coyote stood on the meridian, darting forward and snarling at traffic. It caused a cause a pile-up that prevented any entry. When Deputy Parrish neared the giant Coyote it whipped around with teeth bared and ears pushed back.

Deputy Parrish remembered the flare in his hand and tossed it far off. He rambled, he explained what happened and ended in a nervous "as if you can understand me."

The Coyote dropped its nose to the ground and rubbed it between its big paws it as if it wiped away an annoyance. Then it stood at full height and shook its head before glaring toward the drivers. Everything about the animal seemed exaggerated and larger than he thought a Coyote should be, especially the bright blue eyes that seemed to glow in the dark. Then the Coyote came at him, not in anger but in play and snapped at him to push him back before jumping over the ramp and into the greenery and inky black shadow.

Once he set the flares, he called back on his walkie-talkie and reported the North West streets closed off. He didn't even think about reporting the Coyote, not because he thought they wouldn't believe him but because he knew the Argents would.

Chapter End Notes

CREDITS/ROLL CALL:

Argents - Team1; headed by Victoria, Chris & Allison.
• Rumy - [Sergeant] specialized in Recon; Special Forces and espionage. Chris' right hand man and Allison's godfather.
• Axel - [1st Lieutenant] expert tracker, marksman and Allison's 2nd cousin.
• Bennett - [Field Officer] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old and friend
to Allison.
• Leveque - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Terrain-Orientation. Mechanics, driving countermeasures the means to mobilize heavy firepower to engage opposing forces including other combat vehicles.
• Ulrich - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation.

Argents - Team2; headed by Kate.
• Livy - [1st Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Force-Orientation, R.I.F. and close-combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's right-hand man.
• Tyhurst - [Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation, Cyberwarefare, has CIA background and is ranked with state detective credentials. Referred to as 'try-hard.'
• Norm - [Sergeant] specialty in Medical Intelligence and as a Longbowman; an archer who uses the longbow, w/ various arrowheads. He's JR's brother and Roman's Uncle.
• Roman - [Field Officer] specialty as a Marksman/Sharpshooter, 19yrs. old and a weapons expert skilled in precision shooting. He's JR's son and Norm's Nephew.
• Fry - [Field Officer] specialty as a Tactician is and general officer, while his marksmanship is low he is still in high regard for his brain.

Hale (Present Day) Pack; Derek
• Isaac - [Omega] abandoned, in search of a new pack.
• Stiles - [Omega] also abandoned, in search of any existing pack members.
• Jackson - [...] ...
• Kira - [...] ...
• Lydia - [Banshee] 'A Banshee screams preceding a supernatural death not as a premonition but to highlight the likelihood of supernatural events that result in deaths.'
*chapter 8

Twins' Pack; Aiden and Ethan Carver Alphas
• Marta - [Beta] she's an older motor head and their 1st Lieutenant.
• Bridy - [Beta] the packs' spy because she's diminutive and easily underestimated.
• Gus - [Beta] referred to as psychotic now and again, but his very few (and dwindling) close friends' are his touchstone.
• (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, bi and partnered to Naylor, formerly to Bozeman.
• (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
• (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
• (deceased) Coot - [Omega] former Beta, killed by the Monster.

Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha
• (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed 1st Lieutenant, possibly romantically entangled.
• Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali and closely bonded to Huntington.
• Santos - [Beta] while loyal to Kali has mentored many, without regard to packs. He helped the Twins first learn to shift together without losing their identities.
• Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed and with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
• Levi - [Beta] he's neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
• Huntington - [Beta] has strong empathic senses, is very good friends with Gus' from Twins' pack and Lark.
Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha
• Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' Lieutenant, --from wiped out Shapeshifter dynasty.
• Dr. Kane - [Beta] both a medical Doctor and their torturer.
• Quint - [Beta] eager to please teen and Dr. Kane's biological son.

Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha
• Søren - [Beta] 1st Lieutenant, Danish man of even temperament and a skilled negotiator until his temper is peaked.
• Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
were (you) trapped

Chapter Summary

After the explosion at the Hale House property Scott, Stiles and Lydia suffer after effects. The Werewolves are especially sensitive since the bomb was treated "Trailing White Monkshood", a form of Wolfsbane that has hallucinogenic properties. The longer they're exposed to the vapors the more deadly the exposure becomes regardless of supernatural status. Meanwhile, 2 miles away Kira is at the center of the town's power outage with the body of Jackson Whittemore at her feet. She knows she is responsible for both but the only person who she feels can give her an answer she is pretty sure she's killed. While at the same time Allison and Isaac arrive at the scene to rescue their friends only to realize physically arriving isn't the same as being able to help.

- Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/10-were-you-trapped

Chapter Notes

Previously on were (you);
With Lydia's help Scott and Stiles escape 'detainment' to head out in search of another body. In doing so they uncover the hidden Hale Estate.
Meanwhile, 2 miles away Allison and Isaac discover the mysterious outcome of the Alpha from his pack but only after being discovered secretly meeting in Allison's bedroom by her Aunt Kate.
Isaac and Stiles reveals more about their missing presumed dead Alpha. Both anticipate finding a corpse. Isaac gets confirmation and Stiles turns up a red herring at the Hale property.
They uncover the Hale Estate was hidden because there are markings all over declaring revenge. This falls in line with Lydia's concerns for Scott (and Isaac as well as Stiles being unaligned Betas) being vulnerable during these times of violence.
Meanwhile 2 miles away literally up a creek, a Porsche is crashed with Kira tied in the passenger seat and Jackson at the wheel barely aware of his surroundings. When he regains consciousness he lets her go but when she exhibits uncontrollable electrical attributes that diffuse his transformative powers he helps her diffuse instead of exploding at the at the willful expense of his livelihood.
With the growing amount of murderers and increasing mysterious events Beacon Hills can only promises more to come.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Track 01 - Fuel to the fire by Agnes Obel
Despite the dark that draped the town, the Argent home stood out along the horizon, lit up with private generators. Without the limitations of Beacon Hills' town grid, they wouldn't have to stick to the roads or timetables the authorities would provide.

Between Chris and Kate, their teams split in 2 directions; one into town to save face and provide support with the Sheriff's Dept. and the other to shadow investigate the source of what would cause the electrical outage. More rightly, to speculate the suspicious origins of the outage.

Victoria drove the Hatchback with the tinted windows to the Sheriff's Department in town to help coordinate while Chris took a team on ATVs and drove toward the school once more, where he had left the Sheriff hours earlier, to offer aid from his 'Cleaner' services to keep the roads clear. Meanwhile, Kate drove her team on ATVs through back roads toward the source of the outage.

An hour later Allison braved leading a Werewolf through her family home into the garage full up with weaponry. Isaac didn't necessarily appreciate the décor.

"I know that you guys are Hunters but you look more like one of those separatist gun-nut families," he stared, gap mouthed at the wall units that framed the garage.

"We also sell firearms to law enforcement internationally. We have to make money somewhere," Allison smiled nervously while she unlocked her Aunt's Range Rover and pushed him into the passenger seat. "It does make life a little easier to carry weapons in a tight spot."

"Allison, unless you're offering me handgun, this is a waste of a hard sell," Isaac raised a hand, splayed his fingers and displayed a set of claws at the tip, "I've gotten pretty good with these."

From the driver's seat she gave him a cocky smirk and jerked the car into motion, Isaac launched forward, he barely caught himself before his face smacked the dashboard. "Ohh," her brows peaked with mock concern, "you should probably put your seatbelt on. Claws and fangs don't protect from everything you know," she condescended sweetly and peeled out of the garage at a wild speed.

Allison had less practice with the tactics of tracking while driving, never mind late at night and without any sort of urban lighting. She suspected she could rely on the preternatural talent of her partner, Isaac.

"I'm not putting my head out the window," Isaac gave her a warning glare.

"Seriously?" Allison gave him an incredulous look. She felt too tense for humor.

Isaac sighed, "Stiles would try to break the tension. I'm sorry. He's back exactly a day and already missing."

Allison faltered, she glanced over and noticed the way he leaned forward on the seat, ready to pounce straight through the windshield. He tried to hide his worry behind failed jokes and cool Werewolf effects but if he readjusted his scarf once more he was likely to strangle himself.

"We'll get him back," she assured him, "and he'll be cracking so many jokes you won't get him to shut up, I swear." For Allison her nervous gestures married easily to her preparedness routines and
instead of a scarf she readjusted the harness under her cropped jacket, counting off small knives with the tips of her fingers. Isaac pretended not to notice. Allison pretended not to notice him noticing.

"Alright, where do we start?" Isaac cleared his throat.

"Isaac, think like Stiles."

"Like a hyper-active spaz? That is one scary thought."

"Alright," Allison switched around to drive left-handed and with bottom of the steering wheel propped against the tops her knees. She reached between them and fumbled through a compartment on her quiver as she strapped it on.

"I'm going to make an educated guess," she explained while she pulled out a slim designer clutch purse and from that a cloned phone that she blinked in and out of life. "And say that wherever Scott is it's with Stiles. And wherever that is, it's with Lydia." As she ran through practiced "Emergency" commands, the power throughout the car flickered as well. Fortunately, the further they moved from town, the closer toward Lydia's phone's last location, the less often it happened. Isaac looked at her dubiously about the correlation.

"Do you think so?" Isaac sounded rough.

"I hope," Allison flinched to sense doubt because she couldn't leave room for it, "she did text for everyone to meet at her house after school."

"You think they'd head there even after the Library incident?" Isaac's eyebrow arched critically, he was entirely unconvinced.

"They did," Allison said in a low voice. Not quiet voice but low. "I'm sure they did. I know they'll find each other in all this."

"Would they?"

"Wouldn't they?" Allison looked over at Isaac and caught a look in his eyes, an ache. "They used to be friends. Best friends." She had seen that expression once before in Sheriff Stilinski's house while Scott and Lydia pawed through Stiles' things 2 doors down. Isaac struggled now as he did then to understand connections between people, people who weren't blood or pack but somehow...what was the word Scott chose to use 'Entangled'?"

What had Stiles said pack meant again, something closer than family 'like losing a limb'? But instead of looking for his missing foster family Isaac tried to swap out one for the other because he was so desperate to feel connected.

"Yes," Isaac conceded to the 'best friends' statement and he shifted uncomfortably under her scrutiny. "But what does that make them now?"

She kept her eyes trained on him as if she were waiting for him to attack and she said nothing for a minute straight. Isaac went from squirming uncomfortably into a nervous wreck. She considered what everyone's connection to Isaac was; Stiles felt an unquestioning kinship to Isaac if not begrudging. With Scott maybe she could brush away as more Werewolf business, but it was more than that. Isaac had started to both mentor and befriend Scott. And then Lydia's hard earned and misaimed affections, there laid a deciding vote. She summoned Isaac to Allison's window after all, straight into the Hunter's Den. Via text. And he obeyed.
"It makes them traceable," Allison slowed down and veered roughly over terrain, through another creek, up one slope and down another. "Lydia might not pick up her phone but it's out there."

"What the hell is out there?" Isaac tried to focus only on Allison's words, to keep her talking so that he would not despair.

"Are you kidding?" She didn't mean to take a higher pitch but she scoffed a little. It made him laugh almost, half-in shock and half-distaste. Hell, she would take a laugh where she could get one, "That's the abandoned patch of private property. The old Hale property."

"Hale? Like...?"

"Hale like 'Hale', yes." She nodded. After a second she handed him the cloned phone to get a better grip on the wheel and drive with better control to maintain their speed. She could even maintain better eye contact although that wasn't strictly advisable. "He's your Alpha and you didn't know his namesake originated in Beacon Hills?"

Isaac sat upright and his face went animated, not exactly brightened but certainly excited. He leaned nearer to her and held the phone so that the 'Find My Phone' app was mildly readable.

"Derek didn't exactly encourage us coming up North. I remember the words 'forbid' and 'across your dead body.' I guess he didn't want us to know anything about what went on around here."

"Which is easy since there's nothing here since--" she kept tabs on the conversation and the terrain.

"--Fire," Isaac cut her off and dropped the phone.

"Right," Allison swerved away from a tree but didn't slow down "there's been nothing there since the fire."

"No," Isaac sniffed through the passenger side window, despite saying he wouldn't, "Allison, I smell fire. And not a little one."

track 02 - youth (daughter cover) by katrina cunningham

. A sudden awareness flooded his senses and Stiles felt he had to struggle to breathe, he felt a piercing pain against his shoulder as well as pounding in his head and a sense of horrible familiarity.

× Between a rock and a hard place.

When his focus returned he loathed his weakness and his concession to the inevitable, to death and desertion.

× Between a mess or big trouble.

When he got old enough, he started to understand terms like 'separation anxiety' and 'survivor's guilt,' but it meant nothing when trauma paints the subconscious, and the mind, like a canvas, absorbs every detail.

× Between the devil and the deep sea.
The definition **nightmares or memories** were interchangeable and even the identities of 16 year olds overlapping 10 year olds meant nothing by comparison to their unchanging downfall.

× Between the ceiling and the floor. Strike that; the door.

They practically dangled off cliff sides and suspended by seat belts in the backseat of Claudia's Honda. Stiles lay with a cracking window pressed underneath his right shoulder blade with Lydia inert on his left, twisted harshly at the waist and arms akimbo and Scott collapsed half on top of her, half off because of the shoulder seat belt. Their combined weight pressed in on Stiles and he could barely breathe, but what he could breathe in smelled only of pungent earth and death.

Lydia always woke first with a start, a quiver and then she would silently cry. Once Lydia noticed Stiles watched she would try to reason with him; textbook bargaining. Lydia talked theories of angles while any deep breath made the vehicle sway a little. Sure, she was right about the fine points but essentially wrong in applications and in a few minutes her terrified screams would break him apart more than his fall could.

Scott always woke up messier and made Lydia outright sob when he crushed her but the sound of metal creaking would stop him still. Exhibiting the very best characteristics a best friend should with humor and patience he promised they would get out of there perfectly fine; Textbook Denial. While Scott tried like hell to keep everyone else from bursting at the seams his eyes read things like "it'll kill me to lose you both. I would die before I let go."

Stiles knew if they were in a different position not only would they have woken up on the other side of the car but the outcome would have been so very different. Maybe something genius or brave would have happened to save them all.

Instead Stiles could only come up with something desperate and in silence he found the strength to shove them clear from the wreckage. The skinny arms of a 10-year old can propel pretty far when fueled with adrenaline and altruism. He wished at the time he knew that meant he would never get them back. If there only had been some sign of warning.

The funny thing about conviction is it takes fuel to preserve it; pride or rage or affection. Without any of that his conviction boiled down to stubbornness.

He would never let himself regret but it only took one variant in this endless cycle to realize 6 years is isn't routine, it's a prison term.

Lydia still woke first only without a quiver or crying. Instead she groaned and awoke slow, he felt her tremble under his touch but she hardly seemed fearful when she searched his face with steady unblinking bright green eyes. She coiled around him, balled a hand at the throat of his hoodie and she wrapped the other around his neck. There was no childish remembering where she tried to talk a way out of the inevitable collapse. She pressed her lips together as she put that same analytical mind to the scenario. Even in the closeness with her hair falling into his face he couldn't recognize that desperate 'bargaining' look of hope. In there remained determination as she reached behind her to yank Scott awake.

Their weight as teens caused the car to shudder something fearsome.

Scott was still half-asleep when he stretched out against Lydia's back but the creaking sound of the car still got a rise from him. In unprecedented action Scott continued to move, to twist and come closer crushing Lydia. As the weight of the car shifted she kept with its cadence and curled herself as small as possible. Although Scott smiled he didn't try to be funny, instead he was brave. He reached around grabbed Stiles by the shoulders and didn't make empty promises. He said such
heroic things; *you're my brother. So if you're going do this, then you're going have to take me with you then.*

Stiles' resignation somehow couldn't match their resolve. And when Lydia started to repeat his name, in surprise, as a question, in anger and it means hello and goodbye, Stiles was too busy trying to figure out why the dream changed to guess how different the dream will be.

The rock face gave a warning slide; Scott gripped the back of the driver's seat with one arm and planted the other firmly into Stiles' left arm, leaving divots in his bicep while between them Lydia tied anchor knots into Stiles' seatbelt. Perspiration ran down Scott's still confident face, his sneakers squeaked against the backs of the seats while he strained to keep perfect balance.

Tied to nothing, when the car unexpectedly dropped downhill gravity pulled her away. Lydia hit the door, landing her on her side hard enough to leave her dazed. She lifted her head beside his from where the cracks in the window splintered at his right shoulder. She blinked at him and assured with a weak smile "Stiles, I'm fine" just before the window finally gave way.

Scott assured him it wasn't his fault and not to give up, never to give up. And while Scott talked a blue streak his voice sounded thinner and further, as though he were talking through a long tube, although it was clear on his face he was shouting.

The car tipped further and Scott looked to Stiles with an expression he had seen before they made it to the Mad River, Stiles remembered thinking how much cooler it was now that they were bigger but Scott had grown to be bold. And when the car reached a virtually sideways angle Scott's face showed no fear as he shot past Stiles and followed Lydia's through the broken window.

In this nightmare Stiles watch Scott fall away millions of times only usually he would be on the descending side of things. Never before had Scott sworn or flailed or smacked against branches and rock face before hitting the ground with a shallow thud. When it echoed, Stiles realized he had been too resigned he never moved, not to save himself and worse yet not to save his friends.

When he heard the others above come too late to save everyone and they threw down ropes Stiles understood he could still act on. Genius and brave might not be his thing but stubborn determination he could manage. In a dream he figured they might still have it in them to be hyper-real and more so they were definitely "die-than-live-without-them" friends. So when the cord came through the rear window he pulled for more and more and used a window shard as a saw. He knew Lydia's handiwork would be better than his, so he kept the frame as a harness when he pulled apart from the back seat. He mimicked Lydia's anchorknot technique and tied the nylon cords together to the seatbelt before demanding even more and repelling himself through the shattered window.

Below he could only make out a mist, which made it not only hard to see but to smell or hear or even think clearly. The further he went the more he felt his faith tested; it would have been easy to climb up toward open arms and ready voices, but instead armed with faith he descended into nothingness.

Eventually he could hear the growl of wolves. Wolves only growl when they fight and he could envision them fighting over the dead as meat. But he still wanted it and fueled by stubbornness moved below because he'd rather join them than leave them behind.

To his amazement the cord extended unending. He ignored snapping jaws, scraping claws and the choking mist and wrapped an arm around each friend. He held fast and was not afraid of Scott and Lydia as they began to transform; a red and brown nearly identical among a pack of sleek black wolves. Even as they turned and begin to attack him, he refused to let go.
Above the rescuers started to pull them up from the snapping beasts, through the mist, between scraping glass and twisted metal. As they neared the lip of the cliff, the terrain turned from woodland to road the wolves returned to people. Exhausted, Scott and Lydia clung to him, Stiles said he missed them, he cared for them, he needed them and he made a promise to never let them go.

That had certainly never happened before.

Track 03 - Give Us A Little Love by Fallulah


The night sky was a light show of thunder that chased lightning and it left the air full of retained energy. The police roped off the area surrounding the source of the power outage in the range of a mile including all roads leading toward it. Even the Argents knew to stay back from the source site of the power outage until someone from the electric company declared it safe.

The Yukimuras didn't subject themselves to the same restriction. They drove west away from traffic, away from the roads and into a cul de sac where she parked their car outside of a house for sale and, without guile or restraint, Noshiko lead her husband through the backyard where alarms did not go off thanks to the black out.

Ken asked "isn't thunder supposed to come before lightning?" his wife only gave him a look of disapproval as an answer. She cautiously climbed along the pebble-strewn shoreline into knee high creek water. They intended the current to carry them downstream under the radar of the police but to make certain they would make their target she used a branch as a staff. More rightly she used a branch as a javelin, stabbing the creek bed to stabilize their route and pull them along their path.

"There," Ken pointed out a pacing silhouette over the metal traffic barrier along the end of a bridge. Noshiko put a hand on her husband's arm to keep him from calling out, in bafflement he couldn't help insist "but she's right there."

"I know my love," she agreed, confidence exuded through her tone of voice and through the touch of her hand. "We have her now. Now let us go get her, safely." He paused and took a deep calming breath. With a hand on his wife's shoulder he let her guide them further downstream along the wake of a car crash.

Their shoes slipped and Noshiko continued to stab the surface shale to keep balance as they climbed a path upward. Before they reached the top, Kira sensed their presence and spun to meet them, the relief in her face quickly disappeared to an expression of panic. She cut herself off from running toward her parents to doubling back to Jackson's motionless body on the pavement.

"Did I kill him?" she blubbered, they could barely make out her words.

They looked toward each other for a split second before they rushed into action. Ken took the calming tone he had a career of practicing although just under the surface he felt a world of hurt for her. He came forward and Kira met him at a run, while her mother moved toward the body on the floor.

"Everything is going to be okay," he cradled his daughter's head against his shoulder, while she caught her breath they turned into little gasps. She didn't have the heart to ask him how, just as he didn't have the heart to ask why there were rope burns on her wrists.
"Kira, he's only unconscious," Noshiko said from the ground. She kneeled over the prone body with a hand examining his face, opening his eyes and the other touching the pulse at his throat. She looked up at her husband and daughter with a little smile of assurance and Ken took that as a sign to hug his daughter a little tighter.

"See," he grinned smugly, "everything will be alright."

In a manner more demanding Noshiko came beside them and took Kira by the hand, she turned her around looked her in the eyes.

"Kira you will calm down now," her voice wasn't demanding despite her words. She said things like this quite often, things that sounded like a direction but were actually guidance. She breathed deeply and held both of Kira's hands in hers. When she smiled next Kira matched the mannerism. They breathed together, from the diaphragm and slow in exhale. "Calm," she said once more as a mantra and when Kira's pulse began to slow a crack rent the air in half. Ken shuddered to feel it ricochet through his spine only his wife and daughter hadn't reacted at all. They continued holding hands and breathing together as rain fell from the sky as if a bucket had been dumped onto the earth.

When the electric company gave the 'All-Clear' for the Sheriff's department to examine the accident that took out the utility pole that destroyed the town's power supply, the Yukimuras sat together on the roadside barrier, their daughter propped between them with a sizeable gash on the side of her head.

Medics recovered Jackson Whittemore and whisked him away to Beacon Hills Memorial Hospital. There were questionable specifics as to how he managed to get from the car to the bridge but Deputy Clarke agreed to put off questions until Kira got some medical care. Not unexpected someone from the Argent volunteers asked if they could speak to the Yukimuras. Deputy Haigh was mildly less interested in the dynamics of baby-sitting yet another useless direction when he could be exploring the scene.

"If they don't care I don't care," was his exact reply.

Once approached, Noshiko stayed with her daughter and Ken walked off with Rumy.

"Hey guy," Rumy lightly punched Ken in the shoulder, "gotta say, I'm pretty surprised to see you here. I'm sure there is a story about it." He gestured toward the mud clad pant leg fashion Ken Yukimura had going on. The rain might have glossed over the details of the Yukimura's exploits, but Rumy's trained eye picked up on it right away.

"Oh," Ken paused in surprise and moved to wipe at it but Rumy caught his hand. He shook his head at Ken to wordlessly tell him, 'not now.' Back on track, Ken answered the real implications; why were the Yukimuras 'here'? "Noshiko went to the main house and no one was there."

"Sorry about that," Rumy sighed and wiped back the sopping hair from his eyes, despite the dark they were light and penetrating. "We have our own story unfolding tonight but if it's okay by you we can reschedule."

Ken shifted to half-turn to watch his wife and daughter. Kira no longer wept but her exhaustion and confusion read clearly, she looked painted of pinky-red blood along her brow and jaw the rain wouldn't wash away and matted bedraggled dark hair tangled against her face and neck that framed her. In a line of drastic contrast Noshiko waited for his return with her lip pressed into a line and her fierce eyes trained steadily on him, while her delicate hands stroked the lines of their daughter's arms encircling and infusing her in warmth he could sense from across the divide. They looked like
something the ancient Zen Painters could only have begun to grasp. To Ken they were far more precious than any ancient could begin to understand.

"I don't know," he sighed and shook his head. He smiled and it was the sort of smile that masked a million worries and looked toward Rumy who shared a similar expression. Rumy; the present embodiment of the Argent Family and yet another 'Ancient'.

"How are they?"

"They're good. They're safe." Ken assured him.

"Maybe that's enough," Rumy's smile lengthened.

Ken pinched the bridge of his nose. He figured he should have seen reverse psychology as the next tactic but the sentiment was honest. The Argents valued family in the same venue Ken did, maybe even more so in the way they made it very evident and how they adopted it in their code.

"We wouldn't be in Beacon Hills if that was enough," Ken sighed. He dropped his head slightly, his shoulders dropped with the weight of an unnecessary guilt.

"I feel you," Rumy put a hand on his shoulder and squeezed it gently. He glanced up and noted the police were nearing the crash site and Ken sensed the shift in attention. Rumy grunted in annoyance and shook his head before grinning back up at Ken. "If you're going through hell--."

"--keep going. Churchill." Ken smirked, as a World History teacher he liked a good historical quote thrown around every once and a while. The Argent's envoy knew him well. Ken shook his head and tried not to laugh, "I'm fairly sure he was a masochist."

"Aren't we all," Rumy shoved his hands into his pockets and started to head over to the crash site, "Hey, whatever Chris or them say, you don't have to." He looked over toward Noshiko and made sure she heard, "you never had to. You're just meant to. I mean, I'm meant to brush my teeth. I swear it's been like 10 years," with that he gave a Cheshire grin, spun around on the spot and marched away.

Ken chuckled low and it was masked by the rain. His wife didn't laugh at all. Kira watched the stranger head off into the crowd of officials and looked to her father and mother for some explanation, but none came. Noshiko shook her head looking unamused but Ken answered her with a raise of his brows and a slight smile of assurance.

"Everything is going to be okay," he repeated to his daughter and kissed her forehead before retaking his seat beside her. Within minutes a second ambulette made it onto the bridge to take Kira to the hospital for a full exam. Her dazed demeanor made them suspect she had a concussion from the car crash, possibly something worse. Noshiko opted to ride with her daughter and they remained silent the whole ride, while Ken set off to find the car.

The car at the crash site was barely recognizable as Jackson's Porsche; from the license plate and the position of the seat they could assume he was in the driver's seat. Despite the traffic commencing Rumy with Deputy Haigh remained and took photos for their inspection (notably not an investigation).

Track 04 - Make This Go On Forever by Snow Patrol
The scrape of fiber rubbed her lower back raw and hands clamped around her ankles were the only things flooding her awareness. Lydia felt both asleep and awake. She felt cold and hot. She felt wet and burnt. And she felt the world around her crumble. When she would catch up again she would get captured and concussed. It would happen again. It had happened again.

Things would happen in three folds; she would reach out for a handhold and caught hold of a stairwell banister. She would reach out for a handhold and caught hold of a fistful of the moistened earth from the lacrosse field. She would reach out for a handhold and caught hold of roots of a sacred tree stump; the Nemeton.

She would roll onto her stomach to kick her attacker. Her sneaker-clad foot hit home only for the Monster's grip on her ankle to tighten. Her second self kicked, more assertive but artless, which broke off half of her 5 ½ Donatella Versace heels into her attacker's thigh, ruining them wholly having slowed the Monster marginally. A third attempt failed, when her bare feet were restrained by the roots of the woods and a mystical tree.

In the corridors she heard people floors above, a baseline of mumbled voices behind closed doors.

In the lacrosse field she saw shadowy figure yards away, blurred against the floodlights.

In the forest she sensed animals in the dark, their eyes glowed and their teeth gleaned.

She was exposed, with her fears realized they were laid out on display. Firstly the assault, being cut down and dragged away, being abducted and then torn apart. But more than these things combined, she feared her growing ambivalence. When Lydia thought of the victimhood she envisioned procedurals; she understood the physiology of acute responses, but not the indulgence. She had always been gifted at compartmentalizing.

And if she doubted herself a Monster hissed in her ears "Lydia Martin is not only beautiful, not only incredibly intelligent....she is immune." it wasn't flattery. It was conditioning and if she didn't drown him out it would corrupt her soul.

And with the air between them, as casual as coffee Stiles said "Oh. Lydia, you're really smart." She felt his voice like a blow, he accepted her at face value, scars and all. He had seen through the gossamer, like they had some unspoken connection and it solidified her resolve.

And when she crawled through the dark the Monster hissed in her ear "sometimes the people closest to you could be the one holding you back the most."

In the middle of the classmates she could make out Scott's voice, low but not a whisper "You're a survivor. You're amazing." Even in the tangle of roots, or the crowd of students she could make out his yellow eyes and she was not afraid. She learned to look to her friends.

However relevant their voices were, Lydia knew hers was stronger. She was a strong girl and would not let fear be used as a currency to control her actions. But she liked the sense of her friends among the glowing eyes in the dark wood.

Things occurred in three fold; she walked the halls of an empty school and heard the Monster run at her from behind-- instead of running she stood her ground. She reached for fistfuls of pitch from the lacrosse field-- and digs her heels and knees into the moistened earth. She reached for the roots of the Nemeton and pulled herself onto the plateau and she rolled onto her back, running her fingers along the bloody wound on her side she stared up at the bright full moon.
"Allison! Allison!!" Isaac grabbed her arm hard to swing her back around to the Wrangler. Thankfully she looked more confused than livid. She was in no way an idiot so he had to pick his words carefully, "you've gotta see this is a big-ass trap?" he gestured up and down at the Hale House which already had significant structural damage and now had its front face lit up like a Christmas tree.

It was a stupid comment. Allison, thankfully, looked at him with a sort of pitiable expression rather than an angry one. The sudden onset of rain was on their side and putting out the fire rather quickly, but it wasn't helping them find their friends any quicker and that didn't make climbing into the wreckage any smarter.

"They've got to be in there," Allison said. She wasn't winning any brownie points at being clever or original either. By process of elimination, sure their friends had to be there. Once they neared the Hale House Isaac could sense things had gone dangerously off course. The property went strange and disconnected. He felt it like a blip on the radar as they crossed over onto the property. While Allison acknowledged Isaac's concern as a marker for danger she sped toward the fire.

"Sure our friends are in there," he conceded having little evidence other than instinct to say so, "but where are they, in the back to the west wing, in the basement?"

Allison's lips quivered as she tried for words that wouldn't come, she looked from Isaac to the house and back again. Her body tensed and she rocked back onto her heels like a trap ready to snap and when she looked back to him again her look cold, detached and ready to go. "What do we do?"

"I was hoping you'd tell me," Isaac answered with barely the raise of a brow, he played with his fingers and thought for a second. "We should really take a minute before running in blindly."

"How can you be so calm?" Allison stepped toward him and struggled not to hit him. The only real reason she hadn't was the time it took to rattle off the list of weapons she had to choose from. "Allison, today I was paralyzed by a lizard and maimed by a bookcase. I've just been virtually neutered by some dust on the ground. So take it on some good authority when I tell you that smoke is poisoned," Isaac huffed in annoyance.

Allison stared at him in shock. He shrugged, lifted his scarf over his nose and mouth heading back toward the house. She didn't have the availability of a convenient fashion accessory to use as a mask. She watched him approach the house with a strident ease common only from when Isaac took to the Lacrosse field. She rushed to his side and pulled him to face her.

"Isaac, are you okay?" she remembered not too long ago when they all collapsed on the field and Isaac assured her he was fine. Followed up by assuring her Scott was too. She wondered if he ever really kept his welfare as a priority. When he nodded to answer her question it only infuriated her. "Isaac! You've been breathing poison?"

He nodded, "it's just the usual 'hearing dead people' at this point." After a moment he refocused and from the way his eyes squinted a bit it was obvious he smiled as he gave a light shrug as if none of this mattered.

"Are they telling you anything useful?" Allison tried for levity.

"I wish," Isaac snorted. "That would just be worth it, wouldn't it?" he looked toward the flames.
The rain doused the flames entirely to the point that only a cloud remained, revealing more of a dilapidated estate and no clue to where their friends disappeared to. "Look at this crap. Where do we even begin?"

This time even Allison heard Lydia scream.

"Oh my god! Is that Lydia?!" Allison asked stumbling back.

Isaac kneeled on the ground and cradled his head in his hands. Despite the suddenness, Isaac was grateful to Lydia's wailing. For all its aching it gave his brain clarity.

A rather logical idea occurred to Allison and she hurried to the back of the Wrangler and climbed over her Aunt's spare tire, tool box and go-bag. Underneath she found a large emergency kit the size of an Ice Locker. It took all of her strength to yank it out through the hatch of the SUV, unlock the latches and scour through the items. What an Argent considered emergency material didn't quite fit the same pedigree as what pedestrians would.

Along with her regular accoutrement she brought along claw headed arrows, a 50ft nylon cord and a med-kit. Isaac gave her a nod and pointed to her mouth.

"Wolfsbane doesn't have the same effect on me," she explained.

"It's still poison," Isaac shouted but it came out muffled through the fabric. "I know you like poison, but don't you think this might be too much?"

Allison hefted up her new toys for display, "that's why I've got these to help and you've got your claws." She grinned, with a tilt of her head motioned for him to follow.

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Track 6 - What The Water Gave Me by Florence and the Machine

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Scott couldn't move forward or backward only he was not paralyzed. That would have been a fortunate outcome. He remained suspended, battered, bloodied and burnt, his clothes torn and falling apart, bits of glass in his arm and tree scrapes but he no longer felt physical pain. Only panic.

Above; blinded by breathtaking light he could never reach.

Below; venomous pitch black that would rise to consume him.

Stuck in between, he struggled and cried, he screamed and thrashed. He lost track of time, even, and became fierce and feral, a yellow-eyed animal but it made no difference.

This wasn't a Monster dream, he owned this tragedy. He built himself up from nothingness, he spewed rust from where his claws should have extended and rot filled his mouth from where his fangs should have been. Fear, like clamps, weighed down his limbs and the air reeked of panic, strangling out his lungs but his eyes remained his own. Correction, with glowing eyes he could make out the shapes and vibrations of silhouetted things in his peripheries.

He didn't dare look from side to side though because different versions of himself, younger and older, bloodied, broken, crying, laughing and all of them mocked him. They mocked him because one way or another they had moved forward or backward and left the real version of him to remain
stuck; they had left a husk behind. His own body betrayed him, over and over again.

Among the menagerie were the tiny voices of a girl and a boy bickering. They said critical things but they didn't just anger him, maybe even amuse him. Not at all like the voices that made him want to die but these voices made him want roll his eyes. To think, he used to fear closing his eyes in case he might not be able to open them again. Instead they turned from fierce and feral to dark brown, creased at the edges with amusement.

"Shut up, you nerds" he groaned, with the rot dislodged his voice was raw from lack of use.

"Come make us," they said teased with voices that rose and they fell like a wave.

When Scott struggled to move again it felt easier because he wasn't trying to move for himself alone but because he wanted to move for others. He felt stronger then. Not just for them but for him to become part of 'them'. Rust fell away and his hands became his own, an arm moved at first like a swipe but without strength behind it.

Their jibs changed from antagonizing to encouragement, from goading to pleading. Scott heard them drown out his thoughts. Their shouts turn to pleas for him to try harder, pleas to reach out for them, pleas to not give up. Scott's voice turned from the whine of "Stiles! Lydia! Please! Don't! Stop!" to "Please, Stiles, Lydia!! Don't stop!!" and it became louder. It turned from crying out to something nearing a roar until it shattered the dark. When he opened his eyes the world was a mix of both light and dark because of a billowing smoke and he had finally hit the concrete basement floor of the Hale House.

In vagueness his senses returned to him a little and he could make out through a haze the shapes of his friends. In something close to anger but more intense feeling, not possession but devotion changed the color of his eyes and he could see clearer. Lydia had her coat stretched out to cover all from smoke and fire and Stiles, face blackened with ash, he lay practically stretched out beneath him with their arms locked around each others at the elbow. Scott reached out and pulled them closer to him, tighter beneath the minimum cover Lydia's wool coat afforded them from the discolored smoke and ash. He locked out the scent of the poison that he felt eat at them and cloistered in what remained; Stiles' hair gel, Lydia's kiwi lip gloss, the smell of fear and the smell of trust.

New voices called out in the haze of nonsense, new voices called for Scott. They called from different directions, from the future and from the past. The voices called for him to come away and they called for Lydia and they called for Stiles too.

One of them reminds him of the sort of smile you want to smack but you kind of just can't help but like to laugh with too, and from that the voice reminds him "focus on your nerves... Try to visualize each nerve, individually inside of you. Not slowing them down or separating them, just being here because once you know where you are you don't have to worry about losing control so much. Even if sometimes you do. Be here Scott ... with us. Come on Scott! Come on!!" he felt his muscles tense, the impulse in him came alive, whether it was posturing or engaging it only mattered that he wanted to get out of the haze.

The other voice spoke less but said so much more "you're not a monster Scott. You aren't lost. There's hope. There's always hope. Don't we become a little more monstrous if we stop believing there can be saviors?" she could have been saying a fairy tale the words sounded so right but they were tailored to his soul. "I want you safe," she said plainly with promise "I'm coming for you," she added it might as well have been a threat but it was as intimate as a touch. Allison. She loved him. She said it a whole bunch of times even, the thought made him grin.
Scott could only begin to imagine what the voice must sound like to Stiles and Lydia... Tight against him Stiles and Lydia remained with their limbs twisted up together to guard against the currents of madness, protected by Scott's iron-grip. They didn't struggle against him and he felt confident enough to drift off again.

"How many chances do you have with this?"

"Chances?" Allison answered haughtily and she straightened her long bow. The anchored arrow weighed so much more than she had anticipated and the rain added calibrations she had not anticipated. She took a calming breath before she aimed and shot. And shot again and again, and after the third time Isaac scooted nearer to her on the ground.

"Allison," he said in a low tone so as not to interrupt her.

Allison envisioned his mask must have been off for his voice to ring so clearly in her hear. Isaac's presence neared and left a warm impression. His hand cupped beneath hers and the tremble she hadn't even noticed. She opened her eyes and stared straight ahead, clear-eyed and clear-headed.

"You got this," Isaac said low enough she may as well have imagined it.

When Allison exhaled she released the arrow. It sailed through the air, through the plume of smoke, over the incaved porch and doorway, through, not 1 but 2 ceiling beams before latching into place.

"Wow," Isaac breathed out, and while the cord zipped past, he caught it to keep the spool from flying over the edge. He stabbed a camping deep into the ground, tied the cord off and hopped to his feet with a dramatic flair.

Allison smiled and then reminded "Isaac, your scarf."

With that they came to stand as near as they could without touching the area smoky area; Allison breathed through the crook of her arm and Isaac through his scarf. Though muffled, they called the names of their friends into the darkness but got no reply. There hadn't been a response since the initial scream. Aside from a confirmation of "Hale House; Front Hall" there wasn't much to go on. And yes that was a lot but that was also poison bomb central. Whatever mess their friends had gotten themselves into, it was a royal one. If either were to dare to jump down through the crater in the doorway of the home, it would be wise to do what they knew was the safest, nearest and quickest way in and out. Mind you, there would still be arguments over who would be allowed down the flaming crater since both had a burning hero's complex.

"Do we play rock paper scissors?" Isaac put forward.

"We don't know where to look down there. It just makes sense that I go," Allison crossed her arms and smirked. From where she stood toward the back of the house, slightly up hill she had a clear run toward the opening. "The Wolfsbane affects me slower and I'll have more time to search for them."

"In a place that will probably fall down on you the moment you climb down that rope? I don't think so. I have better vision--" Isaac explained, slowly nearing her.
"You said it messed up your vision." Allison cut in.

"--and if I get hurt I'll heal quicker--"

"You said it messed up your senses."

"--and I can carry them up--"

"You can pull them up from this side without even getting exposed."

"Allison, I can't let you go down there," he came to stand right before her although the slope made it easier for her to stand nearer to his eye line.

"You can't stop me either," she paused and looked him over. She seemed a little angry but he couldn't be sure what she felt without all of his faculties. Her dark eyes burrowed through him, she scolded "You keep putting yourself in danger. I can't let you do that again. What if this time it isn't something you can just shrug off and walk away from?"

"And you can?" he didn't want to lose another friend. The voices from earlier brought to the surface too much of those memories.

"I can do this." she stood taller, her chin held higher. She turned to step around the porch steps and nearing the hole, the fragrance of the poison began to hit her and it smelled lovely. "I'm trained for this... kind of."

"And I trust you, kind of," Isaac shook his head in admiration; her conviction never wavered despite the terrain.

"Well, I don't" Kate Argent announced her presence as she trudged down from a new slope, "And I'm pretty sure I've said that already."

Kate wore light body armor, held a high-powered rifle in one hand and a compound bow in the other. She marched forward with intent, Allison jumped back a few feet as Isaac stumbled backward on the porch steps. Allison changed her position slightly to step in front of Isaac, putting herself between Kate and him in case Kate got aggressive. It was an instinctual move that got a brow raise out of Kate.

"And I'm pretty sure Isaac also knows letting my favorite niece dive into a basement of poison negates our agreement."

"She's your only niece," Isaac corrected, back on his feet while dusting his pant leg off, "And favoritism doesn't mean you should underestimate her."

Allison smirked.

"Oh, I don't. Which is why I'm suggesting this," she tossed over an arrow with a grapple as an arrowhead. Allison snatched it from the air and examined the smaller, flatter and squared out version than the one she had used. "Shoot at your rope without breaking it and you have a lever. Attach a harness and no one has to go down when they can bring themselves up."

Isaac tugged down his scarf and leaned toward her ear. "Can you do that?" he hadn't meant was she capable. He meant it was feasible. Allison turned the arrowhead around in her hands, admired the blunted edges that weren't meant to cut and the easier springs designed to sink into the ground rather than pierce through wood. She thought about it, it wasn't very different than climbing on the banister and tying climbing rope to do the exact same thing, except it would expose them to less
smoke. Allison nodded only her eyes looked worried, "Can you do it?" he asked again, this time he wondered if she could aim that tiny grapple at their small climbing rope through a poison smoke. Her face said she asked herself the same thing.

"Of course she can," Kate said nearer. She handed Allison her crossbow.

Isaac stayed a ways off with a peg and the cord once more, only at the end of the cord they had a harness attached. He prepared for his part by not losing the cord and aiming the harness, through the poison and down to their friends. And if their friends didn't respond right away then he wanted to head down with a second harness and pull them up, that was if the beams, thankfully 2 of them, held their combined weight for the several times it would take to get the lot of them.

A few yards behind them Allison kneeled beside her Aunt in the dampened ground while she stabilized her aim for the compound bow.

"You got this," her Aunt encouraged but as Allison watched Isaac from behind, noting her friend's wellbeing stood literally on the edge of her arrow head, she felt a keen awareness that came with hyper-vigilance.

"Aunt Kate," she held her arm tense as well as her voice, "what are you doing here?"

Kate glanced at her side-eyed and glanced back toward the house. "I had a feeling the fire was the place to be. What are you doing here?"

Allison let the arrow go. It cut through the air and caught onto the cord as efficiently as if she had reached out and caught hold of it with her own hand. "I'm saving my friends," she answered.

The arrow went through the air nearly quicker than his eye could see, untouched by rain or smoke until it clasped their first cord.

Track 08 - Death Magic by RBTS WIN

Then Lydia had screamed. The rooms vibrated and doorframes shook apart. The ground of the lacrosse field crumbled under the clutch of fingers. The Nemeton held her up instead; the forest shuddered, tree limbs trembled, brambles crumbled away, crackled and screech sensing the pressure she applied. She became an instrument keened to cut through the worlds. In them she found her friends, their quiet voices now a part of hers. Louder and louder, becoming howls in tandem to her scream.

Lydia's eyes flew open, bright and aware.

"We're here!" her voice sounded out clear despite the smoke. "Allison!"

Lydia would go in and out on consciousness in the smoke. In the darkness she found them, Stiles splayed at a broken angle and slow to heal with Scott half on top of him.

Scott had crawled over onto him through the dust cloud and flames, collapsed half on him and dug his nails into Stiles' arm deep enough to leave divots. Lydia pulled off her coat, used it as a cover from the falling debris. Every falling thing terrified her as she crawled toward them but the sound
of Scott's wheezing frightened her more. She put her coat over them as best as she could, but it only went so far. She heard voices calling from above but when she tried to answer them her mouth would fill with ash. When she closed her eyes again, she felt the floor come up to meet her.

When she opened them again she felt the crushing weight of limbs against her. She saw yellow-gold eyes in the shadowy dark and felt the ragged fingertips of Scott's hand positioned cautiously around her, which dragged her to curl her into the space between him and Stiles. She groaned, slowly awoke to notice the harness on the ground beside them. She lopsidedly locked it to Stiles and tied the rope as best as she could through the both of them, hoping it would keep. The fire had nearly drowned out and the air had begun to clear.

Assured that Stiles was fastened, wound to her like roots, and attached by throbbing sporadic pains, their combined weight pressed the air from her. It didn't deaden her senses to the world around her, the smoldered and collapsing basement and their floundering rescuers. Lydia focused her calm into her diaphragm, she didn't need air; she had power and her friends safe.

"Guys! Allison!! Isaac!! Come on!!" when she blanked again she hoped her specialness afforded her a few more things. She hoped her immunity meant she could withstand the smoke a little longer. She hoped that, despite it not being very logical, it meant her lungs would not choke up. And she hoped it meant she wouldn't give up until she knew her everyone was safe.

When she woke again she felt like her arm would twist off. It had gone mostly numb twisted behind her, knotted through with Scott's left arm and speared through with Stiles' right. There would be no disentangling without dislocating her shoulder, and of that she was certain. She scraped her nails into Stiles' scalp, clutching at him as she wrapped her right around his head.

"Scott," she rasped and he responded with a tightening of his grip around them. "This time, don't let go," she all but asked, he responded with a nod she felt his chin dig into her shoulder and she felt every digging discomfort and sliding pain wash away. Before she blacked out again she screamed for help one last time then she her consciousness went to the other place. She went unafraid of the scratches, binds, the claws and glowing eyes she would welcome this time when she'd lose consciousness and disappear into the dark.

Track 09 - Monsters by Conner Youngblood

"By all rights this kid should be dead," Doctor Geyer explained. "Being surge of electricity so close to the power station should have microwaved him."

Melissa McCall stood at his side and looked at the test results with him. The EKG read normal but and the EEG read as if Jackson's nerves were still at rate of hyper activity. In fact, it read as if Jackson were still being electrocuted. The skin graft showed a burn mark sever enough that there was no doubt Jackson had been struck by lightning, possibly more than once. Except he didn't get hit by lightning he had gotten hit by the electrical surge from the power station.

The Sheriff nodded his understanding and didn't make mention of his disappointment. The Yukimura girl gave a story about sitting on the metal guard after the car accident, waiting to get their baring and how it must have attracted the lightning. It wasn't implausible and he didn't know why it felt suspicious but it did. He wanted to talk to Jackson but more than that he wished the kid was okay.
"This kid is lucky to be alive," Sheriff Stilinski said heading toward the lobby.

"I don't know about that," Melissa added, "Exposure like that can cause any number of health problems like nausea, migraine headaches even cancer. He will definitely have irreparable nerve damage all over that will affect his mobility."

"Are you saying it would have been better if he had died?" the Sheriff stopped in the hall by her station, leaving her to her long hours and long lines of patients.

"I don't know what I'm saying." She sighed and shook her head, "I just can't stand it. Our kids are either disappearing on us or turning up like-- have you heard from them?" her thoughts ran fast and furious. She looked unhappy but determined it was the sort of look she wore often but she wore well.

"No. But I got a call from some of our volunteers. They were spotted at the edge of town and were being brought in," when he said it, it sounded officious, like he talked about criminals on the run. He smirked afterward at her furrowed brow. "It helps to have friends in dubious places."

She reached out over the counter and caught his hand, "it helps to have friends." She smiled genuinely, no customer greeting there.

"I'm sorry to interrupt," Victoria Argent stood in the center silent as a shadow, her smile artistry. "I just finish speaking to someone in the electric company who had a lengthy explanation as to why the phones still aren't working across town. But SAT phones have kicked in."

"That's great news," Sheriff grinned and Melissa let out a sigh.

"So, you can probably contact the Argent volunteer directly about bringing the children," she prodded cautiously, "will they bring them to the station? To the hospital or escort them home?"

"Since it's not an officer I can't direct them but since the station is full I asked if they could just bring them to a parent," he shrugged. It was unconventional and selfish but he wanted to see his kid if he could. "So, you'll probably see your daughter soon."

Victoria rubbed her forehead and her smile lengthened a gesture that could easily be confused as relief, "yes, of course. Thank you." Honestly, she can't say she was that surprised. "I'm going to go prepare for that."

Track 10 - A Real Hero by College

Kate clicked off her SAT phone and hooked it at her waist. Allison gave her a bewildered look.

"In case we don't make it out, I figure let them know where to look for the bodies," Kate's brow lifted in ill-timed amusement and she gave a shrug.

"Aunt Kate, we don't know how long they've been down there," Allison readjusted her quiver on her shoulder and ran her fingertips along her hidden knives to keep her calm. "And the longer we've been here, the longer we've been exposed--"

"Don't worry; the rain has cleared up everything. Look, we'll do this one more time," Kate stopped when she saw Allison's distress, "And we'll try again and again till we get it right."
Kate went forward stood just behind Isaac.

"Real motivating words you had there," Isaac grinned without any scarf or coat closed up high. His full face shown and he made certain she could see his resentment.

"What can I say, I am here to help," Her eyebrows rose in amusement and she grinned in return.

They both took the rope in their hands and pulled with all their might but as they did so she saw and heard the change in Isaac. His grunts turned to growls and her grip on the rope began to turn easier when his got stronger when he wrapped more and more rope around his fist, keeping it clenched closed with claws. Still able to tap into that strength and keep control of himself, he was definitely getting better at when to use 'claws and fangs' as an asset thing. Her work certainly was made easier and between Isaac and the ATV the three friends were yanked out of the Hale House in one large cradled piece. Kate moved out of the way. Allison abandoned the vehicle leaving the motor running, to get to their side and see to their wellbeing.

"Stiles! Stiles, you're going to have to release Lydia's from your death grip and let go of Scott's head sometime," Isaac chuckled, his nerves made it hard for him not to. "Or else I'm not going to be able to get the piece of banister out of your shoulder blade."

Stiles coughed and watched Isaac for a long while from the bottom of the pile up before he seemed to recognize him. Allison stood over them in shocked silence.

"What?" he mumbled and refused to relinquish his hold, "what piece of banister?"

"This one," Isaac smacked it lightly and Stiles howled in pain. "We've got Scott and Lydia. Let me get this."

Reluctantly Stiles started to ease off but it did little, Scott had dug his claws into Stiles' arm and Lydia had not only wrapped her arms between theirs, but she had also strapped her wrist into the harness.

"Jeez," Isaac muttered.

"What is it?" Allison dropped to the floor, worry made her legs unsteady and her hands were over her mouth waiting for the worst.

"They're completely tangled up. This is ridiculous," he groaned.

"Of course," Allison's hands stayed on her mouth but she started to laugh outright. "Of course they are." Flooded with relief she dropped to all fours and examined them closer. Even though unconscious Scott still held transformative features; she had never known those to stay when someone was unconscious.

"Scott, you have to wake up now," she said softly and tilted her head toward his, "you're safe now. I promise, it's okay to let go. They're not going anywhere."

Slowly his eyes opened and they retained the glowing yellow as she suspected. In all the time she spent with Scott she had never seen his features so fully transformed and certainly not without him in an angry emotional state. Instead he looked calm, he looked content. He focused slowly and when he saw Isaac above him and Stiles trying to lean up from under him, with confident smiles he could sit up and let go. Allison dipped her head toward him and kissed him, put at him ease with her touch he changed to himself once more.

"Hey, I'm pretty sure your friend isn't breathing," Kate interrupted.
For a split second all eyes were on her in bafflement at what a ridiculous conclusion that could be, before everyone shot into panic motion trying to grab Lydia at once. Stiles shot upright to shake her awake only to fall back, yelling in pain from the piece of wood still in his shoulder. Realizing his physical position was part of the problem Scott stumbled backward and Allison caught him. Isaac rolled her onto her back, listened for her heart rate. It was weak and steadily weakening. But she wasn't taking in breath. Isaac knelt by her head, placed his hands on her chest and started compressions. It only took second for her to start retching and gagging out the poisoned air.

Scott and Allison watched on in terrified relief, holding hands in the dirty rain. Stiles watched on in silent shock. He hadn't even noticed that Kate had pulled out the wood plank until he heard her toss it away.

"You good?" she asked.

"Yeah, yeah." Stiles dismissed her, ignoring the feel of blood seeping down his back.

While catching them up on the half-town shut down due to the power outage, Kate handed out fire blankets to help keep them warm in the onslaught of rain. Oddly enough Lydia demanded to have back her wool coat.

"It's Italian," she argued.

"Babe, so are these boots," Kate mocked her, pointing out exactly how mud clad and destroyed everything was. "Now it's covered in dirt and ash just like the rest of us."

Lydia glared and snatched it back. Allison petted her arm sympathetically before insisting Lydia take an inhaler from her to use while she still wheezed. Lydia always listened to Allison's directions and calmed a little, while Allison wrapped the coat around her shoulders rubbed warmth into her arms.

"Better?" Allison asked by her ear after she had processed the strange chest burning relief of 2 puffs.

"Yes," she answered pausing to look down at the asthma pump she suspected to be Scott's. She looked over to where he sat half in, half out of an SUV. Stiles stood propped just beside the door like a centurion, both looked like a building dropped on him. Which essentially it had. And they gave a weary smile and wave in near perfect unison. She rolled her eyes but smiled and shoved the pump into the coat pockets.

Kate asked if they all had a safe place to stay after this and the answers she got were ambivalent. Lydia covered it up with, "well, the town is shut down. So what qualifies as safe?"

Stiles smirked at that, he appreciated seeing someone else on the receiving side of Lydia's snarkiness.

"Looks like she's feeling better," Scott whispered and they both laughed quietly.

"The Sheriff says," Kate raised and waved around her SAT phone as evidence, "that I should get you all someplace safe. Some place preferably with family."

Scott looked to Stiles. Stiles looked to Scott. The knowledge that last time they had seen the Sheriff was from the back of his cruiser stood out firmly in their minds.
"But how 'bout I take you guys to the 24-hour diner for now," Kate offered.

"Sure!" Isaac said cheerfully, "I get dibs on the ATV." Kate made a skeptical face. "So I can have Lydia ride with me. She could use the air."

Lydia had been leaning on the back of the ATV for the entire time they had been talking seemingly disinterested. She looked to Isaac and he gave her a stupid grin that she wasn't sure how to translate, "whatever". She was not only too tired to argue but she wasn't sure how to turn down the man who just saved her life.

"Well, I'll lead the way in the SUV," Kate traded off the keys and went off.

"Ready to ride off with the Hunters in the Hunter's car," Stiles mocked Scott. "Maybe we'll get to do some Hunting."

"You're hilarious, did you know that?" Scott sounded less than amused, "they risked a lot--"

"I get it," Stiles cut him off. He reached up to rub at his neck but winced instead, "didn't risk as much as you." Scott stared in confusion and Stiles rolled his eyes and spoke very quickly very low and turned his hand in a gesture that meant 'move along.'

"I mean sure we came with Lydia but she wouldn't have set off that trap if it hadn't been for me being obsessed with digging up that corpse and it might have been the side-effects of the Wolfsbane but if you hadn't knocked us out of the way like you had we would have died and thanks and stuff, yeah."

Scott smirked and stared quietly.

"You're just going to silently gloat aren't you," Stiles glared.

Scott shrugged.

"You Ass!"

"Stiles, do you need help getting in?" Allison came over to his side after say a brief 'see you later' to Lydia.

"That--That's really nice of Allison," Stiles said with an exaggerated flare for his gratitude.

"You mean for a Hunter don't you?" she looked at him skeptically, before breaking into a grin.

"I wasn't-- no. I wouldn't say that... out loud anyway. She's kidding right, I take it back. I take it back you're not nice at all."

"Oh," she feigned disappointment while she ignored him to instead help Scott settle in comfortably.

"She seems pretty nice to me," Scott corrected Stiles' assessment. Allison let the 2 of them settle in the back while she and Kate returned to retrieving all of their personal items from the site.

Isaac went to the SUV quick goodbyes to Allison, and then went to Scott before and lastly around to Stiles before they separated.

"What the hell did you actually find here?" he whispered into Stiles' ear. He knew he would only have these few seconds in an overly fond goodbye. They wouldn't get it if they shared a ride with Kate or even with the others. As members of the same pack they owed each other a little honesty.
"A dead body in front of the porch, but it wasn't Derek's." Stiles whispered. He grinned and clapped Isaac on the back, as if he were thanking his best friend for sticking around, as if they were just two bros chillin'.

"What dead body?" Isaac worked to keep his grin. Stiles had given up all pretenses of good-naturedness, instead he looked pissed-off as he looked back toward the Hale House.

With the porch nearly torn through that left a hole which seemingly lead to a hell mouth, the front door hung off of its hinges with a revenge insignia predominantly featured the front lawn was burnt up, peppered with contaminants slowly being washed away by the rain, while pools of mud accumulated in incline as well as shallow and suspiciously empty grave.

Chapter End Notes

CREDITS/ROLL CALL:

Argents - Team1; headed by Victoria, Chris & Allison.
- Rumy - [Sergeant] specialized in Recon; Special Forces and espionage. Chris' right hand man and Allison's godfather.
- Axel - [1st Lieutenant] expert tracker, marksman and Allison's 2nd cousin.
- Bennett - [Field Officer] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old and friend to Allison.
- Leveque - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Terrain-Orientation. Mechanics, driving countermeasures the means to mobilize heavy firepower to engage opposing forces including other combat vehicles.
- Ulrich - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation.

Argents - Team2; headed by Kate.
- Livy - [1st Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Force-Orientation, R.I.F. and close-combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's right-hand man.
- Tyhurst - [Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation, Cyberwarefare, has CIA background and is ranked with state detective credentials. Referred to as 'try-hard.'
- Norm - [Sergeant] specialty in Medical Intelligence and as a Longbowman; an archer who uses the longbow, w/ various arrowheads. He' JR's brother and Roman's Uncle.
- Roman - [Field Officer] specialty as a Marksman/Sharpshooter, 19yrs. old and a weapons expert skilled in precision shooting. He's JR's son and Norm's Nephew.
- Fry - [Field Officer] specialty as a Tactician is and general officer, while his marksmanship is low he is still in high regard for his brain.

Hale (Present Day) Pack; Derek
- Stiles - [Omega] also abandoned, in search of any existing pack members.
- ? Other;?
- Jackson - [?] ...
- Kira - [?] ...
- Lydia - [Banshee] 'A Banshee screams preceding a supernatural death not as a premonition but to highlight the likelihood of supernatural events that result in deaths.'

*chapter 8
Twins' Pack; Aiden and Ethan Carver Alphas
• Marta - [Beta] she's an older motor head and their 1st Lieutenant.
• Bridy - [Beta] the packs' spy because she's diminutive and easily underestimated.
• Gus - [Beta] referred to as psychotic now and again, but his very few (and dwindling) close friends' are his touchstone.
• (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, bi and partnered to Naylor, formerly to Bozeman.
• (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
• (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
• (deceased) Coot - [Omega] former Beta, killed by the Monster.

Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha
• (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed 1st Lieutenant, possibly romantically entangled.
• Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali and closely bonded to Huntington.
• Santos - [Beta] while loyal to Kali has mentored many, without regard to packs. He helped the Twins first learn to shift together without losing their identities.
• Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed and with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
• Levi - [Beta] he's neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
• Huntington - [Beta] has strong empathic senses, is very good friends with Gus' from Twins' pack and Lark.

Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha
• Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' Lieutenant, --from wiped out Shapeshifter dynasty.
• Dr. Kane - [Beta] both a medical Doctor and their torturer.
• Quint - [Beta] eager to please teen and Dr. Kane's biological son.

Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha
• Søren - [Beta] 1st Lieutenant, Danish man of even temperament and a skilled negotiator until his temper is peaked.
• Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
were (you) heard

Chapter Summary

After the explosion at the Hale House the rescued and the rescuers have a long overdue sit down face-to-face conversation over coffee, with Kate Argent as an unlikely moderator. They remain in the 24-hour Diner to wait out the power outage during which Stiles and Isaac come forward with their version of events concerning the Hale family in exchange for Kate's story.

• Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/11-were-you-heard

• has been re-released • http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/10-were-you-trapped

Chapter Notes

• Scott, Stiles and Lydia suffer the effects of a dirty bomb laced with Wolfsbane possessing hallucinogenic properties (Trailing White Monkshood). Trapped in nightmares, they confronted their insecurities in manifested form.
• Allison and Isaac worked together to track their missing friends to the Hale House fire only to clash on who would retrieve them from the poison exposed crater.
• Meanwhile, 2 miles away, Mr. and Mrs. Yukimura go to extra measures to retrieve their daughter Kira from the site of a car accident that is the source of the town's power outage. While they are there they find the body of Jackson Whittemore comatose.
• The Sheriff's department found the car accident involving the Yukimuras to be mildly troubling, meanwhile Rumy (representing the Argents) found their presence to be all too familiar.
• Kate Argent's sudden appearance at the Hale House provides the last element needed to bring out the captive and suffocating friends.
• The amount of murderers, mysterious attacks, and strange events in Beacon Hills only promises to increase.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Track 01 - Look Too Closely by Fink

{Thursday; Evening}

Along the industrial bridge, one of the lesser used 'off' ramps into Beacon Hills on the 101 highway, there is a thin strip of divey motels, a rundown gas station and a 24-hour diner named Tony's owned by a guy named Benny.

It was located North enough it was outside of the power outage, out of society enough to attract the
Red-Bull infused cross-country drivers and the occasionally inattentive road-tripping family; perfectly public enough for their private confrontation.

Scott hadn't considered their appearance when he led his friends into the diner. He had only thought about how good it would feel to have warm food in their stomachs and to rest together in comfortable seats. It hadn't occurred to him that their entourage looked like they had just survived the zombie apocalypse. Under the bright lights in the mirrored doorway he realized maybe this wasn't the best idea.

The "Please Wait To Be Seated" sign gave him time for a pause.

"Guys," he turned to Stiles, Lydia and Allison collected in the small waiting area with him. Stiles' hoodie bore a small stab wound and wet streaks that were undoubtedly blood, albeit drying down his right arm. Lydia's looked a bit scraped up but mostly her hair remained lightly powdered with ash that the bike ride hadn't blown away, not to mention her black wool coat turned grey from debris. Allison still wore her archery gear, thankfully not her quiver, and looked mud clad and grass-stained pretty much everywhere. "Maybe this isn't the best idea."

"Ya think," Stiles quipped, shaking out his hair, deliberately spraying everyone with a rain of dirt. Allison ducked out of the spray and Lydia shoved his bad shoulder to make him stop.

"How many in your party?" The waitress asked. Scott whipped around to face her without realizing he didn't have the right words to excuse their leaving. Or an excuse for them at all.

"There are 6 of us," Allison answered as she stepped forward to Scott's side and placed an encouraging hand on his arm.

"Alright," the waitress didn't look remotely bothered with their appearance. In fact, she hardly acknowledged the uniqueness of their appearance except to look them over a second time and add, "It'll be a booth in the back. If that's alright with you?"

"That'll be great," Scott sighed in relief and followed her along.

Track 02 - Metal and Dust by London Grammer

In the Men's room Stiles wiped furiously at the hoodie's sleeve. The blood stains seemed inevitable but weren't his real problem; the banister had left a hole the size of a fist. Albeit a small fist. The banister also left him with a slowly healing stab wound underneath his right shoulder blade that radiated pain, cramping his neck that stabbed his nerves with every move of his arms. He felt he deserved it when he ran his hands through his hair in aggravation.

This item, this red hoodie, this stupid bloodied up and torn goddamn thing was the first thing Scott gave him. Melissa, Scott's Mom, said so. She said it was his favorite thing but he went and lent it to Stiles and he ruined it.

It felt like a bad omen; when he remained hidden things seemed sort of easier, painful but easier to stay in Beacon Hills. Having Scott and Lydia with him had come easy and he had been able to find more answers about his missing pack members in 24 hours than he had in 2 weeks. They made the answers come easier but the choices so much harder. If he hadn't been selfish and dug up the
corpse first, he might have seen the obvious signs of a trap. He wouldn't have endangered his living friends for a dead thing. He would never do that again, but how could he possibly prove that to them or to himself?

He threw a bar of soap into the sink when the knock at the door rip him out of his obsessive thoughts. Stiles swung the door open to reveal Lydia standing on the other side. It wasn't the presence of a friendly face that knocked him out of his anxiety spiral but the sight of Lydia taking up designated space of a "Mens" bathroom doorway.

"What is it?" he heard himself say, thankfully in a tone that was more out of concern than accusation.

She looked more put together, her hair combed back, her face washed and clothes dusted. She stood poised and looked him over from bottom to top. "Your hair is leaking pink," she pointed over his line of sight as if tracing the air, to the leaking veil of combined water and blood that Stiles had transferred from his hands onto his hair.

Stiles dropped his hands away from the doorframe and straightened up. "I knew that," and he spun back around to face the mirror. Lydia watched through the reflection as he scooped up fresh water, running his hands over his face and through his hair. She tried not to stare at the hole through the back of his black shirt and instead stared at the detailed 'Dia De Los Muertos' sugar skull splayed across his chest in the reflection. She thought the detail mocking in the face of events.

"I thought about turning my t-shirt inside out," he smiled at her through the mirror.

"I bet you did," she blinked and came back from her worried expression. She smiled briefly and her steadier façade came back in place. She stepped through the doorway and ignored the rules that denied her "Womans" entry. "Are you using cold water?"

At the sink beside him she took the hoodie from where it hung over the faucet. He shook his head in negation. "Here," she turned the cold water on high and soaped only the stained area up into a frothy mound. Her hands were far more delicate around the tear. She assured him it would come out and since the tear was not far from the seam it would be an easy mend.

"Lydia, what are you doing in here?" What he meant to ask was 'why are you helping me?' her silence afterward as she let the water run along her still hands said something. He recognized a familiar guilt reflected in her face.

"You don't have to help me," while reaching for the hoodie, he turned off the faucet when someone suddenly turned the knob to open the door.

"Occupied!" they shouted in unison, turning to slam closed the door and Stiles locked it this time. Sighing Lydia slipped into her steadier façade once more.

"Well, someone needs to help you," after aggressively wringing out moist arm of the hoodie she handed it to him.

"And I owe you--"

"--You definitely do not owe me!--"

"--you wouldn't have gotten hurt if I hadn't dragged you two out there with me."

"--then you would have gone alone." Stiles rushed forward. "Right?"
"I could have just called the police," she suggested, feeling confused she internalized and looked away. When he didn't take the hoodie back right away she shook it at him.

"You want to call the police before you call me?" his voice raised, as he snatched it from her hands and yanked it on still half wet.

With her apology ruined she stammered "I'm supposed to call you first whenever I find a dead body?!"

"YES!" he shouted. When he clutched her shoulders, forgot the guilt from moments earlier. His doubts were made clearer with a bit of perspective.

Lydia didn't doubt his conviction, but considering how things played out she doubted his ability to keep safe despite his well-meaning. She shook her head and felt a stress headache coming on, and something more traitorous than having debris fall on her.

"No," she pushed off his hands and stepped around him unlocking the door with a turn of the doorknob.

"Yes," he pushed back in the lock.

"Stiles," she glared, "no!"

"Stiles, yes!" he pressed his body against the door.

She definitely sensed stress ahead, "it almost got you killed."

"So, you almost got killed, too and we're both still alive. See, teamwork." They were at a stand-still, but Lydia broke first, tearing her eyes away.

"I take that as a yes," Stiles ducked his head to see her bite her lip to keep from grinning, with that he suddenly felt a burden lifted.

She righted herself and took in a deep breath, "whatever it takes to get you to stop that man from banging down the other side of the bathroom door."

Stiles grinned and held the door open to lead them out. Lydia crossed her arms and led the way at a steady stride, equally amused as exasperated. The man watching them leave, however, held none of their sentiment but quite a lot of judge-y judgment.

Track 03 - Under The Tide by CHVRCHES

While Allison and Scott slid into the booth across from each other Stiles disappeared to the bathroom. They could have sat beside each other and held hands but they wanted to drink up the sight of one another.

"You look like a mess," she smiled a smile that meant 'you're mine' and gave no warning when she reached across and pushed his hair back from his forehead.

"You look amazing," Scott grinned, pleased to be under her exclusive attention. The last time he had seen her at the school she had been stolen away by her family without so much as a goodbye.
Awkward or otherwise.

Now it was her turn to stare. She tilted her head and squinted her eyes her silent accusation of lying but she half stood and leaned over the table to kiss him instead.

"I was so scared," she whispered still bent across the table. Playfulness aside, she cupped his face as though they needed even more seclusion then their private booth supplied.

"I wasn't," he pressed his forehead to hers, he smirked cockily "I knew you would come for me."

Her eyes narrowed further as if she were trying to examine straight through his words into his soul to see the realness of it. She pressed her lips together and lifted one brow, "Scott, are we going to have houses fall on us again?"

"No, ma'am," the cockiness of his smile went away replaced by a playfulness.

"And we're not going to drown ourselves in poison again either?" she said with more authority and pressed their head together for emphasis.

"No, ma'am," he answered and she kissed his forehead at that.

"Find another seat, sweetheart" and Lydia gave no warning when she returned from the bathroom and pushed Scott to move over so that she could sit across from Allison. She looked a little better, with her hair combed, her face washed and her eyes bright with amusement as she challenged Scott to move

Slipping in on the opposite side of the booth, Stiles returned from the bathroom without blood on the side of his face, his hair moist from a quick water run through to dust it out but his right arm trembled from slow healing.

Allison smiled at the act of Scott being sandwiched by Stiles and Lydia. Lydia reached over the table for Allison's hand to note both the archery glove she still wore but the rope burns that developed. She tsked and rubbed them gently to soothe, ignoring the markings of lights bruising on along her own wrists. Allison smiled and let Lydia's nervous tick continue.

However Scott put his hand on Stiles good shoulder and insisted Stiles take his denim jacket. Stiles' face coloroed a little at the offer but he waved him off.

"Seriously man, you're soaking and I wouldn't want you to puke or something," Scott already shifted out of its sleeves when suddenly it seemed Stiles remembered his aversion to blood. They scrambled out of the opposite side of the booth and after several efforts Scott managed to help Stiles to put his arms through the sleeves. Allison watched and tried not to laugh as the boys nearly spun out and toppled over, twice. Lydia simply rolled her eyes.

Track 04 - Future Starts Slow by The Kills

When Isaac entered moments later after having parked the KingQuad ATV, the sound of him knocking back the diner door announced an end to their nesting easiness.

"We need to talk while she's on the phone," he announced upon sitting. He had marched toward them and dropped into the space across from Stiles and next to Allison, but left an awkward
cavernous gap of 14 inches between them.

Allison looked discomforted more than most, since it seemed despite having helped rescue her friends her Aunt Kate had become the target of derision.

"How did you end up at the Hale House?" Isaac asked of Stiles.

"Lydia," Scott answered. Lydia nodded in confirmation.

Isaac took a deep breath "did you, you know?" She stared at him in confusion and he opened his mouth in awkward vowel-like gestures.

"You can say scream," Stiles gestured across at him toward Lydia, as if the connection could possibly be made, "the word isn't taboo."

"It's just I didn't hear her this time," he snapped at Stiles.

"Do you hear it every time?" Lydia asked.

"Yes," Scott answered.

"I think so," Isaac answered.

"It was earlier this afternoon," Lydia recounted "while you guys were in detention."

"Ohhh," both Isaac and Scott said in unison. Allison and Stiles took a second long look.

"What?" Lydia demanded, feeling annoyed to be left out.

"I was knocked out by a bookcase," Isaac explained.

"I think I may have had a concussion," Scott theorized.

"I wish I heard it," Stiles tacked on.

"Mr. Harris took all of our cell phones. I'm so sorry Lydia." Allison squeezed Lydia's hands as a show of apology. Lydia shrugged. In the grand scheme of things, hearing her scream hadn't really mattered if they weren't able to help anyone.

"Why are we trying to hide what we say from Allison's Aunt?" she finally asked.

"She says she might know things." Isaac's voice faltered as he struggled to perfectly phrase his next sentence.

"Things about your Alpha, Derek Hale," explained Allison, evading his attempt to sidestep her feelings.

Isaac nodded, fiddling with his hands under the table and while his posture stiffened. Stiles processed this information and his stance took a false calm, he sat back in his seat and stretched his arms out onto the table.

"W-why would she know that?" Scott wondered aloud.

"She was brought in as an expert." Allison shrugged. She looked around the table, her dark eyes were determined and her expression was open and honest. "I don't know what makes her an expert but they wouldn't have brought her in if they weren't absolutely sure she knows what she's talking
"So she knew Derek but we're lucky. She didn't know we were part of his pack," Isaac looked to Stiles. There was a flash of relief in their eyes but it was short lived.

Kate arrived and she didn't take a place in the booth instead she dragged over a chair toward the head beside Allison, taking control of the table. On the open and opposite end, Stiles and Isaac looked ready to bolt at any moment. They occasionally shared intense 'Maybe we should get the fuck out of here' stares. An awkward silence remained until the waitress laid out cups and dropped a coffee pot on center of the table between them.

"Alright guys," Kate cleared her throat, "caffeine up. It's already late so our catching up needs to be done a lot faster."

Track 05 - She's Not There (Zombies Cover) by Nick Cave and Neko Case

Despite the tense atmosphere Lydia wouldn't let it control her and she insisted on serving everyone. She took their cups, filled them to the brim, she nagged about the amount of sugar intake and forced them to pass the cups along. They muttered amongst themselves almost ignoring Kate entirely.

"Isaac?" Kate interrupted and jerked her chin across the table "is that Stiles?" Isaac nodded tersely, he felt like he had given up some government secret. "Good," she conceded, "I'm glad you found each other. And you're Scott?"

"Yes Ma'am Kate," Scott mumbled on the intake of one short breath.

"It's nice to see you can manage to keep a shirt in one piece," Kate grinned over the lip of her cup eyeing Scott from top to bottom.

Allison's cup clattered to the table "Aunt Kate!"

"And you're Lydia, I've noticed you."

"Have you?" she replied and hid her nervousness behind her slow sips.

"A lot," Kate teased, "on my niece's Instagram," and she added in a lighter tone, "I've seen you make her happy. I've also noticed you insulated her wardrobe."

"You're welcome," Lydia grinned openly. Allison groaned and hid her head behind her hands. Stiles and Isaac tried and failed not to grin to different measures of amusement. For Isaac in a level of bemused empathy. For Stiles because of outright bliss.

"You know, I can't always be there for her," Kate said sincerely, "I was trying to thank you."

"You're embarrassing me," Allison mumbled.

"Well," Kate said thoughtfully, took a long sip of coffee and rotated the cup in her hands "no more embarrassing than finding you playing 'finger my keystrokes' with one Werewolf boyfriend in your parent's room in the morning, to hiding another one in your bedroom the same night."

The table turned still enough that you could hear a pin drop.
Allison slowly turned to face 5 very attentive faces, "that is not what it sounds like." When she looked desperately toward Isaac for help all eyes zipped toward him.

"You were in her bedroom?" Scott asked Isaac, "Why were you in her bedroom?"

"Isaac is not my boyfriend!" Allison snapped at Kate.

Isaac began to babble. "There's a perfectly logical excuse... that I happen to not be able to think of at the moment. Did I say excuse? I meant reason. I meant reasons."

"Bro, what the hell?" Stiles squinted at Isaac.

"Yes, Allison." Lydia said calmly, "That makes it sound so much better. I hid a 'not boyfriend, but totally hot Werewolf guy' in the private bedroom of a Hunter's daughter because..."

"Oh!" Allison deflated.

"I didn't want to leave her alone!" Isaac shouted, and everyone turned to stare at him. "I mean, after what happened at the school we should not have been alone, Lydia was with them and she practically told me to! With the text and she's my--"

"I'm your what?" Lydia said icily.

"You're my friend and I trust your advice," Isaac paused and shook his head in defeat. "You were worried when Allison hadn't responded to your texts. I knew you'd want to know for certain she was okay. Ok?"

"He did actually give me text updates," Lydia smirked. "They were charming actually. A little obsessed but charming. You guys should really loosen up. Okay."

"Okay?" Isaac declared to the whole table.

"OK!" amused, Kate finally dropped back onto her seat without knowing she had edged forward into a defensive stance with every raised tone of voice.

"Thanks man." Scott said low toward Stiles, "for not leaving me alone. After the whole library thing."

"What--really?" Stiles answered back, his expression was mocking.

"Yeah," smirked Scott and he leaned into Stiles good arm. They jostled back and forth.

"You spilled it on my clothes," Lydia yelled after her coffee got knocked onto good portion of her dress, the one thing not entirely stained by smoke or debris. "I could kill you, I could murder you both!"

"Oh Lydia," Allison pet her hand sympathetically, "or later we just finish burning the whole outfit. Save the friendship?"

"This is a beautiful thing we have going on here," Kate interrupted, her voice steadier and more commanding. "I wonder how Jackson fits into your group dynamic?"

Track 06 - D is For Dangerous by Arctic Monkeys
Their banter stopped like a grenade had been dropped in the center of the diner.

"Your teacher, Mr. Harris, said," Kate continued after clearing her throat, "that while you were all at detention in the library and during the locker room incident he was in attendance. None of you have checked in on him?"

Crickets. Rather in contrast to the sound of crickets the boys had their hyper-senses had slowly begun to return to them and they could hear the heart beating speed up of Lydia in panic, whereas Allison in apprehension. Isaac's oozed uneasiness while Stiles remained the same because he expected Kate to try a play for power but Scott's worry radiated.

"Well, 4 hours afterward he was found in the center of the town's power outage, fried with enough kilowatts to put our town out for a couple of days. Fortunately he's only half dead."

"Is he-?" Lydia stared at Kate while blindly, she reached across the table to retake Allison's hand. She was met halfway with her archer gloved grip and the table waited for an answer to Lydia's unfinished question.

"Is he what?" Kate half-turned to face her. "Is he OK?"

Lydia shook her head, "changed?" Allison pressed her hands firmly into her friends as she observed the nearness between Kate and Lydia, the tactical advantage in interrogation.

"So," Kate pets Lydia's arm, and smiled in a sincere gesture, "we have a confirmed Kanima sighting then?"

"Yes," Allison nodded and Lydia didn't have to answer anymore.

"Kanima?" Scott had wanted to know more about Jackson but in all truth was unsure of how to bring it up. Allison's Hunter status was still a very new and touchy subject amongst them.

"Kind of like a lizard," Isaac recounted, "venomous claws, double row of fangs, scales and a tail."

"Lizard-ish." Stiles expanded, "there is a beta form. That one is less... lizard."

"--and how long have we known?" Kate kept her attention squarely on Allison, judgment tainted her tone.

"Confirmed, 2 maybe 3 days but I've suspected for longer," confirmed Allison.

Lydia gasped her name, pulled her hand away and stared in disbelief. There were secrets and then there were 'secrets'. "--but he can't control himself anymore," Lydia recited from the bestiary what she learned in defense of Jackson, "Someone is doing this to him. Someone can control all of--"

Kate calmly placed a hand back on Lydia's shoulder "--I know how a Kanima works honey. I wasn't blaming any of the deaths on him. In fact I think electrocuting himself saved someone else's life tonight."

The table became stunned, not in a silence exactly, as someone swore to themselves and someone else bashed their knee on the table when they squirmed in their seat in surprise.

"It did," Kate emphasized, "but it obviously hasn't gone unnoticed. If he wasn't under the control of
"Offense! Offense taken," Stiles shot forward in his seat.

Kate continued undeterred, "--then pretty soon whoever is using him as their pawn is going to notice he isn't where he's supposed to be?"

"Jackson can be a bully--" aggravated, Scott leaned forward onto his elbows and spoke clearly to everyone.

"--an utter asshole," Isaac added.

"--a selfish lay," Lydia offered.

Mildly confused but undeterred, Scott continued "right all that, but he's our... that. No one should get to use him against his free will like this."

"You were really struggling there, man." Smirking Stiles clapped him on the back.

Scott hung his head low, and glanced toward Stiles, "Yea, I really was." He returned his attention toward the whole group, "It's just Jackson is really kind of a jerk but he's also just like us. High School sucks, and then this happened to us. We're supposed to be changing but it's supposed to be our choice."

"Yes, you are teens," sighed Kate. "Plus you are this, the result of being raised as a Hunter, being raised as a part of pack, being raised sheltered and because of that the benefit of being immune and unaligned." A thoughtful pause settled.

Isaac finished his coffee and dropped his cup with a smack. He broke the silence with his straightforwardness, "Not to interrupt your monologue, but you sure know a lot about us," he handed over her keys to the ATV, "aside from you're god's gift to body armor we don't know shit about you."

"Thank you," Kate grinned and reached for the keys.

When their hands clasped his claws extended and he kept their hold, "you owe me a story."

There had been many awkward silences throughout the night but none so malicious; Allison had her knife pulled from her holster without giving it thought. Stiles leaned forward, his grip on the table enough to mark the wood. Scott's eyes lightened but didn't change color; he put a hand over Stiles' and clenched a fist to keep any claws from either extending or being seen. All while Kate's smile extended to observe it all especially Isaac; she had noticed his slowly healing rope burns, discolored from poison that seeped through open cuts. She gauged he would hardly be what she would consider a threat. Lydia had a hand over her mouth and watched wide-eyed while everyone glared in confusion.

"Yeah, I do." Kate didn't skip a beat. She moved her right hand to pinch a pressure point on Isaac's wrist and force his claws to retract. She sat back, pocketed her keys and sipped her coffee with ease although her heart rate changed minutely. She resettled herself to before speaking, her voice wasn't as hard as before but it wasn't exactly tender. It was didactic.

Track 07 - The Way You Are by 46Bliss
"The story is about another idiot teenager, 16-year old Derek of the venerable Hale pack. This is about the 1st hunt I had as an acolyte, the 1st love of my life, the reason I defected from the main line of Argent's and reason why my brother Chris and I only hunt and kill supernatural treaty breakers. And the only reason I have ever, would ever come back to the hallowed grounds of Beacon Hills.

Argents are raised to be strong, our sons are trained to be soldiers; our daughters, to be leaders. Beacon Hills wasn't always the calm, friendly town you kids grew up in. My family had a faction here once. It used to be a real Beacon for monsters that bumped uglies in the night. But Werewolves, they're gate keepers, they're guardians. And 16 years ago someone broke the boundaries of peace and the packs were dedicated to resolving it amongst themselves.

As Hunters, it piqued our interest but it didn't mean we had to get involved. Personally I didn't know where I stood. Chris was excited to be placed in field work, to track and investigate but I wanted to be a normal teenager. I begged to be enrolled into the local high school. And I was used to getting my way.

Of course I was a tomboy. By practice I registered under a different name than Argent and joined every team that would have me. I didn't expect to find a Werewolf there but Derek was egotistical, not smart enough to be subtle or hide his tracks. I understood what it was to not want to be homeschooled by freaks and to just want to be normal, so I didn't rock the boat. I didn't report him to my family. But I didn't stop observing him either.

Then a girl in the school named Paige turned up dead.

Track 08 - Master Hunter by Laura Marling

Paige's neck had been snapped but she showed obvious lycanthrope infection. Afterward Derek's behavior at school changed and then he dropped out of public school altogether. Derek wasn't an Alpha then, he couldn't have infected her but he acted like a guilty man.

Every Hunter instinct felt I needed to investigate. Even if Derek had committed some mercy killing, which he had, I felt if I reported him earlier she would have been spared.

Finding out the culprit responsible for her original attack would be next to impossible. Beacon Hills still had so many clans here. Old ones; Kali, Pelt, Deucalion and new ones Ennis, Satori, around and so my Father Gerard lashed out and declared war on a weaker clan.

Chris and I were still pretty green and Gerard didn't want us involved. He thought keeping us at arm's length would make us more pliable. At the time we thought it meant our Father's 'concern' meant he thought we were soft, he thought we couldn't handle it. We misunderstood. He was managing us, he had plans for us. We misunderstood a lot of things. We thought war was breaking out because of Derek, not because my Father is a psychopath using old world bullshit to hide his play for power.

So we decided to evade my Father entirely and go straight to the source. We went to Derek. We went into the woods to visit the Hale House. We observed them but they were normal. A mother, sisters, brothers, uncles, aunts, cousins. Derek barely left the home, he never left the
grounds and went through a massive sullen phase. It was... it was really hot.

I visited, a lot under the guise of a home tutor. They had a handful of in rotation and it wasn't uncommon to have people coming and going. Chris easily set up some special surveillance. They never knew we were Argents. His siblings were kind of nice, his older sister Laura sincerely befriended us and I ended up really comforting Derek, and their Mom was really... Talia was really great. But his Uncle was a sociopathic creep. He was as bad as Gerard. I realized that too late.

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**Track 09 - So Far From Your Weapon by Dead Weather**

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Maybe he just felt possessive and territorial, maybe he found some of our surveillance I don't know, but one of Derek's uncles realized Chris was a Hunter and tried to hurt him. No, he tried to murder him. Within the agreements of Hunters and Werewolves it's very *Look But Don't Touch.* We hadn't broken any laws. We were investigating that was all. And he was trying to take my brother's head off. Derek misunderstood and over-reacted, his Uncle Peter taught him Hunter meant killer and our investigation made us spies.

It happened fast. Mentioning Paige had only been the beginning of a long line of our reasoning for being there. Of my wanting to be there. Chris and Derek fought for a while but it wasn't something detrimental, it was under control. It was under our control until it suddenly wasn't. A fire broke out. I did start the fire but it was aimed at his Uncle. He manipulated the 3 of us but I finally got him away trapping him in the unused wine cellar. There was no way of knowing he had something rigged up in there until it went up like fireworks, taking him and the 3 Hale cousins that were locked away.

Laura, she was the first to go into the fire to get people out but then she didn't come out. I know her death wasn't my fault but I was instrumental in orchestrating it. That I can never forgive myself for and I know Derek can't either. She had been able to get some people out of the fire, a scattered few. By that I think you know I do mean scattered. There are still Hales wandering around without a pack.

Whatever it was that Peter meant to do, to gain leverage over Talia or to just cause chaos I'm not sure exactly how or for what. When he went, he took not only the people but the home, the history and all their secrets. I guess in a way he won.

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**Track 10 - Glory and Gore by Lorde**

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And me? When Chris and I escaped our family was right there. They said I was a hero.

I told my father I loved Derek and begged him to let him go, not to hunt him; to let him live. My Father covered my confession up.

Whatever disturbance was going on in Beacon Hills was somehow burnt away with the Hale House. I don't know what else our family did to end the war but it must have been worse than burning children alive.

Chris and I defected though; we made it public that we couldn't abide killing children and burning
them alive. Oh, but they 'hero-worshipped' it. We made agreements to uphold treaties that supernaturals made, to settle them if they were broken (however possible) and, unlike our forefathers, we will broker new ones.

A while later, I did eventually find Derek. I'd tracked the few of surviving pack members, while he had been searching for younger siblings. But we all know the only way a pack is its strongest with numbers and a treaty needed to be brokered.

The Hale clan needed to rebuild somehow but he had to agree they wouldn't attack people. There are ways to make wolves; births, choice, steal. As long as he didn't steal his strength from people like his Uncle had then we never had to see each other again. And I never heard from the Hale pack again, until yesterday."

Chapter End Notes

CREDITS/ROLL CALL:

Argents - Team1; headed by Victoria, Chris & Allison.
- Rumy - [Sergeant] specialized in Recon; Special Forces and espionage. Chris' right hand man and Allison's godfather.
- Axel - [1st Lieutenant] expert tracker, marksman and Allison's 2nd cousin.
- Bennett - [Field Officer] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old and friend to Allison.
- Leveque - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Terrain-Orientation. Mechanics, driving countermeasures the means to mobilize heavy firepower to engage opposing forces including other combat vehicles.
- Ulrich - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation.

Argents - Team2; headed by Kate.
- Livy - [1st Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Force-Orientation, R.I.F. and close-combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's right-hand man.
- Tyhurst - [Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation, Cyberwarefare, has CIA background and is ranked with state detective credentials. Referred to as 'try-hard.'
- Norm - [Sergeant] specialty in Medical Intelligence and as a Longbowman; an archer who uses the longbow, w/ various arrowheads. He' JR's brother and Roman's Uncle.
- Roman - [Field Officer] specialty as a Marksman/Sharpshooter, 19yrs. old and a weapons expert skilled in precision shooting. He's JR's son and Norm's Nephew.
- Fry - [Field Officer] specialty as a Tactician is and general officer, while his marksmanship is low he is still in high regard for his brain.

Argents - Team3; headed by Gerard.

Hale (Present Day) Pack; Derek Alpha
- Isaac - [Omega] abandoned Werewolf in search of a pack.
- Stiles - [Omega] also abandoned, in search of any existing pack members.
Hale (Heyday) Pack; Talia Alpha
• Peter - [Beta] Talia's brother, Uncle to Derek, Laura and Cora.
• Laura (age 17) - [Beta] was last seen struggling between trying to pull survivors from the fire and defending her mother, Talia from her Uncle Peter's attacks.
• Derek (age 15) - [Beta] was pulled from the flames by his sister Laura and ushered to safety by their emissary… until the Treaty was made.

? Other:?
• Jackson - [?] ...
• Kira - [?] ...
• Lydia - [Banshee] 'A Banshee screams preceding a supernatural death not as a premonition but to highlight the likelihood of supernatural events that result in deaths.'

*chapter 8

Twins' Pack; Aiden and Ethan Carver Alphas
• Marta - [Beta] she's an older motor head and their 1st Lieutenant.
• Bridy - [Beta] the packs' spy because she's diminutive and easily underestimated.
• Gus - [Beta] referred to as psychotic now and again, but his very few (and dwindling) close friends' are his touchstone.
• (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, bi and partnered to Naylor, formerly to Bozeman.
• (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
• (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
• (deceased) Coot - [Omega] former Beta, killed by the Monster.

Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha
• (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed 1st Lieutenant, possibly romantically entangled.
• Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali and closely bonded to Huntington.
• Santos - [Beta] while loyal to Kali has mentored many, without regard to packs. He helped the Twins first learn to shift together without losing their identities.
• Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed and with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
• Levi - [Beta] he's neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
• Huntington - [Beta] has strong empathic senses, is very good friends with Gus' from Twins' pack and Lark.

Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha
• Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' Lieutenant, --from wiped out Shapeshifter dynasty.
• Dr. Kane - [Beta] both a medical Doctor and their torturer.
• Quint - [Beta] eager to please teen and Dr. Kane's biological son.

Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha
• Søren - [Beta] 1st Lieutenant, Danish man of even temperament and a skilled negotiator until his temper is peaked.
• Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
were (you) told

Chapter Summary

They continue on throughout the night at the 24-hour diner on the edge of town recovery from the Hale House, the rescued and the rescuers trade off stories. What was meant to clarify circumstances that only led to more upset. Isaac gives over the owed back-story to Kate but in an act of deflection he over shares and tells the story of his pack members, while Stiles confesses what really had him choose to become a Werewolf.

• Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/12-were-you-told

Chapter Notes

Previously on were (you);
• Settled in a Diner on the far side of town the friends recover from the night's events only to have Isaac remind they should be on their guard; because Kate would come in second later to interrogate.
• As per their agreement, with the safe passage of friends through a pseudo warzone and intel, Kate offered up her back-story with Derek (in exchange for Isaac's back-story with Derek which he had yet to offer up.)
• Kate shares a story of 16-years old Kate Argent and Derek Hale, the death/murder of a student that left Derek in hiding and an internal upheaval that lead inadvertently to the Hale House fire. While her story gave perspective it also gave more questions than answers. It offered more deflection than resolution.
• It's confirmed that Beacon Hills has been a long time home for the abnormal but will it return to the tepid norm or break into a war with an epitaph worse than that of children burnt alive?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Track 01 - Staring At the Sun by TV on the Radio

{Thursday; Late Evening - Friday; Early Morning}

The coffee pot had finished and Kate finished her account of her history with the Hale Family, with Derek in particular and she casually waved over the waitress.

Isaac leaned forward onto his elbows as his face colored in frustration while Stiles stared at her, boggled eyed with his hands were curled into fists. Their shared instinct to run became something more of a shared impulse to break something. Hearing about their pack in the past tense, in the
context that a stranger had such influence and spoke with such flippancy, yes, it was her story but had become their up-bringing.

"Why did they bring you here?" asked Stiles in a tone just short of a demand. "If you're supposed to be some sort of expert, what are you an expert of?"

"Stiles," Scott said carefully, "I think you know why."

Stiles turned slowly toward Scott and both Lydia and Scott looked at him with different expressions of concern.

"I don't think you want her to say it," Lydia's face warned with a brow raised.

After a pause Stiles groaned and shook the mental pictures out of his head "I mean, what are you supposed to do now that you're here?"

The waitress came over. This time around she hovered and refilled each cup. She asked if anyone wanted water or if they wanted to put in an order. When she seemed confident her job was performed to the fullest she excused herself once more. Afterward Allison blew out air as if she had been holding her lung full from deep sea diving. She looked toward her Aunt Kate with a mixture of admiration and utter annoyance. Kate could always keep a room in attention and was a boss at interrogation but the tension was likely to give her an ulcer if the excessive coffee didn't. So she served herself another cup.

"May I ask a question," Kate eyed Isaac while she refilled her own cup. She had picked him off as the weakest link early on and her phrase was hardly a question from the glare she gave or her tone of voice, "since I've been nice enough to answer so many of yours? Why were your friends at the Hale House tonight?"

It told her the position of power the range of glances that sped around the table; in a matter of milliseconds she saw a few eyes roll to Stiles and then to plant firmly onto Scott despite his red-faced blank look.

"It was a dare," Lydia explained and when she spoke her exasperation read honestly, "everyone growing up in Beacon Hill's grew up afraid of the Hale House. We were just killing time afterschool playing Truth or Dare and Stiles dared me. Guess I should have picked Truth."

"Yeah," Scott piped up quickly, "our games can get out of hand sometimes. Stiles normally wins but I guess this time technically you do," Scott gave her a gentle half hug; partly in thanks and partly to embolden her with confidence.

"No way," Stiles added, "I dared her to go into the Hale House. Not blow it up." The glares directed toward him could be easily interpreted as genuine. From Scott straight around to Isaac's face read disbelief to disgust, "What? My record stands is all I'm saying."

Kate listed off her familiarity with each of their predicaments, from how each were raised to their unaligned state but she hadn't identified what Lydia was. And if they were leery about Kate knowing their pack's details than she certainly didn't want Kate to know about her, about being a Banshee. Not before she knew what being a Banshee meant. If a little bit of privacy meant she could be a better asset, then she would hold onto it for as long as she could. They were hemorrhaging secrets as it was.

"But the Hale House at this time of night?" Kate seemed unconvinced.

"Why not?" Scott pointed out in a tone soft, subdued "we used to always sneak behind our parents'
backs and do this sort of thing all the time. We didn't plan for a blackout. We didn't plan for the house burning or, you know anything."

"Anything?"

Suddenly Scott remembered he really wanted coffee badly. He wanted it despite there not being a lick of sugar in it and it being black as sin, he took a deep sip to think clearly and realized he had said as much as he wanted to say. Lydia hadn't mentioned her ability. Aside from the explosion they hadn't mentioned the markings on the door, the powder locking them off the property. If those facts hadn't come up he certainly wasn't going to bring up the dead body.

"You," Scott gulped down his mouthful of tar, "we hadn't planned on meeting you."

After a thoughtful pause Kate laughed, "You are a charmer!" she leaned over, "I could just eat you up," she pinched Scott's cheek and slid back into her chair. Lydia pressed herself into the bench to keep from getting crushed.

Scott chuckled nervously and touched his cheek where her hand had been, "please don't."

Lydia groaned quietly to herself and readjusted herself loudly. Diagonally across the table she caught Isaac's eye, he shrugged in shared sentiment, and they were lost in a rectangle full of tension absorbing sponges with no saturation point, with no actual point and therefore no foreseeable escape. He made a glance toward the rear exit as the busboy dragged out garbage bags. She smirked at the suggestion to escape and remembered why she kept him around.

However unlikely it was Allison that was the first to bring the topic to ground; she was thoughtful and soft-spoken but in no way subtle. "But how was Derek able to sire Werewolves if he wasn't an Alpha?"

Isaac's expression darkened. He wished he had followed his impulse and done a runner 60 seconds earlier.

Kate sighed heavily, her smirk disappeared and she looked older when she turned thoughtful. Not to be confused with looked old. Only that conniving took its toll.

"To answer your earlier question, Stiles, that is what I came to find out," she leaned forward and eyed the boys intently.

"You're here to investigate the treaty," Allison said low in realization.

"Stiles wasn't born a Werewolf," Lydia stared at Stiles while she thought about it, "Derek broke his treaty." She whipped around to look at Kate, there nearness wasn't as intimidating suddenly, not when it put her friends at risk and she stood in the way, "what does that mean for what's left of the Hale pack?"

"Traditionally, we would end the pack," said Kate, her eyes were humorless and dark, her term was delicately menacing. "Obviously, you boys are lucky I'm not a traditionalist," she winked at Isaac in an attempt to break the tension. Whatever rapport they had, whatever agreement they arranged had become strained. "Listen, it's all circumstantial."

"That's wrong!" Scott sat forward. Like Lydia, he had subconsciously put his body between Kate and Stiles'. "That's just wrong. You can't just make Stiles and Isaac pay for what Derek--"

"Derek didn't do anything," Isaac didn't yell but his voice was heated enough it brought the attention of a few Diner patrons.
"--you think," Stiles started in a barely controlled low. Scott twisted around in surprise to find Stiles a few scant inches from his face, "because someone else stuck by me while I grew up who wasn't you he had to be the bad guy?"

"-I didn't-- I just," stammering Scott shook his head but didn't have a cup of coffee to hide behind and find his words.

Stiles sensed Scott's confusion compounded into fear, painted over with warmth that only his best-friend was capable of mustering up. Who else could make a hug of a panic attack? For one more moment Stiles needed to trust in that.

"I was dying, Scott," Stiles said truthfully.

Track 02 - Hysterical Strength by St. Vincent

The room swayed as if she were underwater, so she gripped the vinyl of the booth's seat. Lydia had practiced the thought of Stiles' death but it never suited her. Hearing his voice enunciate the words felt like physical illness. She bit her lip to keep her sickness in check, her face hardened as she armed herself.

However Scott felt nothing, his hands dropped leaden beside him onto the bench. Thoughts of death flashed through his mind, from television shows to the photos Allison showed him, the corpse in the ground; they were all disconnected things from him and he could process them. Stiles was his Brother, snatched out from the jaws of death once and the thought of losing him he could not process. Something in him went numb, instead his expression opened entirely, eyes tender and brows knit in focus and dismay.

Stiles' heart broke to watch them; he considered how much it drove him nuts when he thought of Scott abandoned and going through his first transitions of the full moon after the bite with no one to help him understand. He kept clear in mind, for all his good intentions, the look of hurt on Lydia's face when he sent her away from the Sheriff's station because he wasn't certain he could keep his lies straight. Heartache was the business of being a best-friend and for him the table was empty except for them 3.

"After our car went over the edge," Stiles continued, his eyes danced intently between them. He willed for them not to panic, "I thought it was the window but a piece of metal from the door cut into my side. It got caught in a rib. Would it have killed me, I don't know. I just know, when I tried to get loose, the car shook."

Lydia's breath quickened, she sucked her lower lip in and gnawed on it as if to slow her intake.

"--and when that thought hit me, and I tried not to laugh--" Stiles chuckled nervously and wiped at his face, he stared full-face at Scott. "I know you saw it in my face too. You saw me try not to laugh." They shared a grin of acknowledgement. "I thought 'how pissed off would they be if they pull me half way out of this car and I faint on them.' I mean there was blood, am I right and a lot, I thought I pissed myself. I didn't want Lydia to think I pissed myself." The mirth drained from Stiles' face.

Scott gave a nod that he understood only as much as he could, because he had been there physically. Also because he had seen Stiles' face and could sometime glean his mind. But he
strained to understand the rest.

"Then I'm thinking, 'Right, my Mom's also dead,'" Stiles choked a little on the phrase, but he speared on. His conviction sped up his speech. "I'm a dumb-ass because I mean Mom's dead right there and all I can think about is, 'you don't want your bro to think you're a wussy who faints at the sight of blood and you don't-- you don't want Her to think you pissed yourself'. It became easier to be a dumb-ass and fall, right?"

Drawn in with each breath, Lydia moved closer which pressed her into Scott's side. In the gap of crushing cushions their hands caught against each other tucked and clasped in the shadow.

"Which is an easy thing to think until you're actually at the bottom of this, whatever when your head is ringing so loud and you want to vomit. Again, I mean vomit again. And I'm worried if my best-friends made it and even more worried about how to get away from the fact that there is now blood in with the vomit, 2 of the worse things in the world. Plus, dead Mom. So 3 worse things. Then this big, BIG god damn wolf, the one my Mom swerved around. So that's 4 worse things. And then there's Derek. So that's 5 worse things because he's this stranger with red eyes and growling really loud."

Stiles paused to take a breath. Then another to see if his friends had bolted from shock or outrage or something closer to rejection instead there were just the same 2 friends there, sitting patiently that had been waiting for him all along.

"Then I don't remember much," he sighed and slumped forward onto his elbows on the table. "But there was a whole lot highway because we were--"

"We were on our way to my Dad's," her voice sounded wistful and sorrowful. "Right, his Lake House," Stiles tilted his head to see her full on and Lydia smiled softly in encouragement for Stiles to continue. The smirk of his 'grown-up' Stiles' face reminded her of the now-ness, and she felt less lost in history and more grounded. "It's all the way up in the boonies. Never mind that doesn't matter."

"When things calmed down, it took a while for me to understand what he meant when Derek told me that I was dying. Because dying sucks and I had been doing it for what seemed like a lifetime. But what he meant was that I was 'about to be dead','" his hand no longer shook when he placed it on the table. He pressed it flat on the wood table for emphasis. Dead, flatline, the intensity in his eyes reminded as much.

"Dead was my Mom," he breathed deeply and let himself go to a dark place, "her head cracked quietly against the roof of the car and neck left at an angle like that. 'Dead' was her body dangling upside down, with her arms just hanging, swaying limp and crooked. You know, you saw it shouldn't have been like that."

"Yeah, I know," Scott sniffed. He wiped at his cheek.

"Now, that was dead. Because that was incomprehensible, even if I had gotten one last look at her before he pulled me out. That whole ride North she hummed to the radio and watched us through the rearview. Even though I couldn't see her I knew she had a smile on her face. I feel like at least once, while I was still in the wreck, I should have tried to look. If I had seen her face it would have been-- If it wouldn't have been smiling then that was dead and that scared the crap out of me. I would rather be a wussy that pissed himself than that. I begged him not to let me die. Then I saw
his eyes turn red and I wasn't afraid of anything after that."

The world came back into focus. The din of patrons called up their own recollections of food orders and dietary needs.

"There!" Stiles laughed with a false lightness and eased back into the bench. He flicked the not-so-empty cup in front of him hard enough for a chink to resound "Derek didn't break your treaty. Not with me. Not with Isaac. Not with any of us."

Track 03 - Running With Wolves by Cloud Cult

"How many are there with you?" careful to make her tone casual Kate asked Stiles directly, only Isaac responded first.

"Why?" he shifted closer to Allison so as to lean toward Kate, "So, you can hunt us all?"

"She needs to ask, Isaac," despite her title as Hunter, Allison was no stranger to playing the part of peace keeper. She put her hands on Isaac's shoulder and pushed him gently back.

"We had a deal," Kate reminded. "You don't tell. I have other ways of finding out."

In that respect, even knowing her Aunt was in the right, Allison wished she had found a less challenging way of phrasing it. The look Isaac gave her was a silent plea, to take his side while she kept her mild position, a physical barrier to their exchange.

"Venues I don't think any of us want to go down," Kate's passive aggression lent nothing to the calm."So I'm going to ask again, nicely, how many are in your pack?"

Allison's expression fell and she shook her head to confirm Kate's promise. Not that she knew it before tonight but the Argent Hunters were investigating the Hale pack, and that was a fact; Isaac had only a moment to decide whether they wanted to contribute or be dissected.

"Not as much as there was before," sighed Isaac as he settled back in his seat. Kate did not have a clear view of Allison's features and Allison couldn't have been more grateful. She wanted her Aunt to think of her as some firm manipulator as opposed to the secret collaborator wavering and worrying between them.

"That's not an answer," Kate snapped.

"I don't know the answer," Isaac took a cue from Allison and kept his cool, his shoulders back, his chin high and his tone low. And he gave no sign that it made his stomach mush to talk about these things aloud, when he shrugged and said "Truth is until Lydia found Stiles I'd thought he was a goner."

"Thanks for your faith there buddy," scoffed Stiles.

"Ever since weeks ago when someone grabbed Derek, we've been on the move. First we tried to track down who took him but then they started to take us out. First Cora, then Erica and then Boyd."

"When you say 'take us out,' do you mean they're being killed off, too?" asked Kate.
"You just do that?" Lydia commented in a low voice, she had a talent of keeping her bitterness just this side of the tipping point. She had begun to truly understand the depths of her friends mistrust with Kate Argent. She looked from Stiles' downcast expression over to Isaac in disappointment, "you just trade private details like that?"

After such an outpouring it didn't seem fair to look to Stiles to be a mouthpiece but despite his many talents Isaac wasn't used to being a man of words.

"They didn't actually kill anyone," Stiles continued despite Lydia's displeasure, with Scott's hand on his shoulder. "They abducted Derek on the road after they hijacked him but they took him alive," Stiles continued after a contemplative pause he added, "we know because they left Cora behind as a witness."

"It was just the 2 of them?" Kate sounded disbelieving, "The whole pack doesn't move together?"

"They don't exactly subscribe to the buddy system," answered Stiles, "Cora and Derek Hale answer to their own brooding call. Not that I'm judging natural born Werewolves, I am however judging Hales." He added light-heartedly to which both Kate and Isaac scoffed leaving the rest excluded from the sentiment. "Whenever something comes up that's Hale business then it isn't pack business. Like when they hear from someone," he paused to glare at Kate, "a member that's not Kansas City style BBQ'd they get cagey and take off. I wonder why that is?"

"Wouldn't it make more sense to move in numbers to protect an Omega if one contacted Derek to be brought in?" Allison asked, having become practiced at moving beyond Stiles' barbed comments but not Scott's most innocent and vacant stare.

"Strays," Isaac clarified impatiently, "she means a stray Werewolf, someone without a pack. And there's no way of knowing since we've never had a hint of the Hale history. Aside from Kate's story here we've never heard anything about Derek's past. Or a connection to Beacon Hills except for them saying 'Do Not Come Here'." Isaac referred to the elusive Derek and made a gesture toward Stiles.

"You told him not to come here?" Scott whipped around to face Stiles.

Stiles blinked owlishly and gulped as though he might have choked on air, "I didn't TELL him" he over enunciated in a guilty consciousness then added in the smallness of conviction "I may have agreed."

"Why would you agree to that?" Lydia reacted with rawness in her voice.

"Because what Derek always taught us is right," Stiles defended, although the more he spoke the worse he felt, "Family is weakness."

Scott and Lydia were startled into quiet for a moment and then burst into simultaneous bickering over one another.

Finally Kate placed her mug firmly on the table with enough force it made people several booths over settle down, "Children. Can we get on topic?"
"No," Lydia shuffled sidelong to get out of the booth, "Screw you. Screw your topic," she snapped the words directly in Kate's face while she struggled to her feet. She turned toward the table and tried to picture frame the people therein, how very important they were to her and how just over an hour ago she might have given her life for more than a few of them. "Bunch of monsters, just--you're all just a bunch of monsters. I've had enough." Her hands trembled furiously as she grabbed around in her pockets in search of her cell.

The act itself of calling a Werewolf a 'monster' isn't textbook bigotry because there isn't a textbook to speak of but it had an impact every time, in the part of them that questions their humanity with each decision they ever made. Isaac and Stiles sat contrite thinking of how they had compromised of bits and pieces of their families to get where they were tonight, which effectively was nowhere good at all. On hearing the panicked tremor of her heart, Scott reached to steady her hand only she stepped or rather stumbled from his reach.

"Don't," her voice rose, "I'm going to the hospital to be with Jackson, who, from what I've heard, is the only one tonight not acting like an animal."

Not wholly unfamiliar the earth virtually shook when Lydia exited leaving everyone equally chastised in her wake. But Allison, she would never abandon her best-friend to despair so without asking to be excused, she left the table of intimidated hyper-sensitive adolescent boys with her power hungry Hunter of an Aunt. Nothing could possibly go wrong.

Track 05 - Fangs by Little Red Lung

Truck drivers nearly twice her size stood back at the sound of the swinging doors smacking open with the force of her fury. Lydia marched out of the Diner off the curb through puddles ignoring her outfit and her ruined look. A moment before she could fling her useless iPhone into the dark of the parking lot Allison offered hers up as a working substitute.

"Thanks," Lydia muttered when she could recover the use of words connected to sentiment connected to thought. She couldn't reach her Mom so she left a message instead and insisted she call back a.s.a.p.

"It's just water damage," Allison looked over the non-working cell phone "it should clear up in a little bit on its own." She handed it back to Lydia, who thanked her and proceeded to sulk.

"Just try not to flag down a ride with a trucker. Not that I don't doubt you couldn't get the keys of the biggest burliest guy here," Allison smiled staring up at the sky, ensuring not to make eye-contact and enrage the beast. "It's just with the traffic in town you're probably not going to get far."

Lydia didn't laugh but she did smile mildly at Allison's obvious and floundering attempt at flattery.

The phone rang and Lydia practically ate it because she had it at her mouth so fast. Lydia started with the excuses but the moment she gave a location her Mom cut her off and assured she was on her way.

"Mom, I need you. Come get me at the 24 hours Diner off the 101. Please, right away. Please," Lydia didn't whine but her tone had a timbre to it that was rare and vulnerable-- then she stepped off the curb and began to whisper so that Allison couldn't hear. Her body-language cut her off when Allison knew what Lydia needed most was to be assured things could still be held together.
She wished Lydia would let her go over and hug her if anything but she sensed she was still too angry for that.

"Alright. Alright. Okay, I love you," the call disconnected but Lydia still held the phone to the side of her face. After a deep breath she strained her stance and returned the phone.

"I'm sorry," Allison commiserated.

"Sorry?" Lydia's brow furrowed. "My Mom is on her way."

"But the roads," Allison misinterpreted her friend's disappointment.

"Don't ever underestimate the determination of a Martin woman," answered Lydia with a cheeky tilt to her head. "My Mom should be 5 minutes, she's coming down from Fairvale," Lydia looked smug, mostly tired and because of that a little bit false. She still emanated upset and Allison watched on with concern in her eyes, until the rest of Lydia's explanation solidified. "I don't know why she's up there-- Now she's keeping secrets too. There is already too much weird. I don't want to have to deal with this, whatever it is."

"That's alright," Allison said lightly and ran her hand along Lydia's arm to assure her. "I think I can help a little." Allison offered an easier solution; she walked over to the all-terrain bike and brought back an attachment siren light. "Just smack it on the roof of your Mom's car and you should have no problems getting to the hospital and getting some answers on how Jackson is."

When Lydia thanked her she tried not to smile but the idea of people making a pathway for her was something of a dream come true.

"I'm probably going to run into Scott's Mom or Stiles' Dad at the hospital. If I do I'll tell them they're fine. Still stuck out of bounds at study group," she shoved hair from her eyes and behind her ear and pretended keeping up their appearance was just as irritable as the wind and not factually a good-deed. "But I'm not going back in and waiting with the rest of them," Lydia hefted the light in her left hand and clutched her ruined coat closed with the other. She had asked Allison to keep an eye on her and look for signs of instability. There was a sign of such fortitude Allison would need to helm an army of Werewolves to tear down Lydia's resolve.

"No, of course not," she wondered if her face conveyed the compassion she felt but how does one smile enough to say 'sorry, blowing up wasn't enough to show your bros exactly how much you care.'

"I can't. I don't belong in there," her voice hardened.

"I get it," she nodded.

"But you do?" For a moment she looked frightened, not confused but frightened. Throughout every opportunity she had, she warned them 'things were going to get worse' but would they listen.

"I guess I do."

Track 06 - Run Boy Run by Woodkid

When Allison retook her seat she quietly listened to her Aunt on the SAT phone. Kate picked up
and made her voice sound as casual as possible. She reassured her brother Chris she had Allison and they were finishing rounds, inspecting the fire at the Hale property. When Chris offered to send more help, Kate dissuaded him saying the fire had smothered itself out, she and Allison would be on their way back after grabbing some Diner food. She lied easily enough that her heart hardly wavered.

Allison cut through the casual discomfort "Lydia is waiting outside for her Mom to drive her to the hospital."

"What about the roads?" Isaac worried.

"You must not know Lydia's Mom," Allison smirked to which Scott and Stiles gave a nod in agreement. She glanced at them and mentioned, "She said if she saw your parents she would tell them you went to her study session and got stuck out here."

"Wow," Scott said wide-eyed.

"She's still saving our collective asses" Stiles observed.

"She's always been better at thinking on her feet," said Scott.

"She's always been better at thinking," he added mumbling through the hand he rubbed over his mouth, choking on humility.

"She seemed pretty mad," Scott practically said to himself. "We should go around later."

"-should we though...?" Stiles sucked in a pained breath in fear of her wrath.

"She said 'don't'." Allison said in a tone that nearly imitated Lydia's.

"She'll still be at the Hospital when you make up your minds," reminded Kate. "What?" She responded to the confused expressions looking toward her, "I've know that look on a girl's face before. That's a girl ready to stand by a bad boy for a good cause. Isaac?"

"What?" Isaac looked around as if he had been accused. "So, I wasn't 'bad boy' enough for her?"

Everyone stared for varying of reasons; Kate and Allison waited for Isaac's story to conclude. Stiles and Scott wanted to know what Isaac thought of himself to compare in Jackson to Lydia.

"God, I hate teens," Kate groaned into her hand as she rubbed sleep off of her face. She used the other hand to wave for the waitress to come over and refill the pot of coffee. "You're nearly out of time Isaac and you owe me your story."

"What?" Isaac snapped. Hadn't they had enough confession time with Stiles' story and Kate's? "Did you want my sob story too? Something epic? Graphic? My family fell apart after my Brother was killed in Afghanistan. My Mom got sick right after. My Dad beat me and stuck me in a freezer and sometimes he would get drunk enough he forgot I was in there, so when Derek offered a way out and I took it. It's your everyday sorry tale and we each had a version; Boyd's little Sister died in front of him because she fell through ice pond he broke when he was 6. His family never forgave him. Erica's Idiopathic Epilepsy almost killed her when she had an episode while rock climbing. Derek has watched out for each of us. He gave each of us a choice. He's not the easiest guy to live with. He's hardheaded and his rules are strict but it's obvious now they were made to keep us alive. And we did. We survived and we got stronger. We were better together. Now, now it's like I'm lost..." Isaac continued until he lost his breath and words and when he looked to Stiles for a rescue he only saw red-faced dismay.
Maybe it hadn't been intended and Isaac suffered yet another episode of word vomit but Stiles could do something with it. He could use it as deflection; plain and simple. Erica and Boyd were lost to them forever but at least their legend could help protect what was left of their pack, what was left of their family.

"This time when he left, when our Alpha left, afterward we could sense his panic," Stiles paused for emphasis to remind that panic was a step above fear. "It felt like a piece of my cerebellum had gotten ripped out and just thinking hurt. I mean, I never had it easy keeping my thoughts straight but after the change I didn't need adderall anymore."

"Just like how after the change, Erica didn't need Carbatrol anymore..." Isaac added.

"It's not like I felt a relapse," Stiles shook his head as if he could shake off the confusion of his recollections, "but it's like we fell apart without him. Something in us suddenly ripped apart."

"Cora had it worst," Isaac sat up straighter, his words carried with them the weight of recollection. "When they came here to get their Omega, their stray Hale, Derek and Cora were attacked. But they left her behind like a piece of-- she blamed herself for not being strong enough."

"But Cora was smart enough to come and get us before tracking him," Stiles said with a bit of pride in his voice. "After we moved out, Cora broke off ahead but that didn't matter, I already knew the way here."

A tapping sound interrupted their calm and they looked to Isaac to steady his leg. No one pressed for him to continue but Allison gave him a look, she breathed out slow and kept eye contact. She breathed out again as if reminding him 'follow me.'

"Erica noticed first while we were on the road, she sensed we were getting turned around. She said there were too many tracks."

"We caught up with Cora two thirds of the way here when we were attacked. I'm pretty sure it waited for us to be together so it could toy with us. We didn't stand a chance," Stiles reported precisely.

"I think it was just this crazy monster," murmured Isaac.

"I don't," scoffed Stiles, "it wasn't crazy, that freakish deformed wolf had a goal. I think it wanted Cora from the beginning. It was huge and it was hunting. It took her as easy as that," and he snapped his fingers for emphasis.

"We chased after them through the woods," Isaac turned slightly and recounted his woes to Scott's eager face, he felt at least in that direction it was more of an unburdening than a reporting, "that's when Erica got hurt. Hurt really really bad and she stopped healing."

"No, she was healing. Just too slow," Stiles clarified, "those were definitely Alpha wounds she came back to us with." Stiles decided to serve himself coffee as a means to calm down and as a means to stop from nervous laughing. "We were about, I don't know less than 15 miles from the Northbridge entry when we got side-lined by a pack of Werewolves." He took a long drought of black coffee with no sugar and without remembering to let it cool down. Scott winced and tried to peel the cup free from Stiles' grip, rescuing him from nothing more than an empty cup. Stiles licked his lips several times in an attempt to mend and collect his words, "Erica must have thought she held us back. She tackled an Alpha right off of a cliff. As someone pretty familiar with bouncing off of rock faces, there is no way she could have survived that. But her sacrifice gave us time to scatter."
"She hated heights," exhaled Isaac, "I can't believe I ran." He looked to the ceiling and slouched back in the bench tapping his foot again to keep the peace.

"We ran," Stiles confirmed and affirmed his voice brought Isaac's attention down like gravity, "We had to run. She wanted us to run. There were too many in those woods."

"It was a mess," muttered Isaac.

"We lost sight of each other quickly," said Stiles.


Stiles tapped the table for Isaac's attention. At this point the story was more an A-B conversation, the rest of the table were simply bystanders. "I kept aiming for Beacon Hills. I'm sorry I didn't see Boyd go down. I didn't see which way you went but I knew where Derek would be. I needed to be near, nearer to the last place--"

"You said a wolf cut off your Mother's car," Kate broke in with an observation, "You said a wolf attacked Cora on the road. Do you think it's the same wolf?"

"Why would it be the same wolf?" he scoffed in incredulity.

Kate's SAT phone went off again but she ignored it. Instead she crossed her arms and shifted her leg and said with no amount patience in her voice "because there are no wolves in California. And I'm pretty sure you knew that boy genius. I wonder why you're telling yourself you don't."

Scott cleared his throat; while admittedly he hadn't spoken for a while it was more to keep Stiles from snapping back with a witty retort when he wanted answers. Throughout the whole time they sat in the Diner everything said only led him to want to know more but nothing actually gave him the answers he wanted.

"Why is it important that there aren't wolves here?" Scott asked politely. Kate looked at him in amusement, charmed by his good-nature. He breathed in and tried a bit more forcefully, "I was in the car with his Mom too. I want to know if there is something connecting all of this."

"Now you're thinking like a Hunter," Kate grinned.

Track 07 - Missing by The xx

Natalie Martin's car barely turned into the parking lot of Tony's 24-Diner when Lydia pulled open the passenger side door. Her Mom tried out the word hello but it was strangled out by a hug.

"Mom! What are you doing here?" she squeezed tightly and got her fill before she dropped back into her seat.

"I'm supposed to ask you that," Natalie scoffed lightly turning the car back onto the road, where they would inevitably had enough time to catch up on events while stuck in Beacon Hills record breaking slow moving traffic.

"Oh that," sniffed Lydia and glanced in the direction of the Diner, "just a study session gone awry. Now, tell me why were you in Fairvale? It's too early for another conference. Was this a secret
Natalie chuckled and shook her head, "hardly." But she didn't seem inclined to answer.

Lydia smirked. "Mom, you're sudden love-life is exactly the sort of distraction that I need tonight. Tell me this mystery man makes you happy--"

"Stop. Oh, I insist you stop!" she groaned in response to Lydia's persistence. Despite her obvious distress she managed to drive steadily enough. She looked at the face of her bright eyes and eager teen-aged daughter and deflected. "Look at you, you're a mess. Are you sure you're okay? That all happened during a study session?"

"Mom--" Lydia knew of few topics they were reluctant to broach; money, politics, religion and ex's 
"--you were with Dad?" The silence that answered her would not suffice. "Why? Why would he come to town and tell you and not me?"

Since New Year's Natalie toyed with an idea. Recent events brought those concerns to the forefront of her mind, not that she said as much aloud. But a secret meeting with the adversary ex certainly exhibited some forward movement.

Since Lydia's episodes of fugue state were increasing, there was little her Mom could do by way of helping. Aside from 1) love her, 2) support her and 3) project blame somewhere far away. In the past, her Father always made a good target, and since he hadn't reported her missing over winter break at the Lake House and he had yet to visit once since Lydia turned up safe, he made a damn fine target for her Mom's rage.

He had always been a busy man with just a calculated interest in a personal life. Time hadn't changed that. What peace of mind was there to be achieved by officially divorcing your kid?

"Or did he just drop everything to fly over here at the idea of signing away his parental rights?"

"Lydia," Natalie started sternly then seemed to think better, "your new coat. I'm sure if we take it to the cleaners right away they can do something to save it." Lydia's favorite coat, a Christmas present from her Dad he sent in his stead since he hadn't bothered to attend.

"No thanks," Lydia shrugged, "I'll probably throw it away before it festers." Lydia shook her head, she gripped the silk lining hard, she didn't have claws but she wished she had. She wished she could have shred the coat inside out. "It's ruined anyway," Lydia added scornfully.

"Suit yourself. But I'm not going to explain or justify my decision by you, baby. Because you are my baby and it's my job as the Mom to protect you, right?"

Yes, a baby at 17 whom soon would be 18 so whether or not her negligent Dad signed the papers or not wouldn't matter in less than 300 days. A baby that, less than an hour ago, made life and death decisions and stood to make more again whenever fate would spontaneously deem fit, but god forbid if she knew if visitation was continuing.

"Mom, are you okay?" she struggled to smile; convinced finding each other on the edge of town was a thing of luck for many more reason than a car ride.

Natalie sucked in a breath and let it out shakily, "better now." Natalie reached across the divide and touched her daughter's cheek, "we're going to be fine."

Lydia never doubted it, not once since the separation although it was always good to have a check-in.
"Can we go to the hospital?" insisted Lydia when they neared their turn in the slow moving traffic. Natalie looked a bit worried rather than put out. "I'm okay," Lydia clarified, "I just want to go there to see Jackson." If her Mom could secret away to see her ex for litigation than she could make room for Lydia's ex and his medication.

"It's only fair," Natalie conceded after the longest pause and the night oddities continued. "It's not like tonight can get any weirder."

A spark of relief hit Lydia and she flashed a grin before scrambling around in her seat, opening the passenger's side window and attaching a flashing emergency light to the top of their car. Looking to her Mom for approval, Lydia smiled brightly and without tension, conniving, snideness or snark. Her Mom opened her mouth, whether to argue or encourage but it was lost to their delight of the traffic diverting around them. They laughed fueled with the power granted to them; the Martin women.

Track 08 - Half of You by Catpower

"This is not the most ideal place to have this conversation Stiles", Isaac pointed out.

"Nah, it really isn't" Stiles locked the bathroom door closed with the both of them inside, "but with a night of awkward confessionals this is probably the least awkward thing we have to work with."

When a knock came at the other side of the door to see if it was occupied, Stiles groaned and banged back harder shouting "Go away! We're busy!"

Isaac closed his eyes and counted to 3 in hopes that when he opened them again the tiny fluorescently lit cubical of a room would magically deteriorate and reappear as a nice warm bedroom, with a preferably non-fluorescently lit bathroom adjacent with a bathtub and an endless supply of hot water.

"Hey," Stiles snapped him out of his fantasy, "we have problems. I mean you know, you and me, we're like--" Stiles followed up a groan of displeasure with a facial distortion that correctly encapsulated the depiction of their relationship.

"Of course," Isaac snorted, leaning back to slouch against the sink.

"But now we're the only ones left," Stiles seriousness seeped through, "and that's got to mean something. It means a lot of somethings actually."

"Alright, Stiles, like what?" scoffed Isaac, he hated to admit it but he had actually missed Stiles' mad ramblings.

"It means after everything we've heard tonight our biggest problems are with who to trust. And how to trust them," Stiles sighed but his voice kept the hard seriousness of a man on a mission.

"Which is why we're meeting in the 'Mens' bathroom?" Isaac asked.

"As opposed to the Ladies' bathroom? Yes, I thought being that clandestine would draw a little too much attention. Isaac, come on, listen. 1) We cannot trust Kate because her narrative is manipulative. 2) We can't trust Scott, either, because his Alpha is still out there for all we know and has as much control over him as Derek's had on us, or as that controller can have on the
Kanima. 3) We definitely can't trust Allison because she's been keeping secrets all along and 4) I definitely can't trust you because you've just traded half our family's life stories for a bag of magic beans. I mean, what other reason do you have for going to Kate Argent?"

"Oh, that." Isaac let out a breath.

"Oh," scoffed Stiles, "that." With a glare he turned around and swung the bathroom door open, "you should leave now." Isaac started to argue before he realized that he meant to argue to stay in the bathroom with Stiles. And whether Stiles actually meant to use the facility for its intended purpose or just wanted to make Isaac look stupid, either way it left Isaac very motivated to get gone.

Kate moved off to returned the missed phone call and Allison and Scott took that as a sign to say their 'goodbyes/goodnights.'

"You're making a face...it's not exactly unhappy, maybe guilty?" Allison ventured a guess.

Scott sighed and wrapped his hands further around Allison's waist. "I couldn't help but hear her heart while we spoke. Allison the whole time, I mean the whole time it would have escalated because of upset or excitement but then there were moments it dropped, deliberately." Scott frowned and tried not to focus on the disappointment in Allison's eyes. "Those were moments she lied. She's trained herself to cover her lies."

Without meaning too Allison stepped off of the curb and fell a level away from him. She regretted it immediately but Scott shook it off and withdrew his hold, he placed his hands on her shoulder instead, "I'm just saying, be careful."

"You're also telling me I shouldn't trust my Aunt?" Allison tried to keep any accusation from her voice but she sounded like a 6 year old even in her own ears. He ran his thumbs over her tensing shoulders and gave her the minutest smile instead of answering. It wasn't an apology because he wouldn't back down, it was condolences. "I won't pick sides," she whispered.

"I would never ask you to," he pressed his forehead to hers, "I just want you safe."

Allison closed her eyes and wished she had the ability to hear the sound of his heart, not to hear out lies and truth but because she wished for a sense of nearness when touching was not enough. She hesitated then rolled on the balls of her feet. "For as long as I've known you Scott," she admitted, "I've never had a reason to doubt you. But as long as I've known them, which I've known my family whole life," that got a smile out of him, "I've been surrounded by secrets. That is where my duties lie, but I wouldn't exactly say my loyalties."

With both hands Allison reached up and cupped his face and drew him into a kiss. She hoped it would be enough to comfort him. She felt her heart beat like mad and wasn't certain what that translated to but from the press of his mouth there wasn't much by way of calm. She pulled back and smiled, watching intently as his eyes slowly fluttered open. "Until I have proof," she promised, "I'll keep my eyes peeled."

Isaac barely stepped through the Diner doors when Kate pulled him aside, around the back where the rats chased beneath the dumpsters, for private conversation. As Stiles would have pointed out, some things are cliché for a reason.
"Sorry about the runaround handsome," Kate grinned and even at a standstill she looked like she strutted.

Isaac shrugged and kept still. He felt bothered and bored. He wasn't going for cool he just felt bone tired. No doubt the earlier smoke inhalation had something to do with it.

"Don't say I never gave you anything pretty," she said playfully and tossed him a lighter. "You played a good game, we're even now."

Isaac caught the Zippo mid air. It rattled loudly in a weird hollow way and didn't feel like it held any butane. Isaac looked at her in utter confusion. She raised a brow and gave a gesture for him to flip it over.

"We'd already identified Derek's body earlier; I just wanted to hear your testimonial. I thought a sit down dinner would be nicer than beating it out of you," Kate turned to walk slowly back toward the vehicle.

"What the hell do you mean by that?" Isaac's temper caught up with him as he caught up with her.

"I mean, you wanted information about Derek, there it is," she glanced over her shoulder at him, annoyed at his less than hidden method of secretly conversing. "The SAT phone doesn't carry any imagery aside from maps. But when Hunters look for proof a corpse is a Werewolf we don't go for photos, they can be doctored. We pull out the claws."

Isaac stopped mid-step. He thought about the loud hollow rattle. Kate shook her head and turned back a step.

"It's so that the medical examiners don't look too closely," she grabbed up Isaac's hand in hers and made him rattle the Zippo.

Isaac had felt her hands on his once before in the Diner, he remembered the firm grip and precise pinch she touched on a nerve that set his claws to retract against his will. The opposite suddenly seemed far more likely given enough science. When he had woken up enough to snatch his hand back she looked remorseful, for less than a quarter of a second before her smirk slid into place.

"The claws inside are definitely Derek's. But the container used to be Peter's I think," she gestured to the Zippo as she started away, "I held onto it for evidence. It's pretty fitting."

Isaac's mind worked slowly, as if through molasses. He had long ago come to the conclusion Derek had been dead. But there was 'Dead in one's imagination' and 'Dead a Hunter just handed over my Alpha claws and sauntered away'. Of course she could be lying, just as he had lied to himself over the demise of his pack before knowing proof.

Of course, she had provided Derek's claws in a gold embossed Zippo casing, the outside of which had a Triskele carved.

Track 09 - Your Friends Are Gone by Circa Survive

In the disorder provided by the blackout, Lydia found it easy to navigate unseen through the Hospital. She had had enough experience with hospitals of late to remember which doors generally lead where and had the most lax security. Not to mention the 'Intensive Care Unit' was familiar
territory for her.

Her Mom didn't question Lydia's behavior because as much as she disapproved she understood Lydia's need to see Jackson. Natalie may not have liked him very much but she never wished him grievous injury. And for Lydia's sake, seeing your loved one injured was better than not seeing them at all. Mrs. Martin certainly understood that.

Being a native to the hospital terrain, Natalie went on the hunt for food and left Lydia as long as she promised to go no further than the observation window. Lydia justified her actions by clarifying that her Mother didn't specify which side of the window to stay on.

The hospital remained in crisis mode due to the after-effects of the blackout and pile ups the accident had caused. The power blinked on and off and security zipped around but the priorities weren't patients sleeping peacefully of in a ward unto themselves.

The din of people and machines reminded her very much of the Diner she had left behind. And in its likeness when her emotions heightened the people walking, talking and mostly complaining turned into white noise.

While inside, Lydia collected the curtain around them and hope that would provide a semblance of privacy. The lax privacy of hospitals had always amused her, each room essentially another over booked hotel with different accoutrements like a heart monitor or a defibrillator. Meanwhile people would pop their heads in every few hours to take blood or urine or just see if you're you and they would do it often enough that you would never get any rest. How is that for privacy?

But there was room for intimacy. When she neared Jackson she remembered him, she remembered the feel of curling up beside him and she remembered the look of him sleeping. It was different than the look of him half dead. They had removed his clothes and left him attached to enough instruments to make him look like a human puppet. She wanted to examine him but she wasn't certain she was brave enough to confront what she'd find.

She pulled up the bed sheet from the bottom of his cot and examined his bare foot. She scanned to see if there were markings of scales or extended nails. She was relieved to find she could find nothing aside from some discoloration that looked like burns.

"Lichtenberg figure," Lydia found burn scars along the soles of his feet and a similar pattern moving up his calf. Splaying branches blooming black and vein-like "but these appear on lighting strike victims." Her face screwed up in confusion.

It had been hours since he had been brought in. Hours. He showed no sign of healing whatsoever despite his supernatural ability.

She sped around the bed side and inspected Jackson's hand, splaying his fingers wide in and pressing his palm open against her. Then she examined his eyes and touched his face, running her hands over his brow and brushed her hand along his cheek. She felt he warmed to her touch, or she could have imagined it. She restrained herself from checking to see if he had a tail. Aside from the occasional emblazoned markings nothing showed signs of degeneration.

"I'm sorry. I wish I understood more," she wiped away a tear and cleared her throat, "but I'm trying."

In fact she sensed something and she didn't like it. She desperately needed out.

Lydia yanked apart the curtains to find herself caught in the eye line of an observer. Stood just on
the other side of the glass was Kira Yukimura. She looked on wide-eyed but unsurprised and like she didn't seem inclined to call security at all.

**Track 10 - Moonchild by Segal**

To the chagrin of the waitress, Stiles remained in the entrance of the Diner. Scott and Allison stepped off to the side for their 'Epic' goodbye/goodnights while Isaac and Kate disappeared to the devil knows what, which left Stiles to twist in the wind. This for Stiles meant remuneration; the detailed obsessive reliving and reviewing what he could have, should have and would have done differently.

Despite being denied, it didn't mean his sentiment wasn't heartfelt when he rambled off into Lydia's voicemail.

"Hey, I think I owe you an apology and I'm pretty sure it's a long time coming but I don't know what for. I, shit, I don't know what I did wrong though so I'm sorry for that too 'cause it's my experience anytime a guy thinks he hasn't done anything wrong means he definitely did something wrong. ... I think shouldn't have let you walk away from the table. Even though I'm pretty sure no force on earth could have stopped you. Maybe I should have walked out with you. This... this is not going at all as planned. Not that I had a plan. *sh*t.* I should really plan things, or at least plan them better. I said I would be honest with you so this is me being honest I guess. When we were in the basement breathing in that smoke tonight, I saw us in the car again only this time I didn't, you know, I didn't end up leaving you and Scott. And it was awful and it was the smartest ugliest scariest best thing I could have ever done. I should have never-- I don't exactly apologize for that day being as *sh*t* as it was. But I can apologize for a lot of things that came after. I let you go that day because I had to. But I didn't have to let you-- I didn't have to let you guys go every day after that. I'm sorry it drove a wedge between you and Scott. I'm the worst. God. I'm sorry. Honestly sorry. Okay, I think that's what I wanted to say. You said we're monsters because of choices we made to survive. That's messed up. Sure, maybe if you were around you would have thought of better ones. Probably. I'm sorry those choices hurt you, they weren't meant to ... but you've got to get passed it 'cause seriously you can't be like that. *Sh*t, sh*t* I didn't mean it this is turning into a not great apology. Can I say one more thing before I really piss you off and you delete this and we pretend it never happened and it was all because of psychotropic smoke? ... Scott said he tried to get over my death and you never did. Thanks. Okay. Bye. Erase this. Bye. Sh*t."

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**Chapter End Notes**

**CREDITS/ROLL CALL:**

**Argents - Team1; headed by Victoria, Chris & Allison.**
- Rumy - [Sergeant] specialized in Recon; Special Forces and espionage. Chris' right hand man and Allison's godfather.
- Axel - [1st Lieutenant] expert tracker, marksman and Allison's 2nd cousin.
- Bennett - [Field Officer] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old and friend to Allison.
- Leveque - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Terrain-Orientation. Mechanics,
driving countermeasures the means to mobilize heavy firepower to engage opposing forces including other combat vehicles.
• Ulrich - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation.

**Argents - Team2; headed by Kate.**
• Livy - [1st Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Force-Orientation, R.I.F. and close-combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's right-hand man.
• Tyhurst - [Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation, Cyberwarefare, has CIA background and is ranked with state detective credentials. Referred to as 'try-hard.'
• Norm - [Sergeant] specialty in Medical Intelligence and as a Longbowman; an archer who uses the longbow, w/ various arrowheads. He' JR's brother and Roman's Uncle.
• Roman - [Field Officer] specialty as a Marksman/Sharpshooter, 19yrs. old and a weapons expert skilled in precision shooting. He's JR's son and Norm's Nephew.
• Fry - [Field Officer] specialty as a Tactician is and general officer, while his marksmanship is low he is still in high regard for his brain.

**Argents - Team3; headed by Gerard.**

**Hale (Present Day) Pack; Derek Alpha**
• Isaac - [Omega] abandoned Werewolf in search of a pack.
• Stiles - [Omega] also abandoned, in search of any existing pack members.
• (missing) Cora - [Beta] missing, presumed dead.
• (missing) Boyd - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.
• (missing) Erica - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.

**Hale (Heyday) Pack; Talia Alpha**
• Peter - [Beta] Talia's brother, Uncle to Derek, Laura and Cora.
• Laura (age 17) - [Beta] was last seen struggling between trying to pull survivors from the fire and defending her mother, Talia from her Uncle Peter's attacks.
• Derek (age 15) - [Beta] was pulled from the flames by his sister Laura and ushered to safety by their emissary… until the Treaty was made.

**? Other;?**
• Jackson - [Kanima] characterized by claws that secrete venom which temporarily paralyzes their victims, a double row of sharp fangs, and a tail. Unless a Kanima resolves what in its past caused its mutation, it will eventually cocooned stage and emerge as a winged creature. Unlike a werewolf, a Kanima seeks out a master instead of a pack. It will carry out whatever vengeance its master bid. *chapter 12
• Kira - [?] ...
• Lydia - [Banshee] 'A Banshee screams preceding a supernatural death not as a premonition but to highlight the likelihood of supernatural events that result in deaths.' *chapter 8

**Twins' Pack; Aiden and Ethan Carver Alphas**
• Marta - [Beta] she's an older motor head and their 1st Lieutenant.
• Bridy - [Beta] the packs' spy because she's diminutive and easily underestimated.
• Gus - [Beta] referred to as psychotic now and again, but his very few (and dwindling) close friends' are his touchstone.
• (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, bi and partnered to Naylor, formerly to Bozeman.
• (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
• (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
• (deceased) Coot - [Omega] former Beta, killed by the Monster.

**Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha**
• (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed 1st Lieutenant, possibly romantically entangled.
• Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali and closely bonded to Huntington.
• Santos - [Beta] while loyal to Kali has mentored many, without regard to packs. He helped the Twins first learn to shift together without losing their identities.
• Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed and with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
• Levi - [Beta] he's neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
• Huntington - [Beta] has strong empathic senses, is very good friends with Gus' from Twins' pack and Lark.

**Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha**
• Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' Lieutenant, --from wiped out Shapeshifter dynasty.
• Dr. Kane - [Beta] both a medical Doctor and their torturer.
• Quint - [Beta] eager to please teen and Dr. Kane's biological son.

**Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha**
• Søren - [Beta] 1st Lieutenant, Danish man of even temperament and a skilled negotiator until his temper is peaked.
• Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
were (you) sorry

Chapter Summary

While in the hospital visiting Jackson, Lydia runs into Kira and uncovers they had a mysterious connection of which neither could explain. Isaac explains why he made a deal with Kate and shared with Stiles and Scott his findings about Derek. And as a Hunter has to check in with her family but it is not the examination she expects.

• Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/13-were-you-sorry

Chapter Notes

Previously on were (you);
• Stiles re-told the events of the car crash from his perspective that led from his Mother's death to Derek's turning him into a Werewolf.
• Isaac defends Derek's acts as an Alpha by recapping his acts in changing Boyd, Erica and himself into Beta.
• Lydia examines Jackson's body at the hospital only to discover inarguable evidence that he had been struck by lightning. With Kate's declaration that he had surrendered himself to save another Lydia can't fathom a connection. Until she runs into Kira Yukimura at his bedroom door.
• In the end, after leaving the Diner Isaac conspires with Kate over supposed proof of Derek's death, hoping it was worth all the compromising information he had provided of the acts of his Alpha.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

[i apologies for unanticipated hiatus. if i can give heads up regards family drama next time, i promise i will. onto the fic.]

Track 01 - A Wolf at the Door. (It Girl. Rag Doll.) by Radiohead

{Friday; Early Morning}

"Let me get this straight, you saw a coyote, but it wasn't a coyote, it was an 'animal of interest'?" Sheriff Stilinski rubbed his temple, hoping he could find a pressure point that would blot out the nonsense while syncing up all the random data thrown his way in the last 72 hours.

"I wouldn't exactly phrase it that way," Deputy Parrish huffed in embarrassment, "but I'm just telling you what I saw." Considering his experience and the specific events of the evening, there was a reason he had wanted to end up at the Hospital. He needed to get some face time with the Sheriff.
"The 'volunteers' might have seen something or at least they seem to be searching for something but I hope they don't find it, considering..." he let the sentence end there. He hadn't meant to be ominous but of late all paths of endless speculation lead back to the Argents.

He returned to the topic, "But I saw it exactly where we expected it to be on your board, only this wasn't some homicidal Monster like anticipated." He envisioned the moment in the rain, "this thing came right up to me, Chief, like it knew what I was saying."

"It came to you?" the Sheriff paid closer attention.

Parrish nodded, "no less than a foot. It was intelligent and it understood exactly what I said."

"So, we're definitely talking about a second animal?" he came closer and carried a conspirator's tone. Parrish shook his head, "you were right in your first assessment, this was more than just an animal. What I saw wasn't as big as documented; this was smaller than described, and it was young too, brightly colored and spry. Definitely a coyote."

"But everything we've had documented before said 'wolf'."

"Exactly," the Deputy nodded emphatically.

"That means at least 2," said the Sheriff with a nod and gave it some thought. "I guess that means we should be expecting more."

Then they remained quiet and close to one another in the busy hallway of the hospital. Parrish had to ask, not because he felt like it was his place or anything, but because he wanted to know where he stood with things.

"Chief? If you aren't interested in pursuing your investigation-- if you don't want to rock the boat," Parrish paused when Sheriff Stilinski gave him a look. It was the sort of look he recognized when he had hit on a point that the Sheriff hadn't considered yet. Parrish continued after a moment, giving him time to adjust, "You've got your son back. You have every reason in the world to consider this closed. Not just closed, but resolved."

"No," it looked like the Sheriff hurt to admit it, "this isn't resolved. I got into this to figure out why there were attacks. Why there are murders, and don't get me wrong I am grateful my son is alive. Don't ever mistake that," the Deputy nodded in response to the conviction in the Sheriff's tone but the Sheriff only meant to reprimand himself. "But that doesn't leave Claudia any less dead. That doesn't make the attacks un-happen. That doesn't make the savaged lives of now 7 people go unexplained."

"Sir," was the only response he could muster. It was somewhere between a salute and a question.

"Ah, don't do that," Stilinski grinned. He came back to himself, more focused, more energetic, "Parrish? What are you doing here at the hospital and not at your post?"

"Right," Parrish's eyes lit with amusement, "this is a different matter of some delicacy. Another investigation you tend to like to deal with privately."

"What's that?"

"I brought someone in for impersonating an officer and I thought you would like to reprimand them personally," the Deputy turned and with an emphatic rotating gesture of his hand encouraged the Sheriff to follow him toward the ICU waiting room.
"Deputy," he warned, "is now the time for special treatment? This is the sort of thing that gets handled at the station. You can make them wait it out in the cell until the lights come on like the rest of the trouble-makers." Despite what he actually said, his feet lead him into the waiting area where Natalie Martin sat, chin propped up on her hand as she leaned on a coffee table, and despite the slumped discomfort, she still managed to fall asleep.

"If you say so, Sir," Deputy Parrish whispered smirking beside him.

The Sheriff glared his annoyance at his subordinate's cockiness, "Oh, shut up. Tell me again, what exactly did she do?"

Parrish didn't bother to pretend he wasn't amused, "she planted a Mars light on the top of her car for traffic to move."

The Sheriff stared blankly for a moment, swore then laughed.

"Sheriff?" said Natalie brightly from the other side of the room, while she unraveled herself from the seat groggily.

"Get out of here," the Sheriff lightly shoved him out of the doorway, "And don't think you're not going to report in-full later."

"As soon as things let up here sir," Deputy Parrish added with all seriousness while he stepped away, "I'll be at the house, ready to report."

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**Track 02 - Monster Hospital (Acoustic) by Metric**

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It had taken every inch of bravery Kira had left in her person, her shell-shocked person to drag herself over to the Intensive Care unit. It helped that she was assured Jackson was still unconscious. It didn't help that she felt an insurmountable amount of guilt that he was still unconscious.

She had convinced herself that if she set eyes on him, then he wouldn't be in danger. Since the worst of his injuries had been her responsibility, then if she willed him to be well it would be a wash. But as she inched along the hall she realized it might have been her head injury that validated that reasoning. Regardless, she knew she had to lay eyes on him. There had to be an explanation as to why they barely survived being struck down by God on the bridge. Alright, maybe there hadn't been godly vengeance involved, but there was some very striking activity and since the only other person to witness what had actually happened lay down 2 corridors, it was only fair that security leave the path open for her.

By the time she stood in front of Jackson's room the biggest obstruction became her fear. Yes, there were 2 people on the bridge, but she had no answers and she had consciousness going for her. She had just as much time and insight, maybe more so but when she tried to string together events all that she could recollect was... the events in the school Library.

Jackson had come to her rescue and told her that there had been an incident in the Library and that she could be in danger if she stuck around. There were screams on the other side of the Library, so she followed, moments later alarms went off but when they reached the rear exit it was sealed off.
She had gotten halfway through her suggestion to head back when he ripped through metal like a hot knife through butter. She had been relieved at their exit before it clocked in her mind that she should be afraid, and then he turned toward her and clamped a hand around her wrist. The hand looked deformed with long fingers like out of an illustrated children's book, half of his face looked rotted and discolored as only hissing sounds came from his mouth. Kira started to scream but a blow to the solar plexus cut off the sound and they were off.

They were in his Porsche, speeding along the road when she could breathe again, when her thoughts were clear again and she had been too frightened to look at Jackson directly. She cried silently and begged for Jackson to let her go. When he turned to face her, his slitted eyes terrified her and she shuddered. He brought his hand, with fingernails as claws to scratch at her but where they connected static electricity rose and he backed off. In an act of desperation he tied her hands off with laces left over from his Lacrosse stick. As he did so, Kira ducked her head into his line of sight but there was a disconnect. He reacted to her touch, but not to her voice, not to her pleas or her tears. Kira dropped her head to the dashboard and cried for a moment. Jackson wasn't angry, he wasn't even being mean, he didn't even seem to have an agenda, he simply functioned and that frightened her more.

"Jackson, if you don't tell me where you're going--" her tone of voice was unconvincing.

"Jackson, tell me where you're going--" that got her nowhere.

"Jackson, if you don't stop something bad will happen," it wasn't a threat, it was a gut instinct.

In the confines of the hospital she didn't feel any safer than she had in the car, but for wholly different reasons. In the car she felt like someone hurt her and used Jackson to do it. The result was she and Jackson became devastated. In the Hospital she felt like she had devastated Jackson and used herself to do it. Maybe if he woke up she could figure out why. Or if not why then how to make the guilt go away because she had no more control over what happened on the bridge than he did over what happened in the car.

The worst thing that could happen, her mind said, was that she would go up to his room and she would find him burnt beyond recognition. It didn't matter how much her Father soothed her, nothing would make that okay. As she neared the window, that's all she envisioned, pulling back the curtains and his body, worse than burned, the act of her nearness would cause his burned and decaying form to convulse and seize. She placed her hand on the window, too frightened to place it on the door. It was as near as she could bring herself for the time being and maybe next time she would get as far as the doorknob, she thought bravely, when the choice was taken from her as the curtains were yanked apart by Lydia Martin, the second most frightening person she had ever been exposed to.

Tracker 03 - Sweetest Tongue Has Sharpest Tooth (read) by Sarah Patterson

As she passed through the sliding doorway, it clicked closed behind her and she analyzed Kira from top to bottom. Lydia was accustomed to being where she wasn't supposed to be, doing things she wasn't meant to be doing in the most unconventional times. She was just unaccustomed to being caught in the act and still wouldn't deem that person intimidating if they wore a medical bracelet that read 'FALL RISK'. Lydia gave a pause to see if Kira had something relevant to say,
even though she reeked of 'Freshman Fresh Meat' syndrome and wasn't likely to be in Jackson's circle of friends.

After the moment passed, Lydia looked down her nose at Kira and walked around her, hoping to avoid a conversation entirely. She would not be drawn in by yelling or the Bambi-eyed tactics. Unlike Lydia, Kira hadn't observed whether Lydia was a patient or a visitor. She hadn't acknowledged her smoke-stained hair, the generic over-sized bomber jacket that the Sheriff's department provided that covered her tattered clothes. None of that clocked on Kira's radar. The only thing Kira observed was Lydia Martin's calculated calm.

"You're you?" Kira caught up just as Lydia rounded the corner toward the elevator, just as Lydia had assumed she had gotten away unscathed.

Lydia didn't think they were off to a very good start.

"I mean," Kira flustered and tried again in a less desperate, "I know you, but who are you?"

Lydia didn't expect that this roundabout wasteful dialogue in a place where they obviously weren't meant to be anyway would lead to anything good.

"Obviously, leaving," Lydia kept her chin up, her tone superior but jabbed more adamantly at the elevator button, "and what do they call you?"

"Kira," she breathed deeply and smiled. "I'm Kira Yukimura." They waited side by side in silence for a moment, "Is that what I'm supposed to do?"

"It is a closed ward," Lydia reminded, hoping that would indicate the end of the conversation when the elevator doors opened. She made it obvious from her briskness and the how determinedly she pressed the 'Door Closed' button that these things were not up for negotiation.

After hopping into the elevator, Kira considered this, but then continued, "I mean you said 'run'" she put her hands up in air quotes. Lydia turned to face her at that. It confused her when people talked about her as if they were more of an authority than she was which was happening too much of late. "I didn't know what it meant at the time".

Kira turned to face Lydia as well and her face turned still, her voice very quiet as if she expected to be overheard in their empty elevator, "I didn't know from what, or from whom? Then he was there. Now you're--" the doors opened.

Lydia glared at her for a moment then stormed off, she really didn't like when people knew more about her friends than her either. Through the reflection of the patient's room windows she could see the girl, Kira, followed, even through the din and bustle of wandering staff. Lydia stopped on the other side of the Nurses' station, far enough on the safe side of security but not far enough from where people could overhear. Kira took that as a sign to keep a little distance.

"--am I supposed to run from you?" she asked looking as thoroughly confused as Lydia felt.

"Do you even know me?" Lydia wanted to be angry, she even wanted to sound angry but more than that she wanted an answer. They had no other classes together aside from PE and Lunch, plus everyone knew her as 'Queen of the BHHS' or the 'Smartest at BHHS'. This wasn't like that.

"Do I?" Kira squinted at her as if she were trying to pick her out of a line-up.

"Have we met before?" Lydia tried a different tactic; she had a scary feeling it would work.
"Almost 3 weeks ago, I know it was you," Kira said she knew but looked uncertain. Lydia realized that that was during her fugue state.

"In the woods behind my home. You said I wouldn't be safe here. You told me to run."

Lydia had to sit, and dropped onto a space on a bench against the wall. She looked on, miserable with the weight of her own suspicion.

"Why?" she asked through her hand as she covered her mouth in shock.

"What 'why'?" Kira said in surprise of Lydia's surprise. She had just begun to feel relief at her interest only to feel shot down. It seemed the few people who might offer her understanding kept being the ones shutting her out. "I don't understand."

"Why would I come to you?" Lydia shook her head as her eyes went unfocused and she stared off in thought. It reoccurred to her that Beacon Hills attracted special types and oddities, which brought with it new challenges. And with her disastrous luck, she either dated them or stumbled onto them. "Kira, is there something important about you?"

Kira cringed and stepped backward as Lydia came forward, ignoring the human traffic.

"There is." At the realization Lydia's tiredness washed away replaced by a bone-driven provocation, "As long as there is something important about you, Kira, then there will always be a reason to run."

Then Lydia backpedaled. From the look on Kira's face she realized she had overstepped. She wiped at her face, smearing her makeup a little as she regained control of her emotions, she felt overwhelmed because every time she came up with a new answer instead she came up with a thousand more questions. They were each blameless in their predicament, and Scott was right about that, but it didn't make them not dangerous, which she had such trouble reconciling. Lydia got aggravated with herself for getting aggravated with Kira. She thought about Scott and about Stiles. She wavered a little, swayed back and forth as if to pace but without actually moving her feet.

"Should I just do that? Is that safest? Leave? Whatever you tell me I'll listen--" Realizing that this wasn't the fragile and disheveled girl that had wandered onto her property, Kira asserted she would get answers from this far more intuitive person before her. And so, Kira babbled on.

"Lydia, I am Lydia Martin," she cut in. Kira nodded stiffly in acknowledgment, "You don't even really know who I am but you'd do what I tell you?" She bore down on Kira with her voice lowered as if to test their closeness.

"Psychic?" Lydia scoffed, "I'm something but I'm not psychic."

"What are you?" Kira wondered as her eyes darted around memorizing Lydia's face searching for a chink in her armor.

For fear of her moving away again Kira reached for Lydia's arm, then bypassed the fleece-encased limb to touch her hand, just a faint tap between the thumb and the forefinger.

At contact electrical power throughout the ward flickered, followed by the hum of the generators stopping. When the lights returned they were brighter than earlier, meaning that regular power had
been restored throughout Beacons Hills Memorial Hospital. It hadn't stopped with the hospital; from the murmurs and outpouring outside, power had begun to slowly restore on neighboring streets. Power eked from the Hospital outward, with their physical contact at its source.

Together they observed the way people behaved around them, startled with alarm and elation. The officers in the lobby rushed out to facilitate the needs of the locals. Staff rushed to task, the efforts of already spent people with double the effort and triple the shifts, fueled by the access of means to do good.

Lydia took note in particular at the way Kira's hand glowed from their contact, not brightly but still noticeably. Electrical streams, like strands caught in a breeze appeared spread across her palm until they faded along the veins in the cup of her overturned clean hand still beside Lydia's soot covered ones.

The most shocking thing of all, Kira noticed, was that Lydia hadn't seemed remotely shocked. After the light dimmed, Kira let out a breath. When Lydia withdrew her hand it felt a little like static electricity rolled along the surface of her skin and it refused to let up no matter how she rubbed at it.

Finally she answered Kira's spot-on question.

"What am I? Important," Lydia shook her head and smirked at the irony of this moment. Kira had to run into her, here, in all of the Hospitals, in all the Hospital hallways, in front of all the ex's who turned out to be a lizard mind-controlled by some murderous madman of the world, it had to be hers. It was a scenario they made black-and-white classic films out of, surely.

Kira stepped back and hugged her arms around her. She kept Lydia in perfect view but she needed the Nurses' station to lean against. Clarity came like lightning; she felt a sense of power returning but an uncertainty of what to do with it. It seemed from Lydia's expression she wasn't the only one.

Except for the fact that while Kira only felt fear and bewilderment Lydia felt bolstered by it. Maybe Kira could passably deny for a little longer but for Lydia there was no more denying it; Lydia understood she affected change. In fact it was bigger than that; she affected changes in others. She had become some sort of supernatural catalyst. Next step, she intended to understand how to harness that ability.

"Kira," she said firmly and shoved her hands into the depths of her oversized coat, "Number one; remember the only good advice you'll ever learn from any kid's book you ever read." She paused for emphasis and neared Kira before whispering, "Never trust a stranger you meet in the woods."

Kira shuddered while Lydia's brows rose slightly. If she hadn't felt so intense she might have seemed amused. Instead she seemed nearly menacing, until she sighed, "And Number Two;"

"What's number two?" Kira gasped, not realizing she had been holding her breath.

"When you are in the woods, animals will chase you," Lydia stated this as plainly as any fact one would read off of the chalkboard, only her emphasis reminded this held far more value than mid-term notes.

"Why would they chase?" Kira caught on quickly Lydia meant nothing to do with animals. She remembered Jackson upstairs, his face deformed. She thought about him begging her on the bridge, she wondered if she should tell Lydia. She added pathetically, "I haven't done anything."

"It doesn't matter," shrugged Lydia, "It's the natural order."
After a moment's hesitation Kira assumed the worst, "it's not natural to run from that..." she pointed upward, toward the floor above.

"Jackson." Lydia snapped. She rubbed her forehead from stress, "Not a 'that', Jackson." She looked up in annoyance not thinking she had followed Kira's hand gesture until she thought of Jackson lying in a bed above them, attached to a half-dozen machines, frozen in a prone state, neither dead nor healing. She glanced over at Kira who just lit up her arm as well as most of the Hospital. "Maybe he should have 'run' from you instead? Maybe he wouldn't have been cooked inside out?" she added nastily.

"He came..." Kira's voice cracked but she persevered. Lydia might not have been nice about it but she was the only one giving her answers. "He came to me?"

Lydia looked at her intently, and then pursed her lips in thought. "I think he did," she conceded thoughtfully, "I think instead of running he came to you for help."

"Help?" Kira's voice lightened just shy of laughing in disbelief, "I could have killed him."

Kira couldn't understand but Lydia saw variables. Whatever the Kanima's controller had in store for Kira and Jackson, fried on the side of the road during a power outage that only lasted a handful of hours was by far the better option for her. Lydia knew it. Jackson knew it. Regrettably, the controller knew it.

"Run, Stay; the outcome of these consequences are incalculable," Lydia smiled sadly as she turned to walk away. "But whatever you do Kira, don't do it alone. Find someone, one person who will believe your truth and don't leave their side."

"You believe me," Kira called out to her, desperate to not be left behind and Lydia hesitated.

"I meant someone you can trust," she replied passed through the Hospital's double-doors.

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Track 04 - My Favorite Game by The Cardigans

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"Hey!" Stiles skidded to a halt in Kate's path. "Lend me your SUV." It was certainly not a question, so she quirked an eyebrow at his arrogance.

She gave it a thought and acknowledged that the kids needed to get home, she needed to get home without the kids tagging along and they certainly needed to get home without her.

"I promise I'll get it back to you tomorrow Auntie Kate, but you said to the Sheriff," he grinned, "my dad, you'd get us back safe. And leaving us stranded at a Diner isn't exactly what I would call-" he let the sentence hang and put his hand out instead, wiggling his fingers impatiently for her to deposit keys into them.

"Is this your way of telling me you don't need an escort?" she smacked them into his hand.

"This is my way of doing you a favor. You don't want to be trapped in a confined space with us," his grin turned canine, "teenage boys can be rambunctious."

Not far off, Isaac was on edge and uncomfortable with Stiles' sudden appearance. Stiles had made a bee-line for Kate the moment he left the Diner as if he had an agenda. Not that Stiles didn't always
have an agenda in the back of his mind, but Isaac felt unnerved to have Stiles displace him in Kate's presence. Isaac barely had a chance to step out of the shadows and onto the curb unnoticed.

"I think you're right," Kate rolled her shoulder, stretching out a kink as she turned to half-face where Allison and Scott stood curbside. They watched her, uneasily waiting for their sign to part and leave. Kate didn't want the responsibility of seeing them home. The fact is she'd had enough of seeing them for the night.

The movements of patrons passing through their line of sight like threads moving and stitching through seams reminded them that real life pressed in around them, sewing closed their time shared.

"Your folks are at the hospital. Head straight there, no joy rides or they'll know," she warned in a maternal way.

Stiles shrugged and headed off in an eager way, then spun back in a dramatic flair, "Hey, can I just say one last thing." Again, not a question but it was obvious it was a thing he wondered about and it ate at him, this thing only she could answer for him.

"You said you loved him," his face went hard and distant the way it did when he talked about Derek, "Why aren't you sad?" He stepped closer to her with each word. The others had played at politeness, but one-on-one, Stiles had no problem playing a challenger and he didn't care if he lost.

Kate led the way around a container truck. She imagined it was a better place for their conversation, not because of privacy but because of bystanders.

"--because my Derek died over 16 years ago," she continued a sentiment she hadn't started aloud, but Stiles shook off her handhold and it was a sign he wanted answers sooner than later. "He wasn't some savior to me. He was pretty great. Competitive, smart-ass. I-I don't hero worship him or see him as some father figure. I saw him as a kid who had a chance of coming out from behind his mother's skirt when shit hit the fan. I saw him as kid who would grow out of validating his bad choices by blaming his angst, but he just grew to validate more bad choices by blaming man-pain. You think he kept you guys together out of some compassion, I think he collected mirrors so he would never have to grow up. I think he did you a disservice. He shouldn't have collected lost boys when he should have called family services. If I met him today, just ran into him, I wouldn't recognize him. My Derek was hopeful. This Derek sounds--"

"If you say one more thing!" growled Stiles, his voice began to turn menacing without raising his tone, "You didn't know him. You don't know how he would sacrifice for us, how he cared, how hard he had it being cut off--"

"You're right," her mouth lifted at the corner, not a smirk but something not quite sad either. Her eyes were holding something back because her heart beat with the beat of someone who felt anxiety. "I don't. I was just going to say that this Derek sounds sad. He sounded sad. I'm sorry for your loss, Stiles, I really am, but you're going to have to find a way to deal with it. And Stiles, there's already a formal revenge claim rolling through Beacon Hills. I won't tolerate a second. Don't do that in his name. Derek wouldn't want that for you."

"My Derek or your Derek?" Stiles twirled the keys in his hand as a gesture of dismissal.

"You know the answer to that," she shrugged and walked off.
After Kate left the shadow of the truck, Scott made certain to let his presence weigh in. He stood far off by a few of the family vehicles but he heard parts of their conversation. He hadn't meant to and he said as much. Stiles sighed under the weight of it because these confessions after confessions weren't as unburdening as they were designed to be.

"Did you see anything when you were in the house?" Scott said after Stiles leaned on the car beside him. Stiles looked toward him, confusion read clear on his face.

"What do you mean?" to Stiles what happened at the Hale House felt like a million years ago.

"I mean I asked Allison, she told me about the type of Wolfsbane used," Scott started and finally piqued Stiles' interest, "Trailing White Monkshood, it's a type that can make you hallucinate. She said if you breathed enough of it in, it could make you go nuts."

Stiles remembered his experience. He remembered the clarity with which he experienced the nightmare, his recurring one, and the outcome he felt had changed him.

"Do you think you went nuts?" Stiles shrugged maintaining the semblance of ambivalence.

"A little," Scott admitted, remembering his own hallucinations. "I dreamt about letting go, not just about letting you go off the ledge--"

"Scott," Stiles warned. His back went ramrod straight. The nearness to his phenomenon was bone-chilling. He leaned around to face Scott further, or at least seemed to, but in actuality he only turned to use his right hand to hug himself. He wanted to feel for the claw marks that Scott had left from his earlier hand-hold. He wanted to see if his brother's grip was still there.

"--but letting go of everything," Scott turned toward Stiles as well. His voice went low with intensity although their nearness made it easy to hear. "Everyone I loved, everything I felt, every experience I ever had. But I stopped because I didn't want to let go of you again."

"You didn't let go of me the first time, Scotty. I made you," Stiles took his hand away from the marks and placed it on Scott's shoulder instead. He felt as though he could transfer that sense of sureness through touch of finger marks. He didn't use claws but he dug his hand in.

"I don't see it that way," Scott smiled sadly, "I think the dream told me that for the past 6 years, everything I've been doing I don't hold on to because I'm afraid I'd have to let go again."

"Jesus, Scott I'm sorry!" groaned Stiles.

"No! Man, no that's not what I'm saying," Scott gripped him by the shoulder opposite. They made a circle of security. "What happened that day wasn't our fault, don't you get that? We've been feeling sorry for things that weren't in our control. And you're right, there were things afterward that were in our control. When I let you go, I should have let you go all the way and stopped using you as an excuse to push everyone else away, too. It wasn't fair, I guess. And I'm sorry."

"It's all good," Stiles shrugged. He grinned, too tired to stand properly, and pulled Scott into a half hug. "That is one weird thing to apologize for though."
"I'll trade you the keys to the kingdom for magic beans," said Isaac tossing Stiles the Zippo case as he neared them.

Stiles snatched it from the air. He turned it over in his hand and after recognizing the triskele symbol he looked to Isaac with an expression of hotheadedness and concern.

"What is this supposed to mean?" Stiles confronted Isaac.

"It's not actually a lighter," Isaac explained. The three stood close together in a conspirator's space.

Stiles shook it hard enough to make a rattling sound, "obviously."

"It belonged to Peter Hale, Derek's Uncle," added Isaac.

"Who said that? Kate?" asked Scott in mistrust to which Stiles glanced toward him with a brow raised and a smirk in appreciation of Scott's keen mind-reading technique.

"It has Derek's claws inside," Isaac pointed at it, his hand a little shaky, "and that's why I agreed to talk to Kate. I asked her for proof of Derek's death. Now, can I get the keys to the SUV?"

In a numb motion Stiles handed over the keys on instinct while he stared at the Zippo in alarm, Scott stared at in it confusion. When Isaac started the SUV, Stiles pocketed the Zippo and Scott wondered aloud why any of this would be okay with them.

"Werewolves' claws can be used to share memories," Stiles explained, "even after death" he opened the back of the SUV for Scott and climbed in after him. "The problem here is proving that these are Derek's."

"Is there a way to do that?" Scott asked while he watched Stiles flip open the top of the hollowed out lighter.

Isaac kept the SUV steady as he drove to the Beacon Hills Memorial Hospital. He watched through the rearview mirror as Stiles poured the claws out onto his palm. They fluttered like falling leaves from a tree in autumn.

"We need an Alpha for that," Isaac said from the front seat, he tried to watch but his eye kept darting to the road.

"Possibly an emissary," Stiles continued to stare at them from several different angles as if he could discover a new thing in their color and shape. "Anyone attuned to a level of the universe normal people can't hear."

"But not us?" Scott added uncertainly.

Something in that statement snapped Stiles out of his curiosity. He poured the claws back into the gold-plated container and snapped it closed.

"Nope," he leaned back into his seat. He stared at Isaac through the mirror and answered "not us. We can't know if it's Derek's without help. So we're back at square one."

"Can't we just say square two?" said Isaac with annoyance thick in his tone. "At least my solution wasn't camping cluelessly outside my Alpha's house and sleeping through his murder."
Stiles launched himself at the driver's seat and Scott threw himself in his path knocking them both to ricochet against the passenger side seat to land in the back seat once more. Isaac swerved accidentally when he turned the wheel as he dodged Stiles' assault.

"We don't even know if it is his body!" Stiles shouted while Scott held him down. "We just know a Hunter took a Werewolf's claws!"

"How long are you going to fight it, Stiles?" Isaac grumbled with his chin tucked in. He took a long pause and sniffed before he continued "Derek would have found us by now. You know it. I know it."

Despite his want to argue Stiles bit his lip and rocked back into his seat, he crossed and re-crossed his feet. He moved as if squirming and fidgeting would afford the blood circulation that would create all the answers his brain had yet to invent.

"So, you just find someone who can understand if the claws are genuine… but the lighter, that is?" Scott tried to follow along.

"Yes," Stiles and Isaac said in unison.

Stiles gave Isaac a look in the mirror. It wasn't an apology exactly, it was more like a shrug of 'let's deal with this later.' Isaac rolled his eyes and kept along the road, they would be at the Hospital in another minute or so if it hadn't been for traffic but they could make good use of the private minutes they had. Isaac was relieved that Stiles was talking for a few reasons.

The first of which, despite his anger Stiles had a lot to work through that he wasn't articulating, and between pack and family he needed to find a way to bond with the concept. If tantrums were the conduit, then Isaac could deal with that. For a little while, anyway.

Secondarily, Stiles could easily broach subjects Isaac had wanted to discuss with Scott for weeks but couldn't find a bridge with which to manage. Stiles might not know how to bond one relation to the other but he was doing a hell of a job on Isaac's behalf.

"The symbol here," Stiles turned the lighter over and offered it to Scott for perusing.

"This is supposed to mean?" Scott tried to remember as he ran his finger along the curve an embossment of a Celtic symbol; 3 interlocking spirals.

"Lots of things," started Isaac, "mother, father child; or alpha, beta, omega."

Stiles nodded along and tacked on the end "but to Derek it meant something more, something at the core of the Hale clan's teachings. He had it tattooed on his back as a way to keep it always with him, to always carry that burden."

"Even if it doesn't belong to Derek's Uncle there is no doubt it belongs to someone in the Hale family?" Scott suggested. Isaac and Stiles hadn't supposed the idea but they nodded in agreement. "So, now we know Kate doesn't always lie. That's something."

"Yeah, but I bet if you asked her how she knew where to find us tonight you wouldn't get a straight answer," Isaac reminded.

"Never mind her. We've got to find someone to figure out if the claws are his? Someone who can tell us what they say? Someone we can trust" Stiles shoved the lighter into his jean jacket pocket.

"Well, that sounds easy," Scott scoffed mildly.
Shower water supplanted the rain, beating a tandem down on her head. Lydia rotated her neck, feeling the lines of liquid create paths along her skin; she felt as if her senses began to fully come back from the poison that earlier permeated them. Despite how she washed away the ache of the day the spot where Kira touched, that place between her thumb and forefinger remained a pinpoint of virtual buzz. It didn't feel good or bad. It just buzzed. Just like the idea that Kira carried with her parts of Lydia's missing weeks, another pinpoint that didn't resolve anything. Another thing she couldn't decide whether she felt good or bad about.

The water had gone cold before she noticed and the numbness from her hand surpassed the numbness that pulled her to fully awaken. She watched herself in the mirror analytically as she dressed. Aware there was no marking where Kira touched, bruises from crawling across the cemented basement floor were light and already faded, scrapes and lines from the woodland racing already lifted from her skin and the garish scar on her left hip stitched to within an inch of suspicion already paled and read a warning; 'here is one tough cookie.' She obscured with the artfully deceptive covering of her Betsey Johnson Lounging Pajamas, black satin with pink lace detailing and when she dove under the cocoon of her bedcovers she felt her protection complete.

But despite her tiredness she remained haunted with unrest as conversations of the day replayed in her head. The Hospital was bad enough but she wondered what would have happened if she stayed at the Diner. She worried if everyone got home safely but she felt no guilt about leaving like she had. More relevantly she revisited the events of the Hale House. She twisted side to side in her sheets, her moist hair turning into tangles as she remembered too vividly, trying to find a position with handholds or footholds at a moment's notice when all she really wanted were resting spots. She wanted to have her friends' voices in her head but she wanted quiet and stillness too. She looked to her cell phone in its deadness on her bedside table and wondered what she'd say to them if she could.

When she played hypothetical conversations in her mind it calmed her. She played the scenarios out; bickering, catching up, laughing or worrying together. Tomorrow, she told herself (which was already today) she would go out and fix things. She would learn more, always learn more and she would fix things. She had faith her friends would keep until then.

Little did she know at that moment Allison Argent was being perp-walked across her lawn.

They came onto the Argent property by way of the lodge, unseen from the main house and parked the ATV in front of Axel's place, intending to walk the final spread on foot. Although Allison remained quiet, she didn't pretend she was out of the dog house. Instead she practiced counter-arguments in her head. Instead of giving her the 3rd degree, Kate let her stew.

Drying out from the rain, Roman skid barefoot through her parent's kitchenette dressed in flimsy t-shirt and jeans that were stretched wide to fit along his long lanky limbs. Roman returned first from his assignment and took it as a privilege to raid the refrigerator. Allison was relieved the house
wasn't entirely empty, it thankfully wasn't full either. Despite the unlikelihood that Kate would try
to murder her she liked the idea that there would be an in-house witness just in case.

"Breakfast?" Roman offered, warming steak over the stove top. When Allison hesitated and looked
to Kate for the go-ahead. "Come on," he insisted, "the only thing better than sirloin steak is day-old
sirloin steak." He pressed Allison to sit on a stool at the kitchen counter.

She looked at the spread and back toward him doubt, "you're making bacon."

"It's a side dish," he explained and rushed back to the stove to flip the bacon. "I insist. You missed
dinner yesterday, so you're having breakfast." The moment he mentioned it her stomach turned and
growled in reply.

"God, can't I have something besides red-meat?" she leaned up and looked around for any other
option but only saw leftover containers of meat. She picked at the one that had some green garnish
and gravy included. She used the one to scoop up the other and taste tested the sauce.

Roman looked on with disgust on his face. With speed and exasperation he hopped over to the
opposite counter and snatched a loaf of Italian bread and a decorative bowl of fruit (fortunately not wax).

"There you go Princess," he smiled with a wink and placed it before her before spinning back to
grab his frying pan before the bacon burned. The term Princess wasn't demeaning for Roman, he
used it for all the girls he liked and Prince for all the guys he liked. Just as he used King and Queen
for the men and woman he looked up to, it was odd and left over brow-beaten manners from his
Mom, before she disappeared and he was left with his Uncle Norm.

"Thanks," Allison knew her Mom would be furious in the morning but the apple looked too good,
so she dug in.

After a moment a plate appeared before her with steak and bacon on it, "there. It'll put hair on your
chest." It had a knife, fork and napkin on it.

Kate kept a cocky smile fastened in place and looked perfectly at ease.

"Queen Kate? Are you going to hover and wait to have left-over left overs or would you like to
partake?" Roman plopped down beside Allison. At least he acknowledged Kate's presence, which
was more than Allison had done in the last 5 minutes.

"I just like to see you so comfortable considering your busy night," she smirked suggestively.

"Alright," he admitted through a mouthful of red meat "I really uncovered the entrance to a
mystical Holt that reveals centuries of secrets because that's the sort of thing that's around every
corner in this town. Only I'm not going to tell you because I'm waiting to reveal it to the next
angsty hottie townie to get laid just like Bennet does," he said and grinned wide enough to rival a
crescent moon's slope.

"Don't bring that punk into it," Allison laughed, "do you know he told this one girl he's a veteran
from the North and South Korean wars, and then took her out on the shooting range to prove it?"

"Because we're at war with every Korean we confront; North, South, East and West?" Roman
nodded in admiration.

Kate snorted and straddled a stool, "I hate teens."
"Not everything in Beacon Hills is mayhem, my Queen. Once they opened the South highway I came home," he stuffed another bite in his mouth and chewed slowly while looking both women over, then swallowed. "The two of you though, you look like you have a story. Tell."

Allison's eyes went big, pulled off the butt end of the loaf and popped it in her mouth and shrugged with an expression of haplessness. Kate and Roman were having none of it. Kate smirked and looked to Allison to answer so Roman followed in suit and Allison's only thought while she chewed was a common one.

"We didn't go to help with the black out," she started. It was the sort of statement that would have started a massive argument from anyone else. Here it what it meant to be an Argent; she answered to no one and she answered to everyone. "There was a fire at the Hale House; we went to investigate there instead."

Roman made a 'hmm' sound of interest while he chewed slowly, he glanced at Kate to see if she would expand. When she didn't he looked back toward Allison and swallowed loudly, and asked "Why did you end up there?"

Allison in turn looked toward Kate for reprieve but saw none, so instead choked down some grapes. Kate's brow rose with amusement and took a sip from Roman's glass of water to clear her throat before she explained that Tyhurst kept an eye on the Hale house. She elaborated, that after the Hale body turned up everyone expected there would be heightened interest in the Hales, but they never expected something like this. He glanced back at Allison to expand but Allison never found a grape so delicious.

After she swallowed she added "correction; it was an explosion, not a fire. I'm not sure the flames were large enough to spread to the woods but the rain put it out. We didn't find anyone there but a couple of suspicious things we'll probably follow up once the rain lets up."

"After you catch up with some sleep you mean," Roman lost his joviality. He was only 2 years older but he knew how easy it was to get overworked when constantly proving yourself to the big boys. "We'll still be here waiting for you after the 30 winks you'll allow yourself."

She sighed, cut off a bite of steak with a piece of bacon attached and chewed it, and "this was good, thanks." she hopped off the stool. "I should sleep before school anyway."

"There is no school today," he gave her a look of surprise that she hadn't known. He glanced at Kate, "didn't you hear? It's been all over the service frequency." He dropped his walkie-talkie onto the counter as emphasis. "You should have heard unless your walkies have been off for some reason."

"Yeah, sorry. Guess it got switched off by accident," Kate lied poorly; Roman and Allison looked to her in amusement.

"Alright, I guess I'll get more than 30 winks. And wash off all this soot," Allison headed toward the stairs.

"From the fire," Roman said.

"Right," Allison paused in the doorway, suspicious at Roman's odd addition.

"Where you didn't find anyone," Roman continued through a mouthful of steak.

"That's what I said," Allison nodded.
"So you just observed and came back, right?" Roman turned on the stool to partly face her and Kate at the same time.

"Yes, Roman." Allison said a little harsher tapping her foot in annoyance.

"With rope burns on your wrist and radio silence," Roman made it sound like a question but it wasn't. He didn't expect an answer but he liked the tension so he swished his bacon in his Italian salad dressing before chewing it slowly with a grin. "Cool. That's cool. Goodnight Princess," he replied and turned back to play with his food.

Allison looked to Kate for what to do. Kate smirked to Roman, grabbed a piece of his steak before leaving the room by grabbing Allison by her arm.

"Roman is part of my team and he answers first to me. He won't say a thing, now go to bed," she said kindly.

"But what if--"

"Roman won't say anything because there is nothing to say," She kissed her niece on the cheek and gently pushed her up the stairs, "now, get some rest. You're going to need it to come up with better answers, because you have a room full of people to answer to later today."

Track 09 - Bad Habit by Foals

The Doctors placed Kira under observation for a concussion and the gash on her head. More interestingly it left her a resident on the same floor as Jackson Whittemore and while she might have gotten her fill of trying to take a peek, others felt differently. Her father thought himself better than being a lookie-loo but he found himself taking the long way back from the soda machine and taking longer breaks to the bathroom just so he could walk past the unit where Jackson's partition had been left with the curtain open. What luck!

It wasn't enough to want to know that the boy lived and the 'how', but Ken was curious to know 'why'? From his experience, if history has shown him anything, motive and execution rarely equate each other and he had an invested interest. His wife insisted she would handle it. The Argents assured they had it under control. But it didn't hurt if he poked his head in every once in a while when he had nothing else to do. After all, they closed the school Friday due to unsafe conditions in the library and after effects of the blackout. As a well-meaning teacher of Beacon Hills he earned the right to be a bit of a snoop to watch out for his kid every once in a while, especially under dire circumstances.

"Ms. Blake?" Ken Yukimura walked over to his co-worker's side, surprised at her appearance in the hospital, "were you hurt at the incident at the school? I didn't see you there."

Jennifer Blake leaned against the second floor Nurses' station, fatigued and sodden from the weather outside. She turned toward Ken and it took a moment to place the familiar face in unfamiliar territory. Hugging her arms to her in an attempt for warmth against obvious discomfort, relief spread across her face and brightened her features.

"No, I was headed home but the roads North were cut off because of power outage," she sounded frustrated but then added with emphasis "once the storm hit, my car didn't stand a chance. What about you? You didn't get hurt at the school? Your daughter?" she tacked the last bit on as if she'd
forgotten he had a daughter for a moment.

Ken wasn't unused to people seeing him as either the Dad or the Teacher but at that moment he wanted only to be Ken Yukimura; Father, Husband, Educator, Protector and Keeper of Secrets.

"Same, it was the storm." He nodded his head along kindly. "Why don't you sit with us while you wait and warm up?"

"I think it might be better if I wait here, just in case--" she reached for the counter of the Nurses' station despite the busy Nurses not exactly enjoying her presence.

"Jennifer, you're freezing," Ken took special note of her trembling hands.

"I'm fine," she smiled with her soft breed of confidence despite being framed by waves of damp dark windswept hair.

"Are you certain you're not in shock?" he reluctantly touched her arm to test whether it was attributed to nerves and not some bone settling chill that might need more immediate medical attention. But no, despite her general dampness she was warm, only her hands shook.

"Ken, I'll be fine" she nodded but she clutched onto the edge of the desk as if her frayed nerves would come apart if she let go. "I have Beacon Hills' finest to look after me," she reminded.

"What is it you're waiting for?" he asked. His curiosity had been piqued when he didn't notice an injury on her.

"Is it true they have Jackson in the ICU?" she looked past him and then turned to look behind her. She continued to swivel back and forth several times. Not getting an answer from him only caused her agitation to rise.

"Yes," Ken answered eventually after a minute when he decided the truth would come out anyway and it could do no harm after all, "He too was injured on the road."

"I thought he was at the incident at the school?" her mouth dropped open with a sigh of relief then she looked about to laugh and thought better, thought clear-minded enough to ask.

"I must have been misinformed," Ken had forgotten Jackson had been reported at the Library incident by Mr. Harris. Without a logically explained transition, it looked very suspicious to displace Jackson. And worse yet, if Jackson woke up and didn't confirm whatever he said next--

"It's a real shame what's happened," he tried to sound as sagely as possible, nodded his head and said nothing more.

"Do you know what's happened?" she asked. She released her hold on the counter to wring her hands nervously as her heels clacked along the hall. She made a path toward the ICU where someone had left Jackson's window in full display. All half-dozen of the machines attached to him pumped at full power to maintain his vitals, while half of his face look melted down. "That hardly looks like the injuries a kid would get from a few fallen books."

Ken shrugged his shoulders and stepped forward. He put an arm around her shoulders and guided her back toward the section where they were allowed before security (even if they were periodically distracted with power redistribution throughout the building) got on their case.

"I'm not certain" he said kindly "but we're all pulling for him." He aimed her toward a hospital bench, unsurprisingly she resisted.
"I would like to know if he's going to be okay," she insisted and aimed toward the Nurses' station once more. As she continued, her voice rose in agitation "but no one will speak to me." She noted his concerned expression she elaborated her predicament. "His family lives across the street from me. I think you know how it is Ken. It's difficult not to cross that professional line when you watch over them every day only to see them when you get home."

"It's like you just said Jen, Beacon Hills' finest are looking after him," he assured her with a smile and urged her one last time to join them. He even offered her a portion of their stale hospital food if she happened to be hungry.

"If it's just the same, Ken," she said with one of her more pointed smiles, surprising no one, "I think I'll wait here to talk to someone."

"Alright," he huffed briskly gathering himself up, he gave her a dashing grin before leaving her side. "Take care of yourself. You can't be there to take care of the children if you can't take care of yourself first."

Track 10 - Kettering by The Antlers

"Truer words were never spoken," Noshiko said hanging off the last of Ken's conversation as he reentered Kira's examination room. "Come sit with your daughter; try to manage keeping her in the bed."

"She keeps wandering off?" he asked coming to sit bedside.

"Well, you get to," Kira argued. She gestured with grasping hands toward the door as if she could pull it toward her.

"That's different" he explained, "I'm a rebel." He grinned and took hold of her hand.

Noshiko gave a short laugh and picked up her purse. With her unwinding came weariness and she had to act before tiredness overcame her. She looked to her husband and gave him a nod, before she went out to justify herself. She made her way directly through the corridors toward the ambulatory entrance of the emergency room where she was certain to find the most administrative activity. It was the sort of thing to attract Argent interest and where she was likely to find Victoria. Despite the long night and its heavy activities Victoria cut a fine line amongst the mass, with her short-cropped copper hair and designer clothes she stood tall beside a striking dark-haired foreign woman. They worked through the system, logging every call, every new admittance and every injury, whether it was of marked interest or not. When Victoria caught sight of Noshiko she asked the other woman if she could handle the observations alone. "Rest assured I could handle them easily."

"Handle them, Livy, not murder them," Victoria reminded. The woman rolled her eyes and gave a shrug before she returned to the office where staff parted speedily as she entered.

After finally finding a small empty space between two beds, barely enough to be considered private, Victoria and Noshiko came together to speak.

"How is she?" Victoria began. Kira's admission wouldn't have gone unnoticed.
"Better," Noshiko answered on instinct. Victoria looked disbelieving of that sentiment, "she is frightened. She doesn't understand what's happening."

"Has it occurred to you that knowing the truth might put her at ease?" Victoria said a tad too critically. Noshiko gave her a side glare that made her sigh. "Alright, I'll back off but I can only give you help if you're going to listen."

"Help?" Noshiko snapped, "We did not come here for help. I think you have that reversed don't you, Hunter." She adjusted her position as best she could in their small space and regained her poise.

"When you're right you're right, and you often are," Victoria conceded with a smile. "But things have changed," she turned around the pile of papers she had clenched to her chest and revealed a tablet she hugged close to her. She dropped it to the bed beside them and ran through many layers of password protected protocols to reveal Kira's medical records. "There it is. It's pretty impressive... and removed from the Hospital records."

Noshiko stared at the screen in awe, she sometimes tapped the letters to change positions but the MRI revealed Kira's electromagnetic waves gave off the shape of something inhuman. Something greater than human.

"Thank you," Noshiko said quickly.

"Just doing my job," Victoria squeezed her arm in warm assurance then moved to grab up her tablet. "Noshiko, the time has come to talk to your daughter about this change."

She laughed, "This isn't like the 'sex talk,' Victoria. This is telling her, 'we've been hiding secrets from you your whole life, so you'll probably question your self-worth.' This is saying 'you're from an ancient and long bloodline with obligations you were born into.' This is telling her 'there are monsters in the world and you're one of them.'"

After a deep breath, Victoria interrupted, "Noshiko, this is telling your daughter you love her, every piece of her whatever they'll be." She didn't move to hug her companion. They might have known each other for many, many years, but they were not the touchy-feely sort of friends. She did however place her hand over Noshiko's on the stretcher, "it's better that she knows she has you through this process than that she has to go through it alone. It's better than having her afraid."

Noshiko nodded but said nothing. The beeps from the monitors in the beds around them filled up the void nicely.

"I should get back," Victoria withdrew her hand the way someone would if they were afraid they had been caught 'in the act'. Only she thought she heard someone call her name.

"How is your child in all of this?" Noshiko said rather than asked and she made a point of doing it.

With her shoulders tight, turning on a heel Victoria spun back to face her, "my daughter?" Noshiko nodded. Noshiko damn well knew Victoria had a daughter and that her name's Allison. It wasn't vanity to say everyone knew the Argents. "Allison is holding her own during all of this."

"Yes, and Kira said they had classes together. She explained they were supposed to be in the library studying together today," her eyes were intent but tired as she came to her point, "that would be the same time Kira was abducted. Our children are at the center of these things, why?"

Victoria rolled her eyes, "God knows because I don't. That's just how it is." Victoria became distracted for a moment by Livy gesturing for her to come back. Instead, she pulled the curtain
closed around them.

"Noshiko, what did you expect? The Argents came here out of duty; it meant bringing our children along, my daughter along with me. It had nothing to do with being happy or sad about it. That is what duty means. If you want to leave no one will stop you but that won't prevent what you will go through with Kira. She was always going to mature and you are always going to be her Mother."

She paused, in part for emphasis, in part to keep her tone in check and in part to acknowledge she wasn't upset with Noshiko. Allison had snuck out, run around in the dark, rainy forest and headlong into an explosion. And by Victoria's own argument she was meant in some part to be okay with it. She practically bit her tongue.

"Victoria? That is noble sentiment but this isn't about sentiment," Noshiko moved forward an inch and pointed to the obscured folder tucked into the space between the tablet and her chest. She didn't need to read it squarely to know the label read 'Jackson Whittemore', "If we stay here there is a threat and it is aimed directly at them."

Pursing her lips in thought Victoria replied, "Yes. And if you leave there will still be a threat. And someone else's child will come under fire. Only they won't understand what's happening or how to fight back but we do know they will certainly die."

Noshiko closed her eyes and breathed deeply and listened to the bustle of people just beyond the curtain. It felt alien certainly, like their worlds never touched and that sort of familiarity made it easier to make decisions.

"If we stay--while we stay, you need to let us go about things our own way," Noshiko reminded, "We both aim to do good here but your family invaded this city while my family was summoned. We will help each other. Agreed?"

Track 11 - Young Lion by Vampire Weekend

Once they had no need for it, the traffic let up and they pulled into the parking lot of Beacon Hills Memorial Hospital easily. They cut the engine and were met with the tap-tap of a magna light flashlight clip harshly against the driver's side window. Their startlement was matched only by the shame in realization the Deputy meant business when she said they were under arrest.

"How do you manage to get arrested twice within 24 hours? No, twice within 12 hours?" Isaac wasn't laughing, and he wasn't even amused really but his weariness made it sound like it.

Stiles must have forgotten he was hand-cuffed because when he brought a hand up to make an emphatic gesture the other flew up with it and it seemed to surprise him. That didn't stop him from jabbing an index finger toward Isaac's face to make emphasis.

"Detained," Stiles struggled to keep a low tone, "Technically we've been detained."

"They read the Miranda rights this time Stiles," Scott leaned toward him over the coffee table.

"Detained," Stiles repeated with emphasis, "Right?" he spun back around to look at the arresting officer.

The Deputy glanced over her shoulder into the waiting room toward them and she made an
"Deputy Clarke," he stood and stumbled around the coffee table. In an obvious attempt to avoid Isaac he stepped onto Scott's feet. "But I thought you liked me?"

"I do like you Stiles," she scoffed and brought her hands down onto her hips, onto the holster of her gun to remind of her authority, "it's why I cuffed your hands in front of you. Deputy Haige said if he found you he would have brought you in with ankle cuffs."

With that Scott and Isaac cringed and held their hands up in contrition.

"W-why would he do that?" Stiles winced and backed off a few feet.

"The Sheriff wanted you brought back safely. I had money you would come back on your own," she smiled.

"Wait," he stepped forward, "there was a betting pool?"

She tilted her head from side to side noncommittally, "Parrish said you'd head home. Graeme said you would hide out at a friend's. Haige said you'd probably end up at a girlfriend's or worse."

"You really do like me," said Stiles with a sighing flair to add playfulness.

Deputy Clarke answered "Ah-ah," in a manner that sounded more like a warning.

"Purely out of speculative interest," Stiles asked doubling back before he went to his seat, "how much did you win?"

"Let's just say, if there were illegal activity going on which I haven't openly admitted to than it would be something in the triple digits," she smirked.

"Nice," Stiles smirked with an impish glint in his eyes as he headed back to his seat, where he discovered Isaac and Scott staring at him in twin expressions of disbelief. "What? It's nice to be held in high esteem."

"Alright, what are we supposed to do about this?" Isaac raised his handcuffed wrists and shook them dramatically as if they were manacles. "It isn't the time of month for this and not all of us find them to be fashionable, like a certain someone does." Isaac gives his head a tilt to the side and a smirk that infers an inside joke that made Stiles snigger.

But when Scott asked who they meant, Isaac and Stiles were quick to answer 'no one' in unison. While their shared past was no longer a secret, without meaning to Scott felt a little burnt by it. In fact he tried not to, part of him even found it endearing because from the little knew of Isaac, he knew Isaac has had trouble finding someone to get all his nuanced jokes. Just like he knew Stiles and how awkward it's been to feel 100% percent accepted since his return to Beacon Hills. So he wasn't jealous, he was grateful they had each other, something he had to remind himself of and not for the first time.

"Do you think we could escape?" Isaac kidded. Isaac held up his hands and twisted them in a way that reminded they could just break the handcuffs if they wanted to.

"What's the point?" Scott moaned low and rubbed his face in defeat.
"Yeah, we should probably lay low at this point," he shrugged awkwardly, his hands clanging together.

"What's the point of not trying to escape?" was Isaac's rebuttal.

"How 'bout keeping out of getting thrown into a holding pen with the rest of the troublemakers," the Sheriff answered from the doorway over Isaac's left shoulder.

"Dad!" Stiles jumped but was too intimidated to stand.

Despite the frustration and unrest that darkened his face his Father smiled at the sight of him. He gestured for him to stand and come forward dangling the handcuff keys like a fishing lure.

Stiles was slower to his feet but between Scott and Isaac he was the first to reach him. The others inch back until he was forced to make first contact and once within arm's reach, yanked forward into the Sheriff's hug.

"Godammit," he said gruffly smothered into Stiles' shoulder. "Nothing short of arresting you is going to keep your sorry butt out of trouble, is it?"

"I'm so sorry, Dad."

With a second swipe the Sheriff pulled Scott over as well, clumsily into the embrace. After a long moment The Sheriff released them both and kept a grip on Scott's neck. He gave them both a long look over, from tatter top to soot-stained bottom and he made a noise that sounded like a scoff and a grunt. Scott tried not to laugh while Stiles tried not to flinch (and failed).

"Isaac, am I right? The foster brother?" the Sheriff asked to which Isaac nodded stiffly, "Thanks for bringing this idiot back safe."

When he reached over to shake the Sheriff's hand it wasn't the same sort of hug he gave the others, but he was pulled in just the same, their hands clasped and given a clap on the back.

"You're welcome... sir," Isaac stiffened. He was unused to Fatherly displays of affection. Despite Kate's accusations, Isaac's loyalty to Derek wasn't Fatherly affection.

"Now," then the Sheriff gripped one of Stiles' shoulders and one of Isaac's to the point of pinching, turned them around and frog marched them back into the room, "what the hell were you thinking?!"

That was a tone Isaac was more familiar with, Stiles however wasn't and he felt ashamed for upsetting his Dad.

Uncertain on how much the Sheriff knew Isaac replied in what he assumed was the safest response "thinking about what exactly?"

"Since I can't trust either of you to stay put," he responded thrusting them into the uncomfortable hospital chairs, "even under police supervision the two of you are going to have to stay right here until I can bring the car around, take you to the house, feed you, scold you and put you to bed. You okay with that?"

Stiles' brows went up, grinned and gave him a nod.
"Good, 'cause it was either that or the drunk-tank," he threatened, turned to leave.

The tactic of staying still and hoping not to be noticed wouldn't work unless the Sheriff could physically walk through him. And as much as he hated himself for asking it, Scott couldn't prevent the tragedy "what about me?"

"Ah," the Sheriff's grinning amusement terrified him to point of turning his bones to ice. "I almost forgot," he cooed, having clearly not forgotten at all. He made quick work of Scott's handcuffs and turned him toward the door, "your Mom wants you to wait for her at the Nurses' station."

It was all of 20 feet away but from the looks Scott cast his friends it may as well have been the Moon. They reflected his hapless expression but kept their seats for fear of upsetting Stiles' Dad.

Track 12 - Waiting It Out by Imogen Heap

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Considering their recent accustomed hug followed by some sort of smack in the arm or whack in the back of his head, it hurt Scott more to see his Mom refrain. Her anger clearly made it too much for her to actually stay still. When Scott tried to get her attention she glared daggers in warning so he sat back down and waited for her to come along on her own terms. Penitent and impatient in the Nurses' station he waited while she buzzed by him continuing on her rounds.

Finally she dropped her pile of paperwork on the counter between them, she wore her coat, her hair loose and an expression that meant 'Move it!'

"It's not just this," even irritated she didn't yank at him when she moved along the hall with her arm wrapped through his, "although arrested, escaping and evading police custody twice is a new low... now, that I didn't think that you would reach quite this soon. It's everything on top of it."

Her temper had risen to the point where she had to stop to force him to look at her face-to-face, "The completely bizarre behavior, the sneaking around late at night, fighting at school along with your failing grades."

"Midterms aren't until next week though," Scott responded in a way that sounded like a sore excuse. From just over her shoulder, through the doorway of the waiting room nearest Scott could make out the silhouette of Stiles and Isaac eavesdropping.

"Really, Scott? Really?" she took a step back to balk at his audacity. Stiles grimaced in response and Isaac waved him off in his execution of a defense. "I have to ground you." Her intensity rose with her repetition, "I have to ground you. I am grounding you. You are grounded."

"What about school?" he asked before he thought better of tone.

"Fine - Other than school," she rethought her strategy, "then no computer."

"I need the computer for school," he responded instinctively.

"Then no, uh-" Melissa swung around to notice Stiles hovering and he stumbled back into Isaac who in turn fell back behind the door frame. "No Stiles," she added.

"What," Stiles rushed forward and was shoved back by Deputy Clarke. "No, Stiles?" he implored, the Deputy looked at him pitifully but kept her footing.
"No Stiles!" she repeated with conviction. Then hesitated when she realized their recoupling, while challenging, it mattered. But she stood her ground. She continued "and no more motorcycle privileges. Give me your motorcycle keys," she continued at a rambling pace and Scott hurried to comply "Give 'em to me! Oh, for the love of God."

"Mom, you want me to--" he offered to unhook the key from his keychain for her. Sensing her frustration he felt compelled to do more, to try more to make this better. To make amends.

"No," she scolded and snatched her hand away only to fumble at keeping the keys from falling.

"Mom, come on, let me just-- Mom!" he insisted. He felt her anxiety rose and soaked through his skin and felt awful that he had caused this in her.

"What is going on with you?" she went still once more and held onto his hands.

"Do you really wanna know?" he continued low, despite having little more than an inch over her, he brought her nearer and steadied her hands between his.

"Yeah," she implored him.

Scott wanted to come clean, about Werewolves and Hunters, about haunted dreams and burning buildings. Not only did he not know where to begin but he didn't know where that story even ended. Over her shoulder Scott saw Stiles and Isaac with their faces shared expressions of concern and disapproval. Isaac shook his head tightly and Stiles bit his lip intensely, watching him with eyes wide as saucers.

"Is this about your Father?" she asked quietly and Scott's guilt crushed his ability to speak.

From where they stood, Isaac looked to the floor, it wasn't that he didn't understand that sort of distress it was that he understood it too well. As part of a Pack in hiding, especially of late, all Isaac ever did was lie about his family, from his biological to his foster family even to people he cared…especially to people he cared for. That feeling sucked. Stiles' face mirrored Scott's in stress but with a gloss of brave-face, he showed more hardness and softness at once, and gave Scott a small nod insisting he could do this. Then Stiles pushed Isaac back into the waiting room to give Scott some semblance of privacy despite the fact that with their enhanced hearing they could of course know everything anyway.

"It is, isn't it?" desperate for an explanation, Melissa grasped for the truth while she stared into her son's eyes. When nothing came of it, "Okay, you know what, um - We'll talk about this at home. I'm gonna go get the car."

"I'm the worst son ever," Scott shook his head and moved toward his friends. Before he could reach them his pocket buzzed with his cell phone ringing. He stared at them and then at the caller ID. Forbidding transportation and prohibiting contact with friends weren't bad enough, if he didn't take this call before he passed through the hospital double-doors who knew when he would have a chance to talk to Allison again.

Track 13 - Take You Home (Let It Go) by Onyay Pheori

On the bedroom floor with her back pressed against the bed Allison faced the door and pressed her toes into the carpet. With her hair clean and framing her face she rubbed sleep from her eyes. The
question hovered in her mind and it now belonged to her though someone else placed it there. What had the others found in the Hale House?

It must have been important. It nearly killed them. What could have been that valuable and worthwhile that even afterward they didn't flinch to talk of it. None of them heard Lydia scream but she led them and they went. What could be worth poison and pain? She rubbed at the wrist of the hand that held her cell phone.

Finally she decided her curiosity bubbled over her need for sleep and she watched the door to make sure no one peeked in. Scott picked up on the second ring. While he was not asleep he didn't seem inclined to speak.

"Are you okay?" she said in a tiny voice and the word 'okay' sounded subjective.

"I'm handling things," he said honestly because Scott was always honest.

"Scott... I'm worried. And I can't sleep because I can't stop worrying," she shuddered at her own honesty.

He paused and she could hear the noise of people in the background. He sounded like he was at the hospital still.

"Allison, I'm worried too," he finally admitted. His voice became a small muffled whisper as he cupped the phone to prevent others from overhearing. "I feel like... we're just kids. We can't handle all of this."

She drew her knees up and wrapped her left arm around them. She imagined him sitting in a hallway. He imagined her pacing the halls of her second floor. Then she imagined him at the Nurses' Station. Then he imagined her at her desk taking notes. She imagined him sitting in a waiting room. He imagined her curled up on her sofa. They closed their eyes and imagined being beside one another. And she leaned her cheek against the hill of her knees and talked carefully and softly against the mouthpiece of her phone.

"Why would you do it then? Why did you go to the Hale House?" she asked quietly.

"Are you asking because you want to know if I'm okay or because you're investigating?" Scott grumbled and she could hear the strain in his voice. Despite his greater attempts to accept the idea of 'Hunters' in his reality, the acknowledgment that his girlfriend was one of them sometimes was just a bitter pill to swallow.

"Sorry," she back pedaled. "I just can't sleep, my brain is always in investigation mode," she yawned despite her claim.

Scott smiled into the mouth piece. "Can't you turn off your Hunter brain for one night just to be a concerned girlfriend?"

"Can't I be a Hunter and a concerned girlfriend?" she asked sounding mildly annoyed.

After a moment's pause he thought about it and how tough it must have been on her from day one and her struggle, "You've never been anything else," he said smilingly, "and I am really lucky for it."

"Damn lucky," she added smugly.

Realizing the time Scott came to his senses, "Allison, I have to go. My Mom is waiting for me and
she is pissed."

"Alright, I lov--" she stared at her phone. He disconnected before she had gotten a chance to say it again. And she was just getting used to it and now the unrest stayed with her. Not only had he cut her off but he left her question unanswered.

**Track 14 - Weight Of It All by Handsome Ghost**

The act of trying to remain patient in the waiting room, just waiting for their ride became a punishment onto itself.

"You're Dad's scary," Isaac said rubbing his sore wrists.

"My Dad's great," Stiles replied, he hopped off the uncomfortable hospital chair and took a seat on the coffee table facing Isaac.

"The last thing Kate talked to you about was a 'revenge claim' going on for killing an Alpha," Isaac muttered as he squirmed forward in his seat.

"We didn't kill-" Stiles scoffed and tried to shake off the idea, "do you think Derek did?" He didn't add before he died. He didn't squirm in his seat but it was obvious his skin crawled at the prospect that his Alpha killing another packs Alpha, it was the sort of act that made all of this drama make sense.

"Don't you think he would, if he were trying to escape?" Isaac's brow rose in a way that suggested this was more than obvious.

"-but Derek's body was found first," Stiles cut in.

"-but all this started now, after Derek's" Isaac stopped himself from saying death, "disappearance, then it wouldn't make sense for it to be a revenge claim."

Stiles gave pause to this statement. Stiles' pauses were louder than anyone else's in the world, they were filled with plot and pregnant with conspiracy, so that when he spoke next whatever he said, even if it was wrong it gave dimension to the conversation "unless it's..." he started and when he closed his eyes and pinched his nose, coupled with the still cuffed hand it muffled his words, "Cora."

Isaac scoffed loudly and dropped back loudly against the couch. He shook his head in disbelief but his eyes were locked on Stiles, waiting for there to be a sign of hesitation. There was not.

When Isaac mentioned Cora in the Diner earlier, even then he felt a drop in his stomach. He saw the effort it took for Stiles to say her name and understood he wouldn't have tossed it around frivolously.

"She's the only one of us who knows how to formally claim revenge," Stiles nodded in thought and continued. "Who has the right to?" he leaned forward and dragged Isaac forward by his fistfuls of his jacket and scarf, "Isaac, do you think she might still be alive?"

Too stunned to talk Isaac closed his eyes and shook his head, not in negation but in nervousness, he reached between them to unclasped Stiles' hands and gripped them hard for a second before letting
them fall.

After a beat he shifted into Isaac's personal space once more and dropped his voice, "Isaac? You know there is no way Cora is going to be able to live up to a revenge claim on her own."

"Like that'd stop her from trying," Isaac scoffed. After a moment of staring at each other and calculating how true that statement was he looked back to the instigator, "Stiles, I think we're going to need help."

Immediately Stiles shook his head in negation. There was a lot he could calibrate and plot in a moment, but plotting wasn't the same thing as compromising someone's safety. Especially someone he had sworn never to put in harm's way again only hours ago.

"No way," Stiles waved his hands in a cross as if he waved off a plane landing, "I'm not askin' him. I haven't seen Scott in years." After a pause, "But Cora is like a sister."

"And Scott is like your brother," Isaac understood his conflict, maybe not fully. But Isaac was a friend to Scott at this point and knew if Scott was presented with the option what Scott's answer would certainly be. "He'll say yes if you just ask."

Stiles' internal conflict spilled over and Isaac hadn't seen him this upset before. It wasn't 'punch a wall upset' it wasn't even 'yell illogically snarky rambles' upset. Stiles stared at a spot at the wall and stewed silently. Isaac couldn't imagine what he had simmering under the surface but it was enough to make his eyes water.

"Listen," Scott clarified to both of them, "I think if she's alive than we need to find her right away. There's no way she could've survived her attacker and made it this far without getting hurt."

Neither had notice Scott had snuck his way back into the waiting room. Isaac swore so loud and flinched backward, his arms jerked back barely missing smacking Stiles' chin. Stiles stared on with something akin to pride.

"What are you doing here?" Stiles asked grinning.

"Conjugal visit," Scott explained and pointed toward Deputy Clarke who looked on and pointed toward her wrist watch in warning. "She let me come stop in to say bye to my brothers in crime."

Stiles cracked a smile of relief at that.

"If Cora is family to you... well, she's family to me. I'll help you find her."

"Scott, I can't ask you to-" Stiles started.

"Moron. You guys should never have to," obviously from the grin on his face and the hand he had placed on Stiles' shoulder he heard more than he'd let on.

"Scott, it's time," Deputy Clarke pulled at his left elbow guiding him away.

When Scott stepped away he looked unwilling and scraped along in his already scuffed over sneakers.

Isaac considered how much Scott could understand and how much he couldn't while he gnawed on his finger, "Stiles, what was it you said about Kate's narration?"
Stiles scrunched up his face in momentary confusion, "that she isn't a reliable narrative?"

"Alright, then we've just got to figure out who is?" Isaac suggested.

"Kate's wrong," he said finally in a voice that sounded raw, "We aren't lost boys." He didn't face Isaac all the way only looked at him from the corner of his eye. Isaac made a small noise that said he still listened. Their mind followed the same train of thought, if Cora still lived, her pure-blood passion would have driven her to do crazy things to avenge Derek. It wasn't beyond the realm of reason. It was the same sort of thing that drove Isaac to make a compromising deal with Kate. Maybe Stiles hadn't done the same but that wasn't to say he wouldn't have if he was given the chance.

"Derek wasn't a Father figure to us. He was a leader and a friend, but not what I'd call the most reliable or even stable source for reasoning. Good thing we weren't raised by Derek. We were raised by Talia."

Track 15 - Hounds by Valleys

The University lay within the blackout zone, but only just. When the power began to peel back from the Hospital outward it was also one of the first places for it to return to. Despite the sun brightening the town and the power return, their blackout bonfires burned straight through until noon. It was going to be a hell of a time cleaning up the campus but still it was worth it.

With the recent violent crimes the Resident Advisors decided, instead of enforcing check-in and insisting campus police spread to the thinnest, they enlisted the aid of the 'sober-friends' ride services brought any stranglers into the RA's room, any RA's room for safe keeping. A sort of inelegant drunk tank, while the rest of the party-goers stuck in large groups to the bonfires.

Because the highway ran along the West Entrance, anyone looking for a place to wait out the blackout/storm was welcome to join the biggest lawn party in the history of the University.

The placement of the campus also meant anyone on the East side not partying, watching lightning dance on mountaintops through a wicked storm, (which was hardly anyone) witnessed the snuffing out of the Hale House fire over the woodland horizon. Later, word would get around about it, and when it also became something of legend everyone will claim to have witnessed it but really only a handful had.

"The storm has been letting up for hours now," Ethan made it sound like the weather had conspired against him. "Can we still call it a storm when we know it's wrong?"

"The ground is still wet," Aiden shrugged. He shook out the water from his hair, amused with the spray it lashed out at those nearest to him. "Why not, we don't know what else to call it."

"But it's backwards," Ethan squinted toward his twin unamused at being sprayed on sideways as well as from above.

They sat with their legs dangling over the pipe-railing of a low level stairwell, they wore Varsity jackets that suited them but didn't belong to them.

"How do you mean backward," Aiden took a swig of a beer that due to his metabolism wouldn't get him drunk, "it isn't rising up? It isn't 'not' wet?"
Ethan snatched up the can, finished it before tossing it through the air with expert precision, skidding off the side of the building, bouncing off of his brother's Kawasaki and into the recycling bin. It so happened with the rainwater fell in a vertical line and didn't respond to the wind and the when the lightning followed the thunder his every natural sense went static.

"You know what I mean," he grinned after a deliberately offensive belch.

"Rude!" Aiden snapped at him but returned the grin.

"Hey, do you want another one?" came a voice from just under their stoop.

"Nah, I think we're good," Ethan waved off the offer.

"I meant you might want to let this one lay down in your room," the woman suggested with a different lighthearted tone. She carried propped against her a man of fairly decent build who was so far gone all of his weight fell over onto her, even when she yanked his arm several times over her shoulders to keep him up he still hung like a rag doll.

"I don't know," Aiden looked to his brother, "are we still taking in stragglers?"

"Aiden, that's Gus," Ethan leaned in and whispered against his brother's ear a second before he hopped over the railing and landed on the dewy lawn beside her "Yeah, why not? Who says the party has to stop here, right? It's 5pm somewhere, right?"

"Thanks, we got it from here," said Aiden as he dropped alongside Ethan and pulled the other arm of his unconscious Beta over his shoulder. They ambled up the stairs together. Possibly, if they weren't trying to save face one of them might have been able to carry Gus' deadweight alone. Possibly. But it was a marvel Gus had found his way back safely considering what is strong enough to have rendered a Werewolf unconscious to begin with. And then how difficult it would have been to locate Gus' Alphas since they were well camouflaged into their student life at Laurel Hall.

"You're lucky I found him when I did," she explained while she followed them through the hall, "he was likely to get flattened or worse."

"Yeah?" Aiden felt a chill go down his spine. Gus was old enough to be his father and a reckless idiot because the loss of Cooter had driven him to extremes. Loss like that was something Aiden was getting familiar with, but he knew he would never get used to so he had a spread of empathy that Gus was certainly putting to a stretch.

"While you've been judging co-ed's wet t-shirt contest the forest has been burning," her voice went deep and lost all humor.

With her concentration turned fully on them, it felt keen enough to engage them like physical stabs.
In unison the Twins snapped their fangs free and growled. They began to change with eyes that turned bright Alpha red and claws extended ready to grip.

The bottle neck of the hallway provided only enough space for one to attack at a time. She ducked low and caught onto Ethan's arm when he swung for her head; she allowed for him to smack her against the wall then used the weight to drag him down with her while kicking his face upward dislocating his arm. She rolled out from under him as Aiden aimed a dropping punch at her head, missing her by mere centimeters.

The position changed into trapped and she found herself with a need to attack. Her hesitation came from knowledge that fighting Alphas left little if any chance at survival despite her shape-shifting type. She breathed in deep and gave out a growl then climbed up the wall, bounced against it and jumped twisting with her elbow aimed at Aiden's face. He caught her mid-air and flung her with great force into the ceiling slamming the extended fluorescent light fixture before he smacked her down into the ground with enough strength it rattled every bone in her body.

As he reached back for a dramatic slash at her face she pulled her legs upward to wrap around the arm that pinned her, to twist and break it at the elbow. She continued to twist and rolled until they both turned over and she lay clumsily on top. They growled loudly at one another as she moved to head-butt him but before she made contact, overhead Ethan grabbed her by the hair and smacked his knee into her face.

The blow sent her fumbling backward releasing Aiden. She jumped dizzily to her feet and used her sense of hearing rather than sight to navigate as she lashed out. As Ethan swung to hit her, he missed and Aiden got to his feet. As all three began to growl and came to slowly move toward one another, but Gus came to and yelled at them to wait.

"Herveaux ain't got the best attitude," Gus explained.

"And?" Ethan expected more.

Gus said nothing but shrugged instead and she laughed.

"Gus, you prick," she flipped him off and withdrew her claws as she did, then waited for their response.

Ethan and Aiden looked to each other for an explanation but both looked as lost as the other, instead she moved past Ethan and to Gus' side and helped prop him to sit against the wall. Although awake he looked mostly unresponsive.

"Is he going to be okay?" Aiden asked coming to stand over her side.

She glanced up at him "Now you give a crap?" she grumbled. Gus' legs barely helped her as she yanked at his collar to force him to stand. "Who knows? Take him to your room," she shoved him over into Aiden's arms.

Herveaux's features had returned to mostly normal, her hair stayed salt and pepper by her ears, her claws went away but her eyes stayed colored and the tips of her ears took longer to return from black to her natural tan. And Gus was right about her attitude.

The Twins returned to their commons state although the state of the hallway wouldn't be the same until they got some repairmen to come in.

"What the hell even happened to him?" Ethan asked when Aiden dropped Gus onto bed. Gus went back to sleep.
"Packs have been running wild tonight," Herveaux tsked disgruntled, "and you don't even know where your Betas are?"

The Twins shared a look half-shame half-resentful. "You say that like you have any idea what this is like, running a pack," Aiden snapped.

"You're just a Beta," Ethan continued. He knew he sounded like a bitter child, exactly as Kali accused them of being but he couldn't stop the words as they fell from his mouth. "What right do you have to question? Look at you, forced to run errands for your Alpha that could get you dead. Bet you didn't question him did you?"

"A pack ain't a democracy," she grumbled her voice went deep with displeasure. After a sigh she shook her head, sympathy simmered in her eyes as they took on their natural light brown.

"I know what it's like to find yourself after everything is flipped in your pack. I'm in my position it's because I owe a debt." They had no doubt about that fact. It was unheard of for a Werewolf to welcome another predator into the pack, at that a Werelynx with Shapeshifter properties brought to the party incalculable risk. Herveaux must have been desperate to have come to be inducted into a Werewolf pack, possibly against pack wishes considering her shiny personality. To say she owed a 'debt' was putting it mildly.

She jabbed a finger toward Gus, "it doesn't look like he likes taking orders from you either but a pack is a pack is a pack." She spoke easily about being part of a pack when it was clear she didn't belong. Her loyalty was strong and they listened intently hoping to understand how to forge something like that among their ranks. "Keep it together or else."

"Is that a threat?" Ethan looked to Gus, back to the woman and growled. His eyes brightened without meaning to.

"It ain't like that," she nearly laughed. "It's like a saying my old man used to say in the old country 'shit or get off the pot.'" She went across the room and dropped onto Ethan's bed, "just so you know my Alpha is Ennis and no, he doesn't know I'm here on this death-defying mission. I came 'cause I pity you two."

A silence filled the room and settled heavier than the storm once had only the storm had let up and the day had moved on but the weight of her word wouldn't.

"I ain't going to compromise myself again," she dusted off her jeans in a gesture of moving on. "After the fire caused by that explosion tonight and this storm came in covering it up... my people, Deucalion's people and Kali's people are searching for our missing in the forest. If you were any leaders at all you would be too. Or else it'd look like you're the ones behind it."

"That's insane," Aiden exclaimed and even Ethan made a gesture of frustration coming forward.

"This war is insane," Ethan almost wanted to hit her instead he only stepped forward; chest thrust out but did nothing. All bruised up but healed up he looked ready for another round.

"Grief is insane," she kicked at Gus' leg. "I found this guy lame in a field of Carmichael's Monkshood; looking for someone named Naylor in what he swore was a shallow grave. I had to choke him out, break his arms and legs and then drag out him out by the scruff of his neck. Either that or count him as the next corpse."

"He would have died exposed to that much Wolfsbane," Ethan defused and came to Gus' side to see the damage. He understood now exactly how and why his friend would have been brought in
unconscious and weak, unable to speak for himself. He didn't have to like the guy to love the guy.

"At least he had the right idea," Herveaux moved smoothly passed, while Aiden and Ethan came to stand beside each other as she hesitated at the dorm room door. She looked them over with a pitiable shake to her head and warned again "War ain't a spectator's sport."

Chapter End Notes

CREDITS/ROLL CALL:

**Argents - Team1; headed by Victoria, Chris & Allison.**
- Rumi - [Sergeant] specialized in Recon; Special Forces and espionage. Chris' right hand man and Allison's godfather.
- Axel - [1st Lieutenant] expert tracker, marksman and Allison's 2nd cousin.
- Bennett - [Field Officer] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old and friend to Allison.
- Leveque - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Terrain-Orientation. Mechanics, driving countermeasures the means to mobilize heavy firepower to engage opposing forces including other combat vehicles.
- Ulrich - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation.

**Argents - Team2; headed by Kate.**
- Livy - [1st Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Force-Orientation, R.I.F. and close-combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's right-hand man.
- Tyhurst - [Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation, Cyberwarefare, has CIA background and is ranked with state detective credentials. Referred to as 'try-hard.'
- Norm - [Sergeant] specialty in Medical Intelligence and as a Longbowman; an archer who uses the longbow, w/ various arrowheads. He' JR's brother and Roman's Uncle.
- Roman - [Field Officer] specialty as a Marksman/Sharpshooter, 19yrs. old and a weapons expert skilled in precision shooting. He's JR's son and Norm's Nephew.
- Fry - [Field Officer] specialty as a Tactician is and general officer, while his marksmanship is low he is still in high regard for his brain.

**Argents - Team3; headed by Gerard.**

**Hale (Present Day) Pack; Derek Alpha**
- Isaac - [Omega] abandoned Werewolf in search of a pack.
- Stiles - [Omega] also abandoned, in search of any existing pack members.
- (missing) Cora - [Beta] missing, presumed dead.
- (missing) Boyd - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.
- (missing) Erica - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.

**Hale (Heyday) Pack; Talia Alpha**
- Peter - [Beta] Talia's brother, Uncle to Derek, Laura and Cora.
- Laura (age 17) - [Beta] was last seen struggling between trying to pull survivors from the fire and defending her mother, Talia from her Uncle Peter's attacks.
- Derek (age 15) - [Beta] was pulled from the flames by his sister Laura and ushered to safety by their emissary… until the Treaty was made.
Jackson - [Kanima] characterized by claws that secrete venom which temporarily paralyzes their victims, a double row of sharp fangs, and a tail. Unless a Kanima resolves what in its past caused its mutation, it will eventually cocooned stage and emerge as a winged creature. Unlike a werewolf, a Kanima seeks out a master instead of a pack. It will carry out whatever vengeance its master bids. *chapter 12

• Kira - [?] ...
• Lydia - [Banshee] 'A Banshee screams preceding a supernatural death not as a premonition but to highlight the likelihood of supernatural events that result in deaths.' *chapter 8

Twins' Pack; Aiden and Ethan Carver Alphas
• Marta - [Beta] she's an older motor head and their 1st Lieutenant.
• Bridy - [Beta] the pack's spy because she's diminutive and easily underestimated.
• Gus - [Beta] referred to as psychotic now and again, but his very few (and dwindling) close friends are his touchstone.
• (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, bi and partnered to Naylor, formerly to Bozeman.
• (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
• (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
• (deceased) Coot - [Omega] former Beta, killed by the Monster.

Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha
• (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed 1st Lieutenant, possibly romantically entangled.
• Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali and closely bonded to Huntington.
• Santos - [Beta] while loyal to Kali has mentored many, without regard to packs. He helped the Twins first learn to shift together without losing their identities.
• Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed and with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
• Levi - [Beta] he's neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
• Huntington - [Beta] has strong empathic senses, is very good friends with Gus' from Twins' pack and Lark.

Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha
• Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' Lieutenant, Werelynx from wiped out Shapeshifter dynasty.
• Dr. Kane - [Beta] both a medical Doctor and their torturer.
• Quint - [Beta] eager to please teen and Dr. Kane's biological son.

Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha
• Søren - [Beta] 1st Lieutenant, Danish man of even temperament and a skilled negotiator until his temper is peaked.
• Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
Summary:
There is a convergence on the Argent, only not exactly how one would expect... which leads a very awkward family. Possibly the most awkward family of all-time.

- Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/14-were-you-inside

Chapter Notes

Previously on were (you);
- As a result of their action from earlier the boys are brought into police custody until their parents show up to claim them. Stiles end's up under house arrest. Scott gets his bike keys take and grounded. Isaac ends up getting invited to the Sheriff's to sleepover and have pizza.
- Throughout they theorize;
  - Their pack member 'Cora', a pure blood Werewolf and sister to Derek, might be alive and be the person claiming revenge on behalf of Derek's death. Also the only person with the formal right to claim revenge.
  - If so they decide to search her out before the Alphas do. Scott insists on joining (despite their punishments).
  - Verification of Derek's death is still a necessity; the claws they retrieved from Kate could be anyone's therefore verifying if he were even dead.
  - Lydia's connection to Kira, while still unclear leads Lydia to the realization that her talents have a connection to others, not only as a sort of magnet but a catalyst.
- Meanwhile; Parrish and Sheriff continue their investigation with regards the animal that ran Claudia/Stiles off the road 6 years ago. Only now it includes the finding of a mysterious Coyote that shares similar likeness and behavior patterns and at light as well as a new direction to their investigation.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Track 01 - Nude by Radiohead

{Friday; Later in the Afternoon}

"We have a very bad crisis," Natalie Martin said when she let herself into her daughter's bedroom after she barely knocked, but hid partly behind the door.

From beneath the covers Lydia's hand went out to the night-table for her phone and turned it over for the time. There was no life in the damn thing, so instead she peeked out to find that a mass of misery sculpted into fitness wear stood sweaty and gripping her door knob.
"There is no hot water," she announced.

Lydia replayed last night; her shower had gone from lukewarm, to tepid to chilly rather quickly and without power they had no hot water heater. She gripped her phone in aggravation at the fact that it meant she had no phone charger either. She glared at it and saw she somehow still had soot under her filed down nails.

"I have a very bad solution," Lydia responded. Her voice had yet to wake up with the rest of her and she sounded froggish in her ears. When she kicked off her blankets the air felt freezing to her skin from the clamminess of night sweat and she knew she couldn't bear the idea of one minute of smelling herself like that. "We're going to the Argents'."

"Yeah?" her Mom all but laughed and leaned against the door crossing her arms, waiting to hear this explanation. Her solution would have been to swim in the pool, although that would have left her smelling of chlorine.

"Yes," Lydia said, marching over to her closet to pull out a dressing gown dressy enough to pass as a dress, "they have a generator and several water heaters," not to mention she could check up on Allison. She swiftly tied up her hair and tossed a few articles into the black quilted Betsey Johnson satchel bag following a theme and smirked, ready to lead the way, "that's right I said several water heaters for their several bathrooms."

"We're going to just turn up unannounced?" Natalie questioned her daughter's lack of etiquette; she analyzed exactly how quickly the whole scheme went over.

"It's not like we can call ahead," Lydia shrugged and walked out.

Her Mom said nothing but tilted her head to watch her through the mirror and gave a nod of understanding. Her Mom pulled off the latex paraphernalia and collected herself into a wrap dress. She grabbed the overnight bag from a trip she had yet to unpack from. She doubled back to the kitchen for the last accessory before hastening out into her car.

"Is that advisable?" asked Lydia when she noticed her Mom place a wine carrier bag behind them onto the car's floor.

"Absolutely. It's rude to show up without a gift for the host," smiled Natalie sweetly as she strapped herself into the driver's side, glancing a few times into the rearview mirror to ensure the bottles' safety.

"Mrs. Argent," Lydia addressed a shadow in the flowerbed.

"Victoria?" Natalie noted the shape across the edge of the lawn.

"Oh?" Victoria Argent stood and wiped the mulch from the knees of her denims. "I'm just trying to make sure the rain didn't murder my flowers."

"But they're perennials," Natalie pointed out, "they'll survive anything".

"It's just they're my favorites," she explained as she came to meet them on the path to the doorway. She removed her gardening gloves with slow caution before she put her hand out for Natalie to shake.

"No one's favorites are perennials," Lydia responded snappishly.
"Lydia," Natalie warned her to behave and went back to greeting Victoria. "Well, you're Digitalis look like they've flourished."

"Thank you," she shook Natalie's hand and shared smiles with Lydia. "Well you two look to have weathered the storm as well."

"Yeah, not exactly--" said Natalie portentously. Before Victoria started to question, Natalie gave Lydia the 'sign' that being a jab of the elbow, to which she handed over the carry container and they presented the bottle of red.

Track 02 - Deception Pass by Amferraro

"Lydia?" Allison called out happily tearing through the second floor hallway. They locked eyes when she paused along the over path. Allison doubled her speed at the confirmation her best-friend had turned up at her doorstep. Lydia met her at the bottom step and laughed, relief soaked through her bone-deep better than any shower she could have sought.

"What are you doing here? I've been trying to reach you all morning!" she bounced a little, finding it difficult to stand still.

"We are here," she infers her Mom behind them, "for a little R & R."

"Really?" she leaned around to search for her Parents' confirmation, from where her Father stood in the hall leading off to the dining room to the archway where her Mother stepped through with the Martins.

Just out of everyone's line of sight her Father made a shake of a head with a non-committal shrug, but her Mother gave a more assertive, "of course!" She held the Wine-Carrier tote bag high between them as she led the way in and locked the door behind them.

With her satchel bag heavy in hand Lydia pushed Allison back up the step only to get blocked off by 2 men.

The entrance hall crowded up quickly.

"We have guests?" Bennett asked from the top of the stairwell, grogginess permeated his words.

"We have guests," Rumy leaned onto the handrail with amusement that lit his eyes from beneath his drooping mane.

"We won't be staying long" Natalie assured Chris, she looked to the strangers on the steps, "we only meant to come over to use the facilities if you could spare them." She chuckled, mildly discomforted at the intimacy of the request and the sense of chill and stickiness of her sweat clinging to her body. "It's just power isn't back in every house in our neighborhood. Ours is one of the lucky ones I'm afraid."

"The power is only stabilized by sectors around town," after a breath Chris explained, "The electric company is still testing to ensure this sort of thing doesn't happen again. I guess it's just going to take a little longer in some places more than others-- Yeah, of course you can use our place, as long as you need to."
"You can have our room," offered Rumy appearing at the bottom of the steps.

"Our room?" asked Bennett, startled because he hadn't noticed the motion and hadn't expected the suggestion.

"I didn't expect to stay very long," Natalie insisted, Vickie gave her a head shake as if to say 'let this play out.'

"Sure, they'll need to have space to spread out, rest. Plus Axel will be happy to have us at the Lodge."

Victoria and Chris choked on something akin to laughter but pushed on.

"Why can't I stay with you?" Lydia asked Allison.

She made a pained face, "Aunt Kate is up there. We share a room."

"I can ask her to share with me," Natalie offered. Allison and Lydia looked amazed that a solution would present itself so seemingly easily. "I don't see a reason why not. Look at how happy they are and after such a dark night. Plus," she added after a drawn out pause, "I'd rather stay with someone I can stay up drinking with."

"It's settled, then," Chris said kindly. Natalie asked if she could speak to Kate but Victoria explained she would ask on her behalf. She insisted on showing Natalie around, toward a first floor bathroom only after breakfast. Possibly a liquid breakfast. Chris moved to the side of the foyer before he picked his Sergeant's brain. "Is that her?"

"Hmm?" Rumy perked up like a puppy, his attention drawn back from where he watched the women in the kitchen.

"Her friend?" Chris stood by the stairwell "Is that the one?"

"The 'what' now?" Rumy walked over. When he did he pushed back his hair with both hands, his grey eyes stood steady and bright, staring, almost glaring into Chris' glassy bright blue.

"The best-friend she's always worried about?" Chris grinned, at his taller height and he looked like the elder although it wasn't rightly true but they were always equal, and a little ready to argue. With the duties afforded a Godfather put him in the defensive "can't be sure." Rumy grinned back. "I never saw her with friends. Ask Bennett."

Bennett looked surprised to be addressed, in fact surprised to be remembered even. He hopped down a few steps but they didn't actually ask anyhow.

"Rumy," Chris grinned and turned predatorily to which Rumy just shook his head amused. "Tell me, is that the friend?"

"Yeah, of course it is," Rumy leaned onto his best-friend's shoulder. With his hand opposite he gripped Chris' chin, he aimed for them to watch the girls turn the bend along the hall and disappeared from view. "Lookit her, that's her best-friend. She's likely to kill for her."

"So, either I get to go down to let Axel know we're bunking with him? Or I get to go upstairs, pack up our crap and then head down to tell Axel?" grumbled Bennett from two steps above, leaning onto the handrail.
"Christ, Bennett, go pack. I'll tell Axel," groaned Chris dramatically. "Put anything suspicious locked out of sight until someone can come back and retrieve it."

"Yeah?" Bennett looked like he could have tripped backward up the steps and nearly had.

"Yeah, I'll go tell Axel" Chris pat Bennett as he turned to drag Rumy with him toward the back of the house. Bennett took off before anyone could change their minds and bestow him anymore responsibilities. "Rumy can keep our charming houseguest charmed until Bennett has the space all cleared out for ya."

"Oh, thanks buddy," Rumy's eyes were bright with amusement but anxiety had him running his hand through his hair several more times as Chris shoved him toward the kitchen. "You do know you said charm twice in that sentence."

"It was intentional. Be on your best behavior," he smiled before reintroducing themselves to their houseguest in the kitchen. After a few minutes of 'Hello' and 'Thank You' Chris excused himself and made his way to the garden door of the house, when Rumy stopped him to thank him a second time. He replied with a shrug "a best-friend's work is never done."

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Track 03 - Round Here by Counting Crows

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"Lydia, are you okay?" Allison asked as they entered her bedroom, barely even before they passed through the door.

"I'm fine," Lydia shrugged off her hold and moved to the bed. "I don't have a working a shower but I look like this-- Allison, are you okay?" She ran her finger through Allison's normally smoothly combed locks. Even in the turmoil of the events of the night before, Allison had done a better job at keeping herself together, but she looked as though someone poured her through a funnel that had been poured through a dirty laundry basket that had been poured through a tornado.

"I haven't been able to get ahold of anyone since last night," Allison didn't push Lydia's concerns off, just side-stepped them temporarily. She looked to the floor as she began to pace.

"Well, my phone is dead. What happened after I left the diner?" Lydia dropped to sit at the foot of the bed, directly in Allison's line of sight.

"From what I can understand," Allison paused, gave it a thought, grinned and continued to talk but not pace, "Scott's been royally grounded and Stiles has been placed under house arrest. Possibly Isaac, too."

"Of course," Lydia scoffed and made a gesture to the air to infer that it was inevitable. "But Allison, if no one died, why do you look like the crypt keeper?"

After hopping up from the bed she shoved Allison onto the spot she'd just vacated.

"Here," she instructed. And with a swiftness few could parallel, Lydia spun around and whipped open Allison's closet to pull down item after item but only after she gave it a critical -tight nod- or -upturned nose- within .003 seconds.

"You can pick from these options here," Lydia flung some items unseen/backhanded overhead (some unseen into the trash bin) other item she placed as though they were precious cargo, "mix
"Are you mothering me Lydia?" Allison stared at the options equally flattered and mystified, buzzed around the room while maneuvering in and out of the room. The bathroom adjacent makes an ideal changing room.

"Don't be ridiculous," Lydia scoffed. "I'm styling you. After last night, you're going to need help to get back into fighting form before facing a household of Hunters plus my Mom." Lydia looked at Allison's wrists and noticed where their similar bruises were; while she felt a fondness for their link she also noticed it as a problem. Anyone would be concerned about bruising on the wrists of one teenager. They wouldn't have to subscribe to Pareidolia to see a pattern in two teenagers. Nothing a few chunky bracelets couldn't obscure, so she handed Allison a handful to choose from. "You know they'll be armed with a bottle of Cabernet sauvignon."

Sat in the epicenter of what had been her (once tidied) bedroom, Allison felt stunned and bobbed her head along, until she curled up on the bed. Lydia grinned at the sight and with a flourish she spun around to grab more accessories from her bag, "I just have to set the tone with a little montage music-- where's my phone?"

"Charging," weighed with several options, talk or move, or talk and move, Allison found herself slow on the uptake that she had been addressed.

"Did you set my phone to charge for me?" Lydia's eyes narrowed and she crossed the room quickly, her tone went chilly.

"Yeah," Allison replied flatly.

When Lydia hadn't responded she followed it up with "There are also fresh towels on the edge of the bed there," she nodded her head in one direction and then toward the door adjacent. "I left the water running so it'll warm up for your shower."

Allison quieted her explanation when Lydia kneeled onto the bed and crawled across it to meet her. Lydia barely made eye contact at all as she brought her face toward Allison's then groaned softly and made a slow drop onto the bed beside her.

"Ooh, what's happening?" Allison covered her mouth to keep from laughing.

"Can I not leave here, ever?" Lydia curled beside Allison and blinked up at her from under a drapery of uncombed, unwashed hair.

"We can just leave the hot water running? We'll just let the steam in," Allison suggested, plucking back the strands from her friends' face to see her clearer. "Camp out on a mountain of clothes and stuffed dolls?"

"Yes." Lydia answered reasonably.

Allison turned her weight and shifted, the mattress quaked a bit until she lay diagonal to Lydia and then she smiled. It was a dreary smile colored in exhaustion and blue with worry and oppression. But across the chaotic landscape of Steve Madden and Mr. Bear it was a smile Lydia reflected.

"Okay," Allison responded.

Lydia's eyes brightened momentarily before fatigue loaded down their lids. Allison rolled her eyes and blinked back her bemusement only to have fallen asleep, just a little. Just the same.
"It isn't, unfortunately for us, as simple as selecting the next strange thing and declaring it a triangulation point," the Sheriff mumbled, his voice turned groggier from the dehydration of too many cups of coffee.

Parrish blinked back sleep, and when the alarm went off on his phone he was too tired to react. He turned it off after some hesitation and reset it for the third time.

"Deputy, sleep exhaustion won't help your next shift. You should probably go home," the Sheriff reminded.

"I will. I will, in a bit." He insisted and stood up in defiance of his natural instinct to recline. He aimed toward the refrigerator and grabbed a cold slice of pizza for late-breakfast.

After his double-shift, Parrish turned up at the Stilinskis first thing in the morning. He shared his evening's indecipherable notes with grease stained fingers.

"You sense they're connected," he said and Parrish nodded, "and I have no doubt that they are. What do we have to work with?"

"They both stopped vehicles along the same highway, the Wolf to the far North and the Coyote to the South," Parrish scratched out onto a fresh page of his notepad.

"Except, the Wolf attacked Claudia's car," Stilinski said rubbing his forehead. "From what you described, the Coyote jumped in front of traffic. It placed itself in the path of traffic to prevent accidents."

"Even after the crash, the Wolf climbed down the cliff side and clawed open the doors. It wanted to hurt people but the Coyote, it snapped at people playfully," Parrish mumbled through a mouthful of food.

"Reassessing the evidence, now that I know Stiles lived we know that's why the Wolf wasn't there when Scott and Lydia descended. It continued the hunt," the Chief's voice changed, hard, in total contrast to the way he had trained it to remain indifferent when he said Claudia's name. He couldn't reconcile the years he had been robbed of sharing with his son. He wouldn't reconcile that and no one could blame him.

"But the Coyote," Parrish pushed on without hesitation, "it ran off the moment I confronted it."

"The Wolf disappeared to the West," the Chief sighed and stared at the map.

"The Coyote ran into the woods in the East," the Deputy said with a little more spirit. "That's something."

They stared up at the map. They'd dropped a clear film map marking their animal sightings/related reports over the topical map marking the murder investigations of the Sheriff's department.

"All of the murders fall between those two points," Parrish pointed out.

"No, all of the places where the murdered bodies have been found are between those two points.
That doesn't prove they're related," Stilinski reminded and slurped at the coffee. They stared in silence at the massacre masterpiece they'd begun to create.

"If we had a third animal-attack point, we would have a way to triangulate... although it does look to lean toward the woods," they both tilted their heads to the right at Parrish's observation though it made no difference in the feature before them.

"But what would we anticipate. A Wolf sighting? A Coyote? A goddamn Mountain Lion?" he pushed back on his chair so that it leaned and his heels caught at it to keep it from tipping. When the landline rang, the Sheriff nearly tipped.

Parrish didn't laugh but went to get it since it was meant for emergencies only.

When he returned he asked, "Do forest fires on haunted properties apply? Because then we'd have a third point."

The Sheriff's face looked wholly un-amused and less so when the Deputy explained the Preserve Rangers contacted the Sheriff's department only after the rain put out the fire, and even then only after the Fire Marshall called an 'all clear'.

"Alright," he hopped to his feet, "Go home. Get some sleep. It looks like I'm going to need you on your best game later."

They took to their feet and while Parrish grabbed his coat Stilinski grabbed a cover for their investigation board and headed upstairs to check up on his son.

When the Sheriff opened the door to his son's bedroom he found the room an explosion of paperwork that looked nearer to planning a road trip with the print outs of location oddities like one would find on Science Fiction television shows. Isaac lay fast asleep curled into a computer chair rotating near the desk snoring indelicately while Stiles lay draped half-on, half-off the bed drooling onto a print out.

"Boys," he tried to wake them without barging in but they hadn't responded, "BOYS!" with that both startled, Stiles fell from the bed and Isaac jumped to attention.

"I don't know what's going on here," he continued cutting off Stiles as he tried to explain in what obviously had to be a lie, "and I don't want to know. But this mess better not be here when I get back. There's no school today and cold pizza downstairs. Stiles, I don't know a nicer way to say this but I love you kid and you're not to leave the house." The tone in his voice swung from endearing to warring.

"But Dad, what if I need to leave the house? What if there is a fire?" started Stiles while he came to kneel, readying for an argument.

"That's why I posted an officer at the door," his Dad grinned, Stiles dropped back to the seated position. He made a gesture as if to acknowledge 'touché, for this round' "you're not to leave this house unless there is a fire."

"Dad," Stiles forcefully cut in, "you didn't get any sleep." He kneeled up from his space on the floor, stopping his grab at the mass of papers with worry over his face.

The Sheriff smiled briefly, "there was a fire in the Preserve." He shrugged, "you know what they say, 'there's no rest for the wicked'."
Stiles' guilt weighed too heavily for witticism. "No, I guess not."

"Isaac, the officer outside will arrange a ride home later whenever you need one," he nodded toward Isaac.

"Thanks," he mumbled groggily wiping at his mouth. He knew a small amount of the guilt Stiles felt and he wanted out as soon as possible. "But I left an SUV at the hospital that belonged to the Argents. I promised to get it back to them in the morning." Stiles gave him a look that read cheater.

"Yeah, they'll help with that, no rush. You boys take your time; you had a long night after all. I'll see you later," he gave Stiles a parting look that articulated with tiredness and heartache how very much he didn't want to part. And then he tapped the door with his knuckle a few times in nerves and parted.

Isaac looked to Stiles expecting some clever line that glossed over the nerves but he went straight to work, clearing up their investigation into retracing their steps; where was it they last saw Cora? Where was it they had been attacked? How was it this connected to the death of an Alpha? How could it connect to the Hale House fire? What was the likelihood that Cora carved the revenge marking on the Hale House door? Etc. etc. etc.

"Stiles" Isaac glanced at black and white photos of the original fire and compared it to the memory of the night before, "do you think this was her way of letting us know she's alive?"

He sat up, his eyes were red rimmed and when he ran his hands through his hair he left it splayed at random angles "she isn't known for subtleties. Dude, we should find her in no time."

Isaac looked at the ocean of paperwork Stiles sat in; Stiles followed his line of sight and gulped at the ridiculousness of his statement. But with his nose to the grindstone, Stiles had no time to feel increasing guilt on the stresses their activities caused his Dad.

"I can take off--" Isaac started.

"Yeah, whenever you want," answered Stiles without looking up, "I'll let you know if I find anything."

Track 05 - Hanging Tree by Jennifer Lawrence

The 1st thing he noticed when he pulled up to the Argents was Mrs. Martin's car and Isaac couldn't help but wonder how it was the Martins always turned up in the most dangerous places, at the most unlikely times and before he could manage to get there.

"How did you get Kate's car keys?" the man at the door asked.

Evidently he couldn't hand them over to Kate directly because she had disappeared early that morning before anyone could account for her.

"Kate lent them to us last night to get home?" Isaac wavered. He hadn't meant for it to sound like a question but the dark framed glasses at the door meant business.

"Us?" he asked.
"My foster brother, Stiles?" Isaac answered, although why he easily submitted to the interrogation was a mystery.

"Ahh, the Sheriff's son," the man leaned against the door, he tossed the keys in the air with ease and accepted Isaac's story, "I heard something about that."

"We got stuck out in the rain after we made some bad choices and we called Allison," Isaac had showered and cleaned his clothes enough that he didn't reek of soot and smoke evident from the Hale House fire. He couldn't imagine bringing it up would be a good topic for anyone involved.

"Yeah?"

"Yeah," suddenly Isaac felt like if he didn't get out of there he would be taken to some secret room and get tortured until he provided some government secrets.

"Well, thanks." With that he spun around, shoved his hands deep into his coat pockets and with a bit of a skip in his step, headed down the pathway of the property.

"How're you going to get home without a car?" the man called from the doorway.

Oh, man Isaac heard so many scenarios play in his head but the top 3 were;

1) I can drop you off home? - The man would offer and Isaac would be screwed to say the Sheriff or his squat.

2) My girlfriend [Lydia] can probably drop me off - Lydia would kill him so dead. So very, very dead.

3) Allison can drop me off - how screwed would Allison be, especially since he would need a favor from her very soon and this would be too early to burn that bridge.

"I can walk to the bus from here," Isaac called from the edge of the lawn as he walked backward, not breaking his stride. He felt as though if he kept his eyes on the man, if he could just demand he stay there with a glare than everything would be fine. It seemed to work, albeit Isaac nearly walked into the middle of the road but there wasn't traffic.

Keeping his word Isaac walked all the way to the bus station, waited a good 10 minutes and said to no one "ah, well if it isn't coming," to justify his turning around and returning to the Argents home.

To deliberately return to the Argent home, full of a family of Hunters and their intimidating bespectacled minions and Martin women with a penchant for terrifying him; that was where he headed.

Track 06 - Broken by S. Carey

As re-caps go Allison's weren't terrific.

"Is this what Kate meant by being green?" Lydia sat at the top of the bed, her back to the headboard, her knees drawn up. She procrastinated taking that shower she allegedly desired, factually they both had. "How do you even get through a debriefing with your family?"

Clear-headedness came with their catnap; the night before needed some clarification.
Lydia felt stealthier because she knew Allison had no way of knowing she ran into Kira so she didn't bring it up. She mentioned Jackson's marks matched he had been struck by lightning though they knew better. She wanted a little more time to explore her self-discovery before she announced it to the group.

Allison recapped what Lydia had missed after leaving the Diner, or at least she tried to. It seemed something of nerves choked her up. She tried line after line to tell Lydia private stories, to draw pictures without using emotions.

When she gave reports in the "War Room" they were unbiased but each word felt like blackmail.

"Tell me," Lydia insisted. Although annoyed she wasn't harsh only a little amused by Allison's fidgety starting of a sentence and finishing it in her head.

"They have a brother, and a sister who died," she said the later part low and miserably wringing her hands. "Have sisters. A few."

"I heard Isaac talk about them a little," Lydia lied. She barely remembered him blurt their names. "That's good, isn't it?"

That steadied Allison, surrounded by heaviness she stepped back until the backs of her thighs met the bed and she had to sit. Her hands were still gripped before her and she brought them to keep cradled in her lap. When she turned to Lydia she smiled but there was no mirth in it.

"No, it really isn't good," she looked to the bed quickly. Her hands uncoupled and she plucked at invisible thread.

While on Allison's bed, with the headboard to her back and her knees drawn up, Lydia didn't know how to pull Allison from her ache, that wasn't where her talent lay. She had an assortment of varnishes arranged beside her and a selection of her favorite accessories on the nightstand.

"Go on," she said without looking up as she picked through some rings. They glittered and distracted Allison a little so she climbed further onto the bed and watched the way Lydia analyzed.

"Someone grabbed the natural born Werewolf," Allison explained. Lydia's brow creased with discomfort, either at the description or at the selection. "The other girl went over a cliff fighting an Alpha."

"Did the Alphas hurt Stiles or Isaac?" asked Lydia as she nodded considerately and ran her finger tips along a midi ring.

"I think so. They seemed so miserable. They scattered and left behind the people they loved to survive," Allison's voice grew quiet and Lydia opened the palm of her hand. She placed three rings in it and pushed them around and gestured for Allison to pick.

Allison's mind focused on the smooth surface, on cyclical form and symbol of continuity that reminded her of things, however good or bad would come back to the middle. She slipped her selection onto Lydia's finger and she looked at it critically, she held it up between them flipping it back and forth.

"You don't do that as Hunters?" she asked calmly dropping her hand into her lap. When Allison didn't answer right away she started to put her accessories away. Afterward she crossed her legs and scooched a little closer. Then Lydia asked "are you going to make me repeat the question?"

"Yeah, but that's different," Allison turned herself to better face Lydia, she fussed with her hair. She
pushed it back behind both ears and looked to Lydia, she tried to make eye contact as if to validate her explanation but Lydia played with the nail polish, clanking the colors selecting one over the next over the next over the next.

"We're soldiers. We're ready to die. They were just killed," Allison finally explained. She shook her head when she said so, and her hair came forward again as if it were weighed down by her misery. "I don't know how to help them. None of them will even talk to me."

When she applied another layer of clear coat Lydia monitored the steadiness of her hand. Or rather the lack of steadiness in her hand. Fortunately it had no indication of the pace of her heart.

"Everything is going to be fine," Allison said pressing her hands into the mattress to launch her upward and start her to pacing.

"Everything is going to be fine," Lydia repeated only she sounded convincing. "Sit. I'll do your nails," she insisted with a smile.

There couldn't have been a nicer way to say 'stay still or I'll make you,' at least for Lydia anyway.

Surprising Lydia, Allison chose a vibrant red. And in the minutes it took to apply and the advertised '10 seconds' it took to dry, her hands grew steadier as they lay in Lydia's.

"See," Lydia showed her the end result, "I told you. Everything is going to be fine."

"Today, we rest, restore, renew," Allison conceded as she glanced toward the shower.

"Today, we pamper ourselves," Lydia corrected with a grin, "can't you work on saving the world tomorrow?"

Track 07 - Pilgrim by Fink

Evidently once Kate got home it turned right into a party. Norm and Roman were already visiting from the Lodge to help Bennett bring things down but Axel and Fry joined the ranks.

Surprisingly a full house made it a little bit easier to sneak around if you knew how. With the intention of dedication to their R+R time, Allison collected a few choice blu rays, two bottles of soda, (1 light/1 dark), just in case and what snacks she could grab from the hall-pantry, a grab pack of miniatures; an assortment of chips from Fritos to Doritos. Basically whatever she could manage to get while sliding up and down the stairs without being noticed by those preoccupied entertaining guests in the main room.

While she waited for the sound of the shower to finish she spread out the duvet and when she tucked in the corners she felt for a knife hidden between the mattress and the box spring. The shower switched off, but her instincts were on high and in the silence she had no problem moving stealthily across toward her open window to the barely perceptible noise that her training told her had to be an invader.

There was little surprise on her part when she reached through the curtains and grabbed hold of a ratty collar and scarf. She hauled Isaac's weight and launched him forward onto the floor and
landed kneeling on top of him with her knife to his throat.

"Next time, I'm electrifying the windows, Isaac," she warned, her tone read annoyed but her expression read amused.

Barely back to his senses Isaac glanced at his predicament and put his hands up in surrender, "I swear I wasn't peeping."

Allison gaped at him and after a moment Isaac's face colored, the thought hadn't even occurred to her. She tightened her grip at his collar, "Explain. What are you doing here? What is it this time; did Scott send you to check up on me?"

Isaac's Adam's apple bobbed dangerously close to her blade as he squirmed, "I didn't think of that."

"You didn't think of that?" she eased up and with a tilt of her head waited for an explanation.

"When I was trying to think of excuses to sneak in," he grinned uncomfortably and rubbed at the imaginary damage to his throat.

With a stylish roll she got to her feet. Allison offered her hand for him to stand but he gave her a look, a brow raised with a crooked arch and lips pressed thin enough to nearly vanish. His ascension was far less graceful.

"Isaac, what is going on?" she asked dropping back onto the bed beside her snacks. It set the picture; teenage plans of drinks and snacks on one side, deadly Chinese dagger on the other. There was no way Isaac could bring himself to ask for a favor. Instead he moved on.

"How come Lydia is here?"

Maybe that was the wrong direction. Allison sat straighter, leaned forward and her face started to look more confused than displeased. "What?" she said a single word and it sounded like an accusation.

Isaac figured if he said he had been looking for Lydia it would make sense, after all the relationship they had and her abrupt disappearance the night before "she keeps turning up in dangerous places. Like she has some sixth sense or something."

Of course he thought of the plan after he had supposed his theory.

"Why are you following her?" Allison's face deflated at the thought of it and she took to her feet, weapon in hand but she tucked it away in her bed.

"I want to apologize," he said sincerely after some thought. He thought about Stiles left behind stressing over his Dad, stressing over Cora. He thought about Allison, stressed over Scott stressing over her. He thought about Lydia stressing over everyone and lying about it. He considered he got away with walking away when it got complicated because he told himself no one cared. But Lydia sometimes cared enough to yell at him. Like she had last night. Like she had several nights ago.

"Did it occur to you if your apology were a bit less stalker-ish she might give you at least 2 seconds of her time?"

"Oh," Isaac stood in the center of her room, mouth slightly gapped and dumbstruck. He grinned after a minute. Allison offered him some chips to put into it and he readily accepted.

They ate loudly and when he became a little more at ease and he took a seat toward the foot of her
bed, Allison looked over at him and gave him a narrow eyed gaze.

"Are you going to tell me the real reason you're here?" she said quietly between munches. He popped another jalapeño chip into his mouth and looked to her, his absentminded expression perfected. "Only you should know, in the end even though I've got a compound bow and ring daggers within reach it'll be Lydia who'll torture the truth out of you."

Needless to say he choked on his chip.

"If I could help, I would," she answered honestly. It read in her voice, in her heartbeat and in the way her hands started to cling to one another. At the very least, Allison could assure Isaac she truly wanted to help, unfortunately "but the only place my family would have evidence is in the 'Meeting Room, and that place puts the POTUS situation room to shame."

"What if you just pointed me in the direction," Isaac flicked out his claws, "I'm getting pretty good with these."

"It wouldn't help," she shook her head. "The walls' mortar has tiny amounts of Hecatolite mixed in. It makes it hard for supernaturals to do what they do." She ticked off complications on her hand, "I'd need a look out, the key code, avoiding pressure mats, a way to access the right files and the perfect interval where Norm and Roman aren't coming upstairs and sneaking things out of the guest room."

"You mean glasses and limbs?" Isaac gestured to his face and made a mild flailing motion to emulate her Hunter friends.

Allison gave a nod and tried not to laugh, she could only assume Isaac got to know her kin from dangling from the side of her house.

"It's just not something that I can imagine pulling off--" she fiddled with her fingertip.

"Allison," Isaac felt sorry for the position he put her in but since he finally got the words out he needed to get it all out. He dropped onto the bed beside her and pulled her hands apart and brought her left hand into his, "I have your back but I do need this. The evidence Kate gave us, were Werewolves' claws. You know we can't use them without the help of an Alpha. She could have just handed over a copy of autopsy reports or literally anything else."

If Allison hadn't filed away the Sheriff's crime scene photos with her family's report she might be of some use. If only that night in the car, she had let Isaac look at the photos this might have been so much simpler.

"That was harsh of her," she said, biting her lower lip. Her uselessness frustrated her and she clenched his hand uncertain whether the condemnation was aimed at Kate or herself. "Now things must seem bleak."

"You know, if you asked me to help you might stand an actual chance of success," said Lydia from the doorway.

After they jumped to their feet and before they could begin to argue, Lydia explained to them how the latch lock worked on doorknobs. Then she reminded logical planning like that was why they would need her. And since only she saw the actual crime scene, "outside of an Alpha reading those claws for you, I'm the best bet you have," Lydia explained.
Track 08 - All I See by Lydia

After he couldn't find where his Mother hid his bike's keys Scott took the next worst thing and had stolen her car keys. The idea of stealing Stiles away from under the Sheriff's watchful eyes for a third time in 24-hours would not only break their Father-Son trust as much as blow it up. Instead he took advantage of the fact that working double-shift back to back would exhaust his Mom to the point of sleeping through virtually Armageddon. That wasn't to say he didn't push the car in neutral halfway down the block before he drove it to Allison's before parking it on the farthest end of her street.

It would have been far too obvious to sneak in through the window. It was cliché after all. It was so cliché that it had been done once already, and Scott had seen as much from the neighbor's yard.

Scott was certain Isaac had to have had a good excuse but at the moment his mind drew a blank. He sensed the same approach twice might cause a commotion and he didn't want to be obvious. He only wanted to get a hold of Allison. After seeing Mrs. Martin's car in the driveway he assumed Isaac came to visit Lydia.

There, that was another box on the list Scott had to check off of people he had to make amends to. Well, not exactly make amends so much as things ended on the wrong foot and it was worth flipping off of his own house roof and committing grand theft auto.

Crawling through the bushes, his choice of point of entrance became easier when he watched Lydia sneak into the hallway pantry. The other rooms had the population of a small country getting rowdier by the moment but Lydia slipped past as though she were a ghost. A dark dress and streaming straight hair flowing behind while she slipped around one bend, by ajarred office door, into the pantry for a tin of cookies, bowing under people's eye line to get into the kitchen and at ice cream in the refrigerator. She tossed her findings and some spoons into a Tupperware container to mask their content, just in time for Kate Argent to frog-march Scott McCall through the back garden door… ruining her perfect crime.

"Now, what the hell are you doing here?" asked Lydia in a most accusatory tone.

Kate couldn't have put it more menacingly herself. "Shouldn't I be asking--?"

"No," Lydia answered and bypassed her entirely, "I'm still mad at you. Did you follow me here? You're stalking me aren't you, you petty little snot? Do you know how pathetic that is? Or are you here checking up on someone else? That's it, isn't it? I don't even know where to put you on the level of stalker loser; just below someone who says God is telling them we should be together or above someone who makes a pillow cases from strands of my hair."

A light laughter came from over her shoulder in the doorway of the backyard and Kate's attention was drawn to a black youth, half-cockiness and half-business.

"Hate to tear you back from wrangling teens, since I know how you love to do that, but Axel says Fry said you said to call you about something I don't even begin to understand but--" he rambled.

"It's alright Bennett, I know. And thank god!" Kate put her hands up in surrender.

"Nice seeing you again," the kid named Bennett gave them both a nod before leaving with Kate, through the door and back to the Lodge area.
Between the Hunters' knowing nods, Kate's startling capture and Lydia's fury Scott truly felt he had been left with the worst option.

She remained still and glaring at him then released a breath that almost deflated her entirely.

Then Scott rushed to his defense, in what seemed like his only moment of access, "I am so sorry Lydia. I had no idea I made you feel-- I'll take off if you want, I just wanted to-- I don't understand what exactly but if--"

"What are you talking about?" she looked at him as if he were insane. She walked behind the kitchen counter to see through the garden and for how far the others had made it across to the Lodge. Her expression softened and over the counter she gave his arm a light shove. Her nerves were the only thing that prevented her from smiling properly, she explained "I thought you guys could sense when someone lies."

"Oh," Scott swiveled around to face her better on a stool he hadn't even noticed he'd sat on. He focused on her heart rate, he tried to understand where it should have been or where if differed from his. "Normally I can," he thought aloud.

"Well, I guess that should tell you something," Lydia said, her smile came genuinely implying maybe there laid a little anger still but it mattered very little. She gestured with jerk of her head for him to follow, "Come on."

Towing Scott along, she backtracked and she led him through the pantry and along a smaller hall than the one that led directly to the front door. Despite their bone-chilling confrontation with Kate, Lydia decided to up the ante and while avoiding the main room where members of the family lingered, she took a path through Mr. Argent's study. Tossing Scott the Tupperware container she flittered along and pulled down a flask from a display case.

"Did you steal alcohol from Allison's Dad?" Scott looked more blanch faced than when Kate had marched him in through garden door.

"Stealing is a harsh word," said Lydia softly as she slid the door delicately and partly closed behind them.

"What would you call it?" Scott whispered, as they stood with their back to the door.

"Temporarily misappropriated," Lydia snatched back the Tupperware, "I'll put it back once it's served its purpose."

"What's that?" Scott followed once more as Lydia marched on.

"Liquid courage," she shrugged popped open the flask and after she sniffed it took a mindful sip. Her heart rate warned of something more erratic and ominous than a Hunters' interrogation.

"Can I apologize now?" he treaded cautiously, to which Lydia only swallowed her sip harshly in reply. "Whatever I did to drive you out of the diner--"

"Seriously Scott," she abruptly interrupted. Lydia shook her head as she handed the flask over insisting he seal it away in the Tupperware, covering up their haul. "We've fallen off a cliff together. Last night a burning house nearly collapsed on us... so you spilled some coffee on me, I forgive you."

It was a struggled for Scott not to laugh. He was uncertain whether Lydia was striving for reasonable or delusional but she wasn't accustomed to wearing either mantle.
"Alright, Lydia what the hell is going on? Can you please go back to yelling at me, this is freaking me out," he chuckled from nerves as he pleaded. Her heart rate slowed mildly, the alcohol seemed to have its desired effect.

"We're making ice cream shakes upstairs," Lydia explained snatching back the Tupperware and rattling it. "Just trying to have a little R+R after the last few days," and as if sudden as if she snagged herself on the carpet Lydia's eyes went toward the floor.

"Scott?" she asked warily.

"Yeah?" Scott followed her line of sight, aligning their heads hoping to see what caught her fascination but saw nothing.

"When we were in the Chem lab at the school, why do you think you started to transform?" due to their nearness when she looked up. Scott was honest to a fault but being straight forward about being a Werewolf was new. New-ish.

"Isaac and I had just fought. I figured it had to do with fighting him, didn't it?" Scott's face read like the walls of Pompeii, it would crumble with each emotions and when he struggled Lydia came forward to catch him if he'd let her.

"That's what you thought or is that what you felt?" she stood at a slope, Scott hadn't realized he'd begun to buckle under the recollection. She neared him and continued, her eyes uncommonly vulnerable and wide with expectation "What I mean is, after the fight, when it was just us, do you think I made things worse?"

"What?" Scott spoke up abruptly, he stood he knocked into the container. He grabbed it before knocking it over and they held it between them almost like a conduit, he could feel her trembling through it like tiny vibrations. "You're kidding right? You pulled me out of that mess. You have been pulling me out of messes since before I can remember. You keep pulling me out of messes even when you hate me, especially when you hate me."

"Because if anyone is going to tear you down, it's going to be me," she laughed lightly and straightened her posture, tossing her head slightly to get all of her hair out of her eyes.

"Exactly!" he grinned and all his teeth showed, "I'm not exactly sure what happened that day, I just know if I didn't have you things would have been a whole lot worse."

She looked doubtful for a moment but she believed his eyes more than his words, "Thank you, Scott."

Whether he let go of the container or she snatched it back, they broke apart and stay leaning beside one another against the shelved wall. Her breath had gone calmer while his mind started to race.

"While we're asking weird and probing questions," Scott started. Lydia turned only a little to side-glance at him and warn him with the raise of her brow. "Jackson, how is he?"

She scoffed, "He's not dead." Her humor felt dark, if only Scott knew how spot on the theme of his inquiry had been. As a catalyst, how effective could she be toward supernaturals if she couldn't figure out how to help Jackson? Or for that matter how to be effective at all?

"They say he's brain dead but Scott--" she felt confident to tell him something she hadn't confided in Allison although it wasn't very much. "--he doesn't feel that way to me. I can feel him," with one hand she hugged the container to her, the other she put her hand a little in front of her in the air and splayed her fingers. "He's there. Asleep just underneath." Scott nodded as if he understood. It's
quite probable that being a shape-shifter type of supernatural he would, but Lydia was still learning. As she lowered her hand she imagined she still felt it buzzing from Kira's energy but she knew even that was stretching hypotheses.

"I think he's going to be okay," Scott insisted from beside her.

She glanced over at him more fully, "I think so too."

"The Whittemore boy?" Chris Argent asked, pushing open his office doors.

On instinct Scott pulled Lydia to his side to defend her, on instinct Lydia held up the Tupperware as a shield.

"Whoa! You guys don't need to be scared. Unless of course you're up to no good," he said his words in exaggerated peaks, with his teetering steps and the nod of confirmation Scott gave Lydia it was evident Chris was inebriated.

"Just talk about Jackson. He's my co-captain on the Lacrosse team," Scott started lamely.

"And he's my ex-boyfriend," she concluded on better footing.

"You say he's going to be okay?" Chris asked while he entered further and leaned against the back of a chair.

"Scott, you should take this home to your Mom, she's been overworked at the hospital and deserves these leftovers," Lydia ushered him toward the door, "I can tell Mr. Argent about my visit with Jackson."

"But--" Scott started to argue.

"No. Why don't the both of you stay," Chris rose and moved to block the door, "What's the rush?"

"Because," Lydia bolstered on more than likely fueled on by liquid courage. "Melissa's overworked and Scott should have delivered these hours ago." She didn't look to give Scott an encouraging glance, she didn't promise him she would catch up; she just shoved the Tupperware container into his hands, pushed him out of the office and closed the doors behind him.

Before Scott lay a clear path to Allison's bedroom and once again, for the umpteenth time, Lydia rescued him, without even being asked. Considering the payoff, it might just be worth getting kicked in the teeth on the constant occasion.

Track 09 - Line of Fire by Junip

Isaac meant to familiarize himself with the layout of the Argents' home, while sneaking out through the front door. He had been too busy looking up toward the "Meeting Room" and guest rooms while Scott had been keeping his eyes trained on Chris' study, they didn't see the other until they nearly bumped into each other. They stared at each other in awkward pause;

"I'm just taking out the trash," explained Isaac and held up crumbled potato-chip wrappers.

"Bringing up stuff for ice-cream sundaes," added Scott and lifted up the Tupperware container.
And they continued on. There was time for lengthy conversations and explanations, reasoning why real-life circumstances accelerated Scott's development to suppress his presence, why Isaac chose to case the joint or even why either turned up at all when they should have avoided Hunters.

Instead they gave a nod and moved passed.

Track 10 - Dangerous by Big Data

"This is puppetry," Norm muttered while he crossed the lawn.

"This is hilarity," Bennett grinned meeting Norm and Roman half-way. The sky streaked of horizon ombres from orange to reds to blues, Bennett paused to admire it.

"Come on, it's virtually delightful," laughed Roman as he hurried to catch up then out stripped his Uncle.

"Why are we turning the house upside-down for a couple of visitors?" griped Norm.

"I think Queen Victoria is trying to make point," Roman stopped and said low between the two, "a Hunter is only as good as their façade, façade, façade."

"Goddamn it," Norm said at a grunt and tried not to laugh while he adjusted his glasses against glare.

"I've got to get back to the house," Bennett reminded, "how long do you think it'll take for you to clear out the floor boards?"

"Christ! You've got munitions in the floorboards?" Norm's eyes would have seemed wide with surprise, only they were made to look disarming, rimmed as they were and the color of dark coffee.

As he led back to the house, Bennett shook his head like a critical parent, "look I don't know how much longer I can chill within 5 feet of watching Rumy flirt. That nice lady is going to get bored and want to go to sleep, so clear out that bedroom, chop-chop." He clapped his hands to accent his emphasis.

They slipped through the small garden door leading into the kitchen; not terrifically amused or perhaps because he felt a little more than amused, Roman jostled Bennett as he passed by him. Norm may have mumbled the word 'boys' low by way of warning.

"The way I see it we're doing things distinctively out of order," said Norm as he slid the door quietly closed behind him. "We shouldn't be moving munitions from the house. We should be securing the compound, batten down the hatches."

"Fair point," said Bennett in a hushed voice, "but I think we would still feel safer if you could remove the pressurized explosives from the guest room."

Unsure of whether or not Bennett got it Roman laughed outright but it wasn't that he took things lightly, it was quite the opposite, and only few people aside from Norm got that.

"Come on," without intending to undermine Roman often did, "with the recent option being 'get invaded' or 'have our house burned down on us', what are a few hidden weapons going to help
"We didn't have hidden weapons for invasions sake," gestured Bennett with an artful flick of his wrist, "we are collectors. True connoisseurs."

Norm held them off, at first they thought to chastise but sound caught up to them. The squeak of the front door opening for someone to sneak out of the house was not nearly as gentle as the garden door closing while two people vanished back out through it.

After placing his body in a way to block them from sight, Bennett inched forward to look around the bend and caught sight of a tall sandy-haired boy with crinkling-crumbled garbage in his hand trying to sneak out of the house. It was the stuff teenage comedies were made of until his joy of surprise was ruined by another.

"Isaac? Is that you?" Natalie Martin called out as she entered the atrium. She had a look of delight pasted across her face, an empty bottle in her hand and looking all the pink of perfection warmed over from alcohol.

"Mrs. Martin," Isaac spun around to face her as she came in from the main room, Victoria Argent on her tail. "It's great to see you. You look amazing."

She rushed forward to hug him, a bit tipsy from drinking. Aside from being barefoot she looked put together artfully, and it reminded him of all of the after-game parties at her home. She would appear at the end like some apparition announcing it was safe to go home.

"Thank you so much for coming to check up on Lydia," she reasoned... reasonably, so Isaac went with it.

"Of course, where else would I be," he eased back and wondered how easily he could get out of there, guiltlessly.

"See," she insisted and looked toward her friend who had just joined them, Allison's mom of course. "He's a much better boyfriend than that Jackson jerk." Isaac cringed inwardly and ran through too many scenarios in his head where that comment would get him in hot water.

"That's nice of you to say Mrs. Martin, but I should probably head home. It's getting dark," Isaac implied the blackout might still be affecting him. Instead it had the counter-affective.

"Then you should stay. You need to," she insisted, ruining his plan. "Doesn't he?" she swung around to look for permission. They were met with by several avid faces and Isaac realized he was doomed.

"Yes. Of course," Victoria answered awkwardly. "We wouldn't have it any other way."

Track 11 - You Know What I Mean by The Cult

At Allison's bedroom door, Scott realized too late he couldn't reach the doorknob well enough to turn it. He tried to balance the container partly on his thigh and against his forearm and scratched at the doorknob. He didn't feel brave enough to call out her name but she got the hint.
She swung open her bedroom door and answered the wrong name "Lydia?"

"Not exactly," he murmured with a meek expression across his face.

The impulse to ask 'why' or 'take caution' were set aside at the sight of him and she stepped into his reach. She placed her hands on the sides of his face and brought him closer to her, brought his eyes to stare into hers until they had to close to keep from blurring, brought his mouth to hers for feeling out and touching and tasting and they forgot there was a container between them until it made a knocking noise from when Scott brought it back up to keep from dropping.

"Even better," she said low with a smile lengthening.

Without a word Scott glanced down at the container, toward the hall, inside her room and back up with a brightening smile on his face. She responded by grabbing his jacket with a firm grip and yanking him into her bedroom. This time she remembered to avail herself of the lock option on her door.

He tried to be a gentleman and settle the container on the foot of her bed, he even went on to explain how he had run into Lydia and then nerves caused him to back-pedal, and explain why he turned up at all. Allison nodded along as she helped him out of his jacket, as she helped him take a seat as she helped him ruin his hair style for the way she ran her hand through it.

With each attempt at a sentence she pressed her mouth to his, smiled against his jaw, kissed along his throat and tugged her teeth at his ear. As they crawled higher along the bed, levity slowly slipped away and his mouth moved on her collar, as she arched against him and the container crashed to the floor.

Breathlessly she sat up on his lap to see the noise and Scott jumped to attention as well, she asked "what the hell is that?" Scott laughed and buried his faced against her shoulder.

And so Scott repeated everything he had said earlier, only she listened. Without getting off of his lap, without taking her arms from around him, without fixing the thin-straps of her dress, without taking her eyes from penetrating his she listened.

"You left Lydia with my Dad," she looked discomforted but mildly amused, "I am glad you snuck out to see me."

"Well, you know, there was no school today," he replied with a small sly smile.

"Why did you?" she quieted than stroked his cheek softly.

"I wasn't sure exactly how things were between us--" he said in a half laugh, embarrassed by how much he wanted to roll over and continue exactly where they had let off.

"Scott," her voice rose in alarm, "I'm with you. What you said, last night about being--"

"I was wrong when I said I was lucky to have you," he failed to catch his words in time for her face react, her brows rose in a perilous arch and mouth twisted high at the corner toward a dimpled warning of his demise. He gapped and laughed and readjusted his grip around her waist, his body in instinctual defense that she might run away.

"--What I mean is--" babbled Scott with bright blinking eyes "I don't see you as just a 'Girlfriend'. And I don't see--" he changed his tone with care to lose laughter and sound kind, "-- I don't see a 'Hunter'." When he searched her face again she looked solemn and soft, his thoughts left him winded and he licked his lips before speaking, "I see you, Allison."
Feeling uncertain, he shied away from following the comment up but the momentum of pheromones and the feel of her eyes on him gave his pause. "I just want you."

At her smirk, he realized the likely definitions of his proclamation "no, I don't want you!"

"Oh," her lips lengthened to what was definitely defined as a smirk.

"I mean," he let his breath out of mild exasperation, "I do kind of like right now want you, but I also want you because I really love you."

"Listen," she smiled and hit his chest lightly to regain his attention. She swallowed before she spoke, trying to regain her train of thought because honestly she had no idea what she wanted to say. "I didn't want to fall in love with you, because Hunters are trained to do a lot of things, but not that."

"That's crazy," Scott sniffed back his surprise, he had to look at her again and in that pause he kissed her nose because he couldn't imagine it. "How could you train yourselves not to be in love?"

"It's just what we're supposed to do," she tilted her head and softened her gaze on him, "and then I did the craziest thing. I told myself I didn't love you I just wanted to be with you but not just to the end of high school. Not just till college." As she went along her voice turned wistful and she started to smile and by the end of it she kissed him deeply. She wrapped her arms around his neck and leaned forward pressing her weight into him and he had to grip her waist to keep from tipping. She felt like she could never stop, like she could live off of him alone but when he moaned against her mouth she knew they would soon lose not only their breath, but their train of thought if she didn't break away.

"That must have been confusing," Scott all but panted.

"Not really," she pressed her forehead to his. "Because Scott, I trusted you." She closed her eyes once more and leaned her head harder still, with the pressure of the anxiety that filled her. With intensity she added "I trust you. With my heart. With everything."

Cupping her face Scott kissed her once more, with tenderness that grounded her. Afterward she moved to rest her head on his shoulder. They stood there for a few minutes of calm.

"I trust you too" he admitted. "Whatever Werewolf-Hunter drama that comes up next, we've got it covered."

At that a door slammed loudly followed by her Father calling to her because she had a visitor downstairs.

"Hey, hey, hey," Stiles called out as he skidded from the front door to the Deputy's cruiser. He knocked on the hood and the driver popped up to alert. "I need you to take me somewhere," he explained as he dove into the passenger side and buckled in.

"This isn't a taxi service," Deputy Clarke rolled her eyes at him.

"No," he grinned. "Because then I would have to pay you. Instead my tax dollars pay you, so move
"And why can't this wait until tomorrow?" Clarke took a moment to admire the machinations of a pathological 16-year old.

"Because by then I'dve snuck out anyway, only you would be held accountable. And I like you too much to let that happen," he said sincerely.

"Alright," she said and pursed her lips in consideration as she turned the engine on, "let's entertain this. If I were to take you to the Argent's, aside from emotional blackmail--" then reminded she only found him just-so funny by placing a hand on her hip where her handcuffs were "what is it you want me to tell your Dad?"

"That I asked nicely?" he replied with a smile.

Track 13 - Don't Lie by Vampire Weekend

Chris Argent felt cheated of nearly every worthwhile Dad v. Teenager experience in one evening. The first teenage boy caught lurking around the house wasn't even over his daughter. And was the guy tossed out on his ear? Did Chris even get the chance to passive-aggressively threaten the kid with a Sig Sauer or better yet his Desert Eagle? No. The brat got invited to have dinner and spend the night.

Next up on the disappointment list for the evening; the first time a teenager gets brought home by the cops it's not even his kid. On top of that from the looks of it the kid isn't even remotely distressed. Nope. He seemed perfectly at ease with the officer escorting him to the front door,
chummy even.

"Hey, Mr. Argent" he said instead of hello, "is Allison home?"

At the very least he got the right house.

"Yes. Who may I ask is calling?" Chris had a very good inkling as to who the teen was. He had a similar keen expression to his Dad and quick smile that meant he was on the ball and reading two steps ahead at all times.

"Sheriff's son," he said instead of his name with a nod to the Deputy beside him as a sign of recognition. He smirked as if to articulate without voicing 'isn't it obvious.' "Stiles, pleasure to meet you," he added as a formality and shoved his hand forward.

"You can call me Chris," he answered and nodded to the entourage, "Deputy."

"Sir," she nodded in return.

"Hey," Stiles leaned forward guardedly, "am I safe here?"

That statement felt weighty and he wanted to answer a million things and felt robbed again of his Fatherly duties.

"Yeah," Chris reluctantly replied.

Stiles swung back around, "see Deputy Clarke. You can tell my Dad I'm totally safe here. Now you can rest safe in the knowledge your duty is done."

He finished his statement as he backed several feet into the atrium to make it as though Chris was now his ally. The Deputy looked to him in pity then shook her head and walked off. And there it was; the third time that evening a kid was put under his roof to safeguard when he still hadn't grounded the first for sneaking out the night before. What's next, an orgy?

"Allison?" he called out slamming the front door closed, "you have a guest!"

The guest paced the atrium as if he were casing it for a heist.

"Another one!" Chris called out more menacing then before.

That got the kids' attention for a hot minute then he blinked back his unease before giving another smile.

"Can I ask why you're here?" Chris crossed his arms and leaned back against the door frame.

"Sure," Stiles responded in earnest as he dropped to make a seat of a hall table.

Chris tried again, "Stiles, why are you here? Visiting my daughter in the middle of the night?"

"It's not that late is it?" Stiles responded checking the clock on his phone, missing the point entirely.

"Stiles," said Chris in a warning tone.

"Oh, right," responded Stiles uneasily, a tone that finally brought pleasure to Chris' ears. "Because after school, detention and everything that happened yesterday-- I just wondered how she was doing."
"You could have called," Chris pointed toward the phone still in Stiles' hand.

After gaping at it in betrayal Stiles shoved it in his pocket, "actually I don't have her number."

"But you're close enough to feel like you can just stop in anytime," he stood straighter and pondered exactly how to word that passive-aggressive threat.

"Yeah," answered Stiles, moved back and stumbled over until he backed beside the stairs. The further Stiles fumbled back the more lordly Chris loomed. "We're totally thick as thieves," insisted Stiles.

"And how's that? Didn't you just get here a couple of days ago?" as dim light provided just enough ambience make a giant from Chris', greater powers came into play.

"What are you doing here Stiles?" and from the study just along the hall beyond the stairwell emerged Lydia Martin.

Track 14 - Shiver by Coldplay

Both relief and horror crawled over Stiles' skin at the sight of her. She gave him such a look while she delivered the scrutinizing line "what are you doing here?"

"Lydia?" he hopped up in alarm at the sound of her voice, "what are you doing here?" She crossed her arms waiting for a reply an inarguable response of 'I asked you first.' "Ah, right. I came to check on Allison. You?" he answered as he wrung the composition notebook in his hands into tube-like pulp.

"Oh," she rolled the thought over in her head, "Allison probably hasn't had time to give you her number yet?" she stepped further into the light giving ease to her overall threatening demeanor, not that there wasn't still an overcast that kept Stiles' on the tips of his high-tops. And she finally answered his original question "my Mom and I have no hot water in the house so we're staying over."

"Natalie's here! Mrs. M's here..." he corrected with each disapproving glare on Lydia's part, "Mrs. Martin is here."

Mr. Argent cleared his throat to remind there was an actual third and supposedly more formidable presence in the room. At first they found him more intrusive before they remembered to find him more foreboding.

"Yeah, she introduced me to Allison," grinning, Stiles walked nearer to Lydia until she leaned away to warn off his advance. She would not sink into whatever ditch he would dig for himself. "We're all close now, bosom buddies. Chums, super inseparable."

"You're friends with this guy?" Chris looked to Lydia to confirm. He demanded in the Dad voice he had been using on both Stiles and Lydia separately.

Although true Lydia gave an aggrieved nod in reply, she gave no more since she hadn't known what she walked in on and waited to gauge the scene.

"You don't seem very fond of him," continued stepping forward toward Stiles, causing Stiles to
They glanced toward each other, speaking silent communication; his fight or flight syndrome kicking into high gear, her sarcastic eye roll of 'you have got to be kidding me' down to an art form.

"We haven't exactly been on the best terms lately," she said in a tight voice.

"Actually, did you get my voicemail? I left you a message," said Stiles quickly and Lydia blinked her confusion at his ill-timed confession.

"Stiles, there was a power outage. My phone is dead," she snapped at him, "-never mind. Now is not the time for this."

Due to their bickering Chris remembered they weren't his kids and as much as he enjoyed the prospect of being the intrusive protective Dad he may have over-stepped. He recanted, "actually, I'm sure you two will work it-"

"Who knows with girlfriends," Stiles said boisterously to Chris in a desperate attempt for an 'in' to prove kinship. He even added a cheeky shrug to dismiss the topic with levity.

"You're smart Stiles," replied Lydia with a sweet voice and a charming grin as she turned to face him, her eyes glared daggers "why don't you expand on your worldly knowledge of being with girlfriends. I can point out your failures so you'll know better. For your next one, sound good?"

"I thought Isaac is your boyfriend," Chris pointed out.

The color rose in Stiles' face and the look of apology as he stared into Lydia's face couldn't have been more genuine. Although she had never mentioned dating either Stiles or Isaac in front of Mr. Argent, only Jackson (and that got her the 3rd degree) she couldn't imagine this would get any easier. She breathed in and looked back toward Mr. Argent.

"Yes," she answered without hesitation and tossed her hair over her shoulder. Even nearly being smacked by Lydia's hair didn't wipe the smirk from Stiles' face as he stood tall beside her.

"And Stiles just said he is your boyfriend," Chris clarified, his Dad tone returned.

"Yes," Lydia refused to be intimidated, "is there a problem with the math, sir?"

Chris looked to Stiles for a look of shock or jealousy but when there was none he indeed held an expression of someone that had a problem with math.

"Lydia is dating Stiles?" the question came from the living room. Chris spun around to see the culprit. Though Lydia would never mistake the voice it took Stiles a moment longer to recognize Natalie Martin. Isaac stood beside her, along with a handful of other bystanders inching into the atrium with them.

"And Isaac's here. Hanging out with my Mom," with that blithe observation Lydia nodded and gave a small sigh concession that seemed like relief. Isaac and Stiles knew it better for what it was. They knew Lydia had damned them, damned them to the depths of unspeakable hell because they had brought her Mom into the mix. No torture would be painful enough for committing the unforgivable sin of getting her Mom's hopes up and they would never see her revenge coming.

"That's... so good," Natalie put her arms out for Stiles to come into. When he rushed toward them it wasn't just to avoid harassment, it was to wrap himself in one of the most unknowable missed comforts of home. She whispered 'hello' over and over into his ear as if she had years to make up
for. When she asked "where've you been?" she didn't mean the last 6 years, she meant since he'd been home.

"I know; I should have come see you sooner. I've been real busy," he answered honestly.

"Dating Lydia," she looked trusting and emotional. From the clashing smell of the fresh soap on her hair, skin and fresh layer of red wine Stiles knew she had been handling things as best she could. But given everything, not just the neighborhood blackout but the most harrowing weeks before, she clutched onto what good news she could. "That's amazing, after everything. After your years apart."

"Yeah," he kept his arm at her waist even when he let out of the hug.

Across the way, Lydia watched them. All anger drained from her, she hugged her hands around her waist, unknowingly matching them and she smiled softly in relief that they got along. Isaac had inched part of the way over to her, the dubious stare of Mr. Argent did give him pause but he left his hand palm out in case Lydia looked for it. She unravelled from around her waist and held onto his wrist, glancing up at him, a look that said 'this is more for your benefit than me' but the grip she held on with said otherwise.

"We," Stiles jabbed a thumb toward Lydia, "have barely been keeping our hands off each other since the moment we first connected. Isn't that right."

"Only literally," after a soft scoff Lydia replied.

"Is this a private party or can anyone join?" Kate asked as she entered via the kitchen, once more with Scott McCall at her side.

Track 15 - Ticking Bomb by Aloe Blacc

Werewolves were stealthy creatures. He was a creature of stealth, but twice in one evening Kate Argent caught Scott creeping across the Argent's property. And the first time had been your typical confusing your left from your right scenario.

The second time was only after he had made a perfect unnoticed descent from Allison's bedroom window, sprinted across her property and even managed to quietly get his Mom's car on.

Then for whatever reason he turned on the high-beams; the high-beams! And walking casually across the property, disturbing all of no one had been Kate Argent caught right in his literal headlights.

In perfect reverse of how this scenario normally pans out, he ended up being the one under pressure. She sashayed right up to his driver's side window, leaned in, turned off the car and smiled down at him.

"Should've gotten out of dodge while you had the chance," she grinned then pulled open the door for him to exit and come with her back to the house. She hadn't seen him sneak out of the house but that was hardly the point. His guilty expression, sulking body-language and inability to come up with an excuse to be there read "GUILTY".

Only he felt his stealthiness less in question when they came through the door to a crowd of voices,
familiar voices challenging the man of the house. While they had no legitimate stand, he knew those voices and they would rather take on metal traps in a forest again than stand down.

And then another Werewolf got involved so why not more parents to interrogate them?

Kate looked at him from their nook in the doorway of the kitchen with a wicked grin of amusement. Scott shared only pity and his face expressed as much.

"Party-pooper," she muttered dragging him with her into the fray.

"No, no, no, that's not what I meant," he whimpered behind her.

"Dad," finally Allison trotted down the front stairs in response to her Father's summoning. "What is going on down here?" she started to laugh out of nerves but only the Werewolves knew to read it as such, otherwise she looked far beyond amused at the crowd gathered below her.

"Now who is he?" from the crowd spilling over of people from the den into the atrium, Victoria peeked her head over Natalie shoulder and toward the kitchen.

"My ride home," Stiles tried for cover.

"Let me guess," Chris drew a line with his finger through the air between Scott and Lydia, "you're dating that one too?"

"Ew," Lydia's tone went shrill, "no!"

Her Mom's and Stiles' negation were similar in kind.

"No way," Isaac refuted in a much more defensive tone, while Allison shared that tone the aim of over whom was lost.

Victoria snorted to keep from laughing and hid it behind an empty glass of wine. Rumy did snort but did not hide it.

Meanwhile Scott's expression turned from shocked to offended to green in a manner of seconds.

"Wait," Bennett asked from further back but only a bit squeezed between the two. "Let me get this straight Chris, you think because she's dating the both of 'em if any other guy walks in the room it's safe to assume she's dating them, too?"

"..." replied Chris to an atrium full of stares.

If Lydia's death glare was in itself a Grade-A weapon, it wasn't hard to figure out where learned to equipment it from. After tenderly disengaging from Stiles, Mrs. Martin turned toward and marched at Mr. Argent at a speed faster than expected. With her shoulder squared, piercing eyes focused to pinpoint accuracy, her severe tone held little wiggle-room for Chris' indecisive mutters.

"Is that what you're saying Chris?" she said firmly.

"Those- Those were not the words I used," Chris stepped back.

"And what if she were?" She took another step forward.

"I am sure he's a great kid-" he had run out of carpet, walked back into the front door.
"He is a great kid. So is she. Who do great things," she stepped back a little bit and looked him up and down. "It takes more than being in the room with them for 2 seconds to figure that out."

"Like a meal," Victoria offered an olive branch before blood was shed on her hall carpet.

"Am I inviting them to dinner too?" he looked begrudgingly to his wife over everyone’s heads.

Victoria shook her head at him and gave him a reproachful look, "Yes, Chris I think you’re sitting down and having dinner with all of us. I think you could use it. That is if you would like to stay?" she looked to the newest attendees.

After a desperate look to Allison, to which she shrugged haplessly "Sure," replied Scott. "I guess I'm going to have to leave my Mom a message." When Stiles gave Scott a worried look, he explained "she's been out of it from too many shifts. She won't notice if I'm gone a little longer."

"Great! A good warm home-cooked meal finally," sighed Stiles and gave Chris a wink for good measure.

"No more of your Dad's gourmet day old pizza take-outs," Isaac's stomach practically grumbled on cue.

"You get along well. You even eat together at the Sheriff’s?" Victoria asked leading them through the throng, down the hall and pass the kitchenette into the dining area.

"Foster-brothers," Isaac answered, before he thought not to from the glare he saw Stiles give him. It may have been privileged material. Or at least staggered release material for the damn Hunter-Police.

"He's been hanging out with me at my Dad's. Helping me get back into the groove," Stiles answered and anxiously hovered around the table. There were too many seats to choose from and instead he kept circling.

"Is it too private to ask, who started dating Lydia--" she tried to find a better way of wording it but none came so she left it.

Isaac looked too discomforted to bother but not Stiles. "Does sandbox count? Or like diaper change tables?" he grinned, "now that we're onto more savory subjects, would you like a hand setting the table?"

After stepping back Natalie came to her daughter's side, where her daughter virtually preened under her Mother's attentions. Allison bound down the last few steps and met them in a buzz of attention.

"I'm sorry about my Dad," started Allison.

"Don't be," laughed Lydia. "It's an interesting phenomenon to see an overbearing Dad on the greyer-side of the grass."

"Lydia, don't be like that," her Mom wrapped an arm around her shoulder. Although still a little upset, she seemed, of late, to be quick to switch between her anti-Dad and Pro-Dad views. "They're trying," she attempted the line again with a different and more sincere delivery. "They're trying their best."

"Whatever," Lydia grinned, "at least Scott can stay for dinner." She poked at Allison playfully in
the arm, knowing although it would come with a lot of discomfort and teasing her best-friend ... along with her other best-friend, Scott. It would take her sometime to get used to acknowledging him as that.

"Yeah, and now so can Stiles," smirked Allison with brows pinched in artfully cruel delight.

"Ohh," groaned Lydia as she stopped just short of swearing with the sound of her Mom cooing on her right.

"Ooh, the two of you. How did that happen?" she smiled brightly at Lydia. She beamed with such brightness Lydia forgot quite how to breathe, much more how to lie.

"Very suddenly," she cleared her throat and looked away.

"Very organically," said Scott coming to her rescue from just over her left shoulder.

That ladies and gentlemen would be why she'd get used to his renewed title.

"Can I hang out with you guys?" asked Scott, squeezing himself into a small space between Allison and Lydia where a piece of banister remained for him to lean his chin on. "I promise to stay on this side of the bars."

The girls groaned at his lame joke and Mrs. Martin only pursed her lips, "he had no right to disrespect you."

"Mrs. Martin, I know he didn't mean to. I say stupid things that make people feel uncomfortable all the time without meaning to," he shrugged and tapped his fingers on the banister just under his chin which gave him the deceptive look of innocence of a woodland creature. "I can't unsay it. I can only apologize for all those times I told Stiles you were the most beautiful Mom and wished Mr. Martin would go away so I could be the new Mr. Martin."

"Scott! What the hell!" Lydia groaned, reached over and smacked him hard in the arm.

"Ow! What?!" he rubbed the nonexistent wound woefully, "Why're you hitting me? Stiles said the same thing!"

With Allison red-faced, her hands over her mouth and Mrs. Martin laughing outright, their small corner had turned into a rowdy mess of giggles and fisticuffs. After a second more, Allison urged them on into the dining area promising to follow soon.

"Dad, it is one thing to embarrass me but you insulted my friends," Allison fumed. She repeated in a low fury, "My friends! I don't get very many of those--"

"What are you talking about? There is Roman and--" he tried to defend.

"Don't," her eyes went wide in upset, "don't. You came to Beacon Hills. You know what this is like. Am I screwing up in school?"

"No," he closed his eyes and let out a breath. It took all of his will power to stop himself before he followed the comment up with the word 'BUT'.

"Am I screwing up my field work? My participation in meetings?" she pleaded.

"No," he conceded a little shown up.
"Then don't be the thing that keeps me from having friends in high school?" she smiled a little, "just learn some 'Bad Dad Jokes' instead, okay?" she kissed his cheek and went off to the dinner table.

"That has got to be the most awkward dinner-- no, wait second most awkward dinner I've ever seen," after lingering in the hallway between rooms, Kate returned to the atrium. "It is going to be a train wreck!" Kate laughed and waggled a finger at him.

"I know," Chris grinned at his sister, "and you're staying for it."

"What?" she clutched her chest in mock-horror "No, no. I came back to the house to get you," Kate argued and aimed for the front door. "If you're not coming then I've got work to finish."

"And I'm sitting down for a Family-Dinner, which you will be joining. Get your ass in there," he shoved her around and down the hall but then quickly turned back. "Not you. The both of you have caused enough trouble this evening."

Bennett looked truly disappointed because he'd been looking forward to being a fly on the wall and Rumy mostly looked like he would break into giggles at any moment or maybe burp.

"Immediate Family Only," Chris ordered the both of them out through the front door. At that comment they both started jeering loudly. "Now take the long way to the Lodge around the garage and set up your quarters, you clowns."

"Bad form!" yelled Rumy funneled through cupped hands. "Tell everyone I'll miss them terribly."

After the door closed, Rumy and Bennett made it partly toward the garage before Rumy doubled back up the step and rang the doorbell ragged.

"What is it you old drunk?" laughed Chris opening the door just a crack.

"You may not have said that little girl was a 'you-know-what' but you did imply it. Just letting you know," he whispered grinning through.

They looked at each other, the grey-eyed punk as sober as a skunk and his blue-eyed best-friend lost without him. Rumy didn't have to say the words, 'what if someone said that to Allison'.

"I know, I know," sighed Chris and rubbed at his jaw, "this is why you're the backseat driver."

"Get outta here," Rumy stepped agilely back off from the front stoop and called to him in a horrid 'Don Corleone' impersonation-- "A man who doesn't spend time with his family can never be a real man."

Chris slammed the door before he finished the Godfather quote.

Chapter End Notes

CREDITS/ROLL CALL:

Argents - Team1; headed by Victoria, Chris & Allison.
• Rumy - [Sergeant] specialized in Recon; Special Forces and espionage. Chris' right hand man and Allison's godfather.
• Axel - [1st Lieutenant] expert tracker, marksman and Allison's 2nd cousin.
• Bennett - [Field Officer] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old and friend to Allison.
• Leveque - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Terrain-Orientation. Mechanics, driving countermeasures the means to mobilize heavy firepower to engage opposing forces including other combat vehicles.
• Ulrich - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation.

**Argents - Team2; headed by Kate.**
• Livy - [1st Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Force-Orientation, R.I.F. and close-combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's right-hand man.
• Tyhurst - [Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation, Cyberwarefare, has CIA background and is ranked with state detective credentials. Referred to as 'try-hard.'
• Norm - [Sergeant] specialty in Medical Intelligence and as a Longbowman; an archer who uses the longbow, w/ various arrowheads. He' JR's brother and Roman's Uncle.
• Roman - [Field Officer] specialty as a Marksman/Sharpshooter, 19yrs. old and a weapons expert skilled in precision shooting. He's JR's son and Norm's Nephew.
• Fry - [Field Officer] specialty as a Tactician is and general officer, while his marksmanship is low he is still in high regard for his brain.

**Argents - Team3; headed by Gerard.**

**Hale (Present Day) Pack; Derek Alpha**
• Isaac - [Omega] abandoned Werewolf in search of a pack.
• Stiles - [Omega] also abandoned, in search of any existing pack members.
• (missing) Cora - [Beta] missing, presumed dead.
• (missing) Boyd - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.
• (missing) Erica - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.

**Hale (Heyday) Pack; Talia Alpha**
• Peter - [Beta] Talia's brother, Uncle to Derek, Laura and Cora.
• Laura (age 17) - [Beta] was last seen struggling between trying to pull survivors from the fire and defending her mother, Talia from her Uncle Peter's attacks.
• Derek (age 15) - [Beta] was pulled from the flames by his sister Laura and ushered to safety by their emissary… until the Treaty was made.

**? Other;?**
• Jackson - [Kanima] characterized by claws that secrete venom which temporarily paralyzes their victims, a double row of sharp fangs, and a tail. Unless a Kanima resolves what in its past caused its mutation, it will eventually cocooned stage and emerge as a winged creature. Unlike a werewolf, a Kanima seeks out a master instead of a pack. It will carry out whatever vengeance its master bid. *chapter 12
• Kira - [?] ...
• Lydia - [Banshee] 'A Banshee screams preceding a supernatural death not as a premonition but to highlight the likelihood of supernatural events that result in deaths.' *chapter 8

**Twins' Pack; Aiden and Ethan Carver Alphas**
• Marta - [Beta] she's an older motor head and their 1st Lieutenant.
• Bridy - [Beta] the packs' spy because she's diminutive and easily underestimated.
• Gus - [Beta] referred to as psychotic now and again, but his very few (and dwindling) close friends' are his touchstone.
• (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, bi and partnered to Naylor, formerly to Bozeman.
• (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
• (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
• (deceased) Coot - [Omega] former Beta, killed by the Monster.

Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha
• (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed 1st Lieutenant, possibly romantically entangled.
• Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali and closely bonded to Huntington.
• Santos - [Beta] while loyal to Kali has mentored many, without regard to packs. He helped the Twins first learn to shift together without losing their identities.
• Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed and with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
• Levi - [Beta] he's neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
• Huntington - [Beta] has strong empathic senses, is very good friends with Gus' from Twins' pack and Lark.

Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha
• Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' Lieutenant, --from wiped out Shapeshifter dynasty.
• Dr. Kane - [Beta] both a medical Doctor and their torturer.
• Quint - [Beta] eager to please teen and Dr. Kane's biological son.

Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha
• Søren - [Beta] 1st Lieutenant, Danish man of even temperament and a skilled negotiator until his temper is peaked.
• Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
were (you) dining

Chapter Summary

There is a convergence on the Argent, only not exactly how one would expect... which leads a very awkward family. Possibly the most awkward family of all-time.
• Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/15-were-you-dining

Chapter Notes

• Once everyone [Lydia, Scott, Styles and Isaac] turned up at the Argents doorstep they're ambushed into staying on for a dinner with the 'rents [Natalie Martin, Chris, Victoria and Kate Argent].
• How they turned up at the Argents though;
• Lydia headed to Allison's with the intention of catching up and having some R&R.
• Isaac arrived soon after to ask Allison of help verifying whether or not Kate conned him with Derek's verification of death.
• Because the proof of death and investigation files including the files she stole previously from the Sheriff's office were sealed away in the family's panic room, Allison feels pressure to steal them back.
• Scott in turn from his home to visit his girlfriend, Allison with the intention of smoothing over from where things left off the night before, instead he runs into Kate and Lydia.
• Lydia confronts Scott and discusses where things are with Jackson and how Lydia affects others.
• Stiles turned up to ask Allison if her family's mapping information mapped his own murder maps to lead to hints in finding answers about his missing pack, only he turned Chris Argent was the one asking questions.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Track 01 - It's Not Over Yet by Klaxons

{Friday; Evening}

"Come on, how long will this take?" whined Kate. She crossed her arms and remained in the doorway, blocking passage as petulant siblings are wont to do. "I only popped in here because I wanted to show you something."

"Work can wait for one night, Kate," he endured momentarily and stayed back keeping a low tone, despite the attempt at sounding commanding his voice had a lilt of amusement in it.

"After a night like last night?" she nagged. "Activity was crawling out of the woodwork, Chris.
"Literally."

When he bypassed her blockade and moved for his study she followed, through the couches, along the hall complaining steadily.

"We know, Kate. We were there," he snapped back, brothers can only tolerate so much.

"Don't you want to get ahead of this?" her voice rose in excitement as she took post in his study's doorway. He glared at her quickly and she stood back with a wry grin.

"It can wait through one family dinner," he answered opening the liquor cabinet. She popped up beside him once more.

"How many courses though? They're teenagers; I'll bet they'll even want thirds of dessert," her argument continued. Their eyes ran along labels in unison and she pulled open the fridge compartment while he pulled down top-shelf items.

"Be a grown-up, Kate," he banged the cabinet closed, shoved a bottle of white wine and a decanter of whiskey into her hands while he swapped it for the beers she chose, "drink some more wine with your meal."

"That is true," she calmed a little and led them back. She gained dominance with each step, not that her earlier mission was forgotten more that she found this distraction worthy of attention.

"Well," she shook the decanter, "these free refills are better than the diner."

"I hope that's code for 'I'm going to be on my best behavior,'" Chris pleaded by way of condescension since he had no idea what she was referring to. Instead she grinned and descended on the dining room like any good Hunter over their prey.

Track 02 - Boom by Laleh

In the simple act of dragging her chair beside her Mom's, Lydia expressed a need for security. She came to the Argent's for comfort but instead she got a replay of the events of the night before, a do-over proliferated this time with a captive audience.

"I overstepped," she whisper-asked and Lydia shook her head in reply. Her Mom touched her shoulder lightly as she took a seat, recognizing Lydia's brave-face to keep her Mom's dignity intact.

"Not if you let me have some of your wine," she glanced to her and they held a look. Around them was a buzz of people making do with the event of tragic proportions but they remain unaffected, a little forgotten island.

"The white," she instructed in a feigned stern tone to which Lydia nodded. When her Mom eyes travelled the room to lock intently on Stiles as he practically flailed around them into the kitchen, Lydia knew she had fallen down the rabbit hole and time travel swallowed her up. Half-boy, half-man and not very changed from what they'd anticipated of 10-year old Stiles if anyone could anticipate something of a 10-year old.

"He's really okay," Lydia assured her. They followed him with their eyes and without looking Lydia poured the last of her Mom's bottle of red.
"How do you know?" Natalie looked back to her daughter. She touched the glass, running her hand experimentally along the stem in a manner that implied she would drink it soon. She wouldn't. The assumption others might have had of her Mom that night might have been inebriation but Lydia knew her Mom well enough to know how calculated she was. No way would she let her guard down, no way would she leave her daughter vulnerable under her watch and no way would one shared bottle put a dent in her tolerance.

"Because I know," Lydia smiled sincerely, these were the sorts of smiles they shared at home curled up on the couch over work and coffee and hours of quietude. She ducked her head closer and reminded "I do notice things, too."

Natalie's eyes narrowed in a wordless demand of proof. The only other option would be to ask about Stiles from the Sheriff and while she could they both would rather not.

Lydia tucked hair behind her ear and out of face to better access between the two "you remember when he doesn't get his way and it just confuses him for a second. Then he'll come back at you a million miles a minute but his face is flushed with disappointment."

"Still?" she smiled with an almost eagerness to teach the boy a lesson, "How adorable!"

With a humming sound, Lydia sat upright and drew her attention steadfastly to an empty water glass, unsure if she should blame herself now for feeding into the boys' lie of dealings between the two. She weighed her friends' safety against her Mom's happiness and turned the glass in her grip.

"Something like that," she conceded and kept watch while Stiles helped Allison in the kitchen, babbling a mile a minute.

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**Track 03 - Black Sheep by Metric**

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"It's a nightmare just bringing your boyfriend home to meet your parents," Allison muttered while she counted out the dishes and silverware from the cupboard. "This is a blitzkrieg bringing your Werewolf boyfriend and his Werewolf best friend for dinner."

She glowered at him when she noticed Stiles bit his cheek in an attempt not to laugh as humor shown all over his face.

"Well, if it's no comfort at all," he started in a tone that exaggerated sincerity, "more precisely the world's against you. It's your shunned Werewolf boyfriend, his Werewolf best friends and your banshee best friend, plus parent..."

As if to compensate for his awfulness he helped carry kitchen stools to aid the cause of a "Delightful Dinner at the Argents."

She had no need to say aloud that his attitude was no way to ask for a favor, especially not one as big as he had asked of her. He made a face of apology which she considered accepting and only after she elbowed him hard enough to knock over his carefully balanced stack of stools.

With the dining room table intended to seat 6 they were left in need for 3 more seats, all three boys jumped at the chance to help get kitchen stools to help seat guests but Stiles zipped through limbs and through the entry way before Allison finished her observation.
The time in the kitchen gave them a 2 minute breather that Stiles took full advantage of. Allison knew Stiles reputation for quick wit and fast speak but she had never experience that amount of word vomit in one go. He spoke of observations in the terrain, in the deaths pattern, in migrations, in his travelling on the roads and all he needed to find his family. And how to get peace of mind all he needed was the simple act of matching family's investigation spread maps to his. She wished his notes weren't so exacting and he wouldn't have gotten so fired up when he spoke.

"Don't answer now," he said and looked at her intently with dark eyes that bore through her and read each and every insecurity she felt at that moment. He had to know what predicament he put her in, he had to know asking this of her put her in harm's way but appealing to her investigative heart fed an addiction and he could hear that tension in each pump of it.

When he rolled his notebook up and shoved into his back pocket, she fought the impulse to snatch it out and scour the pages and feed on the notes.

"Did you tell Scott? Isaac?" he walked farther and farther away shaking his head and it tormented her. It wouldn't just solve plots unanswered but it could help her friends. 2 minutes was all it took for Stiles to get under her skin in the best way and when they looked at one another over the kitchen counter next, it was a look of narrow eyes and mischief.

As for whom they could trust...

After he re-lifted a stool from beside the kitchen counter and stacked it over another on top of another on top of a third he reconsidered a detail or two.

"Should I bother pointing out you've got an Aunt in there who is probably mocking you because she knows your predicament, and that your parents don't know and she knows they don't know," he gave a little amused snort as he carried the stools and led the way back to the dining room "I hate to tell you this Allison but you can't trust that lady."

The dishes teetered loudly in her sturdy grip as she muttered under her breath "tell me about it".

Forgetting his hearing could pick up on her bitter repertoire, Stiles burst into laughter as they stepped into the dining room. Whatever he'd expected of her when he walked into Allison's home, certainly her appetite for the 'Hunt' had been correct but the way which she considered everything and the fact that she considered Scott first was one of many pleasant surprises.

"What's so funny?" asked Victoria politely, wanting in on the joke. She relieved him of a stool, and helped place them around but Stiles only shook his head in reply. "Shame. You seem in such a good humor, the rest of us could sure benefit from it."

Stiles looked around the room and could tell she told the truth; Kate took a seat at the head of the table while Lydia had pulled a chair very closely beside her Mom on the other end and no one else sat. Chris, Scott and Isaac all hovered in their own respective space of air.

Allison's anxiety sky-rocketed and she knew Stiles must have sensed it, how could he not understand the pressure to help detangle such a mess but all they could do was pick it apart one string at a time.

"Sorry Mrs. A, I save all my best material for her" he grinned toward Allison and she choked a little bit on how unexpected her laugh was in her own ears.

While they shared the task of reposing the seats, Mrs. Argent made it her mission to occupy the people and set them right along their way. She even grabbed hold of Mr. Argent and supplanted
Kate for him at the head of the table assuring everything would be perfect, everyone would be well, everything would turn out right.

As they went around settling the last of it, Allison looked to Stiles with a similar look to the one they shared in the kitchen only this one meant new things. It meant *before we get through that, we've got to get through this.*

**Track 04 - Middle of the Night by Leonard Friend**

"Look at her out there," he grumbled and in turn she followed his line of sight "she looks as bad as one of the kids."

"Is it so bad to look like you're enjoying yourself with your daughter?" his wife smiled at him, a slow thin playful measure dragging him away from gloom to cheer.

"There is enjoying yourself and looking like--" Chris' face pinched in concentration "I don't even know what that looks like? She is just grinning too much."

"You're complaining that she is grinning too much," Victoria neared, glanced from the dining room to her husbands' face in amusement.

"Not complaining," he came back with quickly and she mimicked his pinched face in reply instead of a criticism. "What? I grin."

"I've never seen it," jested Victoria. She pulled a bottle from his hands and tugged his arm to follow her along from the hallway into the dining room. "Chris, there will come a time where you'll find a way to bond and grin with your daughter. I just hope it'll be because of punch lines and not punching guys."

"Doubtful," he smiled easily, privately and unseen down to his wife.

"Try," she encouraged. She ordered Kate to change seats then made a show of where she put the decanter, of where she placed the bottle, on the table or on the counter, until she stood once more beside him when she knew he really wanted to complain.

"Before, was that a suggestion or a direction?" he asked, leaned up to kiss her cheek.

"Guess," she smirked gently shoving him back into his seat.

"Whatever you command--" he replied. As she started off after having placed him at the head of the table, he held her hand for a moment before she broke away.

**Track 05 - It's Time by Imagine Dragons**

"This is a waste of my time," Kate muttered while the kids played musical chairs.

"We just talked about this. Trust your team. Or didn't you train them up right," leaning forward he
said snidely.

"Like you trained Rumy and Bennet," after a long sip of newly opened Sauvignon Blanc, she leaned toward him and whispered back. "To leave a mess upstairs that half my crew has to come in and clean while they sit back and hang with the locals."

"Wow, Sis," he grinned widely, at least mildly acknowledging her discomfort. "Tell us how you really feel."

"I really feel like you made a mess of things, big Brother." She wouldn't normally go for a critical tone but she seemed like she had ants in her pants and she didn't like being derailed.

"If you don't like how things are run than you know what you can do--" he sat back and served himself a glass.

"I came to do what you asked me to do which is sort out a mess," she smirked, her voice a wry play for diversion.

"Are you planning a coup, Katie?" his expression punctuated amusement but the dry kind. He wasn't accustomed to being territorial, he wasn't accustomed to laying down roots but Beacon Hills was not only where they've settled the longest in years but where he and Kate had settled the longest as kids. He was loathed to admit it but he felt possessive of it. One might even use the word protective.

"Big Brother Chris," she said lazily, leaning further toward him for effect. "If I were planning a coup I wouldn't sneak around under your nose or in the backyard I would come up to you and say it."

"Not like Dad," he pointed out, his expression turned hard and he drank from his glass again. All gulps no sips.

"Nope, not like Dad," she agreed and lifted her glass in solidarity as her tone turned cooler. "Which is why we have stayed on separate sides of the states."

"Which is why we need to get back on the road," he grumbled, readjusting in his seat a physical depiction of his mindset.

In a perfect contradiction to his sentimentality toward Beacon Hills he also wanted out. The place held too many ghosts, the personal kind.

"I miss you like nuts," she laughed lightly but her uneasiness shone. "But you know we can't work a job together, we'll kill each other."

"I thought you were going to kill each other right here," Allison finally spoke up finally creeping around them both while she settled placement of plates and silverware before them (the good kind).

"Hey," said Chris in a calm tone to assure her everything was fine, "just being siblings. Aren't you glad we stopped at one?"

"They stopped at perfection," Kate concurred practically purring when she reached up as Allison passed to stroke Allison's cheeks. Allison rolled her eyes and continued pairing napkins with settings.

"We're nothing compared to a coven up North," Chris said off-handedly. He tried to relate to his daughter, unfortunately only Hunter tales popped out. "They decide who leads by having the next
sovereign line's set of twins fight to the death. Winner rules until next twins are born."

"Gross," Allison grimaced in discomfort and froze in her task, "what happens if one of the twins is reabsorbed during the pregnancy?"

"Maybe you should go help out in the kitchen," said Kate before she pushed Allison back to her tasks. The dining area was uncomfortable enough with Victoria bossing people around there was no need to add theoretical life-cycles of preternatural species before appetizers.

"Enough shop talk," suggested Chris after another sip of wine to cleanse his palette.

"Agreed," Kate raised her glass in another salute and then drained it.

Track 06 - Runs In The Family by Amanda Palmer

It was the sort of thing that mattered because titles like 'home' mattered when his got taken away every couple of years. So Stiles appreciated it when Mrs. Argent apologized for misrepresenting the phrase 'home cooked meal'. She explained with a household so full they'd created a potluck system. Everyone brought a dish to the table or they didn't eat.

"So, we have plenty to eat," she added nervously, "but I can't vouch for the quality."

"And my godfather abuses the phrase 'from the old country' to cover up when he can't remember a recipe," pride reeked in Allison's voice while she settled the last placement beside her Father. He shared the sentiment and smiled at her, silent communications drawn from memories as he reached up and patted her shoulder.

"Now, does anyone want to help bring the food in from the kitchen?" asked Mrs. Argent. At that so many volunteers ran toward the kitchen, it may as well have been an evacuation.

When they re-entered and started to take their seats, the boys volunteered to take the stools so the family could keep comfortable which lead to the unfortunate circumstance where half the table (the Werewolf half of the table) were placed in backless, almost interrogation-like chairs facing their (the Hunter) hosts.

"Whatever you do, make sure I sit away from Kate," pleaded Isaac.

"Sure," nodded Stiles, an annoyed assurance while he tried to balance several misapplied bowls in his arms.

"No problem," agreed Scott with a quick, confident smile before he disappeared behind a wall of ham.

Yet after the table had been set all their plans went awry when someone decided they knew better. It seemed simple, when they returned to the table Kate sat whispering beside Chris, so Isaac darted onto the stool beside Lydia despite her scowl. Scott sat beside him, leaving Stiles the nearest to Chris, a mantle he bizarrely felt obliged to take. The chance of a closer inspection into the brain of Kate Argent pleased Stiles but getting to pick Chris' had additional potential. Granted it had some potential minuses but with his friends at his back he felt confident.
Meanwhile Scott and Allison were lucky to have seats near enough where they could steal glances and not seem suspicious, of course it meant he sat across from her Mother but how bad could that get. Except it got bad very quickly.

"Kate, would you be as kind as to let me sit beside my husband?" asked Victoria as she gave Kate's arm a shove and took her seat beside her husband, chiefly the seat across from Stiles. Fine, not too big of a transition on his part that was until Mrs. Martin spoke up.

"Stiles, could you come sit over here?" she spoke tenderheartedly over the low din.

She must have read his hesitation as uncertainty instead of the jelly sensation his insides had turned into. How could she not have understood, something in her tone made everyone at the table melt a little. It certainly turned him into absolute putty.

"If you'd like to. I'd just like to look at you. You two don't mind moving down" she asked of Isaac and Scott in a manner that wasn't a question and so it didn't leave room for arguing.

Once snapped back into his skin he rushed around into the newly emptied seat beside Lydia. He shrugged haplessly when she kept her eyes on him waiting for an attack.

Lydia leaned toward her Mom and whispered "Mom, what're you up to?"

"I'm being polite, you should try it," she whispered back sweetly

To avoid Lydia's penetrating glare Stiles stared across from him. Staring back at him, Allison bit her lip in an attempt not to laugh but she didn't try very hard to keep the humor from showing in her face.

Much to their misery, Isaac ended up sitting directly across from Kate, and Scott (Allison's secret boyfriend) sat beside Allison's parents. The boys couldn't stuff their faces soon enough.

"This is the part of the evening where we all get to know each other," said Chris as he refilled his glass and took a swallow, eyeing the lineup. "How do we get to know each other?"

Due to the pressure Stiles imagined he was on a game show and next they would pipe up with name, age, hobbies and future ambitions in life.

"Would anyone like something to drink beside water?" asked Mrs. Argent, prepared to return to the kitchen for options. Possibly juice or sodas, she was answered by mumbles and head shakes that went around the table.

"You sure, we can get some beers?" asked Chris looking toward their guests.

Scott's awkward sputtered refusal covered over Stiles' yelp of pain. By way of warning Stiles from commenting sarcastically Isaac kicked him under the table while in unison Lydia dug her nails into his left arm.

"Of course I wouldn't," snapped Stiles, he whipping his head back and forth between the two unable to get a full glare-on (what with Lydia staring benignly off while she chewed salad and while Isaac looked intently interested in everything Chris Argent said.)

"How about a shot of tequila?" asked Chris, amused at the colors Scott turned in seconds.

"Scott wouldn't drink tequila," Stiles felt dismay on Scott's behalf so answered for him in a disastrous attempt to try to be helpful which he only realized after the words spewed out of his
mouth. He wanted to point out to the dense Hunter 'Werewolves can't even get drunk!' but he caught himself before throwing Scott under the bus. It was severely unlikely that Chris figured out the boyfriend part Scott played in Allison's life but that still didn't make it cool for Scott to take the brunt of abuse due to proximity.

"Then what do you drink, Scott?" asked Chris, he leaned forward onto the table as though he could stretch across the distance and place himself nose-to-nose to glare out all Scott's secrets.

"Dad. Really?" retorted Allison, her glare matched her Father's over the distance. Maybe one if not all of the Werewolves at the table could sense her agitation, it held a beat like a dance remix.

"I don't drink. I'm not old enough," Scott answered sheepishly and lost his nervousness in stabbing at the greens on the edge of his plate.

"That doesn't seem to stop most teens," added Mrs. Argent across from him. Her voice broke the staring contest, her incision created his escape.

"No, but it should," he smiled and stuffed his mouth full of overcooked over-roasted Asparagus he could barely keep on his fork. Beside him Isaac sniggered then did the same.

"Good answer," Natalie praised him on from the opposite end of the table. How it had turned into a game of tennis with the children as the game pieces no one was sure but she made certain to let them know whose side she was on. She encouraged him, practically "a total lie, Scott but a good answer. You might survive the night."

Stiles looked to Natalie in admiration for her resolution to stick with Scott come what may, when he noticed beside Natalie's wine glass of fragrant red Lydia secretly settled down a mug of white wine. His eyes went wide, mouth went slack before he rocked back (nearly falling off his stool) in an effort not to laugh outright. He had wondered why and how Lydia remained quiet throughout the character assassination of the most kind-hearted person they knew. Instead she responded with licking her lips before pressing them together in silence and nodding along with her Mom, not without flashing him a quick glare to STFU.

"Maybe we've started out on the wrong foot," Mrs. Argent announced and thankfully drew the attention of the room toward her. "How about some proper introductions; I'm Victoria." She gave it her hostess best but their response was little above lackluster. "So you're all friends of Allison?"

Varying degrees of admittance moved from Scott's end of the table with the reluctant 'uhm, we have a lot of classes together' to the bold 'obviously' delivered with Lydia's trademarked indignation.

"It's just I wouldn't know," came her apology for any social inconvenience. She added while throwing a glance at her daughter "Allison never brings friends home."

"And you wonder why that is," she muttered indignantly as she speared at lettuce leaf after lettuce leaf with her fork before shoving a forkful of Caesar salad into her mouth.

"The ornery one here is my husband, Chris." she smiled toward him and he grinned toward her in a way the verbalized a tiredness but solidarity. There was menace behind it whether he intended to or not, something subliminal in his Hunter nature or at least Stiles thought so. At least enough to forget to eat and to sit glaring.

"Now, I'm sure we're all going to get along famously," Chris commented cynically.

"Like all famous headlines; Assassin Kills Kennedy. Titanic sinks. Dinner at the Argents," Isaac
muttered darkly toward Stiles, who brought back to himself, tried not to laugh. Only he hadn't tried very hard which left the table staring at them.

Track 07 - 'I See You' by The Horrors

"And you all seem to know Kate," Victoria may as well have meant it as an accusation considering how it made their skin crawl.

Across the table Kate smiled at them each for a pause but none longer than Scott. He felt like the words 'Caught twice in one night' had been branded across his forehead.

He smiled and focused intently to keep it from twitching. He also focused on not focusing on what exactly it was she intended to do with him when she brought him back to the house. Maybe this was it? Please, let this be the worst of it. Humiliation was something he had grown very much accustomed to.

When Allison's Dad cleared his throat Scott realized it was quite possible he had been staring at Kate too long. Without meaning to he fired that same grin at Chris then concentrated, tone it down, down, a little more, good now you look significantly less agonized and just this side of crazytown.

"Scott," Kate pointed toward him with finger guns, "Isaac." She moved along "Stiles and Lydia." she meant it by way of lazy introduction the boys gave a late response, Lydia gave none at all.

"And you're friends with my daughter," said Chris toward them, mostly into Scott's face due to proximity. Scott shifted in his seat. After a pause and gulping down half of his glass of water Scott explained.

"We're all friends," he took another sip before adding, "plus it helps that Allison is really friendly too."

He counted out the swishes in his mouth before gulping down the water as if were some romantic process when in actuality he felt the coolness of it bring down the heat he knew must show in his face. If Allison's Dad would continue to use him as a conduit for questions he felt like he might just burst into flames.

"And you," Chris moved onto Stiles, "you've only been back a few days but you're close enough to just turn up whenever you want?"

"Sure," Stiles could have thought of something witty but Chris seemed to be the one putting on the show at the moment.

"You've been gone 6 years," the suddenness of Victoria's voice had their side of the table jump a little "it must be a real shock getting back into the swing of things. It must be strange for the two of you."

"No," Scott and Stiles answered in unison. Scott's smile came genuinely to him and Stiles' expression was set to smirk.

"That's hard to believe," Chris took charge after swallowing a large and loud bite of roasted ham. "I mean, just disappeared for 6 years. That's a problematic amount of time to leave and expect to be accepted naturally."
If there was a noise, a singular sound for repulsion and rejection and embarrassment Allison had discovered it and topped it off a facial expression of cool detachment. Scott certainly would have taken more time to admire it if it wouldn't have brought attention to how much he admired her already. Not that everyone at the table hadn't taken note.

"It's been great," bragged Stiles and he smiled, his cheek on cheek puffed out with baked potato still in it and he held up a butter knife for emphasis. "Scott's more than my friend, he's my brother."

"That must be really awkward for you to hear," Chris turned his attention to Isaac, Isaac in the middle of shoveling a second serving of bacon-wrapped-shrimp onto his dish.

Food served as a decent distraction from his discontent and with plenty of food Isaac was grateful for the Werewolves' metabolism because the table was in danger of being eaten straight down to the legs. He only paused when he felt the glare of a Hunter, the sort of thing he hadn't become familiar with. Chris didn't look like the sort who would repeat himself so he analyzed the scene and thought about what the play would have been and answered honestly--

"No, I guess he's kinda like family to me too. We've had rough patches but well, I trust him." He broke off a piece of food and popped into his mouth while he considered, his bright-eyes working over lost in thought before he nailed Chris with a bright smile. "When you meet someone, an honest and real friend you want to stick with them, what does time matter? Plus, he's a fair co-captain," Isaac finished proudly and returned to munching.

Allison was first to burst out laughing although her Father found little humor in the mistake. The Martin women were second to go, in near symmetry their hands went to covering mouths to smother out their laughs. Scott's face turned bright and while he didn't laugh he couldn't find his voice in embarrassment of Isaac's praise.

"He meant Stiles," Kate corrected, a lilt in her tone. Isaac stopped mid-chew to listen. "He meant 'Is it now awkward between you and Stiles?'"

Isaac swallowed, "aw, no. He's an ass. That never changes." To which Stiles shrugged in concurrence and went on eating undisturbed, to which Allison hid her face behind her hand and Lydia's murmuring of 'jeez' could barely be made out below the sound level.

"So that's it, perfect integration," Chris said in admiration, his tone made him sound at ease but Scott felt the hairs on his arm raise. He drank more water to settle his nerves and imagined cool rivers and warm nights and being anywhere but there, preferably with his friends. He certainly would not abandon his friends.

"Sure, if you call 2-8 hours of paperwork and tests daily, the local media tracking your every move, the neighbors constant stares and random people occasionally asking for selfies with you 'PERFECT'," Stiles' smile strained finally and Chris' face showed he didn't so much enjoy the ground gained as find it intriguing. "But my family and my friends, yeah... they're still my family and friends. Nothing's changed there," he gained a bit of vitriol.

"But something has changed," interrupted Victoria, her tone calmer but potent. Stiles blinked at her in momentary surprise but quickly looked ready to argue. "Lydia?" she gestured with a smooth wave of her hand, a soft motion that was meant to display something important and it took Stiles a moment to catch on.

On opposite ends of the table Scott met Lydia's eyes and she looked to Scott to wonder where the escape hatch was. How had it come that Stiles was their spokesperson?
"We've been best-friends forever," Scott cut-in.

"That's why it's so good to see you all together," Mrs. Martin all but swooned as she reached over Lydia's lap for Stiles' hand. It was at that moment he remembered his earlier lie and felt the weight of it, when he squeezed her hand and smiled briefly it felt to him more like an apology.

"Right," Lydia added flatly, "it's like we've never been apart." She couldn't bring herself to look at Stiles, so instead she looked to Victoria and kept her gaze confident. "Isaac can you pass the salt?" she asked sharply to deliberately interrupt the flow and set everything back, to at least try to anyway.

Isaac had done so dutifully and in the tangle of hands motion propelled sound back to the room and Allison asked Scott if he wanted more salad. Isaac offered Natalie more water and so on. Kate even grew vaguely disinterested in the topic at hand and moved to serve herself something stronger than wine. But Victoria seemed to find an interesting thread to pull at and nothing would deter her.

"Is that what it feels like to you?" she asked despite the company's din moving on.

Stiles' keen hearing meant he didn't have to struggle but he pretended anyway, because he wanted the time to invent a fiction that would fit. When he last left things with Lydia… well to be fair when he last left things in the atrium, he'd put Lydia in the position to support a world-crashing lie while she would have preferred to throw him out of the Argent home. But rewinding farther, when he last left things with Lydia at the Diner she called him out for acting like a monster because he manipulated his dead family for personal gain. Then she stormed out of one the most uncomfortable meals of his life, not unlike where they found themselves once more.

"No, yes." Stiles hadn't realized he'd been staring at Lydia while he reflected, meanwhile she spoke quietly only to her Mom and Allison with one hand to her head as if she had a headache.

The position hid the placement of her mug, where she tapped her fingers in anticipation for the evening worsening. All that faced Stiles was a curtain of long hair and fingers peeking through where her head leaned. While he couldn't see an expression he heard the faint tink of her ring against the glass, smelled the light tannins of white grapes clashing against her kiwi lip gloss and sensed the stiff ball of nerves and grace he had come to recognize as distinct to Lydia.

"There's a difference," he said to the back of her head because he doubted he would say it to her face. "The biggest difference in being back is being able to say directly to someone what you've meant to for years but haven't gotten the balls to."

The table hushed, Natalie's face immediately perked up but with Lydia so near she bit down on her impulse to respond. Even Victoria seemed swept up in the moment and looked to her husband with a quick rise to her brows, in intrigue and he watched on sternly as if waiting for the table to explode.

Slowest to react was Lydia who tilted toward Stiles and kept her chin propped up on her hand. She had a disbelieving look on her face and waited for the penny to drop (never removing other hand's grip from the mug).
"Like an apology," he gulped around the word not because he hadn't meant it but because he knew the word wasn't large enough. "And that I'm grateful," he bit his lip while he concentrated on finding a better word and Lydia looked on amused at his misery. Her face scrunched up while she tried to figure out what he tried to figure out, "what I'm trying to say is that since being back, you know I keep f--"

Isaac coughed in a polite reminder that swearing might be a bad idea in this particular interval. After all he had gotten some dirty looks over it and Stiles wanted to make a good impression.

"...messing up" Stiles continued, "Not like I didn't 'mess' up before but thanks for not giving up," his struggle not to swear had Lydia grinning. He had to try not to laugh in her face when he finished because it would have ruined the sincerity "and I am sorry. For whatever this was and whatever comes next."

"That was almost eloquent," sighed Allison in relief. She even applauded a little, "you almost look like that didn't hurt."

"It didn't hurt!" he threw a small piece of bread at her before he thought not to. He immediately placed his hands in his lap and set himself into narrow-eyed glaring mode instead.

"What about you?"

"Hmm?" Lydia looked up, vaguely acknowledging she had been addressed. Her mug had emptied.

"It's been 6 years?" Victoria asked with her own glass perched in her hand, her face lit up with gossip-y interest. "Having Stiles back, it must be so strange and different for you?"

Lydia sat up, straightened her posture and let out a sharp breath "nope."

Scott coughed a bit and reached for his water.

"What do you mean 'no'?" pressed Victoria her disappointment leaden in her voice.

Lydia shook her head, she made a gesture toward Isaac and gave a small-smile "it's like he said 'He's an ass. That never changes.'"

Isaac looked utterly embarrassed at having his earlier misstatement thrown in his face and Stiles looked thrown altogether. They both looked to her for some sort of elaboration only her smile extended into smirk.

"Well," Natalie said quietly, a mild bemusement throughout her voice, "that's something I guess. It's just nice to have you all together. And if you're happy--" she placed her hand over Lydia's.

Moments like these were the ones that reminded Lydia exactly why she felt no guilt tormenting the boys; for every second of upset they caused her Mom they deserved a world of hurt.

"There is one thing," Lydia assured then assured the table with a smile, her winningest smile the sort saved for pageantry. "He does apologize better."

Allison didn't bother hiding her giggle at that point, even Kate gave a snort. Stiles' expression was a wordless whine of 'come on', while Scott and Isaac took a moment to evaluate if maybe Lydia was right.

"What? You do," she looked him up and down, from raggedy hoodie to muddied over Nikes. Absolutely nothing notable about Stiles had changed except one thing "you were a brat who never
apologized. Now you're just a brat. I mean your apologies could totally use work. First, you take forever to get to the point and then you swear too much but they've been pretty good so far. But I have a feeling you'll be putting in a lot of practice."

Of all the things Stiles had thrown in his face "what do you mean I swear too much?" he had absolutely not sworn. He looked around the table for witnesses. From back and forth from Lydia to Isaac who were totally guilty of the accusation she'd just thrown at his feet to the lily-white innocent Scott McCall who stared blankly at him.

"I haven't--I have witness--but you just went and-- you heard my message?!!"

"Of course," she scoffed and rolled her eyes at him, "I always check my messages."

"Why'd you make me believe you didn't get it?" his voice went uneven and Lydia's brows creased lightly with concern, possibly even a little genuine.

"I never said I didn't get it. Why? Were you worried I'd ignored it?" she inclined her head, her voice went playful if not a little devious.

"Pfft, no," he jerked upright and tried to keep his sense of alleviation from showing, only it lit up his face.

"Must be a relief to have someone else around for Lydia to abuse," as Allison tried to think of a nicer word than 'abuse' she looked to Lydia to provide a synonym, Lydia in return gave her a sweet-face blank expression that articulated innocence beyond reproach. It only made Allison laugh longer.

"It is definitely something I can get used to," chuckled Isaac.

"So, you don't have a problem?" asked Chris and the levity diminished. "You know, the both of you, sharing?"

Before a tsunami of outrage in defense of her could rise up Scott answered coolly "food? Totally! Like last night out at Tony's. With Aunt Kate!"

In the din of voices throughout the night, of all the interrogatory questions Scott noticed Kate's had been absent. He had feared her barbed commentary all evening but then lack of it made him suspicious. Suddenly it gave him hope, even the prospect of a miracle shot. If Kate only kept him around to scare him quiet than she still cared enough to keep the peace.

"Because that's what you do with friends Chris," she snapped at her brother and rolled her eyes to look at Scott, "you pass around and share food. Not people."

After an awkward pause a rumble of laughter grew almost imperceptibly, until it became wall of sound and no one wanted to take outright claim to have laughed at Chris Argent first, although no one wanted to stop.

"You know that wasn't what I meant," he explained himself for the second time only to barely be heard.

To which Kate responded with a furrow-browed expression of 'you should know better' as she sipped from her glass.

Leaning forward, Lydia looked to Scott once more and he looked back with a brow-raised expression of distress on his face. Lydia looked stern and pressed her lips into a line that slowly
turned up at the ends, as if her appreciation was also a command to relax. Beyond the movement of shifting friends and talking dinner guests they nodded to one another, somehow between the two of them, they 'totally got this.'

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**Track 09 - Never One To Complain by Night Terrors of 1927**

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"Okay. What are safe topics?" Natalie vied for relief, "How about the weather?"

Even their host Victoria had the dignity to look discomforted although she fared better by hiding it behind a dinner cloth.

Unfortunately, for Isaac he had little experience looking innocent but loads of practice at stirring the pot, and so he asked Kate "it sure has been some interesting weather hasn't it?"

Kate simply scoffed aloud and poured herself yet another glass of wine. Scott too, poured himself more water as it was a miracle his bladder hadn't burst. Allison continued to stab at her food.

"What?" well-meaning Natalie looked around at the unsettled faces, "you can't say you don't think so?"

Lydia looked shrugged in reply as she nibbled delicately on a piece of Salmon. It seemed with her Mom beside her, best-behavior meant "you're mute". Whereas Allison's venom kept her pent up and Scott's fear of saying the wrong thing kept him paralyzed.

"Well, the thunderstorm was sudden," bothered by the stillness Isaac offered a lifeline, "but isn't that what your coastal winters are like? A splash of real weather, then it's all sunshine and lollipops for the next 364 days?"

"El Niño has dried your brain because that's not even a little bit true," griped Stiles. Looking around all evening into familiar faces; it annoyed him, the outright dismissal of wet winters, where a neighborhood stream turned into a gusher creating terrain and new dares for him and Scott to come up with.

"This storm had no effect on the coast. It barely touched a pinky in Beacon Hills, let alone the county," Natalie explained gently, hoping it would settle the confusion. While it had a quieting effect on some it unsettled others and Natalie polished off her wine and regretted she brought up the weather at all.

Unprompted Allison went to the kitchen counter and brought back a new bottle of red wine. After topping off Mrs. Martin's glass she 'kindly' asked her to clarify what her last statement meant.

"I mean the storm barely delayed my husband-- my ex-husband's flight back home," with that she took a long sip.

"Right. Dad." Lydia finally spoke and she looked to her Mother with a soft expression of sympathy and pathos. "Even the forces of nature wouldn't dare put him out. God forbid."

Lydia rose a glass of water to her Mother in mock toast "to my Deadbeat-Dad!" for someone who had said so little throughout the evening she always managed to say a lot. Although Natalie gave her a warning scowl she lifted her glass in return.
"Anyway, the sky has cleared up and the weather has warmed up. It's like spring has sprung," trying once more for cheer Natalie squeezed her daughter's free hand. "Maybe we can go for a walk in the garden later, if Vickie doesn't mind."

Isaac wasn't sure what put him off more; the endearment of Mrs. Martin referring to Mrs. Argent as 'Vickie' or the prospective invitation to walk through her gardens? From the color change on Victoria Argent's face he imagined she shared the majority of those feelings.

"Okay, maybe" sighed Lydia after a thought-out deliberation. "If its fine with 'Vickie'?"

Stiles choked on his food, not just in amusement because he was impressed with Lydia's talent to hone in on everyone's insecurity within seconds but because he had discovered Rumy's jerk chicken.

The table tittered in amusement of nerves and genuine awe of the levels of subtlety thrown into gutter at every endeavor.

"My gardens?" taken aback Victoria abandoned hostesses' benign kindness.

"I think Rumy was trying to impress me while you and Kate went to the Lodge, so he took me for a walk when the weather changed. They're really lovely." Natalie spoke as if she was reminiscing of a time long ago and she realized maybe water should be her next drink. After she polished off her wineglass she then pulled a glass of water nearer.

"Right. Of course," Victoria answered, in rival insobriety wiped her mouth after her glass had emptied, leaving her lips the burgundy color of her hair.

"I could also use some air," stated Allison suddenly pushing her barely eaten plate away. "I think I've shoved down about as much as I can stomach. May I be excused?"

"Really, Allison?" her Father replied in a mocking tone, "I feel like we're all just beginning to bond." And to emphasize he placed a hand on Scott's shoulder.

"Is there dessert?" asked Isaac and Allison gave him a glare he hadn't seen since she'd shot him in the forest. "I didn't say I wanted any," he assured her.

"I think some air sounds like a very good idea," said Kate through an exaggerated fake yawn. "It's been a long couple of days, come on Chris. Take a walk with me."

"Allison, I'll help clear the plates with you," Lydia spoke over them and grabbed up her Mother's and Stiles' still partly full plate to keep them from arguing.

"Isaac, be a dear and help them bring the stools back into the kitchen," Natalie instructed. He looked to Stiles for a way to respond and Stiles simply shook his head and popped the last piece of jerk chicken into his mouth. They stood in unison and carried their stools to the kitchen.

Meanwhile despite her suggestion, Chris Argent hadn't made a move to follow his sister to the garden door. Instead he stewed and glowered while nursing his wine.

"Chris, why don't you come out for a walk? It'll clear your head," Victoria insisted, while she suggested it she made a hand gesture for their daughter to continue clearing away the dining room.

Track 10 - Up We Go (Acoustic) on Vault Sessions by LIGHTS
It became obvious throughout the meal that the Sheriff's kid's sudden reappearance during the town's strange events hadn't sat well with Chris. After meeting Stiles across the dinner table, his suspicions weren't assuaged. In fact, from the moment he'd met Stiles all he'd sensed were blaring lights and sirens.

"I can finish that drink for you," offered Scott. He stood to take away his own dishes and extended a hand to help relieve Chris' from his.

"Ha. Funny," Chris all but grunted, momentarily waylaid from his train of thought. After chugging the last of it he handed his glass to Scott.

Chris grinned in a manner that intimidated but Scott smiled, a quick flash deflecting any dirty look the world could throw his way. Equally nerves and genuine, since Scott had mastered his nerves to the point of deflection, he responded "Thanks Mr. Argent. And for having me stay for dinner."

"I'll be in the den," sighing in defeat, Chris pet Scott on the shoulder once and then bypassed all options and disappeared along the hall.

Looking to one another, Allison and Scott frozen in shared shock and caught their breath after surviving their first dinner with the parents. Unfortunately a table stood between them, kisses and hugs weren't in harmony. Instead Scott returned to clearing the table with a grin on him the size of the crescent moon, while Allison danced a little at the entryway of the kitchen where no one else but the two of them could catch sight of it.

In the kitchen the smile wiped away at the sight of Stiles clearing off dishes.

"I don't know what you did," intruded Scott, dropping his pile of dirty dishes along with Stiles' on the counter. Ignoring the annoyed hiss of 'you're ruining my system' Scott continued "but Stiles you're in his crosshairs."

"That's not important," he explained with a shrug as he went to reorganize dishes. "Bring me the platters. Lydia's collecting the glassware--"

"And silverware," she added slipping from the kitchen.

"I've got the last of the dishes cleared and ready for the machine," Stiles wiped his hands on the back of his jeans knocking free his notebook. Before it could make contact with the ground Scott caught it and it handed it back only from the manner with which Stiles flinched, it might have been better to let it hit the ground than for someone else to touch it. When he said, "thanks" it sounded strained.

"There are no platters left. Everything worth saving is closed up," Isaac announced dropping Tupperware dishes onto the kitchen counter.

"Wow," Allison heaved a sigh and dropped onto one of the newly returned stools "you two are really good at this."

Isaac looked to Stiles over the counter, Stiles looked back, and they looked to Allison and Scott, and explained "big family."

A clatter brought their attention back to the forefront as Lydia sprinkled utensils into the sink. Smirking she turned with a flair "now that we've got a minute, let's make a plan."
"Plan?" Scott scanned the loose circle they formed along the kitchen's dividing counter. He sensed varying degrees of nervousness but from their expressions he gathered a general resignation. "There's a plan happening?"

Beside him with a grin Allison nodded "Stiles came over with some ideas."

"Some really good ideas," Stiles emphasized.

"Some smart ideas about fatality patterns," Allison reemphasized. "But we'll need access to my family's records for confirmation," she proudly punctuated the word 'we'.

"While Isaac came to verify Derek's proof of death," Lydia interjected.

"I came to figure out if Kate conned me," Isaac corrected.

"Scott, with you here the trifecta is complete," then Stiles thought better of it. "The superfecta. The superfecta supreme."

"Or the team," Scott offered, and then hesitated to add "what is our team doing?"

"Committing a burglary," asserted Lydia, smirking.

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Track 11 - Lippy Kids (Elbow Cover) by INDIGØ

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Despite his hunter senses, Natalie managed to slip into the den relatively unnoticed. She regarded the sparse décor spread throughout the room and wandered into Chris' line of sight as she neared the fireplace.

"Do you mind if I make myself comfortable?" she asked and gestured to the couch across from him.

"Make yourself at home," he said with causal sarcasm.

"I just want to wait for the food to settle then see if Lydia wants to go out for that walk," she chose to sit across from him, to look at him directly from over the coffee table. After a moment of looking at one another in an awkward stalemate they broke into smiles.

As parents they shared a sentiment of armament; she couldn't exactly forgive him his attack on her daughter but she needed a 'brother' in arms. And as capable as Victoria was, she seemed the social butterfly and not the active participant.

"Thank you for putting up with us. I know we just barged in here and you didn't have to," she said sincerely.

"I don't see you as someone who takes 'no' for an answer. Besides it has been entertaining so far," he admitted though a bit tired.

She nodded a little, and then conceded "I also think it's been good for Lydia. She's been having a hard time lately."

He nodded, but when he was quick to agree she wondered how much was insight and how much was Fatherly inspect but he had Allison to consider so there was leeway.
"I think it's good for Allison, too," agreed Chris. He scratched at his chin absentmindedly and added "I've seen her laugh more in the last hour than I have in the last month."

"I'm glad," Natalie beamed and considered their underlaying problem. "This is the sort of thing you wished they put in the bold on the parenting manual; 'start liking the friends on behalf of your children or you'll push them away.'"

"I don't know how I feel about that," he shook his head in disapproval but not disagreement. He looked as though someone served him something bitter.

"I couldn't stand her ex," Natalie admitted and when she said it the venom in her voice showed, "but you know I didn't dare say it. Oh, no!" she nearly laughed and had to readjust her seat to leave room for her own discomfort. The mixed feelings she felt toward Jackson filled the room with their weight. It had been that way even before his accident and with his hospitalization it made virtually smothering.

With a twitch of a smile she reminded the obvious "you never say you disapprove, not outright. You might as well fling her at him and scream at her to lie to you. No. All you can do is stick with them and wait it out, the good bits and the tough bits."

He 'hmphed' with a smile in a little bit of admiration. Chris had shown himself to be hot-headed more than once and while Natalie had a temper as well there was control there he had yet to master.

"I talked to her about Jackson earlier in the study," he mentioned, reminding himself that Natalie had a way of wheedling the truth out of you. "She mentioned visiting him in the hospital."

"I'm sure you were a great comfort to her," she said in a manner that meant 'you'd better have been.'

"Even though you hate him you took her to see him?" he asked, that inspect nature she had anticipated slipped through the veil and she remembered why she preferred his company.

"Because even though she hates him now she still cares. So I still care," she sat straighter and lifted her chin so that he would hear her clearer. "You know, I teach kids all over sometimes for a few days, sometimes for months. You have only a little time with them, to learn their names and what makes them tick but you make yourself care."

"I didn't know you were a teacher," he sat minutely straighter showing mild interest.

"That's just my job. I'm also a Mom," she pointed a finger toward the clatter in the kitchen and the murmur of voices therein. "I care about those kids and if I'm lucky they'll be sticking around. You need to figure that out, too."

Although he seemed reluctant, very reluctant he glanced over and watched for a little while before he conceded, "they seem nice enough, I guess."

"Sure," she grinned.

At that they spilled into the room like soldiers called to arms.

"All finished up," Allison announced cheerfully. "Can they stick around for a bit? Stiles wanted to go over some school notes before-- like a cheat for the BHHS placement for new students. We want to get into all the same classes." She swayed back and forth on the balls of her heels; behind her the rest of the kids smiled in their own increments of goodness or at least their depictions of it.
Somehow the collection of suds down Stiles' front added to suspicious innocence. Isaac and Scott hovered just behind him like awkward yet supportive acolytes ready to catch Stiles from the blowback of possible rejection. With a cool expression Lydia stood beside Allison and held her hand, steadying them both and it was the sort of needless dramatic that made Chris feel a little sorry for them and made him inclined to say "Yes" before he actually thought about the request.

Track 12 - The Greatest View ft. Isabella Manfredi by Flume

Fortunately the kitchen phone rang before he had to get really involved and 'gimme a minute' was as committed as he had to be.

"Are you okay?" Lydia moved to her Mom almost immediately.

Over the span of dinner it became obvious her relationships between the boys were edgy but those edges were cushioned with a lightheartedness Natalie had rarely seen Lydia use outside of the home.

Maybe she only got on Chris' case because she noticed her daughter had begun to open up to old friends and new in ways she could never have anticipated and it frightened her a little. But it also made her happy to see her daughter happy and that had to be enough.

"Better now," Natalie answered with a smile as she came to her feet.

Despite obviously not wanting to, Lydia smiled. "Do you still want to go for a walk in the garden?" she asked, ignoring the fact that she wore a pajamas set with a robe synched tight around, attire entirely unfit for outdoors.

Natalie nodded, "Absolutely. It's getting warmer and warmer outside."

Lydia's expression changed from confusion to troubled, "after a thunderstorm? The Barometric pressure tends to go down."

"I know. Strange," her Mom's brows rose in mischievousness. "Still want to go?"

Lydia nodded, "Absolutely."

Track 13 - No Angels by BASTILLE feat. Ella

"Well, that was the Sheriff on the phone," announced Chris upon reentering the den. The triumph on his face shone like the sun. He looked to Scott as he said "he says he can't get a hold of your Mom. And while he's grateful you're looking out for his son he's pretty sure she's not going to be okay with you being here right now."

Chris looked triumphant in finally finding something to hold over Scott's head, meanwhile Scott looked paralyzed, not in fear but in confusion. Was he meant to explain himself or to excuse himself and leave?
"The Sheriff says you should stay put," explained Chris only after he let Scott stew for a bit. "He says he'll escort you home when he picks" he turned to give Stiles an icy stare "you up."

It was Stiles' turn to quake under Chris' control. Unlike Scott, Stiles actually stumbled back a step, unsure whether he was more intimidated by the idea of his Dad turning up or Chris' harrowing delivery.

"Until then, you two are to stay put," he grinned and walked through their little group happy to part them, happy to send them scattering.

Allison looked to Isaac beside her, as if he held some answer. He at least wouldn't have to suffer the same fate but across from them Scott and Stiles looked to one another in pained discomfort for fear of what could be worse than being under arrest. Did house arrest at a Hunter's home qualify?

"Until then? When is exactly 'until then'?", asked Stiles through clenched teeth.

After he reached for his glass and drank the last of his whiskey he'd pour from the decanter, which he enjoyed immensely not to mention loudly, Chris looked to Natalie and gave her a wink. Both Martin women were skilled in the art of straight-facedness and show no sign they'd caught his amusement while he returned to his delivery.

"I guess whenever 'then' will be. Probably when he gets off duty," shrugged Chris.

Track 14 - Second Chance by Digitalism

While the change of affairs certainly placed them in the right place at the right time-- it also placed them under the watchful eyes of Allison's Dad. Somehow this good turn of events also felt like standing in a line up for a firing squad.

"Dad, where are they going to stay?" asked Allison, quick to get onto task. Placement mattered.

Caught off guard with the momentary loss of higher ground, Chris devised something devilish. Something he knew would make the boys skin crawl.

"My study," he grinned. He briefed them in the vaguest sense that the study 'could' lock from the outside (not that he would), plus it was placed ideally one floor away from the girls' bedroom and he he'd lock the liquor away. Hell, he even got the chance to throw in there a reference to his gun collection.

"Don't you worry boys, that's not where I keep the guns anymore," he clapped Stiles and Isaac on the shoulders while he guided them along the hall. "I keep the best of those upstairs by my bedroom. Where I can get to them. At any time."

"Come on Scott," Allison ignored her Dad but spoke loud enough for him to hear. "Let me show you where the pillows and blankets are."

Just out of sight, she caught hold of his hands and laced her fingers through his and tugged him through the shadow with her to the corner, not exactly private enough to be totally unseen but just enough to keep hidden behind the hall closet door.

Once out of sight she beamed at him and stole a kiss, "my Dad likes you."
"H-how did you get that impression?" he asked between a pile of pillows she placed in front of his face.

"He doesn't even look at you as someone who potentially wants to have sex with his daughter," she shut the cupboard closed and carried blankets as they returned to the path along the hall.

"But that's like very not true," Scott stuttered out the words around a grin he could barely hide.

"I kind of figured that. But as long as my Father thinks of you as the equivalent of a monk you're the one he hates least," she practically had a skip in her step.

Scott had an 'ah-ha' moment "and being the one he hates least makes me the one he likes most."

"Exactly, I'm going to go before I jinx it" she tossed the blankets on top of the pillow, her face beamed with relief she felt in that the worst of the evening was over, well until the next worst part of her evening. She left him at her Father's study door then doubled-back to whisper through the mountain of mixed cotton "I love you," as magic words to embolden him before she hurried away.

Even a pile of bedding couldn't diminish his grin because of course it worked, house arrest be damned, bring on the burglary.

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Track 15 - Very Few Dancers by Sons of An Illustrious Father

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By the time Chris turned up at the Lodge, after what he deemed appropriate for settling down/terrifying a few teenage boys Kate had become livid.

"This place is too small for temper tantrums," Tyhurst reminded. He looked irritated himself since he had been getting calls from the Sheriff's department across town for over an hour but he waited obediently for Kate's dismissal.

Rumy made a snorting sound that could have been commentary or could have been from reading a bad poker hand. Norm scoffed in antagonism, adding number of Reese's Pieces to the anti.

Although having only just arrived and little to add to the exchange Chris snapped at them "shouldn't you be cleaning the house out?"

The game dispersed, two separated from the game they'd set up by the fireplace. Axel didn't like Chris breaking up their game, in fact his grumbling was loudest of all when he reminded it wouldn't have been an issue if Chris hadn't let people invade the house and roam the grounds.

"Everything is about invasion with you," Rumy grumbled and stretched out on the couch, deliberately putting his feet up on the coffee table in front of Axel. "Invading my home, invading my fridge, invading my air. What happens if I have to use the bathroom, then Bennet might have to go, then we'll all have to, it'll be anarchy!"

"Knock it off Rumy!" Chris rubbed his temple, feeling a headache coming on from having to deal with more children and dropped onto the couch beside him.

"Where is Livy?" Victoria questioned from where she sat lounging, reading in an armchair.

"She never comes to the Lodge," Fry sniggered, "she says and I quote 'this place of ill repute
smells of cigarettes and simpletons'. It would damage her standing just coming near, seriously she only goes as far as the gardens."

"Well it makes the segregation easier," Rumy muttered while he bit at his thumb.

"Not this again," Axel went to his feet and left through the hall off to the rear rooms and Rumy's eyes followed. With a jab to the side Rumy directed Chris' attention to follow as well.

"Those aren't the bedrooms," he whispered.

"It's none of your business," Bennet said in a weary tone that said to Chris this was a conversation they'd had over and over.

"We're supposed to be a team Chris. A team," he went back to biting his nail and added shaking his head to the nervousness bag of tricks. "If you're not sharing something with your team, if you're hiding something it's because you're ashamed, then it's probably something you shouldn't be doing."

"Is that a saying from back in the Old Country?" Chris smiled a little trying to smooth things over.

Rumy shook his head and kept his friends stared "its common sense Chris."

Bitterness invaded the air and Kate crossed the room to where Chris sat, she tapped his shoulder and made a gesture for him to walk to follow. And when Chris' team moved to stand with him, she said with soothing tones "no that's okay, you guys can hang out here. With Victoria," almost as if they were being babysat. Begrudgingly, they went to start a new game of poker and when Kate led the way to the back rooms Tyhurst and Fry tagged along.

"I don't like all this tension," Chris muttered as he walked with her through hallways in back rooms.

She nodded in agreement, "I don't like the idea of us not being on the same page either Chris. But at the end of the day the one thing we can agree on is we want to keep our loved ones safe. Right?"

She came to a steel door with a large lever she reached to pull, her face was bright with excitement to share her revelation and her brother stopped her.

"Kate, before you open that door think about when we're keeping our family safe, right?" he placed his hand over hers. He thought about his wife upstairs sat indifferent with his best-friend. He thought about his home with his daughter in it full of her best-friends and he thought of his sister beside him, always so well-meaning.

"And now I want you to keep in mind what you identify as a threat."

Chapter End Notes

CREDITS/ROLL CALL:

**Argents - Team1; headed by Victoria, Chris & Allison.**
- Rumy - [Sergeant] specialized in Recon; Special Forces and espionage. Chris' right hand man and Allison's godfather.
• Axel - [1st Lieutenant] expert tracker, marksman and Allison's 2nd cousin.
• Bennett - [Field Officer] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old and friend to Allison.
• Leveque - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Terrain-Orientation. Mechanics, driving countermeasures the means to mobilize heavy firepower to engage opposing forces including other combat vehicles.
• Ulrich - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation.

Argents - Team2; headed by Kate.
• Livy - [1st Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Force-Orientation, R.I.F. and close-combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's right-hand man.
• Tyhurst - [Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation, Cyberwarefare, has CIA background and is ranked with state detective credentials. Referred to as 'try-hard.'
• Norm - [Sergeant] specialty in Medical Intelligence and as a Longbowman; an archer who uses the longbow, w/ various arrowheads. He' JR's brother and Roman's Uncle.
• Roman - [Field Officer] specialty as a Marksman/Sharpshooter, 19yrs. old and a weapons expert skilled in precision shooting. He's JR's son and Norm's Nephew.
• Fry - [Field Officer] specialty as a Tactician is and general officer, while his marksmanship is low he is still in high regard for his brain.

Argents - Team3; headed by Gerard.

Hale (Present Day) Pack; Derek Alpha
• Isaac - [Omega] abandoned Werewolf in search of a pack.
• Stiles - [Omega] also abandoned, in search of any existing pack members.
• (missing) Cora - [Beta] missing, presumed dead.
• (missing) Boyd - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.
• (missing) Erica - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.

Hale (Heyday) Pack; Talia Alpha
• Peter - [Beta] Talia's brother, Uncle to Derek, Laura and Cora.
• Laura (age 17) - [Beta] was last seen struggling between trying to pull survivors from the fire and defending her mother, Talia from her Uncle Peter's attacks.
• Derek (age 15) - [Beta] was pulled from the flames by his sister Laura and ushered to safety by their emissary… until the Treaty was made.

? Other;?
• Jackson - [Kanima] characterized by claws that secrete venom which temporarily paralyzes their victims, a double row of sharp fangs, and a tail. Unless a Kanima resolves what in its past caused its mutation, it will eventually cocooned stage and emerge as a winged creature. Unlike a werewolf, a Kanima seeks out a master instead of a pack. It will carry out whatever vengeance its master bid. *chapter 12
• Kira - [?] ...
• Lydia - [Banshee] 'A Banshee screams preceding a supernatural death not as a premonition but to highlight the likelihood of supernatural events that result in deaths.' *chapter 8

Twins' Pack; Aiden and Ethan Carver Alphas
• Marta - [Beta] she's an older motor head and their 1st Lieutenant.
• Bridy - [Beta] the packs' spy because she's diminutive and easily underestimated.
• Gus - [Beta] referred to as psychotic now and again, but his very few (and dwindling)
close friends' are his touchstone.
• (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, bi and partnered to Naylor, formerly to Bozeman.
• (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
• (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
• (deceased) Coot - [Omega] former Beta, killed by the Monster.

**Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha**
• (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed 1st Lieutenant, possibly romantically entangled.
• Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali and closely bonded to Huntington.
• Santos - [Beta] while loyal to Kali has mentored many, without regard to packs. He helped the Twins first learn to shift together without losing their identities.
• Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed and with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
• Levi - [Beta] he's neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
• Huntington - [Beta] has strong empathic senses, is very good friends with Gus' from Twins' pack and Lark.

**Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha**
• Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' Lieutenant, --from wiped out Shapeshifter dynasty.
• Dr. Kane - [Beta] both a medical Doctor and their torturer.
• Quint - [Beta] eager to please teen and Dr. Kane's biological son.

**Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha**
• Søren - [Beta] 1st Lieutenant, Danish man of even temperament and a skilled negotiator until his temper is peaked.
• Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
Chapter Summary

In an attempt at being stealthy, or at least to their verifying definitions of stealthy Stiles Scott and Isaac break into the Argent's family "Meeting Room" to get long-standing answers about the Hale Pack-- with the help of Allison, Lydia and a little bit of Banshee ability.

Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/16-were-you-stealthy

...Writing a whodunit is like nailing your hand into your head wrapping your head up in a bag full of nails while you're sleeping on a bed of nails. That is also on fire, in case you were wonder. This chapter underwent 6 re-writes before I was happy with it, (4 ½ before it even made sense... which could be heavily attributed to getting sick.) Despite all this whining I love this story, I love writing this story, I love sharing this story and I hope any readers who are still around at this point will love or at least have a strong liking that keeps them reading. So, thanks. (´・ω・`)♡°° Talk to you soon-ish.

Chapter Notes

Previously on were (you);
In the midst of the most "Awkward Dinner of All-Time™" in the House of Argent, while others discuss suspicious appearance and the abnormal weather, our heroes plan a burglary.

• The Sheriff Stilinski continues to investigate the Monster murder history privately while he watches over the Hale house fire publicly.
• Melissa McCall oversees the weird medical irregularity of (should be dead but overnight successes) Jackson Whittemore.
• The packs take to the woods to search for their dead and Beacon Hills continues to attract more weird by the minute.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Track 01 - Werewolf by CocoRosie

{Friday; Late Evening}

The study of Chris Argent was surprisingly sane looking, comforting even for a holding cell. Wrapped around with floor to ceiling bookcases, wall sconces and a fire place, dotted with pieces of indigenous art each probably had secret meanings. There were paneling and cabinets and narrow artsy curtain-ended tall out-swinging bay windows that reminded a little of bars but provided air and escape if need be. Dark wood tables lined the walls with locked drawers, focusing attention to the
massive desk in the center carved of darker wood that may as well have been carved of black metal. Even though there were several seats, even two couches, they were all made of leather and with high backs and didn't scream of comfort.

The place may as well have read 'old-timey interrogation room'.

But with the move of a foot rest here and removing of a coffee table there they would have no problem putting together makeshift beds.

"Is there anything more tragic than being a rebellious teenager," Stiles said followed by a deep sniff beside one panel "being next to a locked liquor cabinet begging to be broken into but not being able to get drunk."

"Stiles," Scott chuckled, "leave it alone."

"Do you think he'll really lock the door?" Isaac asked.

All three stopped (poking and sniffing) mid-inspection.

"Nah," Scott said finally although he sounded reluctant.

"He's probably more likely to put a guard dog," Stiles comforted and Isaac dropped to one of the chairs in defeat.

After a few moments more of admiring what Scott thought was an aboriginal's relic but turned out to be Allison's 3rd grade art project, Stiles interrupted warily.

"What exactly are we supposed to do next?" Stiles reminded "what's the plan?"

"Make up the beds," Scott suggested lamely and pointed to the bedding he'd left stacked on a chair.

With a lack of options left to them they did exactly that until Stiles' Samsung went off. He leapt back in shock, as if he could get away from the very sound then clutched his chest in relief one moment later. A facetime alert popped up on his screen requested from Lydia's phone. Scott and Isaac hovered over his shoulder as he accepted. When he opened the app Allison's face filled up the screen.

"I'm not sure how long this phone will last," she explained Lydia's dying phone and the suspicions of her monitored one. "Lydia is with her Mom still but when she comes back we'll be ready to go, will you?"

"Yes!" they each answered instinctively in their own unique version of enthusiasm.

"Wait?" Stiles finally figured "What does that mean?"

"You guys need to get up here," she rolled her eyes, "how else are you going to break in to a room on the second floor?"

"Right," asserted Scott as if that were obvious then added after a pause "how are we supposed to do that?" a comment to which Allison silently stared.

"Oh, right," Isaac looked to Scott and nudged him hard in the side "we can do that" a thing they've had experience doing anyway.

She sighed at their failure to catch on, "you realize you need to get over here without walking around the house," her tone began to get exasperated.
"We'll climb up and over," answered Stiles fairly quickly and Allison nodded, pleased someone had their thinking cap on.

"How can we be sure we're not going to be seen?" Scott worried.

"It's okay. Everyone is at the Lodge," Allison assured them, "well almost everyone."

"And we'll be stealthy," Stiles bragged with a grin.

"Sneaking into the girls bedroom is the easy part of the evening boys," she teased. "It's all downhill from there."

"What else?" after a deep breath Stiles asked.

"One of you has to case the first floor and check to see if there is anyone in the house," she explained that they could explain away their accidental wandering as looking for a bathroom. But being 'precious-daughter-in-resident' she couldn't do the same and come off as innocent.

When no one was quick to volunteer Stiles spoke up, "Alright, let's settle this like adults; rock, paper, scissors."

In the end their verdict came down that Isaac would go.

"What's next?" Scott asked of Allison.

Amused by their antics she almost forgot the urgency "right--" and the phone gave off a warning blip that it would die soon. "Never mind, I'll explain the rest when you get up here. Just take your time. And most importantly--" as she paused for effect and the boys drew close to the screen "don't get caught."

Track 02 - Brother Song by Circa Survive

Calculating the fact that Mr. Argent had left the main house, it was implied that there seemed to be some grand convergence at the Lodge but that could mean acting right away would be foolish eagerness or taking advantage of the best time available.

As Stiles shoved the phone into his back pocket he touched the rolled up notebook he had prepared with desperate annotations. They burned to be explored. It wasn't until he turned back to his friends, to incite them when he realized he had been oblivious to the tension building up behind him.

"I think I'll head out to check the halls," Isaac said quietly and went out through the sliding doors.

"What's going on Scott?" asked Stiles crossing the room to his best-friend's side.

"If you needed help," Scott asked finding his voice, "why did you come here first instead of to me?" he mostly looked to the ground when he said it.

"You wouldn't have had the answers I needed," Stiles said reasonably or at least he thought so.

"Are you sure?" after a weighty length of time Scott brought his gaze to meet Stiles' but he wouldn't answer.
Instead he tried to smile and made a few noises that were close to scoffing but were the sort of sniffle a pup makes when it's trying to find food around a bowl, searching but not exactly settling. He tried for the dismissive and charming thing he had going for him but it seemed to go sideways with Scott and served to upset him instead. Even when he sat beside Scott on Chris’ desk, something they both knew would have probably gotten them shot or at least maimed, the tension wouldn't dissolve.

Their long standing tension grated on, with fingers gripped into the molded edge of the desk and heads bowed into it, they waited for the worst to pass.

Scott pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed deeply-- Stiles could sense the unease off of him like smoke on a breeze.

"You looked like you would have hurt me if I opened your notebook," he explained. "Not that I would have opened it."

"Come on, Scott. I'd never--" he lied and realized Scott would sense that. "It's not that easy. This is stuff that has to do with my pack. It's--" unconsciously he'd bought out the notebook in front of him, he twisted it in his grip with anxiety "--stuff in here is private information, stuff that's not mine to tell."

"I get that," Scott looked embarrassed of his admission. He wished he had more confidence in their relationship; he couldn't even bring himself to look at Stiles and take full blast of the on-coming declarations.

"Nah, I don't think you do." Stiles stood taller, carrying the confidence Scott lacked and stepped around into Scott's personal space, into the place where he breathed and forced him to look straight forward. "So, what? Isaac is here. And I mean having him back is great, he's this walking talking piece of home. But Dad is unbelievable every minute feels like a miracle. And you and Lydia feel like this craziness of finding pieces of me I never knew were missing. But my pack they were taken, I just --I just lost them! Do you even get that? Like I just lost them?"

When he realized his voice rose he dropped it, he tapped the notebook against Scott's chest for emphasis when he spoke not with meanness but from nerves. Together they breathed slower and Scott tried his best to listen harder.

"I just lost my pack and I'm afraid I might forget them, the sound of Boyd's laugh or Erica's horrible driving, Cora's wild mood swings and the way we just worked together. And you don't get it. You can't get it because with a pack I'm just strong. I felt it. In my head, in my nerves and without them I feel a little nuts, I feel weak. So I miss them and I want them if I think I can find even one of them. What if looking for them is just some act of desperation or maybe if Isaac made it--Cora could be alive out there, she could be killing people and probably about to get killed." He stopped for a breath and to watch Scott's face in hopes that he could understand. "'cause Allison's a Hunter she kinda knows these effects. But you, you can't. Right now her help is what I need because I can fill a hundred fucking notebooks but it's not enough."

Nearly before he ended his outburst Scott reached forward and pulled Stiles stumbling into a hug.

"Maybe I can't-- maybe I won't ever know what it's like to be part of a pack but I know what it's like to feel weaker without you, man. You don't have to show me any notebooks but I promise you I'll be here if you want to talk, about them about being back, about being apart from them, about lacrosse--" said Scott sweetly and Stiles laughed at that "whatever man. I'm not just here to be some guy you're figuring out how to reconnect with."
"Ride or die," Stiles pulled back and with the hand not holding the notebook he put it out for Scott to clasp.

"Ride or die," Scott vowed and clasped it in return.

They withdrew and wandered over to the couches, Stiles feeling all the more exhausted for the emotions that weighed him down. Even he hadn't realized how much grief had been sneaking around and clinging to the back of his mind. He had been caught up in the euphoria of reconnecting, in the adventure of relearning Beacon Hills he hadn't given himself space to understand, space to feel out what it meant to be without his "Big Family"

"Scott," he said holding the notebook in one hand and smacking it lightly into the palm of the other. "I think Derek is dead." He finally admitted to himself and looked to Scott in weary helplessness.

"That really sucks," Scott nodded slightly, proud of his friend and stayed ready to listen as he went on.

Track 03 - Things That Were by Lakyn

The (smaller and lesser used) hall around the back of the stairwell past the study and into the dining which led into the kitchen, yet somehow not only had Scott failed to sneak out of the house through it but Isaac decided to cock it up as well.

"You've got to be kidding me," snapped Lydia, yanking him out from where he hid behind a closet door too small for him.

"So much for ninja school," he tried for a joke but she did not laugh.

"If you were trying to hide there is a bathroom one door down," she pointed out the better option.

"Ah," when Isaac turned to take note Lydia already continued around through the dining room by the kitchenette. She trekked the long way around through the living room to head up the stairwell via the main entrance just to avoid Isaac. So he rushed after her, vying for her attention "can I ask you something?"

"Technically you just did," she called over her shoulder as she climbed the stairs "what is it you need? Fake marriage? Do you want to move in next?"

He winced at her reference "I wanted to apologize for all that. Your Mom confused me for your boyfriend so I just went for it."

"Why?" she paused and turned all the way around to face him and her voice turned deep and considerate. As if she needed desperately to know.

"What explanation did I have for turning up here? I couldn't say I just snuck out of Allison's room," he lowered his voice.

She stepped down, nearing but her poise alone could have crushed him, the sense of her upset vibrated but the way with which she bit her lip said she would sooner cry than strike him down.
"So instead of lying to cover your ass you had my Mom do it for you," she forced out the words.

"Lydia I am so, so sorry," he thought about every time she shouted at him for stupid little reasons and he never deserved it. He figured karmically it rippled back to this moment and he deserved it only instead of exploding into hysterics she nodded quietly and slowly. He felt awful.

"I get it," she said calmly. She glanced around the room as she considered a thousand options as if they were mounted to the walls. "Just don't do anything, anything that might piss her off."

"Never!" Isaac insisted.

Lydia turned to start up the stairwell once more and Isaac foolishly took a chance "thanks, for everything."

"No," she said vicious and spun around. She descended two steps and looked murderous once more, a god lording over him. "Don't you dare thank me. What you did to my Mother is one thing, but how you keep screwing me over is another. Is this how it is with you; for a little bit of attention you're handing over your precious pack members as easily as you pass the salt? Now, you're taking advantage of my best friend just because she shot you before you could ambush me. She should have aimed for your balls."

"Lydia, you're right... actually you're completely wrong. I want to work with Allison because we just want to work together. And you act like you've never screwed me over," he sighed and came to the foot of the stairwell. The glare she gave him dared him to try and ascend and she would kick him back down. "That's not at all what I wanted to say. You and me, you know we're friends."

Lydia lifted her chin, offended by the statement.

"Come on, you know we are," he slowly smirked. "I'm going to ask for your forgiveness now and I just want you to think about it. And then say yes because I'm not going anywhere, okay."

Lydia said nothing but her expression softened and she looked mildly amused.

"Okay?" he insisted and tried for that first step, his hand lightly skimmed over the banister.

Lydia's brows came together with intrigue as she stared at his foot in 'I dare you' fascination then brought her eyes back up to his face. Isaac backed down the one step but kept his hand on the banister.

"I'm sorry and believe me, I will make this up to you," he smiled and he continued.

Lydia spun around and ascended, her hair a wave through the air dismissing him as much as smack to the face.

"We're going to be okay," he called out after her, his tone smug.

"Lover's quarrel," the familiar voice of Victoria Argent said from the small hall behind the stairwell. Isaac stiffened and assessed the situation.

Unless she had super hearing the most she could have gotten were tones, especially since he and Lydia had gotten quieter toward the end. Still, being on high alert was better than not.

Used to slipping into role of fake-boyfriend, Isaac naturally played off the embarrassment at getting caught sneaking seeing his girlfriend. When he responded with "I got lost looking for the bathroom," she practically burst out laughing at him.
"How 'bout I get you some more blankets," she offered to cover for his dignity.

In silences and throughout smiling awkward glancing she escorted him around and back to the study, "do I need to lock you boys in while we're outside?"

"No ma'am," Isaac insisted with a strained smile, "we'll be on our best behavior."

"All clear," Isaac announced settling a new blanket onto a couch. Stiles and Scott looked up from where they sat beside each other on one of the creepy high-backed couches and they blinked, startled at his reentry.

"It sounded like you ran into someone," Stiles asked looking up from where he sat waiting beside Scott.

"Yeah," he explained "Allison's Mom."

Stiles looked at him with an incredulous expression that Isaac would consider that not the 'All-Clear'.

"But she said something about them about going back outside," Isaac shrugged, "so I think we're good."

"Is that all?" Scott asked. What he meant was what else had Victoria said only Isaac interpreted it differently.

"Yeah, Lydia's really pissed."

The room went deathly still.

"Okay," Stiles finally dared to speak, "I vote we wait a while before we try to sneak out to meet up with the girls."

Slowly Scott and Isaac raised their hands, voting in agreement.

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**Track 04 - Run by Daughter**

"Don't you think you're being a little hard on them?" asked Allison from where she'd camped out at the foot of her messy bed.

"Please, don't you think you're being too easy on them?" responded Lydia from the depths of a messy closet.

"What do you mean by that?" Allison twisted at the hip to follow her friend's warpath, where clothes were yanked into the 'vaguely approved' side of the closet or toward the 'possibly on a desperate day' division or onto the 'must be tossed into the pit of despair' pile in a corner by the night table (which had grown disturbingly bulky).

"What I mean is, if only one of them has boyfriend privileges why do they all have access to your bedroom window," she answered flippantly as she pulled out the only acceptable option among Allison's collection of Skater dresses, a midnight colored chiffon number to stick with their burglar
theme. She turned around and looked to Allison for approval and received a grin.

"Would you care to elaborate?" asked Allison impatiently while Lydia feigned disinterest and continued stripping off her pajamas and slipping into the dress.

Lydia walked to the full-length mirror and seemed dissatisfied at the final product. When Allison reminded of accessories drawers tucked in the lower right of closet with flick of finger Lydia disappeared once more. Sufficiently sated she bothered to continue.

"I mean," Lydia said smoothly, "I bet you still haven't thought of what is going to happen if your parents find out you're dating a Werewolf. But when 2 more turn up unannounced, you just let them stay for dinner and gave them a place to sleep."

Finally she reappeared smoothing out the lines of her figure through a dark waspie belt she wrapped around her waist. Her expression displayed equal satisfaction over her statement and her outfit.

"Ask yourself one thing Allison, what quantifies a pack of Werewolves?" she came over, sat beside her best-friend and said a little kinder. "And then think; and how is letting Werewolves underneath a Hunter's roof going to lead to anything other than a nightmare?"

"Lydia," Allison said a little harshly, "this isn't a dream. These are our friends in need of help, what do you think I should have done?"

Their hands were beside one another's on the edge of the bed and Allison's eyes drifted to look at their nearness in the thoughtfulness. They still shared rope marks from the misadventures from the night before, even if their bruises healed those she felt that tie bond them still.

Even without Werewolf advantages Lydia sensed Allison's upset. She had been too harsh when Allison was only frightened for their friends and of her choices. Allison was of course more than a little right; Lydia wouldn't have been so harsh if she didn't care just as much.

"Come on, Allison. All you have to do is take one moment to think. Then just don't change a damn thing," she said sweetly.

Allison laughed lightly, her earlier anxiety forgotten.

"You shouldn't let anyone tell you what to do, not even me," Lydia said primly. After a quick squeeze to Allison's hand she hopped up off the bed and started a search for boots.

"That said Lydia, maybe remember when you take a minute to listen it means you can change your mind if you want to," Allison advised and Lydia responded with 'hmm' while she scoured under the bed, careful not to confuse the leather strip of a weapon for the leather strip of Wellington Boots.

After slipping onto the chair beside Allison's desk, Lydia zipped a pair of black ankle boots firmly on and gave her best friend a look that warned she wasn't above hair pulling.

"And what exactly do you mean by that?"

"What I mean is, our friends, your friends--" Allison brushed her hair out of her face for focus and dark eyes stared with intent, drawing Lydia in with each word. "They jump through hoops to keep that privilege. They're not Jackson. They're not your Dad. So when they disappoint you it's alright to be mad at them and it's alright to get over it too."

With eyes narrowed Lydia leaned forward and said in a threatening tone, "I don't like your insight."
"But you didn't say that I was wrong," Allison leaned forward as well, flashed a smirk broad enough her dimples may as well have been tattoos.

Track 05 - Hush Now (feat. Tina Grace) by Fink

With no subtlety at all, Stiles dove through the bedroom window and barrel rolled across the floor. After pulling her to her feet Allison shoved Lydia behind her. With a lot less noise and action Isaac and Scott hopped onto the windowsill and jumped down onto her bedroom floor.

"Are you kidding me?" Allison smacked Stiles on the shoulder as he came to stand. "You're supposed to be quiet."

"Hey!" he grabbed his shoulder in not-quite feigned pain, "everyone else had a chance to sneak-in. I wanted a go."

"I'll go," Scott offered to assist and didn't laugh at all, not even a little, nope. "I'll check the door and see if anyone in the house heard." With that he hurried off, even after she thanked him Allison followed. She figured between his super hearing and her super subterfuge skills, that is her ability to lie to her parents on the spot, they would probably work best together if someone did come to the door. Isaac moved to lock the window and close the curtains.

With nothing to do but hover in the room's center Stiles relied, of course, on witticisms and comments to still his nerves.

"Nice outfit," Stiles quipped, Lydia had been worriedly staring after Scott and Allison when she swung around to face him, a lot fiercer than he had expected. Well, he'd never been known to think his comments through, why start now. "Is that your interpretation of burglars' costume?"

With a tilt to her head she analyzed him, hands on hips, lips pursed and brows furrowed slightly. After a moment of trying to pick apart the witticism from criticism in his tone she gave him a barely perceptible nod.

"Is that yours?" she smirked in return. He nodded and with a grin pulled up his hood, yanking the strings tight enough that only his nose showed. While shaking her head, she gave a little huff noise in an attempt not to laugh.

"Alright guys," Allison started explaining once everyone rejoined "tonight is actually ideal for breaking into the 'Meeting Room' because Roman and Norm have been moving things around the rooms up here all night. In fact they're in there right now, shifting things over from the guest room."

"Explain how that's ideal-- like does the definition of ideal have a different definition for Hunters or something," Stiles started in after struggling to pull his hoodie down.

"It's ideal because how frequently the door is used is monitored and catalogued--"

"So, while they're going back and forth, no one will notice us," Scott drew the conclusion.

"Exactly." Allison smiled and clasped her hands in mild excitement, the flow of things beginning to get her energy up.
"And because my Mom is in the bathroom at the end of the hall showering and then heading to the
guest room, this is probably going to be their last trip," Lydia explained they'd been transposing
things from the bedroom to the Lodge from what she could see, Allison said what didn't make it in
the first attempts would take temporary lodging in the Meeting Room. "But once we (she used air-
quotes to remind that they're house guests, and therefore easily underestimated) turn in for the
night they're not going to want to come back here at all. They've been moving at a pretty steady
laidback 30-45min interval; so after they leave and my Mom gets out of the shower we have our
window of opportunity. They may be done for the night and not come back to the house at all but
if they do," she shrugged easily with the lazy cat-like confidence "we'd still have 30 minutes. My
Mom is not a problem because once she asleep she's dead to the world." A detail Lydia knew for a
fact since her Mom has slept through her screams before.

"I ran into Allison's Mom earlier and from the amount of food I saw her packing to take back to the
Lodge her parents aren't coming back anytime soon," Isaac added his two cents.

"So right, we have our window of opportunity..." Stiles listed.

"Well, then there is just the room's security; I have the code to get in. That's the easy part out of the
way. Then there is the pressure sensitive mat. Once you walk in there is a 5ft by 5ft pad on the
floor that monitors people or peoples coming in," unconsciously Allison mimed gestures of each
thing she described, her energy kept her moving.

"We just scaled the side of your house. Twice in one night," Isaac pointed out.

"And you got caught," Lydia interrupted.

"I'm just saying I'm pretty sure we can jump over a carpet square," he finished.

"Lydia can't," Scott pointed out.

"And I won't. Once the door is open someone has to step on that square or alarms go off. If 5
people go across it, it will be logged and suspicious. But 1," she grinned.

"Buut," Stiles hesitated, "you do realize that makes you?"

Lydia rolled her eyes at him, "it makes me the fall guy, I know."

"Wait, what?!" Scott's voice rose in alarm and then he repeated himself quieter.

"Someone, preferably not a Werewolf has got to walk in and be catalogued and walk back out later.
It'll be fine, we have 30 minutes that's plenty of time," she said directly and pushed for them to
move on.

"There is a hiccup about getting out of the room; it's a complete blind spot. Because there is no cell
reception in there, there is only PA system. There is one camera and it looks directly out across the
hall showing a live feed of linen closet. The room has soundproof walls, between the codes on the
doors and the short narrow halls there is no way a lookout would work. Getting in is the easy part.
Getting out safely with 100% certainty is impossible," Allison virtually bristled with anxiety.

"Which is why we need a fall guy," Lydia insisted.

"Nope," interjected Stiles, literally jumping to his feet despite already being on his feet. "It's a bad
idea. Correct me if I'm wrong but just because Lydia isn't a Werewolf that doesn't mean she isn't
the sort of anomaly a Hunter would love to get their hands on."
"So how is a fall guy different from bait?" asked Isaac, trying to keep track of too many mixed emotions over too many conflicting theories.

"Because Isaac, I don't aim to get caught. What about you?" Lydia stepped toward him, dipping her head low directly into his line of view. "Are you going to mess this up or do you have me covered?"

"I'm happy to cover you," he said quietly and after a moment broke into a cheeky grin and Scott coughed lightly to interrupt.

Lydia shook her head in approbation and went back to the topic at hand. "The thing is we can't move on unless we agree on everything. The plan won't work otherwise."

"You guys won't be able to go out the same way you came in," Allison picked up "because there is no way to know if the hall is clear. But there is another way I think might work."

"You think?" Scott stepped nearer to her hoping to help secure her by taking her hands, knowing he wasn't the only one to hear the moment her heart skipped a beat.

There wasn't a way in words to explain her burning conflict, how with each step she had to chip away at another layer from her family's trust; she would open the door but couldn't imagine giving away the code, she would share the documents but would never give over access to the closed servers but creating a safe way out would leave her family's 'Meeting Room', what was by definition a 'safe room' permanently vulnerable.

With Scott's fingers locked between hers she felt reminded of the trust they shared. And felt imbued with a faith they had in one another even throughout the mystery they've shared, she looked to her friends and made up her mind.

"There are air vents. There is one barely wide enough, if dismantled and pulled away from the house we could climb out through," she didn't mime with her hands exactly although she drew the shape of the vents through the air.

"Will it really be big enough?" asked Isaac, subconsciously hunching his shoulders low as he considered the prospect of climbing through a tunnel in the wall, something he found terrifying to begin with.

"I'm working from memory," Allison assured "but we should be able to climb through one at a time. It's less than 2ft or 3ft of length between the concrete inner wall and the outside of the house. Once you're outside it should leave us right above my Dad's study so you can drop right down, I'll just need your" and she looked to Scott and squeezed his hand for emphasis "all of your strength to dismantle it."

"After that, I'll just wait until Allison comes back and holds the door open for me and that's it, everyone back to their respective corners," she had displayed such clean cut corners in her mind's eye she even gestured as much with her hands, leaving her hands in a teepee.

Scott squinted in disbelief but unsure as to what, Isaac rubbed his lower lip and Stiles began to work his jaw in preparation of a master-rebuttal.

"I would just like to remind you," Allison put her hand up, in as delicate defense as her tone, "they're leaving now. Our window opens in seconds. If you have questions or doubts now's the time or you don't have any. Got it?"

"If we only have 30 minutes, shouldn't we all know ahead of time what to expect on the other side
of the door?" Scott asked openly.

It was Allison's turn for her face to pinch in discomfort, for her brows to furrow in thought, "there are smaller rooms to the right. Less rooms more like booths. They're filled with our investigation notes. That's going to be everything from a copy of the Sheriff's reports to forensic imprints of every footprint and tire track of every murder scene since these Beacon Hills County investigations began. I'm sorry," she shook her head in apology glancing from Isaac to Stiles. "There is no way going to be time enough for you to go through everything."

"How many booths are there?" asked Stiles, already calculating his plan of action.

"Three," Allison ticked it off on her fingers. "The first are our hard copies. The second is our sealed server. The third is the bathroom which is our exit route." She shrugged knowing Stiles would make a face of discomfort at the idea of climbing out by way of the bathroom. Admirably he didn't, instead he made a shriveled noise.

"What about the server?"

"That's not going to be any faster," Allison explained. "It doesn't connect to the outside world, it never has it's just an archive of every case every logged by any Hunter we've ever been in contact with. Ever. So, you can either compare your map through our server or through the investigation files but, Stiles." She reached across and touched his shoulder lightly as if she were frightened he would shatter, "you're going to have to prioritize."

They all jumped at the sound of a door opening further down the hall. Allison waved for all of them to move out of view from her doorway and stand beside her closet. They listened as a door closed and jovial voices spoke quietly and moved away from them.

When they'd gone far enough away Stiles broke the spell with a whisper, "Scott?"

He glanced over his shoulder from where he hovered beside Allison as they inched forward around toward her bedroom door.

"Scotty, do you think you can read my chicken scratch and go through the files with Lydia?" he asked reaching over Lydia's shoulder to hand over his notebook.

Lydia glared back and forth between the two of them through her discomfort clearly articulated at nearly getting smacked in the face, Scott (normally rather sensitive to others around him) ignored her and focused on Stiles' confident but anxious face.

"Yeah man, I got it." answered Scott, taking the notebook and hugging it to his chest so as to guard the treasure with his life.

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Track 06 - Earthly Pleasures by Villagers

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Allison advised Lydia to walk through the door quickly and move as far to the side as possible.

"Why? Is it rigged to explode? Allison, you swore to keep me safe, are you having me walking over explosives?" she ground out in a whisper.
Allison jabbed out the password into the door's lock. She made a thoughtful expression and her hand hovered over the doorknob for a moment which caused Lydia's uneasiness to move from her chest up to her throat.

"Walk on explosives, no. Just trust me on this," Allison patted Lydia on the shoulder as she pulled the door open, "take your time but walk as far out of the way as you can."

With a huff Lydia tossed her hair over her shoulder and did exactly that. It wasn't a moment later when Scott came barrel rolling and skidded to a halt not 2ft from her. Lydia jumped back, decided she wasn't far enough back to put a table between them. Grinning Scott remained on all fours facing the door as if ready to engage an enemy when a second blur came speedily into the room, a little faster and when it looked as if Stiles would slam into Scott he ricocheted off the ground into the air like a hand ball. He landed laughing behind Scott and came to a stop only after rolling on his back. Prodding at each other and joking as they climbed to their feet.

Although mildly impressed Lydia felt mostly annoyed, after Stiles' earlier stunt with Allison's window she'd begun to realize the light, virtually lax attitude might be counterintuitive to their directive. She prepared to lecture the both of them when a third body of motion vaulted through the door like a competitive long-jumper. Isaac stuck both feet with a thump and rolled forward onto one knee and stopped his momentum with fingertips. Whereas, with the movements of an ice skater, Allison took a silent and concise jump over the patch on the floor and pulled the door close behind her.

"Now, what the hell was that about?" she gestured around the room, toward each of them as they wandered curiously around the panic room turned family's meeting room.

"What, you said it was soundproof in here?" Scott responded innocently enough.

"Not until the door is closed," she snapped at them. When the realization occurred to them, they stared back and forth looking for someone to blame.

"Guys," Lydia reminded with her arms spread she leaned on the edge of the table in the center of the room, the booths just behind her, looming reminders of their task. "Do any of you remember how much time we have?"

The room wasn't barren so much as it was sparse. It was in every way a contrast to how Mr. Argent kept his study downstairs. There were no shelves and no art. There was no warmth or personality to it at all.

To the left (instead of to the right where the booths were) mounted high along the wall was several monitors showing live feeds of cameras all over the property. On the wall just below was a kitchenette fully furnished with all the trappings of canned food and bottled water. Not to mention stove tops, refrigerator, water heater and yet another generator.

On the wall nearest as they walked in were mounted a few dropped down beds and attached amenities, like pillows, blankets and even slippers. On the wall farthest where windows should've been, the outline remained but another code lock decorated the far right corner where a "Caduceus" medical emblem suggested it would have opened up to reveal medical supplies.

In the center stood a long slab of table, oblong shaped with benches instead of chairs. The top was made of dark Touch Foil interactive glass surfaces in places with dark wood, similar to Chris' desk, cutting and crossing through the table like great big T's making places to put things. Things like
"That is an axe," Isaac announced to the room, for the fourth time.

"Yes," Allison soothed and pressed him forward as kindly as possible, trying to move him beyond his shock.

Finally he made eye contact with her, bright wide eyes barely remembering how to blink "why is there a battle axe?"

"I don't know," she shrugged and continued to push him to the other end of the table. "That's probably because my Godfather likes to collect things."

"But the AT4 Anti-Tank Missile launcher doesn't rattle him," Stiles shook his head toward Scott, and Scott in turn had trouble taking his eyes off the missile launcher. Sympathetically, Stiles patted Scott's shoulder and tried to remind him they'd made it to the other side of the table, the long, long table. For now everything would be okay.

Lydia huffed and shook her head, annoyed. They rolled and flipped around them not moments earlier but noooo now they had to stare and whine. Not that she felt particularly comfortable. She made certain to stand out of the rocket launchers line of sight and hugged her arms to her while she glared and tapped her feet in annoyed anticipation.

"You do realize what this means is that they're coming back for these," Allison gestured to the small pile of arms left on one end. With that everyone snapped to attention and hurried to their tasks.

On the one side Lydia and Scott buried themselves, entombed in the physical files to the booth on the right wall. While at the end of the table furthest from the door, Allison stood shoulder to shoulder with Stiles and Isaac and plowed through data.

The reluctance Allison previously expressed to share her families deepest darkest was abandoned. In fact Isaac was loathed to admit it but he imagined this is what it would look like if they were rushing for a quickie, inhibitions thrown to the wind. It was frightening to see Stiles practically skid the long way around the table to creep over Allison's table while she opened up the monitor on the farthest end away from the weaponry. She opened up displays while he whispered, "ooh, what's that? Ahhh, what's that? and that? wassat? wasatwastatatandat" into an indecipherable murmur that she seemed to find a little annoying but only a little.

Grateful to his God-given height Isaac hovered where they leaned to the task but his height did little to give him advantage to their speedy skill at picking apart the images and articles that slid by without any regard to his feelings.

"There," Allison's hand reached across toward him and under Stiles' blockade of a head. Isaac followed her direction curiously when a monitor bloomed to life under her touch.

"Follow along sasquatch," Stiles muttered, "otherwise why are you here?"

He wanted to have something clever to say but the screen hypnotized him. It wasn't space-aged as he had anticipated touchscreen to be. It was just a computer but on a table, when he tapped a box a folder popped up like any other and when he double-tapped a folder it opened. Admittedly he went through them a lot slower than his accomplices at least he could manage to learn something he hadn't before--Kate Argent wasn't as much of a liar as he wished she had been.
"You look in your element," Scott tried not to make it seem mocking but Lydia, kneeling in a space the size of a closet tearing through a cataloged decimal system that may as well have been called Dewy with how easily Lydia cracked it.

She smiled but didn't look up as she unlatched another cabinet and pulled out another envelope, reviewed its content, frowned and tossed it back. "You think I should be a Librarian?"

"I think you should be a spy," he whispered conspiratorially as he leaned down to make it all the more dramatic while struggling to keep hold of folders she already gave him.

She looked up in disbelief at first then battered him back as she moved to stand, "what's next on the list Secret Agent McCall? That's as many missing persons as we're going to find."

He gave a distant expression at the title of Agent McCall but answered her request anyway. "Mauled murder victims for the last 5 months," he answered narrowing his eyes into the overly-worn composition notebook.

"He has got to be kidding," Lydia said indignantly, her hands on her hips she aimed her fury straight through Scott at Stiles. "What does he hope to get out of that?"

"I don't know-- could you try to find the last 3 months at least," Scott compromised hoping her upset would subside.

She stepped back in confusion, grateful she didn't suffer claustrophobia as her back hit the wall. "What's going on Scott?" her infuriation with the boys ended with Stiles and Isaac. She had a silent understanding with Scott, whether they were indifferent with each other, hated or loved each other, all of those things they hadn't figured out yet, they trusted each other, "Stiles didn't ask for that. Why are you asking for that?"

He twisted around his mouth until it turned into a thoughtful lopsided pinched nerve and then he shifted all the files under one arm and held the notebook in the other. But how he held it up, so that he could read, an inch from her face and at an angle made it impossible for her to sneak a peek as he read off the names of the dead; "alright, alright." She shuddered and rubbed the hairs on her arms back down.

"Maybe if he sees they aren't on the list he can feel a little peace," Scott pulled the notebook down.

"Why go back so far?" Lydia asked quietly, somberness pulled her limbs along.

"Maybe if he sees other people have lost their families too-- I don't know, maybe he'll realize with everything we can do, we can do more," he mumbled as he went along, the weight of his word, the way his lips came down from their pinch and eyes looked up waiting for something to give him a break already.

"Hey," Lydia said, gently rubbed his arm then pulled him toward her "here's all your crap." And she dumped the manila envelopes out for him to catch. She grinned at him in a quick reminder that he wasn't factually in this alone. "And here, the one you forgot to ask for."

"What's that?" Scott asked forced to take a step back or fall back.
"The Derek Hale file," she smacked it on top with emphasis. "Now what's next Super Secret Agent McCall?"

"Stop me anytime you like guys," Allison reminded, her tone growing tighter by the minute "this is your family we're picking apart."

"Sure it's not yours," Isaac added wittily, after Allison came just short of a smile she went back to task. "Hey so I've got the report on the fire from 11 years ago."

Together they shifted to see what Isaac pulled up on his side of the screen and crushed Stiles only a little.

"It's sealed and signed by my Grandpa but it has a link attached," she was able to drag it across to her screen. She double-clicked the document attached. "This is the write up of the Hale Fire from the other day and it's still open so don't touch it. I said don't--" she smacked away Isaac's hand mid-reach. "--don't touch it. My Aunt Kate unsurprisingly is writing this one up."

"I can only imagine what that's going to read like," Stiles muttered, he sounded like he'd just eaten gravel and washed it down with lemon juice.

After their commiseration in the kitchen she replayed sitting across from each other in the Diner. She wasn't Werewolf and she couldn't read heartbeats or smell the acrid smells of deceit but she could make out her Aunt's tells.

Around the fire in the Lodge, her side of the Argents played poker. The Lodge was all about Axel and Axel was about poker. Maybe Kate was a master at manipulation but she wasn't much of a poker player. Turning up places she wasn't meant to be or never turning up at all wasn't exactly playing your cards 'close to your chest'. A flippant Leader would cost Hunters lives in the end. Sure she walked around like a Queen, whatever game she played but saw dissension in ranks. All she did was bluff, or at best she had three of a kind. But when Allison looked around the table at her friends she saw a Full House.

If she were a betting person, not that she was into that sort of thing, she would gamble on her friends against Kate without a doubt.

After a pause "Here," Allison tapped her Aunt's name and it illuminated. After holding down her name like a button several options lit up and she selected "these are all the reports Kate has been writing up, editing and viewing lately. All her recent activity in one go; any of interest?"

"Can I?" Stiles asked eagerly, his eyes were over-bright. He wasn't sure which he felt more eager for, devouring the information or touching the glowing tabletop. Allison felt no guilt, only willingness to raise the ante. Instead she silently shrugged her compliance and stood back as he literally hopped to it.

"Is it possible to check and see what she's deleted?" Isaac loomed, trying to get in on the action. Allison pushed him back.

"If it's a sealed file, yes I can check the activity log" she gestured for Stiles to tap on the most recent report "nothing updates onto the server unless it's physically brought into this room. Once it's sealed and brought into the archive, we can check every existing notation. It looks like the most recent update to her report... wasn't her, it was Tyhurst. He noted terrain and proximity reports to the Hale House--"
"Tyhurst," she said his name with a small amount of derision, "is perceptive and obsessive but he doesn't have anything in here about there being a circle of ash and mistletoe around the property."

"You say that like he stole your lunch money," Stiles scanned over the notes as if he could see something she possibly couldn't.

"He wouldn't have missed a detail like that," she smacked the surprisingly durable table.

"Maybe it just hasn't been written in yet, or maybe it wasn't there by the next morning" Isaac played devils' advocate even he didn't believe his own words.

"Or maybe mistletoe eating slugs came up from the netherworld and sucked it all away along with your last 2 remaining brain-cells," Stiles said with all the straight-facedness he could muster, which was surprisingly a lot.

"Of course," Isaac continued talking over Stiles, physically as well as verbally, "maybe someone tried to hide the evidence of it."

"Like maybe the murder," Stiles grumbled, finding it easier and easier to flit through the display screens on the tabletop.

"That doesn't bother you?" after a contemplative moment Isaac asked.

Hunched to their task of scouring through the many pages of the Hale House Fire investigation, old and new, Allison and Stiles hardly noticed any rise of strain.

"What doesn't bother me?" Stiles snapped, at him with barely a glance up.

"We're just going through this--" he gestured to their investigation, "while there is still a murderer running around?"

Taking into consideration what Isaac grumbled about Stiles looked around; Allison beside him, accustomed to pouring through investigations, hadn't bothered stopping. Only she looked to the analog clock on the wall, to the two next to her and then back to the many screens under her nose. In a space that could flatteringly be called a closet Lydia and Scott pawed through drawer after drawer and page after page of documents that helped give answers to another person he valued just as much as Derek. Hell, they even mattered more depending on the day. He thought about his Dad, the Sheriff and his investigation board in the kitchen he'd rush to cover up every time Stiles came in for a coke. He thought about his own notebook, scribbled nearly front to back and what point there would be in stopping.

"It bothers me," he answered solemnly. "For now there are better qualified people chasing the murder. But they've only got pieces of the puzzle. Right now I can't stop a murderer Isaac but I can solve this puzzle piece, okay."

With a furrowed brow Isaac chewed on his lip and stared hard at him until Stiles broke away and went back to work.

"There," Isaac pointed out from his window screen, something he had found easily on his first try "the evidence item list from the old Hale Fire investigation."

"What about it?" asked Allison as both she and Stiles looked up to him.

"Notice something familiar," he jabbed a finger at the offending item, not realizing it would enlarge it but once it had Allison let out a breath. A moment later Stiles dropped down onto the
"That's an interesting Triskelion, Celtic Reconstructionist." Lydia observed as she placed an armful of folders onto the tabletop diagonally from them. Three heads popped up to meet hers, so she continued to address their unwavering stares, "This one is revised from its original context due to Neo-Druidism," she remembered Stiles mentioning the symbol once already and had to know, "Does this mean something else?"

"Yeah, actually, this one is like the symbol to our pack," Isaac reminded and slid the Zippo toward the center to the table.

"It's also the incendiary device used in the original Hale Fire," Stiles added.

"Kate gave it to Isaac the night at the Diner," Scott clarified settling several rolls of documents down beside her along with Stiles' notebook.

"How does proof from the Hale fire verify Derek's death?" Lydia stared at the offending item and to answer her own question, she went back to her task.

"Because of this," Stiles opened the gold plated Zippo made container and let the claws spill out. Allison looked intrigued whereas Lydia looked on uneasily.

"And you want to know if those are Derek's?" asked Allison, she moved further right from between Isaac and Stiles, and toward Scott and where the claws had splayed out. She pulled the poseable arm of an overhead halogen lamp and it swung low for better inspection. "Those weren't listed in the autopsy evidence list."

Isaac touched his screen and pulled up the list to verify his concern, "and that has been signed and sealed. Of course by Kate."

Allison stood abruptly, not in disbelief of him but to bring up a screen for Scott to follow along.

"Do you think she didn't log them because she was always going to steal them?" asked Scott as he grasped to an inkling of hope.

"Or did she steal them from some other poor bastard's cold case, like she ganked the Zippo?" Stiles cynically crushed out that hope a lot quicker than he had expected.

"I don't know," Allison grimaced as she shook her head, both were equally plausible and harder to disprove than she had anticipated.

"They're his," Lydia answered.

Almost as if to have materialized at the head of the table between Allison and Stiles, Lydia stood worryingly still. Diagonally across the table her neatly organized investigation files lay abandoned with Scott. Aside from her teleportation bit, nothing had changed which left everyone in silent alarm.
Slowly Scott came first to himself, "Lydia what do you mean?" he asked as the room watched on. If she felt their eyes she gave no sign.

Stiles kept his fidgeting to a minimum by crossing his arms tight to his chest.

Isaac competed with the overhanging lamp, craning his neck to examine along, looking intently.

Scott recognized her familiar gesture as Lydia reached and extended her fingers slowly only to stop short.

The fingers of her left hand aligned with a set of claws perfectly, as if they could fit onto her fingertips.

"Lydia?" Allison called to her softly but didn't reach out to touch. Her voice startled Lydia awake nonetheless.

"The man I found murdered that night, those are definitely his," she snapped her fingers shut tight and brought them down to her side.

"Are you sure?" asked Isaac, quietly but pretty coarsely as he scooped the claws back into their encasement. Stiles looked from Lydia to Isaac with a glare of warning, then back to her with concern.

"If she says she knows then she knows" Scott confirmed, his conviction articulated certainty he didn't understand fully, so he stuck to what he did know, "Lydia was there right after he died."

Like a bad taste in her mouth, Lydia couldn't shake the sense something had gone off wrong.

Someone asked in a whisper if she were okay and she shook off their concern or she could have imagined it. Everything sounded a little underwater but a little louder too.

"What happened to the good ol' days in mobster movies or spy movies, when you'd ask for proof of the body and someone would just show you a pic or video," Isaac mumbled and pinched the bridge of his nose in strain.

"Ah, right" Super-Secret Agent Scott McCall remembered his assignment "we have got photos!" He shuffled around some map rolls and pulled out a manila folder from among a pile. "From the Sheriff's department," he raised it in the air in recognition of the night when Allison stole them "the crime scene photos."

Since discovering other Werewolves and the existence of Hunters, Scott learned new meanings in the faces of his friends; Allison's strained smiles and far-off looks meant she was occupied with thoughts of her family and not just thinking of the next lie. The newly discovered tight-jawed, press lipped expression Lydia got meant frightened or excited or generally overwhelmed but too stubborn to admit it. Every expression Stiles made should have felt new but didn't, instead felt like slivers of reflections the sort of images that caught in the corner of your eye, alien and familiar all at once. He had just gotten used to seeing Isaac as some Zen master, only he finally understood the veneer kept the guy barely strung together minute to minute, breath to breath.

While watching Isaac's face, Scott couldn't keep the keep the heartbreak from his own face as he handed the "Derek Hale" folder over. Scott wondered whether the information within would give Isaac peace or send him spiraling out? He worried a little less for Stiles who looked a bit green at the gills but uneager to look at the photos. And why would he have to he had gotten confirmation
"You don't want to be sure for yourself?" she said not exactly quiet but her voice hadn't gained any exuberance.

"A Banshee's confirmation," Stiles managed to unravel his arms from their straightjacketed-like bind across his chest. He brought his hand down beside him, his right down to meet her left, to steady her trembling unseen between them, "is more absolute than the torture porn cops can come up with."

The words Stiles had said to Scott, collapsed in the back of Kate's SUV after a long dark night a lifetime ago last night, explained not just anyone could access those claws -- "Anyone attuned to a level of the universe normal people can't hear."

Allison looked to Scott, she gestured with palm up and a clasping mannerism that said 'what now?' She wanted to be of use and was unaccustomed to being helpless but from her fretful glances from the analog clock on the wall back to Scott, it was obvious they were running low on time. Their access to the "Meeting Room" had been like catching 'lighting in a bottle' and aside from sneaking them in the once she wasn't sure what more use she could be. He could only shrug back in helpless reply and slip his fingers through hers to steady her calm; they had a good 15 minutes.

"Jeez," Isaac couldn't stop looking through the photos and the Sheriff's department's bumbling final report. Funnily enough with each reread it helped calm his nerves some to finally have confirmation, to have some closure. "Who would-- why would someone actually do this to someone?"

Allison sighed, took to motion and pleased to have something to do she stretched across the table and brought up a textbook illustration in a display screen below Isaac. "Well, the only legitimate reason to perform hemicorporectomy is to prevent using their body later on to--"

After letting out a sharp gasp that her pet Prada would have envied, Lydia cut through Allison's demonstration. Hell, she nearly cut clear across the table, while she leaned half-onto the table pushing Stiles back as she snatched the folder and spilled its contents all over. "A translumbar amputation?"

Before Stiles ventured a guess he figured he may as well ask "can someone please, in a twenty words or less, tell me what that means?"

As they all turned to Allison for an answer Scott really regretted he was able to read their faces so well "it means he was cut in half."

To confirm as much they looked through the photos, then to one another and back down to photographic evidence of the brutal death of Derek Hale.

Track 09 - I Found A Reason (Velvet Underground Cover) by Cat Power

"Isn't it weird how it can 'not look as bad' as you thought but look 'worse than you thought' at the same time?" Isaac went back to shifting through confirmed images of a Triskele tattoo and the blank stare of his mentor's hazel eyes made immobile.

Thankfully there weren't many. Derek's death had been closed out by the Sheriff's department early
animal damage had left the evidence far too deteriorated to be workable. Of course that is not what the group saw when they sorted through them.

When they went chasing Stiles through the woods Scott had seen these photos briefly, very briefly once before and hadn’t enjoyed it very much. From his recollection, Lydia had been so intently looking toward the woods she hadn’t seen them at all. And now--

"That is not how I found him," Lydia glared at the photos then abruptly dropped them.

"What do you mean?" asked Allison as she scrambled to keep the photos from falling off the table.

"What the hell does that even mean?" demanded Isaac while he tried to keep his nerves in-check.

"So something came afterward and tore him in half?" Scott asked, he noticed unlike him she was less bothered by the gore. And it seemed adrenaline kept Stiles' nausea in check as well, or maybe photographic gore wasn’t as potent.

"That is not made by an animal. That is an entry point. I know because it is where I saw the stab wound that killed him," she jabbed at a close up to the chest cavity.

Stiles reached across to Scott and made a gesture, a demanding palm up finger coiling that silently said 'give me the notebook.' Scott slid it over as quick as possible and Allison passed him a pen she pulled from the railing attachment to the table.

"So why would someone do something that messed up?" asked Isaac. No, demanded Isaac in a low voice that would have been a growl under very different circumstances.

"Hemicorporectomy." Allison answered and reminded, she pushed aside papers Lydia left askew and manipulated a display on the tabletop just beside Stiles' notes. He flashed her a smile something close to gratitude to have something to do with his restless hands, as he moved them along both the coroners' report and the Hunters' report on what the coroner missed. It agitated him a little that the notes were sealed.

"Someone especially does this to an Alpha Werewolf," Allison continued, "when they don't want them brought back from the dead. Whoever went back to stage Derek's body definitely wanted to make it look as savage as the rest of these quote-un-quote animal attacks occurring recently."

Despite their clarity and ability to widen the resolution, Stiles leaned onto the smooth tabletop and narrowed his eyes "someone imprisoned him and tortured him before they killed him."

"Tortured?" while the others wavered at the word Scott was brave enough to inquire after it.

"Derek's Werewolf metabolism had been slowed due to reoccurring precision high voltage currents and he'd been exposed to environment extremes," Allison leaned over the table and reviewed the report beside Stiles, after reading it she disliked Tyhurst's notes. Mostly for the infallible accuracy and succinctness. "Basically someone had been freezing him and electrocuting him repeatedly for days until they finally did this to him."

"Jeez," Stiles stood up to rub his face in aggravation.

"Lydia?" Isaac asked sensing something wrong just before it happened, which Scott felt as a wave of vertigo before he saw her sway. Responding to both their warnings Stiles turned and gripped her arm before she fell backward.

"You're just falling apart aren't you," Allison teased trying to make light of the situation while she
pushed the bench beneath Lydia.

As quick a bullet, weakness shot through Lydia's limbs and went straight right up to her teeth.

"I could have stopped this," she stuttered wide-eyed, with fury and on the brink of tears. She found volume with each slow spoken word, "I saw them doing it, I dreamt about it-- when they tortured him, I sensed when they froze him." She looked to Scott for backing up and when they locked eyes he remembered.

Allison searched Scott's face for reassurance but he had none because he remembered what happened in the Chem lab. When he caught Lydia up and she felt icy in his grip as she nearly passed out from the effect. That change in her had been so powerful he had nearly changed. Still he placed a hand of comfort on his girlfriend's shoulder to reassure her despite his own concern.

"My nightmares, Allison," Lydia's voice climbed in volume and grew in steadiness but her heartbeat went unsteady. She looked to Allison and distress drained the color from her face. She looked tired of being silent but unknowing of what to say or how to say it. Allison remembered that expression from the mornings when Lydia stayed over to hide from bad dreams "I had nightmares over and over but didn't do anything."

Allison gulped and inched gently closer "that's not how it works." She remembered her promise to protect her best-friend but she had no clue what to say. She couldn't just fix her, as much as she wanted to, and she wasn't clever with words and when she reached forward to touch drifting strands of her hair Lydia flinched, instead Allison's hands went to her mouth to shield her dismay.

After a deep breath Allison braved on, "I was next to you in the woods when you felt like your head would crack open," she dropped onto the bench beside her despite the fear Lydia would pull away she caught hold of Lydia's hand and held on tight. Maybe a little too tightly. "While he ran for his life you ran for his life too. You did the best you could without knowing what to do."

All Isaac could remember of that day was running track on dirt roads and fighting Scott, fighting like a child, like an imbecile when he knew how to control himself. He wondered if he couldn't control himself because he shouldn't have been controlling himself, because some part of him heard a call to engage and he had wasted it, wasted his energy on rolling in the dirt. Isaac shook his head, took a step and looked away. The thought became too large it filled the room.

Lydia sat further upright, she tightened her jaw, fortifying herself against the recollection but she emanated instability. All that held her together while the memories came rushing back were the words of her friends.

"Lydia, I saw it. I held onto your hand then like I'm holding onto it now," Allison brought her hand up to clasp Lydia's left hand, in both of hers gently as if clasped in the safety of her hold was where it belonged all along.

"It's not up to you to fix everything Lydia," Scott's calm kind voice seeped through while leaning just over Allison's shoulder. "That's why we're all here." He gave a small shrug that reminded he was vulnerable as well. He looked around the table to each face and reminded "not one of us can fix any of this on our own but we can make a difference together."

No one had to speechify the promise of 'you are not alone'. In fact the words aloud were too new and would ruin the prospect of moving forward together but they were together and needed to move forward within a window of little time.
A cloud of coulda-shoulda-woulda surrounded Stiles' mind as he touched the photos Lydia had just released onto the tabletop before him, a most unappetizing meal. Turning his head to the left and right, despite the fact he could not teleport into the photo, Stiles focused on the areas around the body, little details familiar to him more than anyone else.

"Derek's dead. How could I have been that close and not have known?" the frustration showed like pain across his face.

Perspective snapped her out of self-pity and Lydia recognized a familiar guilt reflected in his face. "Because whoever did this didn't want you to know," she assured him.

"They knew Hunter stuff," Isaac reminded, "like her" he looked to Allison who stared back looking wounded. He hadn't meant for it to sound accusatory but with his Alpha dead, again, his mood darkened. He sighed, shook his head to rouse it up from senseless thoughts but by then Allison had turned her attention back to Stiles.

"At least one person knew how to obscure like a Hunter," Allison corrected, her ambition for solution pushing her onward. She touched the photo along the lines where Lydia had and reminded. "One person boldly stabbed him through the heart. One person performed the hemicorporectomy on him while misted over with a Mountain Ash concoction. My family has theorized there is more than one killer for a while now. This just proves it."

With a rekindled look in his eye Stiles snapped to it "they aren't working together. This was a mistake, a stress response. That's why the time gap between Lydia finding him and when he got severed. Cutting him in half wouldn't have mattered to the Sheriff's department but it would have mattered--"

"To other Werewolves," Allison smiled a little at her realization, gratified at progress although not pleased at the bloodshed. "But you guys didn't even know what it meant. And as far as anyone knew Derek's pack was disbanded so who would it send a message to?"

"I don't know, I don't know, I don't know!" Stiles broke away from the table, he gripped handholds of his hair as he paced a circle. "Wait," he hopped back to the table, "can we come back to this? You said your family has thought for a while there was more than one murderer?" to which Allison nodded.

They cleared the table; Scott grabbed back up his folders and Isaac pocketed the Zippo and collected Derek's file, Lydia grabbed Stiles' notebook before he knocked it off the table and handed it back. Allison minimized every useless screen and opened up a topographical map. Stiles flipped through the pages of his notebook and came to a scribbled version with red, chicken-scratches marking murder sites.

"These are all the strange deaths or missing persons we've been assisting the Sheriff's department with forensics and clean up, whether they know it or not," she explained.

4 yellow X's lit up along the North end of the Highway in Beacon Hills. Stiles nodded in concurrence with his notes. Stiles' scribbled map murders/deaths lined-up, with the exception of an outdated 1.

"Now, here are our other investigations without local law enforcement," Allison added a tad
smugly and instead of watching the screen she watched for Stiles' reaction as 5 orange X's lit up all throughout Beacon Hills County.

Lydia clasped her hands in front of her and no longer wondered for all of her nightmares. Stiles didn't hesitate to start taking notes while Isaac swore and backed away suddenly offended by the table.

Instead Scott examined the table with special interest, staring at it from a few different odd angles before he asked, "Are there more?" meaning missing reports.

Allison glanced up from a studiously bent position to her boyfriend's confusion. She noticed he stood very near to the section where the jogging trail led to the Preserve, to the place where he ran once near a small bridge where water babbled underneath and she drove over at the ideal moment to get to him. The site where he had been bitten and she pulled him into her car, where he mysteriously vanished from home and school until he healed 100% and came out a Werewolf. She saw the beginnings of insecurity in his big brown eyes and she answered confidently with a sweet smile "no, everything is on the table Scott."

"We don't have a lot of time left," Isaac warned adjusting his neck to swivel back and forth from the table to the 10 minute mark on the analog clock.

"That's plenty of time," Stiles replied without looking up.

Track 11 - Worry Heart by Evy Jane

"How come the Sheriff's department doesn't know about any of these?" Lydia cleared her throat.

"Because they're Werewolves," Allison explained, pointing at the screen. "Packs cover up behind themselves normally but there's been real unrest among the packs. There's been massive movements like we Hunters haven't seen in close to 20 years."

"They're coming here to find their dead and missing," Stiles theorized, his eyes moving like lasers from screen note to notebook note. "Someone is baiting them?"

"That's why that group of Alphas hit us on the road?" Isaac said and it wasn't a question, "that's why they thought Derek knew something about what is happening in Beacon Hills? Because he's a Hale?" his tone caught a haughty lilt, he bit into his lip to keep his agitation from spilling over into a waterfall of profanity.

There was no way for Cora and them to know they were walking into a deathtrap. Just like there was no way for those Werewolf-highwaymen to know Derek and Cora were as clueless as the next poor sap.

"So do you think Derek got baited to Beacon Hills the same way?" Scott put up a hand in abject observation.

"No way," Stiles shook his head adamantly.

"You think he couldn't have been tricked?" Scott furthered.

Isaac snorted and failed to hold onto his indignation, Stiles outright laughed.
"He could have totally been fooled for sure," Stiles amended his earlier statement, "but they wouldn't have bothered to collect the dead."

"That's not what they left home for. Besides, they aren't the type to have hard feelings about something like that," Isaac shrugged, a bit calmer.

Stiles sighed but didn't disagree instead he went back to the table. It was obvious they weren't exactly on equal footing but he wasn't about to pick a fight.

That didn't stop Scott from wondering "you don't think Derek wouldn't have come anyway--"

"No," Stiles smiled up at Scott for his sympathy, always the kind-hearted one. "Isaac is right. Derek barely left his garage he definitely wouldn't have come all this way for a corpse."

After asking to see the original Hale House fire report he squinted at the list of family members and the reported dead/missing.

"The one detail we," he nodded his head toward Isaac, "and Kate could agree on is the Hale family being scattered. This number isn't near how many Hale's I've heard of... not that I've seen that many in one place."

"They're not known for showing up at family reunions," Isaac scoffed, hovering close to him. Stiles gave him a withering look, reminding Isaac 'no one found him very funny'.

"We're only allowed to leave the Homestead under one condition," Stiles stopped talking after that. Not with the intention of luring anyone in for a big delivery but because the agreement belonged to their pack. It had become so ingrained he'd forgotten it wasn't everyone's motto.

"We all come back or none at all," Isaac finished when a minute or two had passed.

"Did I not say that?" Stiles nonchalantly looked up from the report to shocked faces.

"Wait? You can't go home again?" Allison asked.

"That's what they say in the cliché," Stiles said and went back to note taking.

"That's not fair," Lydia surprised herself when she realized she defended Stiles' right to leave Beacon Hills to wherever else it was he called home.

"But at the Diner, you said Cora went back home for help--" Scott asked.

"Hales get a pass," Isaac answered smoothly with surprisingly no bitterness to his voice. That was just how things were done.

"Look, I'd love to get into the poli-sci structure of my pack that is totally in hiding but we're on a clock and I'd really like to know more about the murders on this map and why they're not up on the investigation board my Dad is hiding in our kitchen. Please, thanks," Stiles snapped at the room as a whole.

Track 12 - Piece by Piece by Feeder

Allison shot him a look to keep his tone in check. After a huff she started "these attacks lead a clear
sequential path from Fairvale, South toward the Preserve. The mall, the underpass, the gas-station, those are the same--" she paused and added with a grinning intrigue "also, why does your Dad have a whole investigation board in your kitchen? He has a Sheriff's department."

He tried ignoring her confusion in hopes she would keep going but it seemed she would hold information hostage until he fulfilled her curiosity. "It looks likes despite your family confirming animal attacks and playing saluchi with the evidence, he's conducting his own investigation."

"Uh-huh," she giggled a little and gnawed on her finger to keep it from turning into an outright laugh.

"He not only has department access but his own instincts and wits and because the pun is available, I'm gonna say the kitchen sink," Stiles finished his tirade with a flourish, brandishing the pen in the air as if it were a weapon.

Scott tried to hide his amusement but in failing to do so he turned around like a child forced to face the wall, at least until he could catch his complete composure.

"He doesn't trust our findings?" asked Allison, suppressing her smile but not her bewilderment.

"'course not," Stiles replied smugly.

Allison frowned and blinked owlishly at him. She understood exactly where Stiles stood at that moment, on the precipice of wanting to be proud of a parent for getting in on the game but also wanting so much to keep them in the dark. "He just," she gestured an expanse of a pin-board shape with her hands "has a board set up in the kitchen."

"Yes," Stiles started to sound less proud and more like a turtle that swallowed a sock, "which he jumps to cover up every time I walk in. But I took a blurry photo with my phone and drew the rest from my memory," Stiles pressed the pages open where his scribbles made out the vagueness of roads with X's marking spots.

Finally Stiles spread the notebook flat open on the table between him and Allison, Lydia had to take a step back to keep from being shoved back.

"Not bad," Allison observed and she wasn't being insincere. When she and Stiles stood back Isaac, Lydia and Scott's faces popped into their place. Stiles beamed at her over the mountain range of their heads, "not bad at all. You only have one X I haven't seen before."

When she referred to the Cliffside site of his Mother's accident, a detail featured on his Dad's map and a detail he hadn't meant to share just yet it seemed the light dimmed in his eyes.

"I know," he said and snapped his notebook shut. He could see the analog clock even from around Isaac's tall frame. "But what about the ones we've got in common" he insisted, gesturing to glowing yellow X's remaining on the tabletop.

"What so different about those?" asked Lydia along with Stiles, only her voice was smaller because she was fairly certain she knew the answer.

"In less than 5 minutes," Allison replied and shifted her weight "to start with unlike the other 5 targeted they're outcasts."

Lydia flicked back her hair in annoyance at the confirmation instead of relief. Of course they all seemed familiar and of course it started to get under her skin, they had already gotten into her head.
"Do you mean they were orphaned too? I mean not orphans," Scott struggled for the words and when he found it he was reluctant to share the title "Omegas."

"Seems like it," Allison confirmed "They are. Those murders were harsher. Also the bodies weren't claimed or cleaned up after." Allison nodded and looked to Scott, she felt on uncertain ground with him when she reached out for the files he held. He hadn't realized his hands were shaking until she took the files from them. She kept her eyes trained on him even as she passed along the files to the others and with her hands free she didn't reach for his, not right away.

"Are you okay?" she mouthed. In response his mouth pressed into a line as he tried for a smile. He made it part of the way.

"The first 5 were claimed by their Pack, by their families because they were Betas but the rest were left behind for the Authorities to find just because they were Omegas," Scott calculated slower and looked around as if expecting someone to disprove him at any moment.

Isaac clung onto the edge of the table, his demeanor mostly until he rolled his eyes annoyed with his inner-argument, "not that I'm saying the Hales have the healthiest grasp on things but that's why these other packs make such great bait now. Family is weakness."

"Their attacks," Allison said and she referred to the earlier set of 5, she paused. She thought about dictating the way she would when making a case to her family. Instead she moved closer to Scott and laced her fingers through his and told the facts slow, like a story "they were spread over weeks not days. In places all across the county and with victims from different packs. I don't know which these other packs make such great bait now. Family is weakness."

"Then those attacks were a sort of devolution? They were anomalies?" Lydia turned away from the files and looked back to the locations on the map, agitated because she felt there was a more obvious connection she wasn't making. "The locations weren't spread out anymore. The targeted victim shifted. Maybe there is something in the Sheriff's notes that isn't in your notes that can help us understand why the murders changed, and then we can understand why they're happening at all."

"There is another anomaly," Stiles shoved over and ignored Isaac's discomfort (with practiced ease) and spread out the files. 3 folders for 4 reported sites. He re-read dressed his notebook and shot forward along the table and pointed at the juncture along the intersection where the Fairvale
"There is nothing there," Lydia said without looking.

"On my list and yours there is only one other reported attack. Only they survived. Then vanished--" Stiles flittered through his phones photos and produced a blurry image that produced heaps of documentation surrounding an incident in that area. Documentation his Dad had but the Argent's did not (or at least weren't sharing) "Jan 2nd a woman was picked up at the side of the road here with gauges, animal marks. At least that's what the hospital reported. Only once brought into Fairvale General she disappeared. Just like that!" he snapped his fingers for dramatic emphasis directly in Lydia's face. She ground her teeth down, her face pink with annoyance.

"That doesn't matter," Allison insisted, inside she died a little. She couldn't bring herself to look toward Lydia for mortification although she wanted to, desperately out of pity's sake but she suspected that would be the last thing Lydia wanted while hearing her incident report referred to so nonchalantly.

"What are you talking about?" Stiles argued, pointing at his cellphone screen. "With the ability to walk away from an injury like that-- To disappear unseen from a place with that many cameras-- That much security-- With that many people around--"

"No, just no," Lydia's voice came across calm but she looked visibly upset. Even a little nauseated.

"Just think about it," he couldn't understand everyone else's reluctance. While Isaac shared his confusion he did not share his passion so he turned back to the others and pleaded his case "if you figure there are still two killers who worked together until a breaking point then it figures she has got to be one of them, right?"

"Stiles, back off," Scott finally warned. Both theoretically and physically, he leaned abruptly forward toward Stiles and made a waving gesture as if battering him back from an invisible wall, trying to save Stiles from himself. Nothing worked.

"Okay," Stiles let his enthusiasm drop a bit but only a bit, "maybe that's a stretch but even if that isn't one of the killers it's still a survivor. Maybe she was meant to be moved from one place to the other just like Derek but they messed it up."

"No," Lydia's hands almost unconsciously went to her head to rub at the oncoming migraine.

"What do you mean 'No'?" Stiles moved closer to her even as his eyes went around to everyone in the room. "If we find her then we might find out where that path leads. But she just disappeared from the hospital without a trace."

"Let it go Stiles," Allison shook her head.

"It's our only lead," Stiles voice rose, almost shouting.

"It really isn't," Allison asserted, and her voice went lower almost tentative.

"How do you know?" irritated Isaac demanded.

"God, you idiot because that was me" Lydia ground out her lips curled up around barely contained bitterness.

Stiles and Isaac looked at each other for a moment then around at the people in the room, and then, at the same time "Oh."
"But how did she--did you disappear from the hospital?" asked Stiles, disbelief and concern warred for first place in his voice.

"That was me," Allison said with a bit of smugness. "Jackson and I drove out to Fairvale and got her out of the hospital before the Sheriff's department could catch up and report it. If the Sheriff didn't file a report Hunters didn't follow it up."

"Jackson helped?" Lydia looked toward Allison in confusion.

"He asked me not to tell you," Allison dropped her shoulders, exhausted as if there was no point in holding the weight of this secret anymore.

Like flinging all her secrets and upsets into the air Lydia closed her eyes and tossed her hands up, simply done with everything.

"You're right she's not important," Stiles pressed his lips then his eyes widened in alarm at the sound of his words. "No! I didn't mean that!" he swung around to her and struggled to find a face or hand gesture that meant 'sorry' enough. No warring twitchy mannerism won out until he jerked straight upright in realization. "No," he grabbed her shoulders and shook her a little before turning back to the others "she's too important."

"What do you mean?" Scott asked.

"Lydia has to know something," he flipped through his notebook, glared at the map on the table then back to the notebook. "You've got to know where the trail of bodies leading into Preserve means otherwise I'm back to square one, I've got no leads. I've got nothing," although he insisted he tried very hard not to sound insisting and therefore sounded whining.

"Are you kidding me?" she shot up nearly colliding with the overhead lamp, she shoved it back and it spun out, Allison ducked to keep from getting smacked in the face and Scott caught it as it sped toward his. "I was attacked by a Monster, a Monster that bites me who by the way still hasn't been caught. I spent 2 weeks, freaked out of my mind walking around the woods, hypothermic, all of my friends turn out to be total freaks and you expect me to turn over a full report?"

"Sorry," he apologized and held onto her shoulder "sorry, I'm just really screwed here. You do realize that." He looked just shy of spinning out of control.

She rolled her eyes silently articulating that made little difference, "I get it but in a fugue state you don't remember anything."

"Fugue?" asked Isaac, trying hard not to get too involved and get too yelled at this time around.

"Like amnesia," Allison explained.

"Give it up, I have. Unless I ran into someone in the middle of nowhere and they remembered what I did, there is just no way of knowing what happened in those weeks," she affected arrogance, an accustomed stance but her face flushed a little and her jaw went a little tense.

Scott caught her gaze before she could roll her eyes toward the sky beating back any emotional runoff and he worried for her. Considering the few (practically pulling teeth) intervals when Lydia'd confided her traumatic event, he knew her well enough to know she could never have thought up a scenario like that. It would be humiliating and nightmarish for Lydia. Something had changed.
"So that's it?! There is nothing I can get from the time Cora disappeared on the highway," Stiles punished himself in reminder while he shoved his phone and hands deep into his hoodie's pockets, "there is nothing I can get out about Derek's death, aside from the fact that out of two killers out there, it wasn't his kidnappers who offed him."

"Whoa!" Isaac interceded, "where did you get that from?"

"From Cora," Stiles snapped, aggravated at being cut off mid-recap. "She said he was being held hostage. Only the other packs would do that, they wouldn't gain anything from killing him. And the killers would have just killed him, obviously which they did when they finally got hold of him."

"That's why they made it look like another pack did it," Allison supposed "because it would devastate whatever truce the packs had while he was being held hostage for information. Killing him made them suspicious of each other. It makes them scatter and become better targets."

"Maybe," but it was obvious from his face Stiles liked the theory "but if they weren't at odds before kidnapping Derek, why would they be at odds after?"

"Because someone put a big fat vengeance sign on the Hale House," Lydia reminded.

"Before setting it on fire," Scott added.

"With a dead body underneath," Allison rubbed her forehead in aggravated realization "with no identity and no way of reclaiming it."

"Jesus," Isaac squeezed his eyes shut in aggravation. "We're screwed. This is an actual war zone. Like a real actual war zone now and we're in the middle of it."

"But Cora wasn't killed," Scott reminded "why haven't we heard anything about her?" he looked around the table for suggestions. Sure they were reluctant to suggest she might be dead but to suggest nothing? "Before Stiles thought she might be the one clawing the sign for revenge but now--"

"Now, no way" Stiles replied solemnly. He leafed through his notebook and stopped at a page he was reluctant to read off of. "It just stands to reason that whoever is using dead members of packs to lure them out would use live ones for the Hales. They're going to hold onto Cora to lure another Hale out."

"Do you really think so?" Isaac stood up straight and struggled to keep hope out of his voice.

"I don't know," Stiles shook his head and glared at his own offending handwriting on the page rather than Isaac. "It's a real long shot."

"It is not that far-fetched," Lydia disagreed fiddling with edge of the table. "Derek didn't seem to think so. It's why he gave up his life."

"Wait," Scott interrupted "Derek gave up his life. You mean wasn't killed?"

"Of course he was killed," she rolled her eyes and gestured to the evidence envelope in his hands that testified otherwise. "I'm just saying he wasn't murdered."
"What makes you say that?" Allison asked.

"Derek said that," Lydia paused and rethought her approach. "He didn't say anything that's just what I remember him remembering."

"What else can you remember?" Stiles tried his very best not to seem over eager, which wasn't very hard since he was in awe. Lydia's memory of events after her attack had been useless but her recollections as a Banshee were proving priceless.

"Just running," she concentrated and struggled to remove her own remembering from Derek's "I can't see with my eyes, just sense them. He trusted who he was with. Well, one of them. There were two." And they were the worse sort of memories. The memories within memories and then her stabbing headache had begun though she told no one, "Uhm, and he was asked if he would die to save her. I can see his thoughts of her. It gets so much foggier after that."

"Lydia, please try," Stiles dropped the notebook to the table and grasped her hand.

"The one he knew promised it wouldn't hurt. And after a scratch at my neck, I mean at his neck he didn't feel anything at all. And then the first one stabbed him right through," Lydia recounted in a willowy voice.

"How did he know Cora was alive?" Isaac asked.

Detangling her fingers from Stiles, Lydia ran them through her hair and restructured her natural repose "I don't know. I just know what he saw."

"What could he have seen?" Stiles wondered grabbing up his book.

"Lean, dark-haired, brown eyes and a bad attitude?" Lydia asked.

Isaac and Stiles agreed in staggered unison.

"Well, there you go," Lydia shrugged. "That's what he saw on someone's cellphone and it's why he agreed to die."

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Track 15 - Leave The Riches (Violetness Remixes) by Son Lux

"Shit, Cora is alive," Isaac had to admit Stiles' absurd theory had been right.

"And Derek's really dead," Stiles had to admit Isaac's regrettable theory had been correct.

A successful mission. Of sorts.

As if outside of his control Isaac's eyes wandered to Allison, he hesitated to add, "Do you mind telling your Aunt that's how you should show proof of life? Live feed, no muss."

A hundred smartass quips came to Allison's mind but she swallowed them all for the sake of time. Instead she kept her expression cool when others groaned at him and she cleared her throat, and gave a playful twitch of her brows in the direction of the wall clock.

"Guys, if we don't start putting things back where they belong and start to get out of this room in the next minute we're begging to get caught," Allison reminded.
"Is there anything, anything else we can get from the list of victims'"? Stiles pleaded.

"I don't know, tell me what stands out to you," Allison hovered over the list and touched one by the name of 'Mac' "let's start with the earliest."

"Nothing!" Stiles knocked hard on the table, just shy of punching it in aggravation.

"Stiles, that's the exact same day Derek was asked to go Beacon Hills," Isaac noticed.

"How do you remember something like that?" for a moment Stiles seemed genuinely impressed with Isaac's power of recollection.

"Because it was the same day we were driving down from our camping trip on the Mountain and Erica crashed your Jeep."

After a brief moment of nostalgia Stiles swore as if someone put a knife through his big toe. Clearly it wasn't the fondest memory.

"Good thing the room is soundproof," Scott said clearing the damage to his ear canal with a pinky.

"Shame your super powered eardrums aren't," sympathized Allison, hiding her shock behind both hands.

"What about the rest of these?" Allison touched on the list of the dead and Stiles pushed Isaac to move around and stand beside Allison, in hopes Isaac might notice something he'd miss.

"They're weird," Isaac observed.

"That's pretty great," Stiles looked at him in boggle-eyed frustration, "anything else you care to add. They're creepy, gross, not your cup of tea?"

"Come on Stiles," Scott begged off his bitterness. They were all frustrated and tired but why attack one another.

"I just mean, they're different." Isaac pointed at their dissimilar M.O.'s "The first ones are all animal-like. The other 4 start all shredded up but then are finally killed by something manmade, even if it's not the same way twice. Don't you think that's weird?"

They went silent memorizing the details of each death.

But the more recent deaths were described as; a guy clawed up but then he practically got crushed in half by a car. The next got clawed into shish kebab before taking a bullet to the face. The next was hobbled and bitten up, almost had her neck snapped before crushed by equipment up by highway construction.

Derek's death only matched in the vaguest sense that he was torn apart by claws or teeth. Except proof of the manmade weapon used to kill him was intentionally obscured.

"That is weird," Stiles confirmed in his most officious voice, and took to scribbling in his notepad without giving Isaac much credit.

Allison however gave Isaac a grin and pat on the arm, "good eyes."

"I think we're out of time," Scott stated unhappily.
CREDITS/ROLL CALL:

Argents - Team1; headed by Victoria, Chris & Allison.
• Rumy - [Sergeant] specialized in Recon; Special Forces and espionage. Chris' right hand man and Allison's godfather.
• Axel - [1st Lieutenant] expert tracker, marksman and Allison's 2nd cousin.
• Bennett - [Field Officer] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old and friend to Allison.
• Leveque - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Terrain-Orientation. Mechanics, driving countermeasures the means to mobilize heavy firepower to engage opposing forces including other combat vehicles.
• Ulrich - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation.

Argents - Team2; headed by Kate.
• Livy - [1st Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Force-Orientation, R.I.F. and close-combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's right-hand man.
• Tyhurst - [Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation, Cyberwarefare, has CIA background and is ranked with state detective credentials. Referred to as 'try-hard.'
• Norm - [Sergeant] specialty in Medical Intelligence and as a Longbowman; an archer who uses the longbow, w/ various arrowheads. He' JR's brother and Roman's Uncle.
• Roman - [Field Officer] specialty as a Marksman/Sharpshooter, 19yrs. old and a weapons expert skilled in precision shooting. He's JR's son and Norm's Nephew.
• Fry - [Field Officer] specialty as a Tactician is and general officer, while his marksmanship is low he is still in high regard for his brain.

Argents - Team3; headed by Gerard.

Hale (Present Day) Pack; Derek Alpha
• Isaac - [Omega] abandoned Werewolf in search of a pack.
• Stiles - [Omega] on a personal quest for answers to what destroyed his family(s).
• (missing) Cora - [Beta] missing, presumed dead.
• (missing) Boyd - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.
• (missing) Erica - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.

Hale (Heyday) Pack; Talia Alpha
• Peter - [Beta] Talia's brother, Uncle to Derek, Laura and Cora.
• Laura (age 17) - [Beta] was last seen struggling between trying to pull survivors from the fire and defending her mother, Talia from her Uncle Peter's attacks.
• Derek (age 15) - [Beta] was pulled from the flames by his sister Laura and ushered to safety by their emissary… until the Treaty was made.

? Other;?
• Jackson - [Kanima] characterized by claws that secrete venom which temporarily paralyzes their victims, a double row of sharp fangs, and a tail. Unless a Kanima resolves what in its past caused its mutation, it will eventually cocooned stage and emerge as a winged creature. Unlike a werewolf, a Kanima seeks out a master instead of a pack. It will carry out whatever vengeance its master bid. *chapter 12
• Kira - [?] ...
• Lydia - [Banshee] 'A Banshee screams preceding a supernatural death not as a premonition but to highlight the likelihood of supernatural events that result in deaths.'
*chapter 8

Twins' Pack; Aiden and Ethan Carver Alphas
• Marta - [Beta] she's an older motor head and their 1st Lieutenant.
• Bridy - [Beta] the packs' spy because she's diminutive and easily underestimated.
• Gus - [Beta] referred to as psychotic now and again, but his very few (and dwindling) close friends' are his touchstone.
• (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, bi and partnered to Naylor, formerly to Bozeman.
• (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
• (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
• (deceased) Coot - [Omega] former Beta, killed by the Monster.

Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha
• (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed 1st Lieutenant, possibly romantically entangled.
• Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali and closely bonded to Huntington.
• Santos - [Beta] while loyal to Kali has mentored many, without regard to packs. He helped the Twins first learn to shift together without losing their identities.
• Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed and with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
• Levi - [Beta] he's neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
• Huntington - [Beta] has strong empathic senses, is very good friends with Gus' from Twins' pack and Lark.

Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha
• Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' Lieutenant, --from wiped out Shapeshifter dynasty.
• Dr. Kane - [Beta] both a medical Doctor and their torturer.
• Quint - [Beta] eager to please teen and Dr. Kane's biological son.

Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha
• Søren - [Beta] 1st Lieutenant, Danish man of even temperament and a skilled negotiator until his temper is peaked.
• Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
Chapter Summary

In a great attempt for their least great escape from the Argent's super-secret Family Meeting/War Room the friends are divided, literally and metaphorically. Veering off in separate directions they're left to fend for themselves and take the opportunity to mend some fences when things do not go exactly to plan. All the while the investigation of the Hale House fire turns up a cadaver that takes no time at all to inflame the curiosity of the Sheriff's personal obsession, the Argent's private inquiry and an uprising among the Werewolves in the woods.

• Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/17-were-you-undercover

Chapter Notes

Previously on were (you);
While the Hunters were preoccupied in the Lodge at the properties edge, our heroes executed their plan to break into the Argent's War/Family Room with mix results.
• With the help of Lydia's growing (but uncontrolled) banshee ability she confirmed not only Derek's death but that it was not a murder.
• With access to Allison's family archive she and Stiles were able to suss out that there are multiple murderers
• Isaac and Stiles are finally able to put together that the Alphas who once attacked them at the side of the road were kidnappers, and victims just like the Hales.
• With their combined effort they concluded with good reason another one of their pack members could be alive; Cora Hale.
Unfortunately their findings led to more questions than answers and they had run out of time to investigate any farther.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Track 01 - A Reflection On Fire by Junius

{Friday; Even Later Evening/Rather Close to Saturday; Twilight}

The corpse showed significant deterioration, worse than that it had pieces missing.

"It takes between 800 - 900 degrees to burn a house," he explained mechanically, text-bookedly. "Only since the house had already been burnt it would have taken much less for it destabilize, especially since it only took the rain to diffuse the flames. From first impressions the scene was staged; structural damage to the building was strategic enough to leave the basement only half collapsed and navigable enough to retrieve the body."
Sheriff Stilinski and Tyhurst stood shoulder to shoulder only their dispositions were entirely different, the Sheriff stood standoffish while Tyhurst was unrelenting. Under the rubble that was becoming of the Hale House there was found the body of a man, a young man with his face virtually crushed in. Correction; kicked in, but the crash of collapsing floor beams from the ground floor into the basement made it easy to mistake. Tyhurst waited on that report for particular reasons. He noted the deliberately missing fingernails but he wasn't the only one.

The Sheriff figured the fingernails had been pulled because whoever did it wanted to keep any DNA from staying underneath. Perfectly reasonable conclusion to draw, because why would anyone jump to the conclusion that Werewolf claws had been yanked out? Or the face had been destroyed not just to keep the identity obscure, probably, but to get the fangs out and not very professionally.

From the build it was easy to assume the victim was a teenager, probably a runaway (more than likely an Omega like the more recent pattern).

"It takes about 1400 - 1800 degrees centigrade for a human body to burn," Tyhurst voice was crisp and clear even through the medical mask he wore. He looked to the Sheriff who looked both discomforted and as ashy as the debris around them, but Tyhurst continued his observation. "So this young man wasn't half incinerated under this roof. And there is something else." With gloves he moved the body with such delicate care to turn it on his side, then taking a pen from his pocket he put pressure on the chest cavity, right between and gap of two ribs that were open and exposed. He kept going until he touched at a brown-black piece of stone, only it gave way under pressure and showed signs of pink beneath.

"It's un-burnt within," Tyhurst displayed the evidence and Stilinski surprised himself by how closely he inspected. "He had air in his lungs when he died," explained coming to his feet, dusting off his knees as he did so. The investigation allured him certainly but the gore didn't and he took a few quick steps back before he allowed himself the luxury of an easy breath. After a moment the Sheriff followed. "What are you thinking?"

"I'm thinking whoever rigged the house to go up didn't expect the rain," the Sheriff glanced around at the structure still clinging to the shape of a house. He noticed that the frame stood strong enough to keep the top-most floor aloft but the panels from the walls had holes like Swiss cheese and the stairwell had turned into something resembling a display for a DNA module. But the fire-marshal deemed it well enough to poke through for analysis, which left them enough room to get somewhere with first guesses. And the Sheriff played a good game at first guesses. "If they had they would have figured out the math of burning the house and burning the body and gone another route. Fingernails and hair are the first thing to go in the fire as well, am I right?" Tyhurst nodded and the Sheriff took that as lead to continue "so even if we're looking at a homeless person, our murderer still didn't want the identity of the victim picked up. So, if it is a runaway probably young enough to be in the system because parents would still be looking for them?"

A pang struck the Sheriff once again, like a biting down on an open nerve when he should have gotten a root canal seen to a long-long time ago. It seemed despite having his son home and (relatively) safe there would always be a long standing fear that a report would come in a body found, a teenage boy, injured, murdered, mutilated and he would have to come identify and collect Stiles’ corpse.

"Do you think you can get identification from this?" the Sheriff said coolly, removing emotion from his tone because he displayed it on his skin, reddening his features.

"Yes," Tyhurst replied without hesitation. Not because 'The System' worked for him but because
he had his own system. The Sheriff looked surprised by the answer but then pleased by it. "This means I'll have to tap some other resources, sir. If that's alright with you?"

He gave a nod. They climbed out of the rubble in silence and then stood on the lip of where the porch began. Or more rightly, 2 feet back from that on the new hairline of where the porch began. Tyhurst looked to the markings on the door and back to the Sheriff who followed his eye line.

"Think it means anything?"

Tyhurst shrugged, "graffiti." He suggested and the Sheriff gave a nod. The County took it over long ago and neighborhood kids frequented sneaking onto the property for pranks so it wasn't too far off process of thought. "None I'm familiar with."

"I can look into it," Tyhurst offered knowing he could deflect a bit there but the Sheriff was kind enough to suggest the task for one of his Deputies, you know someone more familiar with the locals. Fine. They wouldn't come up with anything. Not likely, but if it kept them busy and out of the Hunters' way it was good enough for him.

The identity was the thing; there were shadows at the corners of his visions that said a who's who of Werewolf packs much to say about what lay beneath. If Tyhurst didn't make a move soon there would be blood spilled over ashes. If that were so, he intended to make sure it was the right sort.

"No offence, but for once I'm actually glad that you're here," the Sheriff said to Tyhurst wearily. The man had background in government that left him impeachable.

"I'm afraid to ask where you learned all this?" the Sheriff said only half in jest.

"Would you believe me if I said the C.I.A.?” Tyhurst said after a pause, his face just shy of smirking.

"Not even a little,” they walked in silence to the edge of the property line where the Chief's cruiser was parked.

Tyhurst appreciated that the Sheriff didn't blurt out all of their findings. Instead, the Sheriff briefed his Deputies and gave them instructions to meet back at the station. He didn't have much to say that he could prove without the coroner's forensics report in addition to the Fire Marshals' final assessment. But he couldn't understand the Sheriff's appreciation of the fact that Tyhurst could take this exclusive information home or the leg up it gave him on all others.

Tapping into a newborn sense of camaraderie Sheriff Stilinski offered Tyhurst a lift back into the station but he declined, insisting he wanted to stick around a little longer. He looked on over the distance as the coroner's team, all of two people cautiously and very incrementally slowly removed the corpse from the premises. The grime, soot and gore didn't put him off, instead he wanted to confer with the coroner if/when there would be an autopsy and when he could take samples.

Just as they parted and the Sheriff climbed into his car he had to add "I bet you really did learn all this in the C.I.A."

That time Tyhurst smirked.

Track 02 - Midnight by Coldplay
"Are you okay?" Scott asked.

"I'm okay," she smiled briefly when she answered because she wasn't, even less so when she realized Scott had asked Stiles just over her shoulder. "Of course you're asking Stiles" her smile went lopsided and laughing, "and not me."

"I mean, I know you're okay," his hand moved along her shoulder and smoothed the line of her spine, his confidence in her as straight as her back. Allison straightened up flashed a quick brave bright smile that flickered out as soon as she stepped out of their way and let them alone.

"No." Stiles shook his head and didn't look up as he calculatingly closed display windows on the tabletop. "Not okay. Not remotely okay." He didn't elaborate so she left Scott to continue his poking. Allison wasn't the only one.

Lydia reorganized the stack of folders she pulled from the shelves. She had memorized the order of evidence but seemed to get stuck on a few. Allison came up beside her and found herself in a déjà vu loop.

"Lydia, are you okay?"

"Uhm," she scanned through the documents in a pile she balanced awkwardly, cradled into her chest so that only she could see them. After a moment she acknowledged Allison. "No, I don't think so. This Omega, the girl, I remember her. I saw her attack and I thought it was mine. Everyone keeps saying she looked like me."

Allison peeked over Lydia's shoulder. "I guess." The image held some resemblance but the mauled image was hard to tell and she didn't want to compare her to Lydia. But the comparison of locations of where the victim's body was found and Lydia was first spotted after her fugue state was nearly on point. And she remembered that night, the night of Scott's last nightmare when he dreamt he attacked Lydia. When he called her desperately seeking confirmation of her well-being and Allison lied, she lied because she was camped outside of Jackson's place. With her conviction renewed Allison slid the folder closed "but she isn't you. You know you don't just dream of things to stop them, you dream of things that have special meaning and that night you shared that dream with Scott."

Lydia blinked a few times, the worry lines were replaced with bright-eyed openness.

"Scott has been having these dreams?"

"He has some dreams," part of Allison should have felt bad for revealing this secret but she knew 1) this settled some of those detachment issues Lydia was working through and 2) Lydia was very good with secrets. "Not exactly like yours. It's hard to explain," and it wasn't a lure to force her best-friend and boyfriend to get along more. It was really on another level that as a non-supernatural she couldn't wrap her brain around.

Lydia looked uncertain for a moment then she started to speak and stopped, her lips pursed in thought. Finally she hooked onto it, "do you think this girl died because of us?"

Allison's conviction turned hard inside. The Hunter in her felt the instinct to fight and protect, she said firmly "no." She took the half the folders from Lydia's arms urging her back to work, not in an attempt to distract but certainly to urge her onward. She got where Lydia was coming from and couldn't 100% disagree "because of the Monster that's got its hooks into you? I'd say definitely."
No guilt weighed the air; Lydia looked to Allison for a chink in her armor but saw only that confidence she needed to lead her through the dark. She looked down to her files and smiled softly before putting on a braver face and starting toward the shelves.

"You should really talk to Scott about this," said Allison speeding up her stride to keep in step.

"Talk to me about what?" asked Scott who stood inside the shelving booth with Derek's file in hand.

"Is there something I can do?" Scott offered.

"This is like looking for a pattern in spider-webs," Stiles muttered closing out another window.

"If anyone can find one I'm sure it'll be you," Scott assured him but Stiles shook his head in negation.

"No way. I'm too close to it. It's like I can't see the forest through the trees," Stiles insisted.

"Or you can't decipher your cliché from your mix metaphor," Isaac mumbled closing off readjusting the lights and seats to make it look as though no one had been in the War Room at all.

Stiles actually smiled at that. After a moment he handed his notebook back to Scott.

"When you look at that what's the first thing that pops up at you?"

Scott hesitated. He knew even holding the damn thing made Stiles' hair stand on end. He looked to his friend who looked on with his hands clutched, fingers laced in a bundle under his nose. His eyes gleamed intently and he looked like he would gnaw through his hands.

What popped up to him in the shapes that Stiles had drawn were the cliffs where this all began for them. He wondered how it all tied into the now. And when he remembered that they their Cliffside beginning of the story wasn't meant to be the beginning at all, he looked at the name-list as neatly as Stiles' rushed scrawling allowed on the margin lines.

Sure, Claudia ranked among the strange events but not earliest.

Among the list of so many, Stiles' brethren, victims, the separated list of Betas alongside Omegas, Scott noted a stand out. It felt safe to assume some connectivity.

"They're the same, the names of the packs," his mind hooked onto something. "They're the same ones Kate said were here 20 years ago."

"Including the Hales," Stiles agreed and wrung his hand tight enough to look like he started gnawing.

"So they've been targets ever since way back then," Scott followed a train of thought. The drawing hardly matterred but the names, the frequency, therein lay its one hiccup.

"I've gotta know, if they're all connected why is my Mom included? The freak show murders--crashing my Mom's car. And now the police are out there?" Stiles rubbed his hands down his face to rub off some anxiety. It didn't work, his mind split over worries for his pack, his friends and the one living family member he had left willingly putting himself in the center of this mess. He felt a possibility come clear "unless she wasn't who it was after."
"Or what it was after," Scott suggested. In earnest he gave a brave smile to carry Stiles out from under another weight of aimless guilt. After all, once he saw Claudia Stilinski on the list he felt just as compelled, Stiles wasn't alone in the car. "It's going to be okay Stiles. We'll figure it out."

"Are you always this disgustingly optimistic?" asked Stiles, his expression worried changed to a different color of worry.

"Yeah," Scott admitted, scratching the line of his jaw with the edge of the notebook. "Sorry?"

"No. It's good," Stiles eased up a little, a smile started to spread. "I'm with ya. I gotta say that this new-found heroism is making me very attracted to you."

Scott grinned and pushed him back to work, "shut up."

"You know, the sooner we get out of here the sooner we can figure out how much more info these Hunters are hiding," Isaac grumbled collecting the last of the Derek's coroner's report into its folder.

"Seriously, what's the point of you aside persistent negativity and the scarf," Stiles snapped. "We need her," Stiles surprised himself at how quickly he came to Allison's defense.

"To input the close-out code on the table," Scott humored Stiles his embarrassment. "I'll just go get her" Scott handed back Stiles' notebook and took hold of Derek's folder before turn toward the filing booth where the girls worked and left the foster brothers to their obvious growing contention.

Instead they stared at one another; Stiles looked to Isaac with a narrowing glare.

"What are you looking for now?" Isaac slipped alongside Stiles. He rubbed his thumb along his brow in nervousness and kept his tone low.

"I don't know yet," and Stiles didn't care who listened. He flipped page by page through his notebook crossing through line after line of theory, while he tried to memorize line after line of data on the table top screens.

"Whatever it is, you'll find it," Isaac reassured him and Stiles answered with an eye-roll. "You weren't that far off course," and that got him a grunt.

"I was right there Isaac," Stiles stopped writing and closed his eyes, dropping his head low but not touching the table. After a breath he looked up, remorse darkened his eyes through and through, as he remembered his forest "I might as well have been a million miles away."

"So what's the plan instead," said Isaac, a hint of callousness in his tone. "Give up?" Stiles blinked at him in confusion and followed it up with a look as if he had eaten something rotten. "Do we go back?" at that suggestion Stiles outright scoffed. "Exactly," Isaac shrugged, "so what has your scheming brain thought up already? Share it with the rest of the class so we can punch holes through it already."

"You really think it just comes to me," Stiles snapped his fingers, "like the solutions just line up?"

"I didn't say they would be good ones," Isaac gave a slight nod. Stiles sniffed back a scoff, barely but didn't do much to hide his smirk. At least they could agree on that.

"Stiles, for weeks you were a few feet away spying on all of us-- your family," Isaac leaned onto
the edged of the table and said low as he remembered the weeks he spent trying to find a place in BHHS, a single person in Beacon Hills, one friend in the silence but he was alone. "I didn't know."

Stiles gave a snort as he laughed and stood straight "are you trying to tell me it's a good thing someone's trying to hide things under our noses?"

"Uh, I don't know am I?" Isaac kept his hands on the edge of the table as he straightened his back, stretching his arms out. A cat had such traits rather than a wolf.

Stiles shook his head along with his thoughts loose, "shit, it is a good thing we know someone is trying to hide things under our noses." He chewed his lips a little before he spoke again at the speed of his thoughts, "when we were attacked on the road by the second group, the Alphas, they didn't bother to hide it but the first attackers was a sneak attack. That is the real threat. That is our murderer; #1. The others don't matter."

"I don't know," Isaac's bitterness leaked into the space between them and he had to step back to make room. "They mattered enough to've destroyed every remaining member of our pack."

"Listen." Stiles rummaged his notes once more and ran his fingers along red pen marks that swirled along blue bic drawings on trails that led from highways into Mountains, "on our trip here, where Cora was snatched up was by Northbridge and far up enough to follow #1's attack pattern. It was sudden and disorganized which didn't follow Derek's ransoming. Derek's attackers must be #2, the Alphas because they got him as he got off the parkway and came onto the Southern Bridge." Stiles jabbed at a mark on his scrawled map distinctly so far south that it might as well have been a different county.

"What are you getting at?" asked Isaac.

"If #1 grabbed her," he shuddered to think, even as he tried to calm his focus and failed, "let's assume that's the 'Monster' due to M.O.," he tapped the pen against his notebook with a growing ferocity, "since it didn't kill her on the spot and Derek seemed certain she was alive we don't have a reason to doubt it. Now, we haven't seen any sign of her than either a) she's still captured and alone or b) she's escaped and alone."

"You don't think Derek could have escaped?" Isaac threw out there because he wasn't exactly sure he could follow Stiles' reasoning.

Stiles gaze narrowed in thought then he shook his head resolutely, "I think if he did, he would have ended up in exactly the same spot." He displayed by drawing a light line of dots along from the length of miles from where Derek had been kidnapped to where he had been found. "Dead and looking like the rest of the deaths going through the county so the authorities wouldn't suspect it."

"What do you think we can do about it?" Isaac came close again and tried to follow along the dots as Stiles traced a second and third hypothetical trail the length of Beacon Hills that Derek could have travelled without crossing any major streets or walkways. To not have made contact and travelled that distance unseen would take more than a desperate act.

"Nothing. Goddamn nothing." Stiles voice rose with frustration. He hit the side of the table hard, not hard enough to leave a mark but hard enough everyone in the room turned to look. Exhale noisily and stared at the ceiling then added quietly, "I feel like I'm standing in a goddamn graveyard. Sitting on our laurels, sniffing each other's asses."

After a pause Isaac picked up the notebook from where it fell between them on the bench, then added "Unless laurels means on a pile of battle axes and missile launchers then I don't think it
"Can't you at least be a little helpful?" Stiles sniggered and looked at him sidelong.

"I might be a little bit more supportive if I stopped getting shot, threatened and crushed under falling debris," Isaac rolled his eyes and slid closed the shelf draw at the edge of the table.

"You say that like you're not okay now," Allison followed popping up on the opposite side of the table, sliding closed another draw, "you want to know the same things I do. Are we not okay?"

Stiles gave snort at the sight of Isaac's face gone steely and blank. "We're totally okay," he lied.

Track 03 - Slipping Around by Zhala

"How do you suspect this will turn out then?" he said with the cool detachment.

"I 'suspect' it's another goddamn dead body, Deucalion," Ennis nose flared as he breathed out, he might as well have been a steam engine for all the tension that rolled through him. "Just like the last damn dead body. Just like the next goddamn one."

"What would you do Ennis?" Deucalion's tone changed in such melodic increments which were easy to be deceived by. Ennis wasn't one easily deceived by Deucalion and he knew the man felt just as furious, even if his voice wouldn't raise or his nose didn't flare. "Would you kill the next person you suspect? Or the next 'goddamn' one after that?"

He waited long enough to force Ennis to turn toward him, whether to glare or to ask something more of him. "Then you would be the one making dead bodies, Ennis. Then Kali and I would be combing these woods for you."

The implications weren't just that Ennis would become an 'avenging angel' against an anonymous enemy but a reminder that Ennis was just as impotent as Deucalion, the Alpha who stood beside him watching as rent-a-cops combed the Hale House for the answers they wanted.

At the mention of Kali's name Ennis could have gnawed his arm off for his own restlessness but this man walked on the wind of agelessness for all his pains.

"There, there brother," Deucalion derided gently, "surely you can't still be sore over something that couldn't have been helped," Deucalion sounded reasonable. He SOUNDED reasonable but in truth he was poking a bear and Ennis knew. The man's smile, no, barely the upturn of the corner of his thin lips was like a stab at Ennis' brain.

"This can be helped. Kali backstabbing me could have been helped and you know it," Ennis showed all his teeth in a grimace that was nowhere near a smile. His fingers dug into the bark of a tree as he edged forward not exactly leaning in for a race but he wanted to move because standing still would kill him if he had to do it for a minute longer, certainly near this madman.

"And with our numbers decreasing your solution is war," Deucalion said.

"Says the man with screams coming from your home every night."

"You can hear that from your Motel out in the Styx? Let me ask you, no let me ask your torturer,
those cries coming from my home what do they really sound like. Because they don't sound like screams to me at all, they sound like secrets... Oh, you can't ask your torturer can you. Where has the good doctor Kane run off to?"

"Tell me, Deucalion, when you're out of secrets and you're out of friends, you've gotta walk over them hills and through the woods before you get back to civilization, amiright? How you planning on managing that safely, Old Man. I've heard your types don't tend to make it."

"While the two of you had your pissing contest the body has been tagged and filed away," taciturn voice cut through the crap. Tyhurst's tone had a propensity to cut through most moods, fortunately arrogance qualified.

"I wanna see it!" Ennis insisted, his foul mood turning from Deucalion to Tyhurst with ease.

"No can do," The Hunter's expression twitch barely perceptive, his amusement rippled something along the features, just around his crow's feet. He reminded patiently "there are procedures put in place."

"I don't give a rat's ass about what you suits have to say, I'll break down those police station doors. I want the body, it belongs to us," and as Ennis spoke, as his voice deepened his fangs extended. Then it was Deucalion's amusement to have shown in an obvious smirk.

"First off; you need to step back. They don't even keep bodies in the police department. No one does. They take them to the city morgue," Tyhurst pointed out coolly and Ennis took a step back, infuriated. "Secondly; the 'procedure' we have put in place are between Werewolves and Hunters is for exactly this reason. Maybe the two of you think it's okay to be at the jugular but once it spills over into threatening civilians we will intervene."

"Will you now?" Ennis very nearly wanted him to because he wanted to make something pay for his sense of grief and loss. And any and every one standing in his path would do, the stuffed shirt especially looked like a good target.

Deucalion put a hand out on his shoulder and divided his attention, momentarily diverting his temper.

"Of course he will," Deucalion reminded in that familiar superior tenor of his. "He has a moral duty to the body-- that is if you're still willing to listen."

And like that Ennis' fangs retreated and his temper was momentarily diffused.

Tyhurst gave them both a look from top to bottom and analyzed if they were up to the task of actually taking information in without immediately blowing their tops. Although unsure, he was sure of himself enough to handle them if not.

"Preliminary exam; the fire was set up to leave the basement passable enough to get to the corpse. But the victim could have been killed somewhere on the premises, too hard to tell. The area has been too deteriorated by both the elements and explosion but as you can see," he pointed off toward the doorway in particular and the wood board left hanging off a hinge, "from the marks there; I'm pretty certain someone wants revenge."

"What about the body?" Ennis insisted.

Tyhurst took a moment and looked from the house back to them, dragging a trail marking a growing interest.
"Like I said there was significant fire and smoke damage done, to the body as well. Identification is going to be hard. We were hoping the terrain would give us a clue but it's only confirmed he was burned somewhere else and staged here."

"He?" Deucalion clued in.

"Yeah," Tyhurst sighed and dispassionately ran through details. "He's been dead a couple of days. He's got defensive and offensive wounds, his skin mostly healed up before it melted flat but he still had internal lacerations that didn't get enough time to heal up before the deathblow. He had a lot of fight in him before he went down. He's got a pretty decent crack to the face that looks to have been post-mortem to keep him unidentifiable or knock his fangs out, probably both but a snap to the base of the neck that was likely to be the thing that killed him. The Sheriff's department noted that his fingernails have been pulled, they think it was because whoever did this wanted to keep any DNA from underneath."

"A theory you didn't help along I'm sure."

"I'm sure you're sure," Tyhurst ignored Deucalion's' cool condescension. "It's easier to assume a murderer is the only creature in these woods."

Even Deucalion's coolness twitched at the cast away commentary. "Anything else to offer, Hunter? Anything useful?" Deucalion insisted. He played at confusion when he only meant to play his cards close to the chest.

"Like an actual description of the guy?" Ennis teetered on anger once more.

"Ah," Tyhurst flicked wet hair out of his eye. The rainwater still pelted lightly off the low leaves of the near trees and he imagined it made for decent coverage, scent-wise. Werewolves weren't the cleverest in a fight even if they were the readiest. If this all came across as bad news, well then it would be bad wouldn't it. "I guess you must be missing new members if you're this invested--" he didn't wait for a reply, he looked between them for how they looked to each other for combative gestures "--I couldn't say for sure but I would say 165-167lbs. medium build, about 6' 3 and young."

A crack went through the air as Ennis put his hand into the trunk of the tree nearest. It wasn't quiet comparable to the guttural sound he gave off when, while growling he yanked his hand out and took a third of the tree's core with it.

Tyhurst hand went to the gun on his hip as he came to the end of his sentence while Deucalion stepped aside, with a stoic expression betrayed by his claws that came unfurled.

"I take it you can identify the guy?" Tyhurst said calmly, he breathed out ready for the blow back when Ennis snarled in his face with eyes enflamed and a snarl on his lips.

"What's it to you?!!"

"Calm. Down." Tyhurst insisted in his most professional voice and took one large step back from beneath the trembling tree with the shaky trunk and the raining leaves. "I can't release the body without a positive ID."

"The boy's name is Quint," Deucalion supplied. "I suppose Ennis would be nearest kin since Quint's father bolted a few days ago."

"So, another Omega?" Tyhurst logged mentally. Ennis didn't like the comment and ground down his footing in a gesture to move toward him but Tyhurst stood his ground.
"He didn't run away. He was run out by that bitch, Kali!" he shouted.

Deucalion looked to Tyhurst almost in a way of warning before he simply shook his head. At a certain point things had dissolved into bickering which resolved nothing.

"Your classification system doesn't make him any less dead, Ennis. Helping that kid get some respect is all I'm trying to do," Tyhurst voice lowered in tone but became clipped in punctuation, reminding Ennis of his status.

"It's not about respect!" shouted Ennis, with red glowing eyes and gleaming fangs. "It's about justice!" he thrust out his hand, palm out dead center into Tyhurst chest and sent him in an arch, nearly 10ft landing sprawled onto his back.

On his side, Tyhurst feigned weakness and rolled back, he took advantage of Ennis' underestimation and pulled out a gun. While growling and posturing, Ennis missed the taser Tyhurst shot from the waist. The wires connected to Ennis' collar bone and sent him into seizures. He dropped to the floor writhing, his Alpha features melted away as he fell into the rain water Tyhurst used as an accelerated conductor.

As he had planned all along Tyhurst stepped calmly forward, avoiding the puddles and waited for an extremely long period of time before he let go of the trigger and pulled out the probes. With his right hand he kept his Desert Eagle .50 trained steadily on Deucalion. His heart rate went steady heightened with a face an expression of anger from being pushed just a little too far.

"Come on Hunter--"

"Tyhurst," he reminded he had a name.

"Alright," Deucalion put his hands up with claws withdrawn, "don't make us part of a historical cliché."

Tyhurst brow rose, piqued in annoyance and without warning he fired two shots. They went over Deucalion's head into a tree near off and after a howl in pain there came the sound of scraps when Kali came sliding down a tree trunk to an inelegant heap on the forest floor.

"Didn't anyone ever tell you not to bring claws to a gunfight?" Tyhurst called over to Kali while he replaced his weapons into their holsters.

Deucalion went to Kali's side along with Tyhurst and noted his perfect aim, one silver bullet to each calf. "You'll heal once you dig them out, but you're going to have a helluva' time digging them out," he grunted dusting off his clothes from mud and clinging leaves.

Not that she didn't know, not that she wasn't writhing in pain, not that she wasn't swearing and threatening and in her rage admitting her furious intent to "kill who ever I have to!"

"What would it have helped, Kali?" Deucalion tried to reason. "A skirmish becomes a war. A murder becomes a massacre."

"Don't you understand, we must do whatever is necessary," she panted out.

"We end up no better than our enemy" Deucalion asked.

She scoffed and looked to Tyhurst over his shoulder and back to him "Deuc, everyone is the enemy."
He shook his head in disappointment. He would have helped her from the woods, he might have tried to shield her from Ennis' anger when he awoke but upon thinking he realized it would have put him between a rockhead and hardhead. He pushed off the Hunter and encouraged him to walk away, told him there was war no matter what either of them said. And when 'Tyhurst' (whom he called by name) asked if this meant there would be more bodies in the woods, Deucalion admitted he wasn't sure about the future but he and his pack were about to check the Preserve because (he dusted soot off the Tyhurst's shoulder) there was the scent of war in the air.

**Track 04 - Breathe Me vs Young God (mashup) by Gingergreen Mashup**

While lost in his thirst for knowledge Stiles lingered by the Multi-Touch table, lips pursed in thought while he rolled the notebook down to a tube, as if he could squeeze more information from it. Meanwhile Isaac followed Allison as she stepped along keeping on task with their exit strategy. He virtually appeared beside her with words in a low cadence of apology that Allison admired for its lack of originality but rhythmic delivery.

Isaac tried to explain away why he would jump to bitter and judgmental conclusion about Hunter's-
"I mean, think of how we were raised." Which wasn't the winningest argument and got a few dirty looks, he followed it up with, "but now that we know the killer used techniques a Hunter would use it makes sense."

"Or any supernatural that doesn't shape-shift. Or a druid. Or an emissary or just about anyone who has ever read a bestiary." she reminded.

Then she pulled out a cordless power drill the size of an assault rifle and Isaac quieted. Not Stiles, no his chuckle only raised in volume. But when she started to remove bolts from the ventilation shaft above the toilet Isaac offered assistance with the exact phrasing of "do you need help using the bathroom?"

At which point Stiles had the dignity to leave the booth to check on the others and give wide berth for their car crash.

When the metal panel came free with an unappealing screech Isaac hopped to attention and grabbed onto the ends, steadying it before the fall.

"I got this."

"Why?" Allison snorted at his eagerness to please. With a slight smirk she shoved off the rest of the panel's weight onto him. "You feeling a little foolish?"

"Yeah," Isaac grunted beneath it, surprised at its heft. "Is there something wrong with that?"

Allison smiled and went back to work unhinging the ventilation shaft's internal brace. "Isaac, I admit I've made mistakes but the action of every Hunter is not my fault," grunts punctuated her statement while she drilled away at another bolt.

"I can see that." Isaac considered the more he learned of the Hale's past the more questioned their dependability. "Is that how you see us?"
It occurred to him as an afterthought, if Allison was raised with similar prejudices she had the same right to resent him—hell, to resent each of them because of the things Werewolves have done to Hunters throughout history.

Instead she rolled her eyes and tossed him another bolt.

He struggled to catch hold, unaccustomed to being physically weak he juggled the objects.

Another bolt.

"You're struggling because of the mineral in the mortar we make the walls from. Its scattering light and the affects it has on shape-shifters."

Another bolt, followed by a creaking.

"All sorts of people come to us for advising," she explained cutting through his theory of how the Argents related to supernatural creatures. "When they ask to meet on equal footing there really isn't an ideal place for that. So, we created one." With that she pulled at the brace with all her weight, satisfied at the rattle it gave off, "this is why you're going to need help pulling the vent away from the house's outer-wall."

Dismissing Isaac's utter discomfort at having his Werewolfiness brought down by minerals and herbs Isaac also didn't like the idea that his gesture of apology would be trumped by a ringer. He dropped the bolts to the floor with a clatter and when Allison climbed onto the ledge above the toilet he didn't move to follow.

"Did I say something wrong?" she squirmed around in the entrance of the passageway to face further toward him.

"No, nope. What makes you think reminding someone of their mortality could be taken the wrong way?" he shrugged crossed his arms and did anything to keep from making eye contact.

Allison dropped down from the ledge. "You know coming from someone in the holier than thou Hale Pack I would be careful where to hedge my bets." She laughed lightly.

They stared at one another for a moment, top to bottom, arms crossed, smirking in kind.

"Should we start again?"

"You mean, Again-again?" he bit down on an urge to laugh.

"We have really gotten ourselves into a situation," she put her hand on his arm and pulled it undone from the digging grip. "We're lucky we're friends. We'll figure it out eventually."

Isaac shook his head and tried to hang onto her words as they swam against his insecurities. It wasn't that long ago when he saw the ghost of his hallucinated dead pack members walking in a poisoned state, all throughout that Allison stood beside him.

"I'm going to go get Scott," he said instead of Thank You but it was in his tone as he smiled and walked away.

Despite the claim that they should talk, Scott and Lydia worked in a common stilted silence. Lydia's virtually photographic memory had her calling out easy instructions for Scott to speed
through. Every time he paused to see if she would say something 'now', instead she gave a glare that demanded 'move on.'

Finally he asked without daring to look "what's bothering you? You shouldn't be embarrassed," he took a stab in the dark. Lydia could barely talk to him about her abilities never mind being exposed in front of so many. "You helped everyone. I don't even know how to begin-" "

"Are you kidding me?" she whacked him in the arm when she handed over the following folder. "All I did was complicate things. Those answers only made new questions and that made everything worse," she hissed.

"How is everything worse?" Scott turned around, he stood at a crooked angle to keep balance on the stepping stool and unintentionally blocked Lydia's exit. "You helped give our friends closure," he insisted.

"But at what cost?" she shook her head in aggravation and struggled to keep her voice from rising. "We've entirely lost the plot!"

"What does that mean?" Scott accidentally slipped down one step and Lydia's eyes widened in surprise. He stabilized himself and after a moment, once the threat of collapse passed he looked to her in apology as the file in hand fell apart on the floor at their feet.

"Oh, Scott," she dropped to her knees and he hopped down to the steps to the floor in front of her. 

"It's like Ms. Blake said in English class on Thursday about the narrators' perspective," she explained calmly as they handed pages back and forth into sequential order. "Learning there is more than one killer doesn't make a difference- there could be 2 or there could be 20, it didn't change the situation just the perspective."

Scott helped her up and moved aside the step so that she could safely return the folder to its rightful place. "English is not my best subject," Scott maintained with a smile "but how could figuring that out not make a difference?"

After she pushed the folder into its place Lydia turned around to face Scott fully, he held the same toothless smile but with a new tint of worry. She sighed deeply feeling at ease in the small space because it felt familiar to their whispers.

"I didn't exactly see what Derek saw," she explained. "I could hear it so crisply. I felt like I was in his skin, do you know what I mean?"

He nodded.

"Yeah, I think you do. When I get these sorts of nightmare visions-"

"Do you feel like you're the person it's happening to?" Scott's worry turned the tone in his voice thick, just as it made his eyes seem a little darker still. He was never very good at hiding how much he cared for things.

"Sometimes," whereas Lydia in contrast never found it easy to display vulnerability, or find the words to express it. "When I said I'd help I thought it would make up for how I've been, for the way I act." When Scott shook his head and started in on that speech of his saying 'she didn't have to' Lydia ignored him and bullied passed it like she always did. "Finding the answers weren't exactly a priority. But my redemption story just turned into a ghost story now that everyone knows what a freak I am. And even when I can do whatever it is I can do, I'm useless."
"That's crazy-talk," Scott assured her but his poor choice in words wounded her. Her eyes were bright and wide, they darted around searching his face intently not quite a glare but something terribly incriminating.

"And you? When you offered to help your bros, I bet you thought it would be a buddy action-adventure you'd reminisce over pizza and Pepsi," she glanced toward the rest of the room where weapons lay and their friends worked at dismantling a wall to break them out of a Hunter's War Room and some horrific end. "And now?"

Scott didn't have an answer but she was right in assuming this excursion turned out nothing like he had expected, not from the moment they first set eyes on Stiles in the middle of the woods.

"What is it to you now Scott? Is it still an action-adventure or a murder mystery?"

Scott considered the moments he spent in the car discussing things over with Allison, how he wanted to stop the Monster and would coerce their friends to do it. Or even how he'd grabbed extra files of the dead to shove into Stiles' face in an attempt to manipulate his attention.

"Now what's it to Stiles?" she breathed quietly just as Stiles walked toward them, his notebook wrung tight into a tube. "Detective story turned into a quest for revenge?"

"Lydia, if your nightmares are anything like mine than we know it's not our fault it's not in our control," he reached and touched her arm. Scott couldn't imagine what plot was meant to play out between each of them only that they wouldn't be abandoned to confusion. Not from playground to battlegrounds. "But we affect our story because of what we take from it, right?"

"You were paying a little bit of attention in English," she teased and brightened a little, just a little. She breathed out a slower and calmer breath than the ones she'd been ranting with. The strangeness shared between them once cut her off but he had heard her say she didn't want that anymore. Not in so many words but his instinct wasn't all that off in this mysterious room.

"If we're going to keep being thrown together," he started, to quote with care. "We need to agree to terms," his hand ran along her arm and hooked her fingers while falling away. Lydia's mouth twitched into a smile as she tried to keep his gaze but sometimes their intensity intimidated her so instead she caught hold of his hand. He continued "we need to believe, even if it seems like our perspectives keep changing we're still sharing the same story. That's never going to change."

"Fine," she squeezed his hand tightly before letting it go. Lydia recognized her words thrown around with a Scott-esque twist. "Still an idiot with a hero complex," she smiled a bit wider then worried, "but when things get dark-"

"With all of our different perspectives," he thought on her analogy, "we can just try and see from each other's instead?"

"Okay," Lydia said low, she tilted her head to not look straight at him from fear of (maybe even) laughing.

"Okay?" asked Scott insistently with grin.

"Is everything okay?" Stiles asked, reluctantly inching toward them.

"Yeah, just a little worried," Scott admitted. He looked to Lydia almost for permission before he looked back to Stiles. "Everything's okay now."
"Great! Now" and when Stiles neared he glanced high and low among the file booth and tried to talk his way within for a better look.

"Not a chance," Lydia pushed him back once than a second time as she stepped out from little entryway. "Haven't you gotten enough yet? Or are you trying to get us all caught?"

"What do you mean by 'enough'?" Stiles stumbled until his back hit the edge of the table, then he jumped a step forward when he realized he smacked into the battle axe. He and Scott rushed forward, their hands hovering at odd, carefully non-spikey places to keep the thing from falling off the table.

"She is right about how much time we have left?" Scott reminded when he could steady his panicky breathe.

"Still it's not like we're going to get another chance to get into the Hunters' secret lair," he glared over their shoulders as Lydia and Scott stood as sentinels. The more he insisted the less articulate he became.

A snag in the back of Lydia's mind caught the better of her, "don't you have enough in your little notepad to work with already?" That stopped Stiles' tirade, Scott said Lydia's name in a soft warning but she was insistent, "you're already investigating your Father's investigation. Now you've got juicier mysteries on your plate, what else is it you're really looking for?"

"I'm not looking for trouble," he back-pedaled.

"You're not doing too great at looking for answers either," she warned. When she said so he looked away, toward the clock as if a sudden impulse to get out in a timely manner became of great importance.

"Didn't he leave that notebook in the forest?" she turned her head to ask Scott. Reluctantly he nodded, remembering clearly when he then briefly flipped through it, locking away the sight of the familiar scrawl. It smelled so strongly of Stiles that Scott thought he might be able to use it to track him; instead it remained practically forgotten, shoved into the bottom of a backpack along with dirty socks.

"Maybe you're really good at remembering things," Stiles shrugged and tried to play off his discomfort with aloofness. Instead he looked a bit like a turtle "but some of us might want to get the details down before it slips our mind."

"Like your Dad does," Scott suggested, Stiles nodded like a bobble-head in his eagerness. "With a pin-board in the kitchen that almost anyone can sneak in and get a peek."

After a moment to process the change-up, Stiles shoved the notebook in his back pocket and stood a little taller.

"Or like this room where someone can break in and just poke around," Lydia said.

"What am I supposed to do?" Stiles scoffed lightly.

"I don't know," Scott shrugged. He looked apologetic but didn't veer off topic. "We could help you," when he looked to Lydia, her expression held surprising openness as she gave the smallest nod.

"Don't let the details drive you crazy, Stiles," Lydia's voice gave the slightest tremor over the word crazy but she pushed through. The point she wanted to make was more important, the fact that she
knew too well how over analyzing could tear up your waking thoughts she spoke with more confidence, "trust your instinct sure, but trust us to help you think clearer. Maybe even help you make better choices."

Stiles sensed a trap if he gave up this footing. He probably spent more hours at night staring at the notebook than staring at the backs of his eyelids that was true. And it didn't help that Lydia had quoted part of his voicemail back at him in a clear attempt at manipulation. In earnest assistance, yes but manipulation nonetheless.

"I can't stand the idea of someone finding this," Stiles admitted when what he really meant to express was that he really didn't like the idea of conceding the point.

"You could always burn it," Lydia said with a smirk, mostly to get Stiles riled up.

"Is everything okay over here?" asked Isaac, wondering at Stiles grabbing with two hands to cover the pockets on the backside of his jeans.

"Fine. Great! Why? What do you wanna know?"

Scott ignored Stiles babbling and turned to Isaac and asked "You okay?"

"Yeah, not exactly," the discomfort of his loss in strength led to the equally uncomfortable situation of admitting to it. "I need your guys' help.

Mildly dusted in grime, Allison remained half-in and half-out of the vent that she lit with her cellphone light. She assured them it wasn't a cavernous as first anticipated but Isaac wasn't comforted at all. She dropped down once more and gave room for Scott and Isaac to work together to dislodge the frame. There wasn't enough room in for anyone else in the bathroom-booth and Allison, Stiles and Lydia hovered by the entrance, waiting and not at all looking at the clock away on the wall. Although they heard its threatening tick.

The worming and shimmying of the frame took longer than expected despite the two working together, even with Scott encouraging Isaac every second of the way. And when it finally lurched forward it gave a vibrating jolt instead of a screech which surprised everyone.

Everyone froze until finally Allison broke their shock "alright guys, let's move!"

With a little goading Isaac was first through the shaft, encouraged mostly because he saw the crack in the piping and with the breeze of the outside moon illuminated world he felt compelled. Scott went through second, assuring Isaac if he hesitated he would be there to shove him the rest of the way. Allison urged Stiles to follow up when he stopped in the doorway of the bathroom.

"Wait?" Stiles refused to move forward. He noticed when Allison climbed back up to the lid of the toilet seat she had handed over the power drill to Lydia. "What are you doing?"

"Once we're outside it'll be easier for Scott to replace the vent and Lydia will seal it up from the inside," Allison gestured to the drill which Lydia held up in salute.

"Why can't Lydia just climb out with us?" asked Stiles "You can stay behind."

Lydia looked to Stiles and to Allison and back again. She was grateful to Allison's poker-face and Stiles' inability to hear any change in her heart rate at the moment. Allison never explained it to Lydia but she didn't have to because Lydia had an instinct when Allison was pushing herself too
far, and it was evident to her at least that Allison could only trusted the guys with her family's secrets up to a point. And they were edging on that point, leaving desperately Allison wanting to be on the outside of the room to make sure they closed it all the way. She wanted to make sure the Werewolves didn't leave themselves a backdoor entrance to the War Room. She wanted to confirm with her own eyes that everything was securely sealed up and later with her usual access she could double-check the bathroom as well. Her paranoia was part of her personality and it made her better at what she did, it made her an asset to her friends even but it made it hard to explain why she had to leave Lydia, a non-Werewolf best-friend behind.

"This is part of the plan Stiles," Lydia insisted and shoved him, her bossy tone confused him and she hoped it helped enough.

"Nope." Nope, not enough. "I don't like this," he reached his hands out and grabbed hold of the doorframe. "I'm not going."

"What do you mean?" Allison stared in shock.

"What's going on?" Scott poked his head out through the vent that creaked a little from his shift in weight.

"I'm not leaving Lydia behind," Stiles crossed his arms. Lydia rolled her eyes at the dramatic flair in his statement.

"I thought that was the plan," Scott glanced from person to person. Allison looked bewildered, Lydia frustrated and Stiles determined.

"Stiles, it'll be fine. Lydia can handle herself." Despite his assurance Scott hopped down from the ledge.

"Someone should stay with you," Stiles looked to Lydia intently and momentarily her argument left her mind. "What if some other Hunter shows up before Allison?" Stiles looked to Allison for validation, only she looked to the exit, her escape for all things.

"I'll stay," Lydia ignore his concern. "I'll be fine... we all agreed I'll be the fall guy." it wasn't something she hadn't thought about it was just something she refused to talk about (a habit she picked up from Allison) because if she really addressed it she wouldn't even have crossed the threshold.

"I'm so not okay with this," Stiles said, his mouth pressed into a line and he shook his head.

"Guys, go." Lydia pushed Allison and Scott back toward the vent and yanked at Stiles' arm to follow, the small space nearly turned into a skirmish.

"No" Stiles said, with his frown turned into a full on pout as Scott shoved at his back.

"Hide if anything happens," Allison instructed and hugged her best-friend. Lydia watched her best-friend disappear into the shadowy depths.

"Nope, still not okay with it. Not going anywhere," Stiles said from several feet outside of the booth after he broke away.

Scott gave her a small smile of reassurance and went back to their plan and he climbed through the vent in reverse. After delivering a cold glare over her shoulder Lydia climbed onto the toilet with the power drill held tight in hand. She looked murderous.
Once in the duct it was obvious Scott felt stronger than inside of the room. He was able to realign the bracing without the help of another. He held it in place while Lydia drilled each bolt securely in place. He was merciful enough not to say a thing although his face said more than enough with just a small grin. When she finally smacked the grate into place over the ventilation shaft she was grinning, too, and smug when she saw him flinch in response.

Stiles' attempt at coming to the rescue was ill-conceived when her arms were already sore from drilling, hair stuck to the back of her neck from sweaty exertion and she only had the one bolt left. She said "thank you" anyway when he handed it to her because he looked apologetic. She wasn't sure she would ever get tired of the sound of his apologies so she only glared a little and was gracious enough to allow him to help her down.

Track 05 - Sleep Tonight (Junior Boys) by Stars

The rush of nearing twilight felt flush against Isaac's senses was nothing like he could rightly describe. Although if he tried it might start with a combination of descriptions of his favorite foods ingested on the first birthday after he turned Werewolf, loads of sexual innuendoes would be referenced along the way. That would be near enough to it. Maybe.

They scrambled along through the tunneled spaced for all of the two minutes it took to get to the filter at the end but no one faster than Isaac. With a grunt and a bump of his fist the filter came loose and their exit revealed. Scott kept up the rear so that he could readjust and seal off the opposite side which made Isaac even more grateful for how straight forward and easy it was to get through to the other side. He wasn't sure he could have survived that closed environment for more than the blink of an eye it took for him to claw his way out, not exactly metaphorically.

He caught hold of the second story ledge and grappled with shingles to pull himself upward. While he remained balanced in a crouch staring up at stars, through floating grey clouds he heard Allison call to him barely in a whisper.

"Hey," she said for the fourth time only this time he looked back at her. "Are you okay?" he nodded. "Alright then can you move over?"

He gulped feeling a little stupid and scuttled along trying not to topple or knock down shingles and make it obvious he was sneaking over her rooftops again. Just as he thought to offer help climbing out Allison glided from the lip of the tunnel across the ledge, she caught the edge and swung her weight back and forth to catch enough momentum to fling herself up beside him.

"Hey," she greeted a little winded and with a grin. "I took gymnastics for 8 years," she explained when he still hadn't closed his mouth.

When she noticed Isaac's breath hadn't calmed despite their new found freedom. "Are you okay?" Allison asked.

"Yeah," he said after he took a deep breath and then shrugged to keep his cool, "just not a big fan of small places."

"Come on," she insisted. Keeping him moving was best, she knew obsessing would make it worse so she put an arm softly on his shoulder and shoved him along to make room for Scott. She kept her hand there.
Without nearly as much class Scott crawled from the duct onto the ledge beside them. Everything seemed to be working for their advantage until Allison asked where the filter was.

"We have to close the exit guys. Otherwise someone is going to know something came out of there," she rolled her eyes when both boys made a suggestive face as to what comes out of bathroom vents anyway. "I mean someone came out of there. Isaac?" They looked to him questioning and he turned back blank-faced, his mind drew a blank. He back tracked and only remembered busting out not how exactly.

"It's okay. It's alright," Scott insisted and lowered his voice as he did when he remembered they were supposed to be sneaking.

"I see it!" Allison said excitedly but quietly. She pointed into the shadows on sleet and grey lines against the horizon. Somehow she made out the flat of where it had been tossed higher onto the slanted roof where the shingles were looser still. Without hesitation she ascended toward it.

"Should we--?" began Isaac, he made a hand gesture between them meaning one or the other should follow.

"She can handle it," affirmed Scott with a proud smile.

At that moment the sound of shingles giving way scraped along and clattered about. One fell over the ledge and cracked onto in a flowerbed below. They looked up at the sight of Allison speeding backward, legs curled into a bundle too fast toward them. On instinct Scott put out a hand for Allison to hook before falling off. Tucked under her other arm she had the ventilation filter and she wore a bright smile as though she expected, no, intended Scott to catch her all along.

"I got you," he grinned at her. He wished he had thought of something cleverer to say but that was all that came to mind.

"I know," laughing gently, she leaned over and kissed him.

"I know you know," rubbed his cheek softly against hers so that the words were less that sounds and more like a caress.

Allison closed her eyes inhaled, when she opened them again her expression was scrunched and wary in the way he dreaded, in the way that meant 'I'm sorry because things are about to get worse.' Scott nodded consent. With that she used his nearness as leverage and their embrace as hand holds to reach the ventilation shaft.

Scott's claws dug into the roof while Allison's nails dug into his shoulder and she hung across to put the filter casement securely in place. It took a bit, more than a bit. And after a few grunts from Scott came a low growl and squeaked apologies from Allison it got done.

"I'm okay," Scott insisted although he looked shaken with eyes dimming from a state of amber "are you okay?"

"I'm okay, are you okay?" Allison asked in disbelief, one hand over her mouth the other tracing the outline of her deep scratches into Scott's shoulder blades.

"Alright, already! Guys, we're all okay," Isaac reminded just a bit louder "but Lydia and Stiles might not be if we don't hurry." The thought of their friends locked away powerless made him sick, and when Scott look to him he could see from his expression it was dread they shared. They turned to find Allison had already easily climbed half way up the rooftop before they could ask her to move along. Once at the top she took a deep breath and flipped over the edge like she had no
reason to hesitate at all.

"Whoa," Scott said louder than he had realized.

"She took 8 years of gymnastics," Isaac chuckled and put a hand on Scott's good shoulder. "Hey, come. We gotta go."

With a nod and a little bit of competitiveness they both flipped off the windowsill, dropping down to Mr. Argent's study where they would wait out the night.

Track 06 - Place for Us by Mikky Ekko

"Would you stop pacing," Lydia's voice was tight and not a shout at all but their long silence made it seem like a scream.

Stiles stopped mid-step out of fright and let his foot down very, very slowly. She was not amused. The clock on the wall infuriated her moreso but it wouldn't have done her any good yelling at that either.

"Stupid clock," Stiles muttered as if reading her mind. She sighed and moved to lean on the side of the table nearest the weapons. At least they were an interesting distraction.

"Is that armed?" he asked of the rocket launcher only after having placed himself on the farthest end.

"How would I know?" she glared but looked back at the weapon in wonder. While she investigated Stiles came up beside her.

"This stuff is crazy," he said and poked at it as if it would come alive and she shook her head in disapproval. "What? It is? Who keeps a rocket launcher under the bed?"

"But the medieval axe is okay?" her eyes narrowed in critical disbelief.

"That's pretty bad-ass," he smirked, with that she rolled her eyes and stepped away. "Why would you want to stick around here alone?" he called out after her which made her stop mid-step.

"What?" she swung around, her hair spun with to further illuminate a comically false veil of innocence with gaped mouth and wide eyes.

"Don't 'what?' me," he made a flippant hand gesture to mock the flow of her hair. "What are you up to? You've been helpful before but you've never been this helpful."

Lydia recalled her earlier conversation with Scott, the quiet confidence they shared about something close to this and she tried to lock it quickly away while thinking up what to say which took too long and his smirk lengthened "oh, shut up."

"We both know you're trying to make up for something. What's so bad you gotta throw yourself in front of the literal bomb?" he drew closer but stopped part of the way between her and the weapons, not quite sure which was the more threatening.

"Well, you're not the only one trying to figure things out Stiles," she came back. She gave it another long thought and looked him over for any inch of mockery.
"Oh" and his mouth went gaping. He nodded and shifted his feet. 

"We both know things have changed since the fire. You talked to Scott about it right?"

"Yeah" he nodded and watched her intently. He stepped forward as cautiously as one would an open flame. "Did you want to talk to me about it?"

She bit her lower lip and shrugged "Yeah, maybe."

He grinned then pressed his lips together trying to hide it. "Should I start?" he waved his hand airily like he held a literal olive branch. "Should I blame it on psychotropic Wolfsbane?"

She didn't move but like a micro-expression her face turned a little more severe, a little more serious while her voice went a little more soft across their distance. "Maybe. Or maybe we could admit 6 years changed some things." He only noted the moisture in her eyes when she sniffed them back harshly, "I feel a little more forgiving."

Moving the rest of the way to her Stiles put both hands on her shoulders and she bowed her head to the side, "yeah, to everyone but yourself."

"I've had this idea about things," she started slowly, her arms were crossed creating a wall still between them but her expression was tenderer than he had seen it since the first day in the Sheriff's department. He felt relieved to know she could still look him in the eyes again, to feel that connection again. "Things were easy when you were a thought floating in my mind. Now you're here and everyone's reacting differently than I imagined. Now my nightmares are turning real, I feel like I've lost my mind so what's to keep you from walking away and turning into a thought again?"

Stiles sighed and he gripped her shoulder hard. He imagined the effort it would take to ground an out of control hot air balloon. Sure he believed these might be worries that poured through her head and they were terrible and guilty wounds he'd work the rest of his life to mend but it wasn't what he sensed when he watched her across the room tight in the booth with Scott.

"That's not what's bothering you?"

"No," she smiled softly, "it's not. Not when you're standing right in front of me."

He smiled at that.

"What's bothering me is figuring out how useful am I if I'm just crazy?"

He rolled his eyes at that "now you thinking you're crazy IS crazy!" he scoffed. He ran his hands from her shoulders to where her arms crisscrossed and pulled them apart. He dragged her forward by her wrists, "you just need to learn to see you as you are now then you'll recognize how powerful you are. We'll help you. I'll help you."

She stumbled forward reluctantly while her small smile grew into a smirk "I figured you'd say something like that. You and Scott, you're so alike sometimes it's scary. It's your turn now?" she reminded. Her brow and tone rose in insistency, "is there something you wanted to blame on psychotropics or did you want to be honest this time?"

Rather than bow his head in avoidance he looked to the ceiling for guidance from the fluorescent lights, "I dunno." Lydia squeezed his hands viscously. "Alright, alright, alright" he all but whimpered. "It isn't something that changed in 6 years it's something that shouldn't have."
Unaccustomed to the expression of stillness and wide-eyed concentration that she reserved for few, Stiles felt mute and a pressure for the right words to the say but in the end they came easily to him.

"I'm not going anywhere," he said like a promise or a fact of some sort.

Her eyes were drawn to the notebook poking in to sight from the outline of his waist. His grip on her hands tightened and her eyes came back to look at his. "I mean it," he insisted.

A beeping interrupted their stillness and their hands broke off. Lydia moved toward the door as the keypad lit up with the entry codes unlocking.

"Allison," she said with relief in her voice.

"It could be someone else," Stiles suggested with panic in his voice. But Lydia shook her head as if that were the silliest suggestion that were ever made. "We should check just in case," when he said it her expression screwed up in distaste.

"Stiles--" she started when he refuted. But he insisted and pulled them toward the tiny live-feed that played before the doorframe. There stood the sights of two men, two very distinct men, neither of which were their friend and savior Allison Argent.

"Come on, let's get under the table," he stepped over and waved to the spaced between two benches where they could crawl and squeeze into.

"Ohh, No!" she stood tall, poised in indignation with her hands up in defense. "You have got to be kidding me! I have seen to many bad movies to know this trope. I'm not letting you mount me!"

"I'm not--" Stiles voice rose in disbelief, his jaw dropped as if he had forgotten how to speak preventing him from articulating any rebuttal. The door gave off the sound of air displacement as pressure moved when locks released. "Would you just shut up and let me save you?" he insisted and her glare settled an internal argument he had had about thinking things through before spurting them out.

Lydia took his silence as a signed to go ahead, she caught him firmly by the wrist and dragged him to disappear below the table seconds before Roman and Norm walked into the Argent's secret Meeting Room where there were killer and armed weaponry.

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Track 07 - Shake It Out (Acoustic) by Florence and The Machine

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Allison rolled onto her stomach at the sound of her Mother calling her name. She had touched down onto the windowsill when her bedroom door began to push forward. Crawling along her belly against the tiles she made it to her bathroom window she pulled herself inside. She called back "I'm getting out of shower," Allison lied stripping off her clothes. "Mom is there something you needed?" she thought of wrapping herself up in a towel, walking out and waving off her Mom’s worries easily but it depended on the level of investment.

"Oh," Victoria responded while nearing the other side of the door and Allison pushed in the lock with the achingly slow stillness to keep the act soundless as it snapped into place. "Where's Lydia?"

Where is Lydia indeed? Screwed.
"Probably using the bathroom down the hall," she hurried a reply. "What do you want?" she deflected.

"I've been calling you for nearly an hour?"

Genuinely thankful she left her phone behind by the bedside Allison shared that excuse.

"Well," Victoria continued and with her ear pressed to the bathroom door Allison could hear the bedspring of her Mother sitting on the edge of the bed "your presence has been requested at the Lodge?"

"Requested?" she tried not to sound desperate. She knew now her Mom wouldn't leave until they had a face-to-face and Allison realized the complication this ruse created. Should she turn the shower on now she would be found out. Hell, even turning on the faucet enough to wet her hair would have made it obvious. She looked around the room across every surface for a saving grace, from the towel rake to the sink, the medic cabinet to the mirror and the toilet.

"shit," she muttered to herself realizing the one outlet left available.

Upon exiting the bathroom she had one large bath towel wrapped tight around her body the other she scrubbed hard, scouring water from her hair.

"Does 'request' actually mean request this time?" Allison made her way across the room and checked her phone. Sure enough there were a number of messages from her Mom but they were punctuated with messages from her Godfather.

- **Mom**: Allison if you aren't too busy do you think you could come to the Lodge?
- **Rumy**: babycakes, this place smells of conspiratorial hatecakes. You're lucky you've got friends as an out. I need friends. Would you be my friend?
- **Rumy**: muffinbutt, the mojo here is seriously choking my flow. You might not even want to be my friend after this. I might not even want to be friendly after this.
- **Mom**: Allison? Are you awake? Your bedroom light is on. Why don't you bring me down the lay-line maps in my bedroom if you're coming down?
- **Rumy**: shugarmartian, you are made of such good stuff. I don't think u want to be close to this. I'm getting it from all ends here. I won 3 hands in a row but I feel like a loser, like the house has it fixed but something killer is coming. Only something raw is in the air y'know what I mean butterbean?
- **Rumy**: whatever thy tell u dont come. don't let em' con u. I dont kno whats going on yet but there is some bad juju booboo. dont let it fuck u._I hope you're not answrin cuz your asleep n in th end thisll b nothing buta dream.
- **Mom**: Allison? Is everything okay? I'm going to come up in a minute if you're not coming, okay?

Allison quickly put her Android back to sleep before her Mom could get a peek at the amount of missed messages. Admittedly her heart sank that she hadn't received a message yet from Scott saying they'd gotten back safe but she knew it was too soon. She longed to get some good news. Something needed to go right tonight, just one thing needed to come out good from her scheme, the first plot she had that put every single one of her friends in jeopardy.

"Sorry I missed all your messages," Allison said and knew she came across sincere because in her mind she said it to Rumy. "But why would I come down if I didn't have to? You guys don't need me."
"Maybe we do," Victoria sighed lightly placing her hands on her knees, moving aside the lay-line maps she'd obviously grabbed on her own (something she was clearly capable of doing herself). She looked to her daughter with a light in her eyes, some eagerness lived behind there.

It helped that Allison remembered there was toilet water in her hair.

"Mom unless there is something new you want to tell me right now--"

Victoria said nothing.

"Well, there is nothing new I have to say and I've got a friend here I'm neglecting," REALLY NEGLECTING she thought.

"I texted you because of Kate," Victoria added a bit anxiously.

"I bet," Allison said in exhale and she looked at her Mom. There was acknowledgment there they had yet to speak aloud. Since Kate arrived she had made for some sort of power move, even when Kate pretended to try to help and it wasn't something Allison could rightly point at. It was suddenly obvious her Mother felt the same.

She sat beside her Mother at the foot of the bed, "what's she got to say for herself this time?"

"She wanted everyone to be there when Tyhurst got back," Victoria explained. She looked to her daughter with anticipation in her bright blues eyes. "He's got something big to report."

Allison clocked onto a thing they'd brought up in the Diner, one of many uncomfortable subjects; the reason why her friends turned up at the Hale House - Lydia sensing a dead body.

"Did he and the Sheriff's department turn up a corpse?" Allison said as blasé as talking about the weather, not the recent weather though.

"How did you know?" Victoria had genuine surprise barely suppressed in her voice.

"Wild guess," Allison huffed in annoyance, not at her friends so much since they had been honest in as much as they could be. In as much as much as subterfuge afforded around Kate Argent.

"You didn't see anything when you were out there with Kate?"

"Let's just say I was sufficiently distracted," Allison responded and looked away not wanting to give away the game. She used the smaller towel to twist her hair up and keep the water from leaking down her back. "That and Kate lies."

Once she said it aloud it felt like the most right thing in the world. Her Mother's expression was hard, covering shock. Not at the statement but at the knowledge that Allison had caught on so early.

"Yes." Victoria took a moment then smiled. She petted her daughter's leg before she stood to walk away, "but don't be so hard on her. We all lie sometimes. Never mind the title of Argent; if we didn't turn a blind eye to each other's lie sometimes we wouldn't stay our happy family."

"Mom," Allison said severely, "that is legit a dead body."

"Yeah, and your friends found it first."

Allison felt her stomach drop through the floor.
Victoria smiled gently. "You snuck out to meet them and you didn't tell us because you were afraid their involvement would get them in over their heads. It might make you a good friend but it also makes you very grounded." She stroked her daughter's cheek before kissing it, "it might not be on par with being as dangerous but it has all the earmarks." She didn't question about Allison's loyalties, like she feared her Mom would, like she feared the Matriarch of their Argent faction would. Instead she simply gave her a deriding look that a Mom gave her kid for maybe hanging out with the 'wrong crowd'.

When she slipped out of the bedroom Allison felt somehow dirtier even than the feeling of toilet water slipping down her spine.

"Do you think we missed any of them?" Roman said in jest, with a dramatic grunt.

Norm laughed eventually after he squeezed through the door after Roman. Each man carried a military grade duffle equal to their size attached to their backs and held smaller bags along their arms.

After they passed through the door they paused for Norm to re-enter the entry code to seal the doors without alarm.

A childhood of playing Twister made it familiar to place "Player 2's" right arm over "Player 1's" head. "Player 1" place your left leg twisted under your right leg but laced through "Player 2's" legs made easy. Despite years of displacement having changed their height difference from centimeters to inches, body mass for things like Lydia's chest against the expanse of Stiles' shoulder span but they held their placements steadily. For a little while anyway.

"D'you think the two of them could have possibly packed enough gear?" Roman started in again. He swung low a satchel with a belt of bullets wrapped around it. The satchel held handheld weapons from hand guns to throwing knives they'd collected from around the second story, possibly even her Mom's room. Lydia's chest tightened with the breath she held for fear Roman would settle the bag on the bench in front of them. He didn't.

"Makes sense," Norm replied. He neared the table and brought with him sedateness of someone juggling 200lbs of illegal weapons. "(Rumy and Bennet) lived here a while longer than the rest of us. They've accumulated some rust."

"Rust?" Roman scoffed. He dropped the body-sized duffle bag onto the table. "This is a goddamn arsenal," from Roman's flippant description a slight wave of nausea coursed through both of their hidden guests. For all of its stable mounting it shuddered from contact and passed through Lydia's spine down to Stiles' stomach.

"Good thing too," Norm added both in sentiment and content as he added his bag along with Roman onto the table. "Since this town is infested," alleged Norm indifferently. At his passivity Lydia felt a little faint and pressed her forehead against Stiles' neck. While Stiles too felt weak and bowed forward onto his elbows instead of carrying their weight straight armed.

"Infested? Aren't we being a bit dramatic? Do we use the word infested anymore?" asked Roman, he sounded prickly. "Werewolves aren't exactly termites eating through wood."
"How is it possible you don't see how accurate your metaphor is? For months they've been popping up just about everywhere," Norm recited as he placed his hands on the table. While Lydia couldn't feel the vibration, Stiles seemed to sense it around them and it reminded how trapped they were. "Back in the day this never would have happened."

"I'm sure you would have never let this happen." Roman's response came in a question that wasn't a question at all. "Back in the day you'd've burned townies with Wolfsbane if you'd want to exterminate the Werewolves, right?"

"Firstly; they were just chemical burns," said Norm and he punctuated each point with a knuckles to the surface of the table.

In response Roman scoffed.

In response Stiles shuddered.

In response Lydia placed her right hand close to Stiles and she brushed her thumb along the back of his hand.

"Secondly; it was an effective method," continued Norm as he turned to leave. On the opposite side of the table Roman followed in suit.

"Don't listen. Just focus on my voice alright." Lydia whispered against the curve of Stiles ear, he squeezed his eyes shut and turned toward the sound. "Don't listen to them. Block it out." She didn't know what the modern punishment would be for getting caught by Hunter in the heart of their home but in that moment anything felt better than the shredding through Stiles nerves. "It's going to be okay. Okay?" a barely perceptible nod rubbed against the side of her face. Once she made him believe it she believed it and could better ignore the moisture teeming in her eyes. "Okay."

"Thirdly; it was long before even my Father was born," Norm concluded as he punched the key code back into the door.

With a tight squirm Lydia turned her head, unable to make out the men but enough to make out the digits and memorize it for later. Allison would just have to forgive her for prying, for keeping a secret that wasn't hers to keep. If Lydia had learned anything that night, she learned if it protected a friend you did anything, anything.

When breathing out Lydia deflated and aligned herself to the plateau of Stiles' spine, careful not to sink her entire weight. "You're okay," she said, her voice kept imperceptibly low with her lips pressed into the fabric of his red hoodie.

"You sound disappointed," they could hear Roman distantly as the door began to close.

When Stiles opened his eyes again he focused only on Lydia's hand beside his, the shine of the band on her finger and polish on her fingertips. He shifted his fingers a little so sidelong they touched in places and they felt like the only realness.

"Not disappointed. Frustrated. How many months has Chris been here and yet he can't seem to come up with a solution nearly as effective," Norm's voice turned small with worry, distance and the sealing of the door.

Track 09 - I've Got A Future by Toydrum feat. Gavin Clark
Isaac didn't pace like Stiles or wring his hands like Lydia. He didn't bite his lip like Allison but he had a "Tell" when he was nervous. He developed stillness and lounged. Against everything, walls, doorframes, lamps, countertops anything that looked like it needed his help holding up, he could be found stretched up against.

When Scott caught him at it he looked like a cat startled in the act of catching a mouse, mid-scramble and mid-pounce but pretty sure he'd gotten in trouble.

"They are going to be okay Isaac," Scott insisted although after he'd texted Allison he kept his hands gnarled tight around his Blackberry, strangling it out from his own anxiety.

"Yeah?" Isaac's startled expression drained a little.

"Yeah," Scott maintained. It should have been tiring saying the same thing over and over all evening but he needed to hear it as much as he needed to say it.

"You don't think they're taking long?" Isaac asked, easing off the doorframe a little.

Scott did think they were taking long but there was a difference between taking long and taking too long.

"I think they're going to be okay," he repeated with a different tone. Lower and he hit the words with a different intonation.

Isaac wasn't waiting for friends. He might think of Stiles as an annoyance half of the time, most of the time but he only just gotten his foster-brother back. The loss was as fresh and nightmarish as murderers and Monsters even if he was only a room away.

"Just take a breather and think about it realistically," Scott gestured between them like he circulated serenity between them. Isaac looked down wide-eyed, his neck craned back in a sort of dismissal at first but then he tried to understand. All Scott wanted to do was get through the ordeal together. "They're on their way out of the room now you just to got to get out of that room too."

Isaac scoffed lightly at that. "Don't you get tired of checking to see if everyone's okay?"

"No," he shook his head and after he gave it a little fake thinking "I guess that's why I'm such a fair co-captain."

There was faint tension around Isaac's eyes that wouldn't leave. The dank lifelessness, literal senseless anxiety the room created clung to his skin in a way that felt like a thousand showers could not peel away. "So what happens next?"

"Dunno," Scott shrugged a smile quirked across his face, "still trying to figure that part out. The day just started though, we've got time."

That eased Isaac a little, the realism or maybe idealism that dawn would bring with it new opportunities so he went over to the couch and dropped onto it with a relieved thud.

"Guess we catch up on some sleep," he yawned, spreading his arms out wide.

Scott watched him but had a flicker of a thought. "Where've you been staying all this time Isaac?"

"I've been staying over in Spaulding," he hadn't hesitated when he answered but his heart gave a
little jump. From Scott's confused expression it was obvious things didn't add up, after all even if you couldn't afford to live there everyone knew the area well.

"You mean you've been squatting?" Scott said. It wasn't impossible, there were such thing as illicit squatters; the district had empty turnover or new properties. The Uni kids sometimes invaded during vacations. The really wealthy ones who didn't want to go home or to Aspen on break and wanted to have the 24-hours sort of parties near enough to the beach but far enough from the townies and just posh enough with pools and amenities. Isaac hardly fit the bill. 

While Isaac nodded and stretching his long legs out, he eased himself back into the couch looking as though he attempted to flatten it out.

Scott came up alongside him and dropped onto the couch. Isaac crossed and uncrossed his ankles to kick off his sneakers but didn't speak not even as Scott answered a question he hadn't yet dreamt of asking "you can stay with us if you want?"

Isaac's eyes went narrow, not because he didn't believe Scott only that he wasn't sure it wasn't a trap. "I can take care of myself. I'm sure Stiles'll let me crash at his sometimes. It's not that big a deal."

"Nah," Scott shrugged and he didn't exactly smile but there was a lift at the corner of his lips that said sincerely he found this intriguing. "It isn't a big deal. We have space, though we take turns doing the dishes and take turns cooking... Plus, I think you're kinda like family too."

"Maybe," Isaac nodded noncommittally. "Yeah," he said and looked away. A smile grew as he turned to look at the clock and eased up on the couch.

"Maybe, yeah," Scott repeated with a mocking sigh.

Track 10 - Thank God For Girls by Weezer

Due to muscle tension Stiles limbs dropped out from beneath. He rolled out a moment later and sat back, kicking his feet out until his back hit a display-case hard. He would have kept kicking until he peddled through to the shore. Lydia crawled from under the table after him and took longer to regain her bearings. Despite understanding the room to be soundproof she worried they could be overheard and the Hunters would double back.

"Shh, Stiles," she whispered to him as she crawled to sit beside him.

Covered in a sheen of sweat, Stiles breathed in gasps as if he had come up from deep sea diving, he kept his eyes closed tight and flinched away from her touch.

Pulling her hair behind her ears and with her hands over her mouth she stayed a captive audience to his suffering. "What can I do? What's wrong? Stiles."

"Wait." He demanded in a weak voice. He then sighed and when he dropped his head back against the bookcase it made a sharp bang that cause Lydia to giggle out of nerves. The sound made Stiles' grimace turn into a shaky smile before he opened his eyes. He pulled her clasped hands apart and held one firmly while she kept the other to her mouth as if it were the filter ferrying control air through her.
"Try slowing your breathing," she insisted, at that he opened his eyes to deliver an artless glare that expressed 'what do you think I'm trying to do.' She twisted around to turn her legs beside her and ease her weight a little into him. If he read her nervousness there he deserved as much "you okay over there?"

"Yeah," he nodded and straightened his posture. "Thanks," he conceded with a rasp when his voice sounded like his own.

Lydia softly cleared her throat "of course," she looked around and pointed toward the monitors "and you for keeping an eye out."

Stiles started to his feet and pulled her up with him. "I need to get out of here," he insisted.

"I know," she kept her eyes focused on the door and considered their options. And where the table once held solutions to Stiles' destroyed pack now exhibited lay vacantness it meant they had time in a sort of way but not promise. Allison would be on her way but not with the expediency they needed.

"I mean now," their hands held tight as they glared at the single entry point. "There is no way I can tear down that door but if I don't try something--" he babbled.

"You don't have to," she yanked him along toward the door. They moved with ambition although the door served as a source of intimidation and his brow furrowed. He watched Lydia with skepticism but she insisted eagerly "I have a very bad idea."

"I am all in," he grinned and released her hold when they came nearest. He analyzed the key lock and thick mixed-metal of the door. The room restricted his supernatural strength and left him weak but cognizant with Lydia steering him.

"There is however a catch," she explained with a stiltedness that annoyed him.

His face colored with aggravation and he didn't have to read her heart rate to realize he stepped into dangerous territory nearly literally when she put her hands on his chest as a warning to stop. The pressure weight sensitive mat lay at his feet, a 5ft. by 5ft. chance to get this right only the one try.

Lydia looked to him and smiled. He didn't have to have full faculty of his senses to see newborn fear behind it.

"Promise me, if you sense anyone coming down the hallway you'll pull me back." It sounded too measured to be a command but he gave a curt nod for effect of obedience and to mask the panic crawling over his skin when she sauntered across the divide to punch the code into the Argent's stupid super-secret Meeting Room door.

"I think we're good," said Stiles as he walked part way across the walkway that lead beyond her Mom's room, with sights over the front door and a clear-ish view of Chris' study.

"You think," said Lydia snidely while she inched behind him. They'd lucked out the hall had been clear when they escaped the Family/Meeting/War/Hellish Room. With the one live feed that showed view the linen closet it left them a little antsy as to what Stiles had to head toward when returning to the study. Lydia had the straight line of all of 15ft to Allison's room so there was little worry on her part. But she would blame herself if Stiles got caught just because she couldn't contain him before Allison came to their aide.
"Yup, I don't sense anyone moving around downstairs," he responded turning back to her with a grin. Clearly he was happier his full senses had returned than he was pleased for the all-clear.

Relief surprised her with the weight of its gravity. She'd been wired for yet something else to go wrong that having Stiles leave her with no drama had almost been unexpected.

"Oh," she then smiled. "Well, go," she shoved at his arm surprised it took him so long to remember he should hurry away. He grabbed the railing and started to descend as Lydia spun around and walked toward Allison's room. She had the impulse still to sneak along, partly because her Mother was asleep and partly because the whole night seemed to ask for it.

When Allison's door cracked open she hoped to surprise and impress her friend with her clever escapee skills but was usurped of the privilege with smothering hand over her mouth. Stiles pulled her back with a hand wrapped around her waist as he easily lifted her and carried her into the linen closet.

"Shh, shhh, shh" he whispered against the hair at the back of her neck. "That's Allison's Mom."

When he let go of the grip over she turned her head part of the way, not with enough room to see him but enough to whisper at him "I thought you didn't sense anyone."

"I didn't sense anyone downstairs," he sounded just as aggravated as she felt.

She twisted higher trying to regain her footing and squirm out of his hold. Without supernatural hearing she could hardly make out the sounds in the hallway, if Mrs. Argent had closed Allison's door and moved on. Lydia only hoped she would hear someone passed them by over the sound of her heart hammering in her ears.

"Lydia please," his voice came at a controlled and closed-off tone utterly unfamiliar to him. "Could you just not," he begged.

"I'm being quiet," she snapped, quieter still, twisting a little further with the intention of tossing him a glare. She noted the reddening of his face.

"It's not the noise, it's the friction," he muttered and looked down to where her hip rubbed against his crotch.

"Oh," she articulated in a sound between a squeak and a gasp. Swiftly she shifted in his firm hold on her middle and turned around; instead of keeping her legs between his she crisscrossed theirs intending to give them enough room in the downstairs department. With hands braced on either side of his head, just above his shoulders she pushed against the wall for balance, she leaned up and aligned with him. "There. Is that better?"

While Stiles eyes travelled from where his hands on her waistline to her face, his own face looked like it caught fire even in the dark, "no. Lydia, it kinda makes things worse."

She watched on with bright eyes disarming and amused as she bit her lip in realization then bit it harder to keep from laughing at the most lopsided grin. Their humor disappeared entirely when Victoria Argent pulled open the linen closet.

Well, the humor didn't disappear entirely. The fury in Victoria's face was as terrifying as any of the illustrations in the Bestiary. Her eyes looked rimmed with glowing fury and lips practically disappeared against a harsh line of angry disapproval.

They were separated while Victoria escorted Ms. "I'm-rather-disappointed-with-you" Lydia back to
Allison's room (threatening Stiles with the more clichéd "I'll talk to you later, Mr. Sheriff's son") They glanced to one another and secreted a smirk when they thought on the fact they chewed out for sneaking out for a lover's rendezvous in a closet, rather than super-secret Supernatural espionage. Considering it meant a successful mission this was reputation they could live with, which was a weird definition when you really thought about it.

Chapter End Notes

CREDITS/ROLL CALL:

Argents - Team1; headed by Victoria, Chris & Allison.
• Rumy - [Sergeant] specialized in Recon; Special Forces and espionage. Chris' right hand man and Allison's godfather.
• Axel - [1st Lieutenant] expert tracker, marksman and Allison's 2nd cousin.
• Bennett - [Field Officer] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old and friend to Allison.
• Leveque - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Terrain-Orientation. Mechanics, driving countermeasures the means to mobilize heavy firepower to engage opposing forces including other combat vehicles.
• Ulrich - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation.

Argents - Team2; headed by Kate.
• Livy - [1st Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Force-Orientation, R.I.F. and close combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's right-hand man.
• Tyhurst - [Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation, Cyberwarefare, has CIA background and is ranked with state detective credentials. Referred to as 'try-hard.'
• Norm - [Sergeant] specialty in Medical Intelligence and as a Longbowman; an archer who uses the longbow, w/ various arrowheads. He' JR's brother and Roman's Uncle.
• Roman - [Field Officer] specialty as a Marksman/Sharpshooter, 19yrs. old and a weapons expert skilled in precision shooting. He's JR's son and Norm's Nephew.
• Fry - [Field Officer] specialty as a Tactician is and general officer, while his marksmanship is low he is still in high regard for his brain.

Argents - Team3; headed by Gerard.

Hale (Present Day) Pack; Derek Alpha
• Isaac - [Omega] abandoned Werewolf in search of a pack.
• Stiles - [Omega] on a personal quest for answers to what destroyed his family(s).
• (missing) Cora - [Beta] missing, presumed dead.
• (missing) Boyd - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.
• (missing) Erica - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.

Hale (Heyday) Pack; Talia Alpha
• Peter - [Beta] Talia's brother, Uncle to Derek, Laura and Cora.
• Laura (age 17) - [Beta] was last seen struggling between trying to pull survivors from the fire and defending her mother, Talia from her Uncle Peter's attacks.
• Derek (age 15) - [Beta] was pulled from the flames by his sister Laura and ushered to safety by their emissary… until the Treaty was made.
Other:

- Jackson - [Kanima] characterized by claws that secrete venom which temporarily paralyzes their victims, a double row of sharp fangs, and a tail. Unless a Kanima resolves what in its past caused its mutation, it will eventually cocooned stage and emerge as a winged creature. Unlike a werewolf, a Kanima seeks out a master instead of a pack. It will carry out whatever vengeance its master bid. *chapter 12
- Kira - [?] ...
- Lydia - [Banshee] ‘A Banshee screams preceding a supernatural death not as a premonition but to highlight the likelihood of supernatural events that result in deaths.’ *chapter 8

Twins' Pack; Aiden and Ethan Carver Alphas

- Marta - [Beta] she's an older motor head and their 1st Lieutenant.
- Bridy - [Beta] the packs' spy because she's diminutive and easily underestimated.
- Gus - [Beta] referred to as psychotic now and again, but his very few (and dwindling) close friends' are his touchstone.
- (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, bi and partnered to Naylor, formerly to Bozeman.
- (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
- (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
- (deceased) Coot - [Omega] former Beta, killed by the Monster.

Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha

- (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed 1st Lieutenant, possibly romantically entangled.
- Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali and closely bonded to Huntington.
- Santos - [Beta] while loyal to Kali has mentored many, without regard to packs. He helped the Twins first learn to shift together without losing their identities.
- Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed and with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
- Levi - [Beta] he's neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
- Huntington - [Beta] has strong empathic senses, is very good friends with Gus' from Twins' pack and Lark.

Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha

- Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' Lieutenant, --from wiped out Shapeshifter dynasty.
- (missing) Dr. Kane - [Omega] both a medical Doctor and their torturer.
- (deceased) Quint - [Omega] eager to please teen and Dr. Kane's biological son.

Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha

- Søren - [Beta] 1st Lieutenant, Danish man of even temperament and a skilled negotiator until his temper is peaked.
- Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
Chapter Summary

After finally leaving the Argent residents, with their varied escorts they return to a semi-normal life to extracurricular at BHHS only to be presented with surprise reappearances and an escalating threat(s).

• Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/18-were-you-frenemies

I am incredibly disappointed with 8tracks recent international exclusions. I'm looking into re-creating the playlists here on YouTube as well, that will take some time, as if I don't have enough delaying/to procrastinate with. Well I wouldn't try it if I didn't care about doing it. Wish me luck and lots & lots of patience.

Chapter Notes

In the midst of the most "Awkward Dinner of All-Time™" in the House of Argent, while others discuss suspicious appearance and the abnormal weather, our heroes plan a burglary.

• While in the Hale House a victim of arson is revealed to be a murder victim from the evidence Tyhurst provided to Sheriff Stilinski.
• Bringing the evidence of the burnt Omega to the packs only fueled their internal conflict, crossing over into the attention of the Hunter.
• Using the ventilation system Isaac, Allison and Scott escape the Argent's meeting room only Stiles refuses to follow when he (re)realized it left Lydia alone to fend for herself.
• When 2 Hunters, Norm and Roman reenter the Meeting Room to collect the left over weapons, Stiles and Lydia overhear alternate plans for ridding Beacon Hills of the Werewolf "infestation."
• In a panic Stiles and Lydia are forced to make their own impromptu escape with mixed results.

If you have a question/concern/comment/thoughts as to the length of this chapter, good, good, good on you-- now here's some food for thought about that; this is just ONE chapter I couldn't bring myself to divide up so I could have an update in timely fashion. Oh, what hot mess of lags between updates and long-ass chapters there would be... not that there's anything wrong with that. But sometimes I just can't endure it. And then sometimes there this. Talk soon-ish.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Track 01 - Loosen Your Hold by South
The process of signing out of Beacon Hills Memorial Hospital turned out to be disturbingly quick. Or at least Kira thought so. One moment they were virtually strapping her to the bed, exaggerating a head wound as if her brain would leak out and the next minute they had her family packed up and exiting through the side door like thieves in the night.

When Kira looked in the bathroom mirror she saw tired, puffy eyes and matted hair but couldn't find a scratch anymore. Even the Doctors stopped ordering tests. When she brought it up to her Dad he insisted the Doctors backed off because laughter was the best medicine, therefore she should just sit still and listen to more of his rendition of 'Hamilton'.

Mercifully her Mom returned soon after her latest disappearing act to cut him off. Kira had never been happier to see her.

"Dear, you're meant to make her feel better, not homicidal," she said when she took in the scene. Fatigue made her laugh lines lengthen but her smile stayed hidden somewhere.

A striking woman clothed in white silently followed in Noshiko's wake. But not in the same Doctor's lab coat sort of white, something made of a significantly higher quality in ivory and pulled off a designer rack with the intention of framing her statuesque form just to have the dark waves of her hair fall over the lapels artfully.

"Kira?" Noshiko called sharply but not harshly, concern flooded her features. "Did you hear her?"

"Wha?"

Her Dad gave a mild snort.

"Hello Kira," the woman voiced with a smooth and distressingly compelling accent. "I'm very happy to've met you darling but I think you're going to want to get dressed now. The reception is chilly out."

"Dressed?" Kira fumbled out of bed and wished she could remember how to detangle her limbs from a blanket. She was grateful her Dad was there to help. She wished she knew how to form sentences with more than one word. Unfortunately, no one could fix that glitch.

"We're going home now, Kira," Noshiko urged. She held bag of clothes in one hand and ushered Kira toward the bathroom with her other hand.

"Home?" at the bathroom door Kira stopped and stared blankly at their encouraging if not slightly edgy faces.

"Dear, much as it delights your parents to remain fretting at your bedside unending I thought you might prefer it at the bed within their home. Would you like me to arrange that?"

After the briefest pause Kira nodded emphatically.

"Excellent. We're in agreement" the woman uncoiled a coaxing grin.

Realizing she had nothing else to say Kira closed the bathroom door between them, not that they paid her any mind.

{Saturday; Rather Very-Very Early}
The woman turned toward Noshiko and lifted a brow, "the papers for you to sign are with me. And as soon you and your bundle of ambitions are ready the car will be waiting by the side entrance."

On the other side of the door, Kira hurriedly dressed while standing at a crooked angle, half propped against the door while she tried to hear what the adults said.

"I've made certain your path is clear," she assured the Yukimuras. A familiarity was still there, but the friendliness was clipped and only formality remained.

"Thank you," Ken said.

"Of course," the woman responded with instead of 'you're welcome.'

"We're grateful," Noshiko continued or started to.

"Gratitude is hardly a purview of the job darlings," her voice held the same chill in it that Kira sensed earlier; somewhat supportive and just shy of haughty. "I assure you when it comes to our working relationship I can be very enthusiastic but gratitude isn't my raison d'être. Let's hope that's not all you have to bring to the table."

"Are we bargaining?" asked Ken and just as his voice came out in a gulp Kira also felt her throat constrict.

She felt like she had to decide between listening to her parents get condescended to by their Florence Nightingale in a tailored dress or make for a dramatic escape. Well, it was in her nature to make a runner, so she rushed out the door and stumbled into the fray.

When Kira asked where they were going next, both women answered 'home'. But she meant in that moment, she wanted to know where to aim her feet. Thankfully her Dad understood and took her hand to lead her to the elevator.

When the elevator doors began to close on their descent a resident doctor along with a nurse headed in their direction. But an arm stretched gracefully across the divide and the woman attached to it explained they weren't allowed access to the elevator at this time.

"Why?" asked the resident.

"How many years of education have you accumulated thus far? And you've yet to learn not to question your betters?" she responded arrogantly, with just enough flair the staff members indeed knew not to question her so the doors sealed between them.

"Livy!" groaned Noshiko in disapproval.

With nearly a foot's height difference between them Noshiko's glare wasn't misaimed but when Livy swung around her expression indicated misunderstanding.

"Oh, of course," Livy stooped to give Noshiko her arm to lean on to sign the paperwork.

When she looked to her husband for moral support Ken shrugged his ambivalence. With a groan, Noshiko scratched her signature along several forms without reading any while Kira fretted her parents had maybe sold her into slavery. But whenever she looked to her Dad his goofy grin gave her confidence that he liked her too much to throw her away.

Fortunately for her nerves the woman didn't follow them to the parking lot, she just ushered them to the ambulate entrance and where a man named Leveque escort through the hospitals.
maintenance vehicles to where a man named Ulrich had the car ready and running for them.

Even when the hospital disappeared from view through the back of their car window Kira felt anxious as hell.

"Mom, are you a spy?"

Ken scoffed, sniffed and glanced back, "don't be silly Kira. Maybe that concussion knocked things around. You know your Mom works in antiquities, just like you know you need some rest. Stop goofing around now."

"Mom?" Still no reaction. "Mom?" she repeated a little louder.

"Kira, what is it?"

"Are we spies?" Kira asked.

Ken didn't laugh that time. He looked to his wife as she drove with a smooth stillness he couldn't master in a hundred-hundred years.

"Spies, Kira" she said irritably. "No we're not spies."

Along the awkwardly sporadically trafficked throughway on their way home Kira considered her parents' miraculous appearance on the bridge when she needed them and their unquestioning behavior throughout the night.

"That's exactly what a spy would say," she grumbled.

From the sour expression of her Mom's face to the awkward chuckle she heard her Dad try to stifle it was obvious they heard.

Despite the power restoration around the city, electricity hadn't reached as far out as their neighborhood. It was late enough at night to be early the next morning. They could get away with a candle in the hallway to keep from bumping shins on the way to the bathroom and another candle by the stairwell to prevent a slip-and-fall. So while her parents went to the task of pooling their emergency resources they directed her straight to bed. Kira didn't put up an argument. Kira didn't speak up. Kira found she didn't have a voice at all when she lit a candle on her bedside table and everything lost explanation once again.

She wanted to change into actual clothes, not the 'appropriate' clothes her Mom grabbed for her because everything she wore the night before had been burnt or bloodied. She wanted to wear pajamas she could burrow into her covers with, something mixed cotton blend covered in superheroes and positive vibes. What she didn't want was to turn around and face her vanity mirror and find her reflection aglow from within. Not vibrant but totally something along the definition of glowing. When she looked down at her hands nothing stood out as interesting, absolutely nothing special but the reflection made it seem like a sheen of gold dusted the air around her inconstantly.

In a panic she reached for the lamp on the nightstand to see things clearer. She shouted in surprise when instead she pulled it too far and detached it from the wall. Afterward she kept quiet in dismay when the lamp turned on anyway.

"Kira, are you okay?" her Dad called from the kitchen. It smelled like he had put some coffee on to brew. He would go to work in a few hours, he would go back to his regularly scheduled program and he would easily be able to pretend like none of the night's events happened.
Kira let the lamp go. Once her touch disconnected the power deactivated and it bounced lifeless onto her bed.

"Fine," she lied. If they were going to be spies she was determined to be better at it than her parents were. "I just bumped my leg on the night-table getting ready for school in the dark. I may have knocked over my lamp."

Two rooms away Noshiko pulled her head up from where it was cradled in her hands. She had a look of hope in her expression that her husband disapproved of because he translated it as cowardice. Kira expected her Mother to be stern and forbid her to go to school, to order her to homebound rest and obtuse double-talk throughout the day. But when Kira bound into the kitchen freshly showered nearly an hour later it was her Dad who looked perturbed and showed disapproval, as in genuine stern-voiced disapproval about her quick return to school. In turn her Mom gave her quiet gazes and simply wished her well before she left to bed herself.

And they did argue, all through breakfast, right through his organizing paperwork for advising students coming on the weekend for make-up assignments, through the bathroom door as he showered and shaved, and the duration of the drive to school.

"Why couldn't you have stayed home and rested?" he pleaded once he slammed closed the car door.

Kira closed the passenger side door, her hair caught in her mouth and gave her a second to think of something clever. To cover up why she wanted out of the home, to gloss over the fact that her reflection frightened her, to skip over the fact that their back yard haunted her with visions of a red haired waiflike woman with an ominous message and to ignore the fact that she wasn't 100% sure her parents were being honest with her anymore.

"Because I really think Mom's a spy," she flubbed up her reply.

Track 02 - Hell Around The Corner by Tricky

After plenty of practice being the son of a single mother, Scott knew the signs of an angry Mom. He sensed Victoria Argent moments before she marched Stiles through the study doors. Maybe Isaac sensed her nearing presence but ignored it because curiosity had the better of him. Or maybe Isaac sensed her but ignored it because raised in a household of Werewolves with hyper-senses meant things like hiding under the covers weren't worth the effort.

So with seconds to spare Scott managed to squirm under a duvet while Isaac stared expectantly at the door as it swung inward. Stiles gave a meek, inexusable wave as he staggered passed and Isaac came to face Victoria. They stood side by side listening to a succinct threatening lecture about what she would do to either of them if she caught them sneaking out of the room to see their girl again.

"Again?" asked Scott as he kicked off the covers as soon as she closed the door behind her.

"I got caught in the halls after I searched for passersby," Isaac reminded and with amusement in his voice, he searched Stiles' face for an explanation.

"I got caught in the closet with Lydia after we escaped," Stiles shrugged like he hadn't painted a picture that explained the reason for Victoria's maternal outrage. "Never mind what I've been up
to," Stiles waved off Scott's lecherous grin as he plopped down beside him on the couch. "What have you two been up to? You guys okay?"

"I wish everyone would stop asking that," Isaac grumbled and moved to lean on the doorframe. "You're fine. We're fine. Everything is going nuts in this town but we're all okay."

Stiles looked to Scott in aggravation and gestured to Isaac with a flick of his wrist as if to demand an explanation.

"I think he's worrying." Then Scott lowered his voice, "I thought he'd be relieved when you got back."

Stiles glanced over toward the door sensing Victoria somewhere wandering around, "What is it? What's going on?"

"She's staying. She hasn't gone back to the Lodge," Isaac complained. After a huff he turned and dragged his feet over to them.

"Makes sense," Scott laughed lightly. Both sets of eyes looked to him, expectant of an explanation. "It looks to her like you keep sneaking out to see your girlfriend." They groaned in acknowledgment and relaxed a little, Isaac finally sat across from them and Stiles breathed a little easier. And he added with a smirk, "I would stand a better chance of sneaking out and seeing my actual girlfriend than either of you have of asking to get out and take a leak."

Ignoring the icy reception from his comment Scott reclined along the sofa, shoving Stiles over and went on to question, "How did you escape?"

"Things didn't exactly go as planned. Lydia started to have some anxiety attack or something," he said blithely.

"Lydia doesn't get anxiety," Isaac raised an eyebrow smelling something distinctly fishy "she gets results."

"Whatever, then she got us out," Isaac leaned back sidelong onto the smaller couch but he looked about as comfortable as a broken toy, his angles were ill at ease. The furniture wasn't the problem "It sounds like Mrs. Argent's on a conference call." He cast a glare at the door. The other two had to concentrate hard to confirm it. Obviously, something in Isaac's tightly wound nerves left him more sensitive. "We're not going to get any sleep tonight are we?"

With a grumble Stiles looked to him and gave a nod. But Scott in turn struggled to stay awake and yawned through an apology.

"Figures," Isaac stared at the ceiling and listened to the lady of the house in the den whisper angry orders at her cellphone. Someone somewhere didn't show commitment to the cause the way Victoria anticipated, someone somewhere Victoria expected to turn up to the house but hadn't and wouldn't because they had more important things but nothing mattered more than family and the way she said it made Isaac picture the Hunters he feared in his youth. Isaac might not have been locked in the 'Family' room upstairs but he still couldn't break out of the Argent's house. Throughout the night, over dinner and in the past several weeks Allison proved she was nothing as heartless and shallow as the impression her family gave off. He glanced at Scott who drifted back and forth into dreamland under a Hunter's roof and Stiles flitting through his notes again. Isaac practiced breathing mindfully and while he wondered what it would take for him to adjust to this new
mindset when his cellphone went off.

"I'm in the bathroom," Allison started off then rushed with an explanation after she thought otherwise. "I have to rinse toilet water off me. My Mom surprised me. She was in my room when I got here, so I had to-- I did something. I couldn't get to them right away. But they went and broke out, the idiots--"

"I noticed," Isaac snorted. He felt relief wash over him. Somehow her ridiculous and unnecessary phone call made everything better. "It's fine. How's everything? How're you?" he asked when the sound of stress hadn't dissipated.

"I'm-- I'm-- everything is alright. Lydia is a little frazzled but okay. We're going to try to get some sleep. You should try to get some sleep," she took in breath a held it. There were sounds around her, the odd echoed sounds a bathroom gave at the opening and closing of a mirrored-cabinet when you can't find what you need. Finally, "I'm sorry."

He sat up, "why?"

"I said I'd go back and get them. I wasn't quick enough. I fucked up."

"No. It's fine." Isaac wanted to explain how he knew she tried her best, because Allison settled for nothing less. He also wanted to re-explain how stubborn and hardheaded Stiles and Lydia were and if they were determined not to wait for Allison, there was nothing she could have done. But it seemed improbable for it to be believed from him anyway.

"It's just you were worried."

"All of us were."

"Yeah but--"

"Get some sleep," he gently advised. "It's all good."

Allison paused again, the non-sound felt different. Her breath came easier and she sighed deeply, accepting his acceptance of her apology before she hung up.

When Isaac tucked the phone back in his jean pocket he caught Scott with one eye open and a sly smile, no longer pretending to be asleep.

"Whatever," Isaac whispered, smiling in gratitude that they considered his anxieties and didn't judge him too harshly for it.

"What? What did I miss?" Stiles peered around between the two of them, expectantly.

"Everything," Isaac nagged. "How can you notice anything with that stuck up your nose?"

Like a heart attack victim would clutch their chest, Stiles clutched the notebook to his in extreme offense.

"You're obsessed," criticized Isaac, concerned with yet another friend's over-worrying.

"I'm not obsessed," Stiles came back and after bringing the notebook onto his lap added "Scott, tell him I'm not obsessed."

"Stiles," in a groggy voice Scott added as mildly as he could "you do seem a little obsessed."
After considering the accusation Stiles rubbed at his chin and explained it "I'm not obsessed. I just have questions."

"And now that you have answers," Isaac reminded teasingly but with worry threading throughout "you're scouring through that notebook more than the day after someone sat us down to explain why boys and girls were different."

At that the last layers of sleep peeled off Scott and he sat forward kicking out from the covers, a dopey grin on his face. "You had to have someone sit you down and have that talk? But you'd met girls before?"

"He means during the full moon," Stiles said. He shook his head a little, not enough to shake off his aggravation but enough to embrace a distraction "the way their change has more power than ours. Kids don't take that with a lot of seriousness which is why I didn't want to forget anything."

"Unless," Isaac emphasized the word ominously "you're learning something the rest of us aren't--"

Stiles tossed him a glare and responded low "no."

"Then you're keeping something from the group," Isaac accused in a correspondingly low tone of voice.

"Is that what you think?" Stiles voice got angry but not louder. "If my nose is in this, then I'm not with you guys?"

"No one is saying that," Scott assured him.

"Why not?" Isaac openly contradicted. His slowly temper rose and with it he came to stand over Stiles. "You've disappeared before. From him, from me." Stiles jumped to his feet, his notebook rolled into a clenched fist while he stood nose to nose with his foster-brother.

"Wait, guys," Scott said as he got up.

"What's keeping you from running off to make another big mistake that leaves you half dead in a ditch?" Isaac took a deep breath and waited for a rebuttal from Stiles that didn't come. There was only a fueled and hurtful glare.

"Isaac!" Scott tried to warn him off of saying something he might later regret.

"Scott, stay out of this!" Stiles snapped at him without looking. His eyes remained penetrating Isaac and demanded to know, "Is this because I said I didn't trust you?"

"This is because you still don't trust me," Isaac replied, realizing that in Stiles' glare there was sadness but not remorse.

"And now," Stiles said, his fist clenching tighter around the notebook, the sound of it twisting being the only thing that came between them, "you're trying to figure out why you trust me at all with all our family obligations stripped away."

Isaac wiped at his face and took a step back. He was humiliated to realize how close to tears he felt. He admitted, "something like that but at a higher volume and with broken furniture."

"Maybe some broken bones?" Stiles shook his head. His voice went weak with the lame offer.

"Maybe," Isaac shrugged.
"Raincheck." Stiles smacked the notebook against his open palm and tried not to take offense when Isaac walked off to find something solid to lean against. Stiles thought about how much his friends had stood beside him, burglarized beside him, ran beside him, hid beside him and generally remained beside him without being asked and how easy it had been to take it for granted somehow. "Guys, there's nothing in here. Nothing in here more important than whatever we do next. These are dumb notes that are probably weighing me down more than helping at this point."

"You know," Isaac nodded from where he leaned against the fireplace, "I can think of one thing you can do with them, then."

After a deep breath Stiles said "I have a better idea." Then he walked around the couch, across the study, opened the grate for the fireplace and threw the notebook in.

On the left side of Stiles, Scott stood and stared at him in confusion. Isaac stood on his right side, looking over his shoulder staring from the fire to Stiles and back again in abject mortification. Stiles watched and admired the flames while a sense of strained disbelief and strangling relief wrapped around him.

"That's great Stiles," Scott comforted, putting a hand on his left shoulder. "But I'm pretty sure Isaac was going to suggest you shove them up your ass."

"I really was." Isaac nodded.

"I realized that," Stiles said, his voice cracked.

"Just a little late," Scott figured.

"Just a little," Stiles confirmed and looked to Scott with a slow growing smile.

"I appreciate the gesture," Isaac beamed, putting a hand on Stiles' right shoulder.

"Keep your gestures to yourself, dumbass," Stiles brushed them both off. He came back to life, his eyes bright, neither angry nor happy but with the flames lit around him he looked incensed, something akin to a phoenix reborn. "What do we do now?"

Isaac followed him away from the fireplace but stopped just shy of pacing behind him. This felt familiar; it felt better and right, like scheming with a pack once more. Finally, "I don't know. You were always the plan guy."

Stiles rolled his eyes and waved his hands dramatically at the fireplace "that was my plan book!"

"Guys," Scott said in a warning voice. He held a finger over his lips reminding they should keep it down in case Victoria would overhear them. They stilled and listened hard to hear if they were being listened to. Nothing. Then they looked to one another and after a second Scott assured them with a grin "we'll figure it all out together."

"I knew we weren't getting any sleep tonight," Isaac sighed. Stiles shared the sentiment.

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Track 03 - Gasoline by Halsey

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"That's 'Esquire'." Jackson was pleased to brag about, it was one of the few things he was proud of
when it came to his folks. He loved to throw around the fact that if people didn't do what he wanted he could sic his Father, David Whittemore, Esq. on them. "It means lawyer."

That sort of subversive threat didn't make Dr. Geyer sweat, not just because the Hospital had its own troop of lawyers but because he had Jackson's best interests at heart.

"Hold on, I'm not saying you can't go home, I'm just saying I'd advise against it," he gave the Whittemores his patented authoritative inarguable look. "It was less than 12 hours ago your son was brought in due to massive physical trauma, severe burns over 90% of his body on death's door. A turn-around that quick is worth at least observing."

"Maybe it is," Mrs. Whittemore said, her arms crossed and hair pinned back in a bun as severe as her glare, "but it will damn well be in a different facility than one that would professionally declare him 'at death's door.'"

Jackson grinned ruefully and looked from his parents to his Doctor, an expression made more severe by scabbing that ran the line of his jaw, like tendrils along the right of his face up into his hairline. Eventually and unsurprisingly his parents wore the Doctor down and he left to get the discharge paperwork together.

"We'll get you home," his Mother promised and touched his hair. She jerked her hand back with the feel of its crisp, cooked ends. Jackson pushed her hands away to spare her the embarrassment of indignity. Instead she promised "we'll get you the best help. We'll take such good care of you."

"You're kidding me, right?" he derided and shuffled away, making it seem like the hospital slippers were the reason for his limp and not the nerve-endings giving hundreds of tiny spasms as they rejoined. "I've got this," he called from behind the curtain where he flinchingly peeled back the layers of his hospital gown. "I just need you guys for paperwork."

Mr. Whittemore looked to his wife, sadness darkened her eyes but she said nothing only hugged her arms tighter around her. He put a hand on her shoulder and tried to share some strength which was in fact sheer stubbornness and admittedly the only thing Jackson inherited from him.

Since 11 years ago, Jackson started in on being unreasonably hard on himself, an overachiever with a need to make someone proud, which somehow replaced affection in his mindset. There was no convincing him otherwise, which was why it was easy to assume it was directly connected to that event, that day they sat him down and told him he was adopted. Dependency replaced trust and their household simply functioned, instead of belonged.

"It isn't all you need us for, son," Mr. Whittemore fished for something, anything to connect. They'd just spent a night mourning their only child but Jackson played it off like it was as inconvenient as being pulled over for a D.U.I.

After a moment, he pulled the curtain open with a yank, he looked from his Father to his Mother with practiced arrogant expression, with an expression 'only a Mother could love.'

"Nah," he walked across toward them but sat in the chair nearest the door.

It was a space awkwardly close to his Mom for someone who felt emotionally distant.

She realized quickly, his sneakers remained in his hands because his fingers were too cramped to uncurl fully. The hard look in his eyes went away in his dismay as she made a gesture to ask if he would permit her to help. When she mouthed along with the rhyming mechanism, while moving her fingers to laces through the hoops, as 'Mr. Bunny went over, under and through' Jackson smiled
"My car is totaled. Can I get keys to the truck?" he asked, looking up to his Father.

"You can't drive like this." He looked devastated to deny his son but did so anyway.

"The Doctor said I wouldn't get anymore mobility without practice," he reminded grudgingly.

"He meant taking it slowly. Getting out of bed to take yourself to the bathroom and maybe even walking around the block."

"I'll get someone to drive me, I just can't go home," he insisted. He didn't know how to explain, they made him feel comforted and wanted but they couldn't make him feel secure there.

Mr. Whittemore wiped at his face, and then crossed his arms taking his officious stance to give it some thought.

"I love you kid," he said, understanding that the statement made Jackson uncomfortable but it was exactly the sort of moment where it would win as a strategic argument. As a Father he would regret not saying it. "I really do, but I'm not letting you take off."

"I'm not taking off, I've got lacrosse," Jackson argued. He knew how petulant he sounded in his own ears but he also knew that if he made a decent argument, his Father would give him wiggle room. "I'm getting better by the minute. I want to be around people and not in some hospital room. You said as long as I find someone to drive me around--"

A rapping came to the door announcing the Doctor's return with their paperwork. They mentioned Jackson's intentions and again he advised against it but he couldn't deny it.

"You are looking better by the minute. I still feel that you should be under observation, but if you're insisting you'll have no problem finding someone to help." He seemed a little amused to admit it. "You've had everyone, from classmates, to teachers, to neighbors peeking in on you. I'm sure there is someone still hanging around and willing to help."

Jackson nodded his head, a little less confident now that Dr. Geyer signed him out and the prospect was real.

 Track 04 - Bedroom Hymns by Florence & The Machine

Earlier, Allison had barely managed to grab on a plaid shirt from a 'possibly on a desperate day' pile and yank on high waisted shorts. She made for her bedroom door just in time for her Mother to shove Lydia through it. The relief masked her shock easily and she kept Lydia at arm's length when she went for a hug. An explanation was given that made a sort of sense, the sort of sense that went with teen drama, something about sneaking rendezvouses in closets.

When her Mother had gone, she asked Lydia about her well-being instead of how she had gotten out of the room. After all, she wouldn't put it past Lydia to figure out some clever escape.

"I got caught rubbing up on Stiles in a linen closet," her face screwed up in distaste. "I need to get clean. How are you?"
"I gave myself a swirly to make my Mom think I'd been in the shower after I'd been missing her texts all-night," Allison's grin went lopsided until it managed a sort of frown.

"Alright," Lydia conceded, "you win."

While Allison hopped into the shower, Lydia yanked off her costume and tugged on an oversized T-shirt to use as sleepwear. Afterward, Lydia pulled over the desk chair and spoke through the bathroom door and over the shower and explained how they escaped, why they felt they couldn't wait for Allison and how she memorized the door's code. Afterward Allison dismissed Lydia's apology as she stepped out, drying off her hair by scrubbing it hard with a towel as if she could scour straight through her scalp into her brain.

"I trust you," she insisted with a smile. "After you offered to stay behind without me asking you to...That means a lot. You don't need to apologize for how well you know me."

They discussed what they uncovered after leaving the Meeting/Family Room and how well they knew it until they fell asleep, which was rather quickly with the frenzy of the evening's events past.

Day broke and the alarm on Allison's phone went off on her bedside table. At first it seemed like any other weekend where she'd head in for extended cram sessions BHHS (that was, if the school had been re-opened) had set up for midterms and maybe catch up with her friends for lunch (outside of her family's watchful eye). When she hunted she rarely if ever carried with her the stress from the night before but when she woke to find Lydia beside her stretched out scribbling away she felt the oppression of where they left off.

"You couldn't get any sleep?" she turned to her side, her voice croaked with sleep.

"I did. A little," Lydia swiped at her face, batting back hair and tiredness.

"Did you have nightmares?" Allison's worries started to move nearer but Lydia blinked up in recognition, confused recognition.

Lydia dropped the notes she wrote onto the bed between them. It looked like in the middle of the night she rolled over, grabbed the nearest thing and started to write away, and the nearest thing happened to be a three year old unused address book with chibi animals decorating the pages.

"Nope. No nightmares," Lydia assured Allison. "I just had an idea."

Allison wanted to probe but she had the sense Lydia wanted to play things close to the chest for a reason. Not that it didn't make Allison feel just as nervous as climbing rooftops by moonlight but it meant approaching with just as much care.

"There were just some ideas I had for Mr. Harris's Genetics class that I wanted to get down. Thinking about them kept me up," her smile wasn't as bright as it could be.

Allison stayed still and waited. Lydia certainly didn't need help in her classes and maybe it was because of this. Maybe it was because in the middle of the night inspiration hit and she worked out theory in her unrest and it chased out chibi bunnies and baby chicks across a landscape of geotechnical engineering. Or maybe Lydia was full of crap which is what Allison's instincts said.

"How can I help?" she pushed and Lydia scoffed a little.

"With my Genetics research? Extra credit from Harris's class of Biotech and Genetics?" Lydia
continued to emphasize the incredulity of this and the more she did so the more eagerly Allison nodded lifting her head from its languid and propped position. After a deep breath she sat up and encouraged Allison to follow. "It's not strictly for class but it is something I am researching because--"

"Lydia, can I help?" what Allison meant was if she was capable of it, put her to work.

With another sigh Lydia heaved herself up into the sitting position and flittered through the scribbles on the pages between them and poked at her newly alive phone. Allison followed studiously, ready for anything.

"I've been thinking for a while now-- Do you know what junk DNA is?" she asked assuming Allison would say no so she gave no pause and continued. "It's a term. But there is no such thing really as junk DNA just noncoding DNA, kind of like DNA that hasn't found a purpose yet. I think the bite finds a purpose for it."

Lydia glanced down to the notes on her phone and tapped for it to highlight in emphasis. Then she met Allison's eyes begging her to follow along, "but that's a really naïve way of putting it. The bestiary had a really basic hypothesis; saying the bite caused the person to take the shape that reflects their personality."

"That is incredibly basic," Allison added dryly, however her attention was entirely captivated. "Do you think the bite or the stuff the bite is made from can be unbounded from junk DNA?"

"Still, too basic," Lydia reminded and with her left hand tapped the pencil against the page. Her mouth twisted as she gnawed on the inside as her thoughts crushed in on her. "This isn't actually a virus we're talking about. It's likely a genetic mutation-- not an evolution which some Hunters seem to think. Some Shapeshifters seem to think so too" with that comment she scrolled through notes on her iPhone with her right hand. "The mutation can be dormant in family members which is why some natural born pack members might never shift. While everyday people who're exposed to the mutation, they might shift or if they don't have the dormant mutation at all and it's introduced into their system..."

"And that's when the non-coding DNA responds," Allison followed but barely.

"The junk DNA's response is the mutations. There is a parasitic element not considered that makes it so Alphas can get inside their Beta's heads. It's the same for all of them; Werewolf, Werecoyote, Werelynx, Werebear. Were-anything have the junk DNA's response to the mutation introduced into the system except--" frustration heightened her tone and strangled out her words. Her calculations along the pages were a lot more complex than the explanation the supposed "--except a regular parasite can be eliminated. A virus could be cured. A mutation is a part of the person's natural genetics." Finality held her tone but her expression had a distinct feature Allison was familiar with.

She leaned closer to Lydia and peered over her shoulder as if she could make heads or tails of her notations. There were familiar markings, there were names and categories, there were priorities that Allison knew certainly and Allison got exactly why Lydia could not give up.

"Lydia, how can I help?" Allison insisted. There was something in this pile that was driving Lydia to obsession and Allison had no intention of giving up either.

After a few more moments of glaring at the pages Lydia let out a groan of aggravation and took to her feet. She tore the pages from the book and held them tight in her hand, not tight enough to ball them up but tight enough to disfigure them. And unless you knew how Lydia's mind worked and her obsessive equations to save the world, they were useless.
"Allison, what does any of this matter if they're going to screw it up anyway?"

With a few blinks Allison's amusement at the comment faded quickly, then sat further upright "how are they going to screw things up this time?"

While she paced she looked over her shoulder, "you know what they're going to do, don't you? If I could hypothesize a way to block the mutation-- if I found a way to protect them from being targets, if I made it so that they weren't Betas anymore, it still wouldn't keep them safe."

The prospect hit her full force. It was something aside from beheading an Alpha that could return her boyfriend to being a regular teenage boy and Allison clambered to the edge of the bed, throwing back the tendrils of sleep as hastily as her bed sheet. She wished to god she understood genetics better and that Lydia's notes didn't read like hieroglyphics.

"Are you saying that you're looking for a cure?" Allison asked. Lydia gave her a warning look and did not answer. "Okay, right. If it isn't a virus there isn't a cure. But you are looking for something, right?" Lydia gave her the look again. She pressed a curled knuckle against her lip in thought while Lydia paced crop circles into her carpet. "Lydia," she answered finally a lot more awake than she'd felt all morning, "don't you think this has been tried before?"

"Not by me it hasn't," that stopped Lydia in her place. She tossed the papers toward the garbage bin on floor beside Allison's desk. "Anyway, it doesn't matter if those idiots end up dead," she shrugged trying to downplay her disappointment.

After giving it a little thought Allison remembered how the boys left off last night. "They aren't as vulnerable as you're making them seem," she frowned mildly and Lydia simply rolled her eyes. "They are together. They're stronger together. That's something."

"That's worse."

"Isn't it good now that they have some answers," Allison glanced from the garbage bin back to Lydia. She strained to keep the worry from her face.

"Answers seem to bring more questions or haven't you noticed now that they know Cora is alive they're probably going to run off on senseless mission to find her," she crossed her arms and had a small smirk, waiting for Allison's expert argument.

Suddenly the thought made them both distressed the realization that they knew the boys well enough to sense an expedition underway. Danger was already on the horizon and they hadn't even gotten a full night's sleep.

"I need time," Lydia whined mildly, "and the fact is they're going to be too busy doing exactly what got Derek killed to care about saving themselves."

"Should they just let their last living pack member die?" Allison could hardly believe her own words, only she was so used to spit-balling ideas the words were out as soon as she thought them. She might as well follow the thought through. "Do you really think they would sacrifice someone else's life so that they would be safe?"

"I think, if it means saving everyone maybe they should remember whoever held her hostage this long will keep her safe for a little while longer," said Lydia lightly, stepping forward to drop onto the bed and sit beside Allison. She clearly didn't want to seem cruel, inhumane but rather practical but knew presenting an idea like that to the group would never ever be accepted. Allison, however, would not judge.
"Even if it were possible to take their Beta status away, you're not saving them." Allison took a deep breath and shook her head resignedly. "Yeah, you're taking the targets off their backs and the Monster out of their heads but you're leaving them vulnerable. That's not saving, that's just changing the playing field and without even asking."

Allison wondered how many times she could watch her friend's heart break in 24-hours. Every time she lied to her family she felt like the worst daughter. Just like every time Lydia's Banshee ability failed to yield results, she felt useless. Every time her theories and notes came to nothing she felt like her mind, her very thoughts were coming apart. Lydia kept a brave face but her jaw went tight as she held back emotions and eyes went soft as she looked to Allison for answers but nothing came.

Knock-knock.

Mrs. Martin poked her head in and Allison told her to come in the rest of the way. She explained she had to go home to change before making an appointment and if Lydia wanted the lift to tutoring she would have to leave 'now-ish.' Lydia latched onto the prospect like a lifeline and pulled on a fluttering floral dress number from the depths of her Betsey Johnson bag and that she yanked a cardigan over. After stepping into the boots beside she made it seem like she had been born ready.

Before she could escape through hall Allison followed along like a shadow and stopped at the top step, she knew one or both of her parents would linger downstairs and she wanted the intimacy of their goodbye. Allison asked if they could talk about this later with a false lightness incase their parents overheard and Lydia gave a similar false smile and nod, "I hope so" she chirped but the stilted response meant she wasn't sure there was much more to say.

In the following stillness, Lydia carried worry with her that didn't shake even as she tossed her hair over her shoulder and straightened her back with poise the envy of many. Allison smiled briefly and ran a finger along a stray hair and put it right, sliding it with the rest over Lydia's shoulder.

"You can never save everyone, Lydia." Allison added very quietly, she closed her eyes for a moment to reflect, she heard the words Scott once used to try and comfort her and she felt the hypocrisy run viral through her veins. It didn't make her mean it any less.

Lydia didn't answer at first. Instead she adjusted her designer satchel bag between them and focused on that before she brought her eyes back up to Allison's and addressed her obstinately. "Maybe not," Lydia said. "Maybe not," she repeated in a mutter as she stepped out of Allison's range.

There was nothing left to say. Allison went back to clear her thoughts, much like Lydia's notes were left scattered around.

Track 05 - Get Lucky (on Savage Sunday) by Gavin James

"I think I get it now," Chris conceded although his expression was what he thought exuded coolness, instead it looked stamped with the grayness of unrest.

"Get what?" Natalie Martin asked. She stood at the stove and slid eggs off of the Teflon frying pan onto a platter with ease. She wore a borrowed bath robe to cover the back splatter from staining up her clothes, but it was obvious from her hair, shoes and the bits of pattern peeking from between
folds, she was quite ready for the day. Possibly even ready to take on a Hunter. "What is it that you think you get now?" she smiled and brought a platter of newly fried bacon over toward him.

He smiled fuzzily over the edge of freshly made coffee. He took a sip before he pushed a few bits of this pancake and those eggs onto his eager and empty plate. "I think I'm getting why people have sleepovers."

"Flirt." Victoria hit him lightly in the arm as she entered the kitchen from around the den. She padded in practically silently, still damp from the quick shower she grabbed from the downstairs bathroom. Just as she sat down on the stool at the kitchen island beside her husband, Natalie poured her a Screwdriver. "Oh, bless your heart."

"Flirt," Chris smirked as he portioned his eggs onto two plates and shared it with his wife.

"I'd be happy to lounge all day but I've got to leave soon. This is just my way of saying thanks," Natalie came over and provided some toast.

"You didn't have to," Victoria said.

"But you have raised the bar," Chris said. Victoria gave him a look. "What? I didn't say she had to. Just everyone that stays over after should make a three course gourmet breakfast to say thanks."

Victoria shook her head in embarrassment. Natalie switched off the stovetop and disrobed, by literally just taking off the robe and came around to take up a stool on the other side of Victoria.

The wall clock ticked loudly and Natalie poured herself a cup of coffee into a thermos. "Can't stay long enough to finish it but," she held it to clink. They each leaned around and touched the tips of their cups against each other. "Thanks, for everything. I can't offer a generator but if you need advice, an evening in, a break from the kids--"

"That one," Chris nearly sputtered mid-sip. "That's the one."

"Okay, you can count on me." Natalie smiled and after another sip she slipped off of the stool and headed down the hall.

"Food!"

"Real food. Actual food, not exotic from the old country whatever."

"Yes," Scott groaned from where he laid prostrated on the floor.

"So, you smell it too?" Isaac asked while he pressed against the study door.

"Yes," Scott answered smothering his face with his hands.

"Pretty sure I smell coffee too," Stiles said bouncing around, looking in no way like he needed coffee.

"Pretty sure the whole house can hear you smelling coffee," Scott muttered pretty sure no one heard him over the growling of his stomach.

"Boys?"

They'd been so involved in their own bemoaning they hadn't noticed her approach, not until her
voice came from a few feet down the hall. Mrs. Martin sounded like a native of a different more angelic land as the only adult who didn't want to confine them to 4 walls or passive-aggressively threaten their well-being.

"I know you're awake. I can hear you," she said as she drew closer along the hall.

Isaac and Stiles jumped away from the door in fear that maybe she had joined the parental enemies, instead Scott moved closer in hopes for the best.

Knock-knock.

"I made breakfast," she spoke softly as she pushed the door open incrementally. "If you guys want any--" she didn't have to finish the words before they zipped past, shouting back quick words of thanks while they peeled down the hall to the kitchen.

They didn't even mind the Argents sitting down and having their own quiet meal at the kitchen island as they piled on layers of eggs mixed up with bits of vegetables, sprinkled with layers of cheeses and sides of peppered-bacon and fruit salad.

"I missed this," Stiles said as he shoveled another mouthful. When his friends looked to him with faces full of food and curiosity, he clarified "Mrs. Martin home-cooked hangover breakfasts."

"Class act," Scott answered with a greasy grin obscured with too much bacon intake.

Lydia hurried into the kitchen and looked at the eclectic crowd. "I think I'll wait in the car," she said and took the travel mug from her Mother's hand. She was going to need a lot more caffeine to deal with this and on a Saturday.

Mrs. Martin looked on piteously, even though she laughed a little she took it as a sign to leave. "And to show my gratitude I'm going to also offer to take the boys off your hands."

Everyone perked up at that.

"I figure some of you have practice this morning, so if anyone needs a lift?" with a lift to her brow, she pointed toward the front door as a sign of freedom for all mankind.

Isaac leapt to his feet and even as he raced to the kitchen to wash his plate as he continued to eat off of it.

Stiles and Scott looked to one another in worry. "Sorry." Stiles reminded, "I'm supposed to wait for my Dad."

"Why don't you call him?"

When Stiles got through to the Sheriff he had been minutes away. It should have been a relief, but then again Stiles should have known better. Mr. and Mrs. Argent seem eager to speak to his Dad and they were happy to leave their dishes for the boys to clean up so they could meet the Sheriff by the front door.

By the time Allison finally dressed and readied herself, she could see from the walkway upstairs a small group of parents accumulated by the front door. She descended quietly and at the foot of the
steps slipped in the opposite direction and snuck into the kitchen. Once there she grabbed an apple and watched the guys clean up while perched on a kitchen stool.

"Is there another arrest about to happen?" she gestured to Stiles. "Should I get out my phone and take some pics?"

"You're a riot," Stiles flicked soap water at her. "I want to get to school today."

"Why?"

"Because the rest of us are there," Isaac answered drying off a frying pan.

"We have a lot to talk about," Scott said leaning onto the countertop beside her after he wiped it down.

"All of you, together" she confirmed. Allison leaned back and watched, concerned Lydia's words were some self-fulfilling prophecy.

"How long do you think we can make them suffer like this?" Stilinski smirked.

"Oh, we could probably B.S. for hours and talk about the weather and those boys'll piss their pants the whole time," Chris said wryly. "But I'm sure you've got better things to do."

"Yeah," the Sheriff stood with his hands shoved in his pockets and cracked his neck stretching out his kinks. "I can't thank you enough for watching out for these idiots."

"It was the most entertainment I've had in weeks," he nodded into the house. The Sheriff could read something in his face. They both could agree in working together nothing in this town was considered entertaining with all the bloodshed they've been uncovering. But it wasn't the sort of thing you brought up over coffee. Chris made the effort to excuse himself "I might actually stand here for hours if I didn't have something to do with my sister."

"Not a problem. In any case, thanks for the lend of your man last night," the Sheriff's tone went from jovial to formal, back to business.

"Who? Tyhurst," Chris asked and answered.

Stilinski nodded, they were on equal footing when it came to being worried parents but when it came to being investigators, in a few hours they'd be butting heads. "Boys!" Sheriff called into the house.

Moments later heads appeared in the vestibule, Allison led the troops. She paused at the foot of the stairs and said goodbye to each of them one at a time. In order not to make it obvious that she wanted to make her well-wishing to her boyfriend meaningful Isaac and Stiles stood back to have theirs last.

Mrs. Argent said goodbye to each of them with a hand shake and pulled each of them in for a kiss on the cheek, despite the night's events. Although her hand squeeze was a bit (by a bit, think crushing) tighter on Stiles and Isaac's handshake.

"Love you," Allison whispered when she leaned up and kissed Scott's cheek. He froze because he
faced the angle her Father could see.

"Yeah, cool," he said instead as he pulled away and shook her hand before heading out.

Isaac waited sidelong and found himself beside Mrs. Argent. She smiled and seemed extra pleasant but he sensed a prickliness that could only be described as protectiveness. He couldn't fault her that and when he tried for pleasant he wasn't sure it came off as anything other than fidgety.

"Thanks. For letting me stay. And for not, you know, not castrating me," he grinned.

She nodded.

Stiles and Allison laughed in their little murmuring, perfectly contented with Isaac's discomfort. He looked through the front door and wondered if it would too suspicious to make a break for the car. Lydia looked contented enough sipping her Mom's coffee, oblivious of his torment. Or she probably predicted it which was why she made the early exit, because she was a smarty and he had been more seduced by food than smarts if truth be told.

Victoria's Motherliness must have kicked into overdrive because she started to whisper unsolicited advice and Isaac imagined a strangling grip wrap around his throat. Now there was no way he could make a run for it.

"You know, I know a little something about love triangles," she consoled. They watched Stiles where he laughed awkwardly when Allison kissed him on the cheek. Isaac laughed outright but his impulsive infuriation she took as indignation. Stiles pretended not to notice them in the corner but made a little acknowledgement of goodbye as he zipped by. Their eyes followed him as he raced out to meet his Dad and face his fate.

Mrs. Martin stood with the Sheriff along with Mr. Argent in a circle of parents, like a tribunal preparing to dictate what was next to come. Isaac looked on uncertain of which he preferred; three sleep deprived disappointed parents or an overbearing one who wanted to overshare sage advice.

Lydia honked the car horn to urge on the proceeding and Isaac totally understood that impulse.

"She's fiery but she's smart. Believe me, from my experience when three people are in a relationship eventually someone falls in love," she pat his chest as pushed him over the threshold. Isaac shuffled along confused about where he should head but not willing to argue. "Don't worry, it won't be the one she pulls into closets for a quickie, it'll be with the one she looks for to bicker with because she doesn't want the conversation to stop."

Mildly stunned, Isaac stumbled down the next two steps and looked back to see Mrs. Argent stay in the doorway, smiling and waving him off.

"Thanks again Mrs. Argent," Isaac searched for the words but could only come up with a lame gratitude for a scary-ass-Momma-Hunter who took the time to watch out for him.

"You're very welcome Isaac. Trust me, it'll work out."

- Track 06 - Since Last Wednesday by Highasakite

Scott thought he had cleared some hurdles. He made it out of the Argents' home (finally), but right
on the front steps he ran into Natalie Martin, who in turn had run into Chris Argent. Caught up tripping over his own tongue he thanked them profusely for having him over, for letting him stay, for being good hosts etc. etc. etc.

"Alright, Scott." She interrupted and put a hand on his arm. "It's alright. We understand you're grateful. Now, breathe."

So he did, taking nice long deep breaths.

"The Sheriff's here to take you," Chris added intending to sound ominous. Natalie gave him a warning look while Scott simply looked sheepish and answered 'yes sir' robotically

Scott shoved his hands deep into his jean pockets to keep from fidgeting. He felt his fingers turn both twitchy and stiff and feared there might be claws appearing at any moment. He didn't mind looking tense but the last thing he wanted to look was suspicious, to let off any sign that he might have emanated to say 'Hey, dude totally dating your daughter in secret. And thanks for letting me dig around in your super-secret family files because I'm totally a Werewolf. Totally.' He wouldn't have thought it but he actually would have preferred to stay inside and have the Argents glare and analyze him from afar than stay scrutinized by just the one, by just his girlfriend's Dad.

Instead of feeling the dread someone should feel if they had a an officer of the law turning up to drag them off Scott felt more than ready to jump at the chance. He clutched to Natalie when he hugged her goodbye and whispered "thanks" in her ear, for what exactly he couldn't explain. For sticking around? For sticking up for him? Probably, but the time for rationalizing had passed. He knew that for certain when Sheriff Stilinski stepped beside him and clamped a hand on his shoulder hard enough to leave likely permanent creases in the fabric of his jacket and indents straight into his soul.

"Morning, Scott. Can I get a minute?" he asked to which Scott gulped and nodded. He explained that he tried to swing around to the McCalls' but no one answered the door. He didn't want to let Scott off without facing the music but he didn't want to keep him and Stiles around the station all day either.

"She's probably still asleep," Scott said feeling terrible. His Mom worked to the bone, sometimes she called Scott to come pick her up after work because she felt too weary to drive.

All of that for them while he ran off with others breaking promise after promise. Not to mention taking risks that would send her flying off the handle. All he could do was promise to try harder at everything, to make better grades and to help more around the house-- to continue promising to be more present instead of adding danger to the growing distance between them.

What would she say when she woke up to find out not only had he broken her trust and snuck out, stealing her car as well, but he had to have the Sheriff drag him home again?

"She'll be upset, but she'll understand," the Sheriff assured Scott reading every worry off of the boy's face. "I'll talk to her with you."

"I have to make drills," he mumbled glancing down at his feet. It wasn't an excuse; it was another obligation he didn't want to mess up. He wanted to enjoy lacrosse for as long as his Mom would let him and he didn't want to let the team down. "I can't miss it."

Stilinski thought about it for a moment then smiled slightly. "Let me make sure the school reopened. And let me call your Mom again and leave a message."
It was a compromise but to Scott it was a ray of light cutting through grey skies. A kindness that the back of his mind told him he didn't deserve. Scott hesitated "No, it's alright. I can call her."

"Listen kid," he said with a lengthening grin, his expression had a cockiness and warmth to it. "This is your figurative get out of jail free card. Don't waste it. I'll take you to school then talk to your Mom so you can manage both. I'll see if I can explain the scene here."

"The scene?" Scott asked with worry. He knew it was unlikely verging on impossible for the Argents to have figured out their Meeting Room had been invaded. If they had, he suspected they would rather have dealt with it on their terms but he panicked anyway.

"Once Stiles snuck out it was pretty likely you'd follow. You have his back and that's great, I appreciate it, but you gotta let the rest of us pick up the slack." The Sheriff had a faraway look in his eyes suddenly and pulled Scott further away from the house. His voice lowered minutely and he draped an arm over Scott's shoulder pulling him in tightly. "There are better ways of making up for what you lost than acting out."

Scott realized the Sheriff was worried about him. Not 'let's have the drug talk' worried but more like they should seek family counseling.

When Stiles first vanished Scott was afraid to be around the Sheriff. He thought Stiles' Dad would blame him for the crash because he was in the car and did nothing. Or resent him for surviving the crash and not his son. That was, until the Sheriff's department came to the elementary school during their 'If You See Something, Say Something' campaign. They reconnected in the middle of the hallway moving in opposite directions and from that day on stayed connected. After a hesitant recognition the Sheriff waved hello and then Scott burst into tears, broke away from his classmates to run and hug him. The Sheriff trembled while he held onto Scott, then he whispered things in a calm and steady voice. To this day, Scott didn't remember the words just the voice. They sat in the seats outside of the principal's office for over an hour and talked. About some of the dumbest things, that Scott remembered but the Sheriff listened and sometimes even laughed. After one of the many times the principal would walk by he asked (in a condescending tone) how much trouble had Scott gotten into this time. Shame filled him up and he didn't know how to explain to the Sheriff why he never felt like paying attention or why he never felt like staying seated or quiet. Scott only knew he felt like he should explain himself but Stiles' Dad gave him a somber smirk. Without prying he understood and very much like he said on the lawn of the Argents "there were better ways of making up for what you lost than acting out."

"I'm sorry sir," he frowned. "I didn't mean to step on any toes."

The Sheriff shrugged. "It's bound to happen. You're as close as family but you need to learn to back up, too."

Scott nodded. He understood the words but wasn't sure about how to apply them.

Stiles and he were so wrapped up in one another, sometimes he didn't know where he ended and Stiles began. How was he supposed to learn to curb that impulse when the Werewolf in him longed for a pack? Finally he understood Isaac's reasoning for semi-stalking him the past few weeks. And the idea of 'backing up' felt wrong. When he looked up at the Sheriff, at Stiles' Dad, he recognized that look of wordless understanding. Scott wanted to involve him. Why not? When he'd unburdened himself in the past, it had felt like the right thing to do. Stiles worried about his Dad getting himself in over his head and wouldn't this grant them both peace?

Scott sensed Stiles and turned to see him bounding out of the Argents' home. Scott smiled sadly, said nothing and stepped back to make room for his friend. There, he had to 'back up' and it wasn't
easy. The Sheriff's beating heart skipped at the sight of Stiles and he knew it was the right choice even if it didn't feel easy.

Despite his joy in seeing the boys the Sheriff harshly instructed them both to wait in the car.

"This is the worst. He's too mad to even yell at me," Stiles whined in the back seat of the cruiser and Scott smiled. "It's not funny. He's going to freeze me in carbonite to keep me from ever leaving the house again!"

They watched the parents culminate at the stoop, Stiles' Dad among them. They seemed severe but from what they could hear nothing severe was being said. And the more Scott thought about it the more he realized the silence was the Sheriff's punishment.

"Stiles," Scott leaned forward and lowered his voice "don't worry about it. Where would he even get enough carbonite?"

Stiles turned back, his indignation flipped and directed at Scott. "What do you mean-- What are you saying? It's carbonite!"

The word didn't sound familiar to Scott as much as he searched his mind for the definition.

"It isn't real, Scott!"

"Ahh," he sighed and grinned at his oafishness. Well he tried.

But Stiles upset only turned comically heightened, his freaking out over his Dad forgotten replaced by rage toward Scott.

"It's in the Empire Strikes Back... 'Star Wars', Scott!"

Scott adjusted his collar to hide his flinching and prepare for the oncoming storm he sensed. "I've never seen it."

Stiles' face turned red but he said nothing. He sputtered a little then crossed his arms and sulked. There, they'd reached yet another impasse where they did not match up and Scott (unlike Stiles) was okay with that.

Track 07 - Kids by Mikky Ekko

The interior of his Dad's cruiser had started to look warmly familiar to Stiles. The rooftop with its fraying material at the corners, to the boxes of takeout shoved under the driver's side just enough to make it seem clean. It was a welcome sight of sorts. Even if it was usually from the backseat with Scott pushed in beside him feeling some sort of guilty. Fortunately, Miranda rights and handcuffs weren't involved. This time.

His Dad shushed him twice, once before he started the car and once afterward. They drove slowly off of the driveway and along the property line, they made it as far as the neighbor's mailbox before Stiles had to ask "refresh my memory, do you usually reserve the silent treatment for when you're only kinda mad or really really 'I'm going to donate all your stuff to charity' mad?"

The car slowed and both boys jerked back into their seats to avoid the Sheriff's angry backlash. The
car bumped a bit before it reversed.

"Are you taking us back?" Scott asked. His voice rose in pitch along with his nerves. The last thing he wanted was to return to the Argents'.

"I'm not mad," the Sheriff said pulling up near the bumper of Melissa McCall's forgotten Chevy Malibu. After putting on the parking brake he turned to look at them, his expression read mild amusement masking concern. "I'm going to walk this guy to his car, then we'll finish up breakfast at home where we can talk about some things. Okay?"

"Okay," Scott said relieved to see his Mom's car and a chance of escape.

"Okay," Stiles said confused to not have gotten some sense of anger off of his Dad, not even a little.

Scott seemed too pleased with himself to feel bad for Stiles as he left the car in a hurry. And just before his Dad closed the door he ducked his head back "and son. You can sit in the front seat."

"Yeah? Really," he grinned. It felt like a privilege.

"Yeah, for this conversation I'm going to want your full attention."

Ah, there it was. That rumbling of anger he had expected all morning. Stiles hopped out of the car and watched his Dad and Scott talk. He rested, leaning with arms folded onto the roof of the car and listened. Not extra special powers listened. Just listened to the wisps of voices and tones he could make off the wind. From their faces he could see they got along well. It both warmed him and saddened him.

Scott's Dad left when they were kids, really really young kids. They were barely around the age to start school for the first time and they thought it was great at the time because it meant Scott spent more time at his house. They were too young to account for the fact that Melissa had just become a single parent and would soon take on two and three times as many shifts to make up for their suddenly halved income. Stiles watched the way his best-friend talked to his Dad, the way he never cut him off and smiled a lot even when it seemed more like a wince of pain when it was obvious something critical had been said. But he had never known his Dad to be critical without being kind and sure enough, within seconds he had a reassuring hand on Scott's shoulder. Stiles wondered if after he left did Scott and Melissa turn up to help a recently bereaved parent/widower and run around his home doing things like the dishes and making the bed? He bet they did, he bet they showed up with Tupperware dishes filled with more food than his Dad could stomach and that they sometimes still did. Stiles bet that as the years progressed his Dad might have come up from a stupor to find Scott took out the trash and that Melissa harangued him into coming over for dinner. Yeah, that sounded about right. It looked like it anyway and it was a lot better than any alternatives Stiles could imagine.

"You okay kiddo?" his Dad asked while he neared the driver's side.

"Yeah Dad," Stiles snapped his head up out of his daydream. He liked the way his Dad's face lit up every time he said it, so "what's up now Dad?"

Stiles couldn't go back in time and take out the trash for the past 6 years, not that he would because he probably would have blackmailed Scott into doing it anyway but that was hardly the point. The point was if he could make his old man happy by simply calling him "Dad" he'd end every sentence with it.
"Enough of that 'son'" his Dad pursed his lips, a little amusement still and caught onto his scheme straight out of the gate. "Get in," he urged and Stiles complied.

"What's up? Someone said something about breakfast I think--"

The beep-BEEP of the Sheriff's warning siren bleated off a warning. Stiles lurched forward in surprise. Ahead of him Scott seemed less surprised and waved at them through his driver's side window before he led his Mom's car onto the road.

"First; we're going to escort your friend to his lacrosse drills then we'll see about food," he kept glancing at Stiles while he drove along after Scott, Scott who drove obnoxiously slow adhering exactly to the speed limit and obviously took the time to count his time at the Yield signs, down to the 'Mississippi'. It was like he looked for Stiles to crack.

"We were going to talk," Stiles cracked, he was loathed to do it but he wanted to tear the band-aide off the wound already.

"How're you doing?"

"How am I doing?" Stiles laughed.

"Yeah," his Dad looked offended to be snubbed so early on in the proceedings. "How are you doing? You keep running away from home and you haven't even been back a week. It makes a Dad feel a little insecure."

Stiles stopped laughing, his throat closed up a little, "no. It's not like that. Everything is great. Better than great."

"Yeah?" the Sheriff had his eyes on the road when he said it but cockiness in his tone. Stiles could sense the distress lifting off of him like a scent on the breeze, probably the only fresh smelling thing in the car.

"Yeah Dad. I love it, being back. I'm sorry running around with Scott and them made you think something else."

"Nah," he waved a hand at him. "I should have figured you running off and having your adventures with Scott means everything is back to normal. Except you're older now--"

"Bigger too," while grinning Stiles stretched in his seat to remind of that, he wiggled his feet to show gratitude for the new yet scuffed up kicks his Dad picked up the other day "don't forget bigger."

"Things have really changed," he looked Stiles in the eye, while they cruised leisurely along and let Scott catch some distance. "We've got to make room for escalation."

"Escalation?" Stiles didn't like the sound of that. He didn't like the sound of change either, frankly he thought that they had all changed too damn much and if he could make it all go back to how it was again he would jump at the first chance he got.

"You're not going to sneak off to build forts or bury your broken toys in the backyard. Instead you're sneaking off to friends' and girlfriends' houses."

Stiles winced. While he was afraid that rumor might have gotten around to his Dad, he was not 100% sure it had. Reading from his Dad's expression it didn't seem as though he had but the guy was real damn good at playing aloof. But it would make his lying-life a whole lot easier if he didn't
have to lie to his Dad about whether or not he was dating childhood best-friend Lydia Martin. Not that he was sure if they qualified as best-friends at the moment, although he thought so and it wasn't like he saw her as a child either; a fact that was getting increasingly hard to ignore.

"Uhm, Dad? I could still bury my broken toys in the backyard if it makes you feel better?" he offered lamely while he tried to keep focused on one worry at a time. "It's just my last toy was my Jeep and kinda prefer it at the shop than six feet under."

"Smart-ass," when his Dad spoke again his words were measured like he had maybe practiced this part. "All I'm saying is no more sneaking out but I'm okay with you going out--"

"Really?!"

"--I get veto power if it's overnight. For god's sake would it kill you to check in with your Old Man every now and again?" his Dad paused for a brief second and surprisingly enough it wasn't because he made an off-handed joke about a dead Stiles. No, he just waved over the driver trying to cut into their lane. When he looked back at his son it was obvious they knew the words were said but words were just that, words. "But in the future, if something is wrong just call the Sheriff's department. I have pull there. I might be able to get you out of a jaywalking ticket or two."

A honk reminded them that Scott had just turned into student parking and they could leave him off there.

Stiles waved at him through the glass and from Scott's window he could see the curiosity on his best-friend's face. Stiles' grin must have seemed unfathomable at that point.

"What about school, Dad?" Stiles swung back around to face him. They had already put more than a few hundred feet between them, ever increasing when the Sheriff caught on. Stiles could swear it was like he had supernatural senses or something?

"What about school?"

"Dad can I please go to school today?"

This time he did laugh and Stiles looked wounded for it.

"What? I can't want--"

"So help me, if you say 'an education'..."

"I wasn't going to say that!" Stiles' voice squawked in a way that conveyed he was exactly going to say that. "It's Saturday. I can meet up with Scott after lacrosse practice. Until then there are study groups for the upcoming exams where I could catch up with course work. I can volunteer with some of the other students volunteering to clean up the Library," he jabbed a thumb toward the banner some unfortunate kid had trouble putting up at the end of the field that read 'Volunteering to clean out the Library is mandatory. -- Coach Flinstock.'

The Sheriff seemed tempted with the latter option.

"Plus, I'd really like to hang out with my friends," he concluded sincerely.

They rode in silence for a few minutes and with each minute that went by stress weighed down on Stiles, he felt like he would gnaw through his thumbnail until he reached a knucklebone.
"Alright--" he sighed.

"YES!!" Stiles bounced nearly out of his seat and smacked the dashboard in his excitement. He couldn't wait to text Scott to meet him in front of the school and show him around.

"--alright, alright." The Sheriff shook his head and felt he quite possibly made a mistake but it was by far the more promising mistake of the options available. "But before that, I'm taking my son to breakfast."

Stiles was in no way going to mention that saying 'son' like that could get annoying pretty quickly, just like he wasn't going to mention that he had already eaten breakfast. That might bother other people but not him.

Track 08 - Beauty Queen by Foxes

The interior of the car smelled faintly of her Mom's Flora perfume and her black coffee. One smell reminded her of strength the other just smelled strong and in need of sugar. The car was tiny compared to the Argents' home and sloping green lawn haloed in the fresh morning blue sky. But to her it felt less stuffy in the car than outside with the rest of the fam(s), plural, playing at playing nice. Not that morbid curiosity didn't draw her interest with each new attendee.

Lydia kept her eyes on the road, her blank stare leveled with the horizon and she wouldn't be coerced out of it by her Mom's meaningful glances or Scott's bothersome texts.

When the Sheriff arrived she waved 'hello' as he passed by looking unsurprisingly harried. She stayed facing forward but watched each development unfold via side view mirrors. There were the Argents who guarded both sides of the door which made it easier somehow for her to imagine them as Hunters, guarding each other's backs. Her Mom chatted with Chris until the Sheriff arrived creating a threshold of adults to pass through while inside Victoria hovered beside her friends, giving them the third degree. Scott made it through first which didn't surprise her much. Stiles escaped second which she had expected. And after Isaac zipped through Allison brought up the rear. It was enough to make someone, a hyper-aware and a little paranoid someone assume they'd planned it all along as a way of herding out rowdy teen boys like prey from hiding. But it made Lydia appreciate Argents' like mindedness and how they could nearly telepathically communicate the others' actions. Another person might even envy them and while she would never admit it aloud Lydia admired them, Hunter or no you had to be some intuitive person to communicate subtleties. But Isaac seemed to already take issue just with the Argents' presence.

When he rushed into the backseat Isaac barely said 'morning' before he broke into a full-on sulk, scowling through the window. She sipped her Mom's coffee deliberately slow and didn't acknowledge him because she refused to be sucked into his pity party. She watched her Mom, the way she effortlessly navigated an angry Sheriff, a cranky Dad with too little sleep and a Mom that seemed a little out of her depth with a sleepover filled with too many kids. When her Mom gave her a weird look, not a glare exactly but something between disappointment and compassion that translated to 'Victoria just told on me.' She sipped the coffee slower still, leaving only her eyes showing and obscuring the worry she knew she couldn't hide. Again she caused her Mom pains over these boys' stupid lies and she worried that she couldn't see into her Mom's head over whether she really felt okay about Lydia's romantic life. Her Mom has faked it before in how she would
practice over-friendliness to cover strained tolerance.

"What is it?" Isaac asked and Lydia threw him a dismissive annoyed glance. He backed off. She figured she must be virtually vibrating with her negative feelings. Even though he was marginally involved he didn't have any business in her family matters.

Lydia caught another look from her Mom, something nondescript but she recognized it, which meant 'let's get out of here' so she turned the car on. She kicked her feet in impatience and when she did so it became suddenly hard not to think of her purse down on the floor. Looking over schoolwork or paperwork her Mom left in the car was normally something she used to kill time and would absolutely help regulate her emotion. But in this instance the work was not only impossible to sort through but not something she wanted to take out in mixed company.

In the back seat Isaac cast his eyes down to his feet and kept his hands bunched up at his knees. If they weren't distressed jeans before they soon would be. She could have told him some kind words to soothe out the kinks but she didn't. Not because she wanted him to stew in anxiety but because she wasn't sure how to talk to him anymore. Lydia had gotten so used to being annoyed or angry at Isaac it was like she'd forgotten the way they used to tease each other or the way they used to play little mind games with stolen glances. It was like she hadn't learned the full-spectrum of communications, especially knowing what she wanted and how to get it. But now despite knowing she wanted a better way of reaching out, she'd been too stunted for too long to figure out how to get it. She knew schematically how Isaac fit into the lives of her friends but she felt a little off-kilter when it came to placing him into hers. When she felt his eyes move up to look at her she looked away. The only thing she did know is it was too early in the morning to try and think through these sorts of things.

Natalie slid into the driver's seat and grunted inelegantly when she leaned back into the headrest. Her eyes squeezed tightly shut as she took in a deep breath then let it out slowly. When she turned her head against the headrest to look at Lydia the corners of her lips curled up in what could have been misread as a smirk.

Lydia's brows shot up as she gave a wide smile. "What's going on, Mom? Heard any juicy gossip lately?"

Her Mom kept eye contact while she reached forward, took the parking brake off and started to pull them out of the driveway. Her Mom loved to give a good glare, with eyes that looked brighter with the peak of their annoyance.

"You're going to apologize," she shook her head, a little humph of amusement made it between her lips.

Lydia glanced around and knew the best thing to do in this option. "Sorry," she winced comically and exchanged drinks with her Mom as an act of contrition.

"Not to me, Lydia." She snapped taking the coffee over the smoothie anyway. "You need to apologize to Victoria."

"I am. I will." Lydia sipped the smoothie but gave up after a sip. It was too citrusy for her liking and mixed with the taste of coffee made her tongue feel tangy and singed. She winced and looked back to find her Mom smugly drinking from the coffee. "As soon as I see her, next time I'll totally--"

Natalie cleared her throat when she put the coffee back into its cup-holder. Her fingers began to drum on the steering wheel and Lydia knew to try again.
"--send flowers. I will definitely send a bouquet."

"She isn't telling Allison's Dad. I didn't ask her not to. It's because she isn't certain exactly how Chris' temper would handle it. And she doesn't want Allison to have it taken out on her."

"I'll send a whole arrangement."

"Don't you think a bouquet is too impersonal?"

Lydia gave it some thinking, mulling options over in her mind while they waited out a red light. The view gave her the idea "I can send her one of her favorite plants."

"Well, that's more thoughtful at least but don't you think it's a bit gouache. Sending a gardener plants to plant?" her Mom said in a tone that suggested to 'try harder'.

"It's perfect. A little 'Digitalis Purpurea' would be a bright spot of purple against the 'Digitalis lanata.'" Lydia insisted. Her aesthetics were flawless and she took offence to anyone who would argue, her Mother included.

"Purple and white?" Natalie's voice lost a little harshness as she considered it and Lydia knew she'd won.

"I'll call your regular florist," Lydia reached for the phone in her Mom's purse.

"Fine, but you're delivering it in person."

They took longer pauses at the Yield sign and every stop sign so they could find the right information. The first florist produced no result. Once they went through her back up Natalie decided to get on the line and harass one of the party-planners she used. Lydia went into her purse to pull out a pen to take note.

"Lydia. Lydia? What's the name of the flower?" her Mom insisted.

What use was the pen if Lydia didn't give her the info? But she had almost forgotten her private investigatory notes until they spilled at her ankles. She waved off her Mom's pestering while she scrambled to get them all as if they were sacred items.

"Lydia, I can't remember the name--"

"What?" she sat upright and felt lightheaded from the rush. Irritation fueled her tone but it was obvious she was upset with the florist, with the notes and with the lack of a hypothesis but not her Mom. (Not listed in order of priority, obviously.) "Tell them it's also called foxglove. Tell them do their job and get me purple foxglove!"

Natalie looked surprised but then very amused, "Oh, you heard her did you. Well then add fruit or chocolate if you have it and if you include a bottle of your best cabernet I'll be happy to pay extra. I expect you'll have it ready for her to pick up this afternoon. I wouldn't want her waiting around if I were you."

In surprise Lydia covered her mouth with a hand. Surprised at her snapping not in the venomous way she felt, but in the way she felt like that more often of late than she could remember feeling otherwise. Natalie hung up the phone and reached over to caress her daughter's head.

"Lydia, you're fine. Maybe this has all been too much activity," she smiled faintly. "You've barely recovered from what happened at your Dad's. Then those strange incidents with the police. Then
"I'm only tired Mom." Lydia said and tried to reassure herself as much as her Mom. "I've got everything handled. I just had a bad night's rest."

"You did warn me it was a bad idea to go to the Argents'."

Lydia laughed softly and calmed a little, she leaned her head against her Mom's touch. "It was still my bad idea."

"So, no more intruding sleepovers," as Natalie suggested it Lydia already nodded her head along eagerly. "And no more sneaking through hallways and off into closets with boys."

"I don't know about that," Lydia smiled and her eyes shifted toward the back seat. "I wasn't the only one to blame."

"My god, Isaac!" Natalie jumped back with a gasp. "You are so quiet. I'd forgotten you were back there."

"It's okay Mrs. Martin," he shrugged and looked discomforted to the point of torture to not only be there but to get caught being there. Sure she offered the lift to school but he had no idea this is what it meant. "I promise I've learned my lesson. Definitely don't plan to sneak off with boys in closets in the future."

Lydia's upper lip curled and her brow creased. She doubted he picked up on subtleties either otherwise he would have realized Mrs. Martin did not find him funny.

"Are you trying to be charming?" Natalie said in an icy tone.

"No Ma'am."

"So you were trying to be funny?"

"Not at all!" his voice dropped in horrification.

"Shame," she faced forward and started the car on the road once more. "If it were either of those you could put in the work to get better."

"It's neither, I swear."

"Otherwise you're just deficient."

Lydia sipped her smoothie to keep from laughing. Then she gagged a little when she remembered the distaste. Isaac searched to her for rescue instead she continued to clear her throat.

"I never meant to-- I just wanted to say that last night, I was embarrassed to get caught. I mean I messed up, not just 'cause I got caught but I could have met Lydia anywhere else. I don't mean in the house, like today at school or something. I guess I'll try harder to behave better."

"Alright, that's enough." Natalie waved a hand for him to stop. "You can get out now?"

"What?" he didn't sense the same stinging nature in Natalie he usually would have from Lydia so he couldn't be sure at which point he stepped over a line. "Isaac we're in front of the school," she said in a clipped no-nonsense tone but her expression held
sympathy. "Lydia, I'll see you at home later. Can you give me a minute with your boyfriend?"

At the title Lydia looked startled. She gave Isaac a look that promised a painful future if he messed with her Mom, then she grabbed her bag and left the car. She didn't take kindly to the presence of Scott and Stiles hanging outside by the benches in the front of the school, in fact the swish of her purse made brutal contact with Stiles' elbow as an example to move on.

"Young man," beginning in the traditional verse, Natalie turned at the waist and leaned between the two front seats. She pursed her lips and looked him over, her eyes severe and raking "you say you're going to try harder. Don't try, be better or things are going to get ugly. She's counting on you."

Isaac glanced at Lydia through the car window and wondered if they were talking about the same girl. Lydia didn't seem like the person who counted on anyone, except today he'd watched how she behaved around her Mom and knew there were layers. Everyone had layers but Lydia was like one of those optical illusions of a staircase twisting in on itself to become a tunnel which led to a labyrinth.

"She shouldn't," he muttered and forgot not to say it aloud.

"Why not? I can see you count on her," she reached over to touch his shoulder, she said low and almost smiled "I have eyes like a hawk and I see so much potential. Just. Stop. Messing. Around. Do better, for yourself."

"I guess," Isaac finally said then heard himself and panicked "I meant I will. I don't guess."

"Isaac. Get to practice," she sighed and pushed him toward the door.

Isaac scrambled out and had trouble catching his breath curbside. He figured by now he should be used to a Martin woman shoving him out of a car. But no, there was no getting used to having to talk to a girlfriend's Mom, even a pretend one. He hadn't really had that experience since he'd changed to being a Werewolf and before then dating wasn't really high on his list of priorities. His original family life had been volatile and morose but less distressing than sitting alone in a car facing Natalie Martin. But without even a lick of preparation he had survived, except not really since he turned to find himself face to face with a livid Allison Argent.

Track 09 - Headlights Look Like Diamonds by Arcade Fire

"Am I grounded?" Allison asked. She couldn't understand exactly why there was so much tension. The den had filled up with Hunters.

Livy finally returned and despite everyone's nagging she smoked indoors. Rumy looked like he hadn't slept plus he hadn't even said 'good morning' to her which was a bad sign. Axel even managed to drag himself from the Lodge into the main house. Bennet and Roman raided the kitchen for leftovers from Natalie's apology breakfast. Tyhurst managed to avoid attending (because of some diplomacy stint with Werewolves) but Ulrich had attended and Leveque despite their common invisibility act. And with all the pressure Allison had from the night before to attend the Hunters' conference they had in the Lodge Chris offered to drive her to school. But he wouldn't allow her to drive alone.

"Norm could drive me," she suggested. Somehow the idea of sharing confined space with her Dad
intimidated Allison.

"Norm is in the Lodge doing something important for me," Kate reminded leaning over the kitchen counter. She spun the car keys in her fingers and smirked goadingly.

Alright it wasn't the best suggestion but Allison could maybe poke at Kate and get more out of her than her Dad.

"I don't think so," he said snatching the keys from his sister's hand. "We need some Daddy-Daughter time don't you think."

Allison couldn't argue not that she didn't agree but his tone left no room for it. "I guess so," she gave a decent fake smile.

"I don't think so," her Mom cut in. Victoria entered the room. All eyes went to her, she wore a light spring coat and a purse hung over her shoulder and her hand reached out for the car keys expectantly. She looked like she hadn't slept either but awake and bristled from annoyance at everyone's bickering.

"I think its Daddy's duty time, Chris," she demanded. He reluctantly dropped it into her palm and made a noise that sounded like a scoff. Victoria added "If Allison can get some studying in on a Saturday morning I think you two can sit down and listen to each other for a few."

"Not exactly the same," he gave her an exasperated look.

"Mom, can we go now," Allison said low from the hallway. She moved along before they changed their minds and dragged her back into their drama. She slipped into a khaki security jacket and shrugged her bag onto her shoulder. She wanted to get to the school and warn her friends of Monster theories she'd come up with while combining Lydia's concerns and last nights' findings. She couldn't do that sitting in a Hunter's huddle that would probably drag them up to the Meeting room for God knows how many hours.

"You'll figure it out," Victoria assured Chris. She looked at him insistently, her eyes hard and her hand caught his before he pulled away. She held on in soft assurance until with a small smile, he nodded. Kate said nothing but watched, as if she had to agree to keep along with it all.

In the car it felt stuffier than Allison had anticipated. She still couldn't understand why everyone insisted in driving her so she asked.

"Does everyone think I'm going to cut school?"

"No... Some concerns have come up and we wanted to make sure you knew before you got to school and we weren't sure how to tell you," Victoria frowned.

It was a 6 minute drive to the school without traffic and Allison didn't think she would make it with her sanity if her Mom kept up with the aloof act.

"Did Livy bring back some new information from the hospital?" she asked, throwing out a wild guess. Tyhurst sent info about the dead body the night before. Her Mom plucked up maps of ley lines the night before to probably check on the electric currents but the electricity had returned to the city. Which left only one mystery Allison could fathom; Jackson.

"Well, yes but this isn't exactly about that." Victoria smiled a little and shook her head, when she
spoke again her voice turned even and small. "It's about what you've been avoiding this whole time."

The car slowed at a yield sign, in fact it came to a full stop and her Mother looked at her expectantly.

Allison felt sweat dampen her collar and she raked her mind for any explanation she owed her parents over the last 24-hours. There were only two events that came to mind, the burglary and the sleepover; she prayed the earlier hadn't come to light so she gambled on the later. "Thank you for letting my friends stay. It was really generous of you," she said weakly.

"Stop-- I think we've had enough excessive thanks this morning from everyone else." She smiled tightly through the rearview mirror and Allison laughed awkwardly in reply. The car started again with a jolt cutting off any rebuttal. They said nothing until the car darted into the space in front of the school. "It was more than generous Allison. It was a problem and you know it," it was plain stated and not severe but Allison felt the brunt of it. Victoria wasn't wrong.

Still Allison opened the door slightly, her sneaker touched the curb, tread ready to make a break for it but the glare from her Mother kept her paralyzed.

"Allison, I understand last night was extenuating circumstances but I think we should discuss what you've been dodging."

Allison bit her inner lip and wondered "which is?"

"I know you must feel we expect a lot for you--" her cheek turned flushed and her hands tightened on the steering wheel.

"Mom, I do not." Allison defended. A desperate eagerness kept her from listening. "I love working alongside the family and I haven't slipped up with school." She found herself repeating the same arguments but it felt frantic and empty.

For a moment Victoria hesitated and then reminded "You found a dead body with your friends and hid it from your family."

Victoria stared at Allison, the same cold unwavering stare that warned Chris he stood on thin ice. The words hit her like knives in her heart, an accusation she should have expected eventually; her Mom accused her of choosing friends over family. But Allison steeled herself against it and edged further toward the door, her sweaty palm pulling her along.

"But Kate knew," she said low.

Her Mother breathed out through her nose, her lips pressed into a line, her disappointment read loud and clear. She nodded, taking the answer at face value. Victoria wouldn't get any more answers from Allison than she would out of Kate and she now knew that.

"What if something like this happens again?" she asked low and tight.

Allison opened her mouth but no sound came out. She'd been resisting the urge to talk about her friends with her family for so long that after last night she'd crossed a line and there was no going back.

"It's happened before when Hunter children entered conventional society," Victoria let go of the steering wheel and inhaled sharply. "There is pressure to get too involved. In one or the other but you don't have to choose Allison."
She let go of the handle.

"Your father and I see how well you're doing at school," she tilted her head and sized Allison up. She smiled. "You don't have to go looking for dead bodies. I saw you signed up for the Swim Team."

"Oh. Yeah," that poked a hole in Allison's dread and her face lit up.

"The swim coach said you expressed interest in also signing up for the Gymnastics Team," Victoria's tone began to take that combination of hard and sincere as she hit the point.

"Yes, again." Allison considered aloud, pleased and steadier than she felt. She wavered at the sight of the trio; Scott, Stiles and Isaac.

"You are taking on a lot of extracurricular activities," she carried on. Her finger went back to drumming along the steering wheel.

Allison slowly nodded and smiled a tight and toothless grin. She didn't know why the trio loitered curbside but she prayed they would move on. And move on quickly. She kept her eyes trained on her Mother though.

"Well, I do hope you manage your time conscientiously," she prodded "and not look for trouble. And don't linger on harmful distractions." She made certain to cast a quick glance at her friends further along the curb.

"I wouldn't. I won't." Allison blinked. She reached for the handle once more and pushed it wide open.

"You can never be unguarded." Victoria warned.

"Of course, Mom," she hopped out of the car but stood at the door, ready to swing it closed.

"Even around your Werewolf friend," Victoria called out after her, pressing her lips together and measuring the spite in comment.

"Which one?" Allison misspoke then slammed the door shut.

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Track 10 - Top Ranking by Blonde Redhead

Danny Māhealani had a few many things in common with Lydia Martin; their class rankings were in constant rotation for top student, they were both known for throwing the best parties in all of Beacon Hills, and they both suffered the affections of Jackson Whittemore.

Because of that when Lydia caught up with Danny as she cut through student parking when she recognized the expression of jaw clenching anguish that meant Jackson had just blown through.

"Hey, Danny," she started, but when she tapped him on the shoulder he took a few seconds to respond. "How are you holding up?"

After a pause he smiled and tried to play it off with his practiced nonchalance and dark-eyed charm, "getting verbally abused by your best-friend is just how I start lacrosse practice these days."
Lydia cocked an eyebrow in uncertainty; she lingered beside him and considered an arrangement that might help them both.

"Do you really want to head in right now? Or how do you feel about rescuing a damsel in distress?"

Danny's uncertainty rose to match hers and was right to do so. She wanted to escape the school grounds, if only for a little while. She asked for a lift to her car which was inconveniently left by the side of the road Thursday night when she drove Scott and Stiles to the Preserve.

They doubled back and Lydia's quick steps placed her in front of driver's side door of his gray Toyota Yaris. "Key!" she held up her hand resolutely.

"I thought you wanted me to drive?" Danny asked, he curled his lip at her.

"I said I needed a ride," Lydia shrugged, "I never said I needed you to drive me. You should get in and get comfortable." She was out of practice with a manual and it showed, not enough for a cause of concern but enough to be noted. He didn't complain, when she drove he put the window down and ignored the texts he got from team members over his tardiness. Danny offered to help program the GPS, but when she didn't answer his offer, he managed the radio instead. When they reached the site of her VW Beetle she hesitated getting out and they sat in silence, listening to Calvin Harris classics.

"He's just such an asshole," she finally admitted and didn't have to clarify who.

"At least you don't have to put up with his bullshit anymore," Danny reminded, his impish smile working wonders on her nerves. "You did break up with him."

She looked him over and pursed her lips. It was as though their familiar suffering knew no end. "When was the last time you broke up with him? At the end of the last game? The last practice? The last time he returned your lacrosse equipment damaged?"

Danny gave her a strange look, part pity and part grudging respect. "But he gets a pass every time, because-- I don't know why." He shook his head and shifted in his seat uncomfortably, he looked around the scenic and prohibited view. Nothing symbolic there. "He needs us. He needs to remember he isn't the front he puts up to deal with his parents and school."

Lydia was quiet for a few seconds and when she spoke again her voice was low and tentative. She was smiling just a little, "because he's the sort of guy who shows up after you bungled the Championship game with brand new top of the line Maverik goalie's gloves to break your bad luck streak, a bunch of lacrosse videos to watch and a bottle of tequila."

"Right, that guy. The same one who bought out every booth in a high end salon to keep it private and pamper you while your bad perm got fixed." Danny said, trying to sound wry but sounded uncertain instead.

"I heard he was in the hospital," Danny lowered his voice further.

"I know. I visited him," she said and looked at him sidelong as she ran the forefinger of her right hand tentatively back and forth along the wheel.

"I just wanted to know how he was," he forced a smile but he looked troubled throughout. "You should have seen who drove him to school today."

"Well, at least he's here. That's what matters doesn't it?" she adjusted her seat to face him further. She couldn't imagine how Jackson must have looked waltzing in when he'd been barely breathing
hours ago. Barely breathing yes, but she'd sensed him underneath a film of static waiting to come up.

If Jackson turned up in school already, as much as she wanted to interrogate Danny about it made more sense to confront Jackson for answers. After an evening of too many confrontations, Jackson seemed like a great way to get torn apart and she wasn't rested enough for that.

"You know, I only came to the school today for 2 reasons," she got out of the car and walked toward Beetle. "Boys are definitely not one of them."

"Alert the press," Danny hopped out behind her then he followed to the driver's side and lounged by the open door. "You know he told me my new boyfriend 'stinks', as in literally stinks without ever having met him."

Lydia swiveled around, her bag smacked against her side and she clutched it severely. She could probably care more-- she could probably fight for the acknowledgment of Jackson's mutation or the changes. But everyone wanted to pretend things were normal and it was too much weight to carry to feel responsible alone.

"What did you do?" she asked, she couldn't keep the bitterness from her voice. "Tell me you didn't stop seeing your boyfriend just because of it?"

"An Adonis with light brown hair, dark brown eyes and perfect thin bitable lips?" Danny explained and he leaned back a little against his car, as if he envisioned the boyfriend as he said so. "You kidding? I told my man to turn up as often as he likes."

"You're just trying to make me jealous now," smiling she turned and headed toward her car. Danny laughed. He followed her while she checked to see that the damn thing even turned on. The relief in her face that it did, that she could dump her things in the passenger seat and that she could curl herself into a seat that was her own and didn't need adjusting made him smirk.

"Are you going to be okay?" he ran his thumb over his lips and pretended he didn't feel too invasive.

"I just need a break from bullshit," she sighed and put a hand to her head.

"We should throw a party," Danny grinned, knowingly goading her.

She rolled her eyes but grinned up at him nonetheless "we should throw a party, something to ease the after-midterm blues."

"Weather is warming up, a memorial day to night pool party?" he picked at the edge of her car window and gazed at her playfully from under long lashes.

She shook her head and conceded "I bring the pool you bring the party?"

Danny grinned and stood upright, he added cockily "I can bring more than the party."

"Thanks," she scoffed sensing his suggestion "but I'm done with teenage boys."

"I'm not talking teenage boys," he said. He shoved his hands in his pockets and stepped back so she could close the door.

She gave it a loud slam but lowered the window. She poked her head out and gave a fake smile "there is no flaw in focusing on myself for a little while."
"And there are no flaws in having someone to focus on you," Danny smirked. He cocked his head to the side as he shifted on his back foot and spun around to walk back to his Yaris.

"And you have a someone in mind?" Lydia called out and found it almost inviting to considered what it would be like to spend time with someone who wasn't trying to make her lie or steal with them.

"I know a University RA; 5'10", dark brown eyes, light brown hair and carved out of marble," Danny coaxed striding backward, smugly.

"And you can vouch for this stud?"

"Personally," Danny called over his shoulder and over the noise of Lydia starting her car. "He's my boyfriend's twin brother."

She considered it. And she considered the fact that of all the things she and Danny shared their friendly rivalry for all things, grades, Jackson and party was always congenial. If the world was going to hell in a hand basket, she could rely on Danny at least to keep some priorities reliable, entertaining, unchanging and in-check. Everyone liked Danny but she doubted anyone more than she.

"Sounds promising," she called through her driver's side window as she pulled up alongside his car. "We could use some distraction. Bring him to the party."

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Track 11 - Howling At The Moon by Phantogram

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"How could she be mad at us for standing on a curb?" Isaac moaned.

"I think there is obviously more to it than that," Scott insisted while he pulled his t-shirt over his head. He wanted to head toward the showers. No. He needed to head toward the showers. He'd tried to relax at the Argents' but there was no way he was going to let his guard that far down.

"I don't think it's strange to want to know why at least," Isaac accompanied him to the showers with a towel wrapped around his waist. He had a leisurely way about it from using the locker room showers as his second home for the past few weeks.

"With the way her Mom was glaring I don't know if it was that easy. Anyway we'll find out why when coach makes us all go 'volunteer' at the library later," Scott told him then paused, he locked his jaw and stood as tall as he could to look for the danger he sensed near. "That's not the only thing we need to find out about."

"What the fuck?" Isaac leaned over the tiled wall that separated the shower area from the locker room floor. "When did Jackson get out of the hospital?" he said low, low enough special enhanced hearing hopefully wouldn't catch it.

Scott only shrugged. He was relieved Jackson lived but alarmed with how quickly; if Isaac carried himself leisurely, then Jackson walked around like he owned the place.

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Track 12 - 2THINGZ by Basecamp
The thin line between excited and terrified was a fence that Kira jumped skittishly and constantly. Cartwheels turned in her chest as watching lacrosse drills through the classroom windows only pulled her closer, despite every synapse in her brain erupting.

Number 37, co-captain Whittemore managed passing drills. She couldn't believe her eyes. Because of that, she wanted closer, in-person proof. Even when fear caused the hairs on the backs of her arms to rise, her hands still pressed against the glass trying to lean out for a better view.

"I wouldn't take offense if you wanted to join in with the natives," her Dad said over the rim of the papers he graded. "You should do something aside from sitting indoors and rotting with your old man."

"It's not that bad spending time with me is it?" she insisted even though her voice shook a little. "Plus you'd miss me if I left."

He gave a snort and went back to his papers. "Kira, my beautiful daughter, how would you know that if you never leave?"

After another minute of him aiming a good glare he encouraged her "there are other things, other programs you can use to distract yourself that isn't checking out the lacrosse team?"

"I'm not!" she blushed when she contested but had nothing to follow up with. She stepped back from the windows to try and show she spoke the truth but the past five minutes argued against her. "What should I do instead?"

After he encouraged her "Go, go," and waved her away with the test papers in hand. "Volunteer at the library. Join a study group. Do something."

She could hear the annoyance in his voice. It changed from 'Teacher-Bothered' to 'Dad-Mad'. And she conceded, mostly because she felt the oncoming yawn. She refused to concede that some part of her needed to get some rest, not when the rest of her felt rampant with curiosity.

Convinced she would avoid the lacrosse field instead she went to the locker room in the interest of splitting the difference. Curiosity brought her down to the Coaches' shared offices. As long as she avoided Coach Finstock's door then she wasn't stalking the lacrosse team. Outside Coach Helisek's door, the bulletin board was littered with listings for the Swim Team, Gymnastics, Track, and the Basketball Team. They overlapped each other along with schedules and notices so much so she could barely make heads or tails of it. While she wondered at what she could use to distract her, the lacrosse team rushed in from the field.

Kira had the choice to walk boldly around the corner and make for the stairs and possibly catch a peek while pretending she didn't know she ended up on the boy's side of the locker room. Instead she opted to stick by the bulletin board and pretend to remain so engrossed that she didn't overhear the boys shouting and jeering just to have the Coach sic volunteering at the library onto them. She recognized some face and voices of classmates; Scott McCall from World History, Isaac Lahey from Living Environment and Algebra 1, Danny Māhealani from music, and finally, Jackson Whittemore from World History, Environmental, Ecology and (of course) nearly burning him alive on a bridge.

Jackson was easiest to recognize, he only occupied the air around the corner from her, even with her back to him when he walked from the field into the locker room, and moved further from her by the second he once again made the hair on her arms stand on end. Even after he had gone into
the locker rooms and the doors blocked him from sight, she couldn't bring herself down the hall
toward the only stairs that lead up back up to the classrooms. She stayed her ground, closed her
eyes and wished she were a shadow.

1. She totally verified it was him, no joking. 2. She wished to god he didn't notice her. 3. As
much as she tried she couldn't think of what to say if he did.

While standing at the bulletin board she listened, she tried to find his voice among the throng of
boys. It felt weird considering before the incident on the bridge Jackson felt like a concept to her;
number 37, co-captain and best player on the Lacrosse Team, captain of the boy's Swim Team,
expensive Porsche, perfect hair, perfect clothes, he just seemed unreal.

That concept was superseded with the fresh sense of a cryptic voice that was barely human and a
severe grip on her wrist. His palm felt coarse and dry from brute athletic use and his fingers were
like little vices. He sucker-punched her in the gut, it knocked the wind out with horrifying strength
and each time he yanked her along the act had the precision to intimidate her and when she
replayed it in her head, which was often, she envied it. Jackson Whittemore had a lot going for
him, but none of that tantalized her like the idea that he had answers.

How had long fingered claws materialized where his hands had been? How had his eyes gone
empty and still looked pleading? Where was he taking her so urgently? Why didn't he ask? Why
did he seem so menacing, then suddenly so pathetic? Why did he make her do it? Why did he
terrify her until she felt air rip apart and lightning run through her and into him, electrifying him to
his core?

Alright, maybe he couldn't answer all of that but at least he could answer how he was possibly
walking when she just left him virtually dead just hours ago (not that she wasn't relieved). It helped
that he left the locker room alone and unhurried. Casual as anything, in red sweatpants and a black
t-shirt, the worn lines of which left space at the collar for her to see tiny crease lines reminiscent of
burns. Last night they were deep, marring, black and brown carvings but now they looked like the
simple indents of childhood scars, disappearing along his jawline and branching back into the
seams of his hairline. Fascination emboldened her and she listened to the voice in her head, which
sounded disturbingly like her Dad and said "Go, go!"

Kira turned the corner and strut toward him, she kept her chin high, called toward him, made eye
contact and promptly tripped. He came to stand over her but didn't move to help.

"What are you doing here?" he said low.

She flipped her hair out of her eyes and tried to keep her cool, "I wanted to see you, of course."

His expression twitched in disbelief, his light eyes intently concentrating. "You don't want to do
that."

"W-why not?" her voice wavered in confidence but she looked him over and noticed the tension in
his stance and knew he felt something similar. When he didn't move away she put up a hand
imploring him to pull her up. He didn't exactly do that, he just let her grab hold of his hand and pull
herself to stand. There wasn't a shock running between them like there had been in the car but there
was still something that made him jump away from her touch.

"You shouldn't want to be near me," he said sterner. "Trust me on that."

"Shouldn't that be the other way around?" Her wide eyes searched his face for more than pretense.
The sound of more team members working their way from the field with Coach Flinstock
distracted them. He looked fiercely annoyed. Exasperated he grabbed tight hold of her arm, just above the elbow and dragged her back around the corner. Kira stumbled along to keep up but paid no mind, instead she looked down at where they connected. She noted his grip, while firm felt nothing as strong as the other day.

His voice felt desperate and intimate in the way it had on the bridge and Kira felt hypnotized by it. "What do you want from me? What are you even doing here?"

"That's kinda what I wanted to know," she shrugged. He dropped his hold and looked her over making certain she was fine. His expression went back to intent and uncomfortable, not exactly normal for Mr. Popular. She felt shy under his attention but persevered, "What are you doing here? Are you okay?"

"Would I be here if I wasn't?" he grunted.

"I guess not," she blinked. She looked around and despite the hall being empty she lowered her voice. "Why are either of us okay?"

"Why would I know that?" he sighed, aggravated and disappointed. "Is that why you came here, to question me?"

"Kinda yeah," she bit her lip and shrugged. Maybe she wasn't asking the questions right.

"Why the hell would I know anything?" his expression turned tired, he rubbed at his neck and when he did it stretched the line of his fading scars. They looked even lighter than before and she tried not to look, in fact she struggled to keep her eyes intently on his face.

"Because, I don't know... because yesterday you came to get me not the other way around." her voice went quiet with each straggling word.

"Then doesn't it make sense that you'd stay away," he took a step back a strategic preparation to back away.

"This stuff, it's crazy." She insisted. "Is something like this going to happen again? Can it happen again?" she followed him forward that retreating step.

"I don't know," he hesitated at the corner of the hall. He leaned on the wall with all of his weight and sighed the sort of sigh that seemed like he needed to refuel, it seemed like honesty made him exhausted. "Probably," he muttered and stood to leave.

"That's scary." Kira admitted. She stood in the center of the hall and felt like the air knocked from her all over again. She wished he'd hit her quickly so she felt none of this slow sucking force that ached one radiating nerve at a time.

"What's your name?" he asked over his shoulder.

"Kira."

"Right, whatever. It probably doesn't matter," he half-turned. "You should figure things out for yourself from now on."

"Can't we help each other?" she hurried to his side.

"You're kidding, right?" He didn't sound nasty, just annoyed.
"No," she felt surprised at his dismissal. Her lower lip trembled while she worked up the courage "You asked me--you'd asked me to help you. What if I could do that again?"

"You think that was help?" when he scoffed his mouth was a grimace afterward. A cruelty came to the mocking, nothing severe although there was a harshness she noticed in the lines that were left along the side of his face.

"It wasn't?" Guilt stabbed her but she pushed past it when she thought about his touch in the rain, when she thought about the way his desperation felt coming across like waves and then the lightning came right before the thunder that nearly shattered her ear drums. Throughout all that it was his desperation that scarred her memory.

"Don't worry about it," he could barely keep eye contact.

Who was he kidding, it was all she worried about and she had a sneaking suspicion when he looked at her he felt the same.

"I really thought I'd have killed you," she reached out for his arm and pulled him back to face her fully. He trembled under fingertip and flinched from her but only after he let her guide him toward her. She reassured him with a shy smile, "but Lydia thinks you might have looked for me specifically to help you."

"Lydia Martin?" his tone and posture changed. Disgruntled was easy nature for an athlete but he made it an art form and at the mention of her name Jackson seemed outright agitated.

"You know her right?" Kira withdrew at her misstep. "I just met her last night when she was visiting you at the hospital."

"What else did she say?" Jackson followed forward her retreating step.

"She said I should keep my distance," Kira's voice lowered with each faltering step backward until she came up against a wall "from this whole place." She gestured around her with an awkward small flail, inferring that Lydia hadn't meant any one person in particular. Kira gulped "she said I should just run away."

Jackson tilted his head and considered her words mindfully. When he finally turned to look toward the locker rooms Kira knew he really looked off into some memory he shared of Lydia instead. "Well, she is really smart," he conceded and stepped away. He looked back and gave her a severe glare, but there was no heat behind it. "You should definitely keep your distance from me, Kira. Maybe you should be running."

It wasn't a threat but his abrupt departure left her feeling intensely violated and it made no sense. With her back pressed to the wall, Kira dug her fingers into the edging and braced her footing to keep from sliding to the ground. She felt intimidated again that's for sure but she wasn't certain if that would be a lasting impression. She replayed the conversation and read between the lines until she came away from it with a different message than what Jackson meant and it fascinated her. Tears welled up in her eyes when she realized he cared so little about her, on the bridge and in the car. His brutal honesty came across because she mattered so little. He told her to keep her distance not out of concern but because otherwise she would be a nuisance. It still got her answers and she could work with that, as long as she didn't stay on the sidelines.

"Have you decided?" Coach Helisek asked.

"Wha?" Kira jumped.
"You've been staring at the bulletin board for almost the whole period. I figured you were on the wall about joining one of the teams," he shrugged and tapped his watch in emphasis. "I've got to get to the gymnasium for--"

"Yeah," she interrupted. She stared at the piece of clip art mocked her with its trailing speed lines dictating her destiny. "I don't want to just be a stand-in anymore. I want to join the Track Team, full time. I'd like to run."

Track 13 - Human by Ellie Goulding

"The fact is, sleeplessness doesn't abide laziness," Livy leaned forward, stretched her arm across the Multi-touch table and flicked her cigarette into a shot glass. "I understand that it's been a trying number of days we've had but we should be producing better results with the amount of work we're putting in."

"Too many cooks in the kitchen?" Leveque suggested.

"No one is cooking here!" Ulrich rubbed at his eyes then looked around, relief at the concept reminded him "where's Rumy?"

"In the bedroom," a freshly showered Bennet gestured towards the room next door while he munched on a stick of honey bacon, "returning his precious items to their rightful places."

"Don'tcha think Victoria would want you to smoke outside?" Axel asked Livy, in a particularly condescending tone.

"And affect her gardens? I sincerely doubt that," she chose to rise above his tone as she waited to finish an intake and scoffed with an outbreath. "Gentlemen, and I use the word liberally, are we gathering here to have a good old fashioned chinwag or was there a reason for this imprisonment? Please?" she added the latter with an imploring look to Chris Argent, their leader-in-standing.

"We just wanted a debriefing of what happened at the hospital from you, Ulrich and Leveque and to catch you up on what happened last night," Chris said dispassionately. He looked just as bothered to be there as the rest.

Leveque passed a hand over his face and dropped onto a bench beside Ulrich.

"What's there to say on our part, we got the Yukimuras out because we were told to and we made sure no suspicious data stayed on the records at the hospital," Leveque answered tersely. His tiredness made his tone grumpier and oldmanier than usual. "16-hours and the only abnormality we can report is Whittemore getting up and strutting out of the hospital after the Kitsune girl hit his insides like an E-bomb."

"That I can account for," Kate said in a dismissive tone. But she didn't account for it; instead she just continued her pacing, with arms crossed, moving back and forth behind her brother while he spoke to the group. If she intended to support and not distract she was doing a bad job of it.

"Well," Axel cleared his throat, "our Victoria could account for the something to do with the Yukimura girl." He produced a display map on the table top that was a duplicate of the maps Victoria had brought down to the Lodge the night before. "Those are telluric currents. They're confirmed to be carrying low level electromagnetic currents suspected to affect lunar phases, the
sort of thing that borders on 'pseudoscience',' he scoffed, his bushy 70's mustache waggled along with his style of disgust. Axel had gotten bit by so-called pseudoscience before and it left scars along his side and dead nerves in his right arm-- his good shooting arm. With careful quick fingers of his left hand, the learned dominant hand, he brought up a second map to overlap. Orange lines, thicker than the blue river-like lines streamed along, fewer in number and crossed the telluric currents sparsely. "These are ley lines. Power can be drawn from these pathways and I ain't talkin' diesel gas."

The door opened and Rumy shuffled through, looking bright-eyed and sodden from a fresh shower. He scanned the room as all expressions turned toward them. He smiled brightly, he read the room and gave a crooked smile, "ah, I've made it in time for the recap then."

Chris continued while Rumy sealed up the room, "when the blackout moved through the city, it didn't pass through the power grids. It moved along the ley lines. Logic dictates that power should have been restored along the same path but it didn't."

"From what Victoria's saying, the bridge isn't of significant standing in Beacon Hills," Fry spoke up in a wheezy rarely used voice. "The storm starting at the bridge is evident of the Kitsune."

"Kira," said Ulrich, his mouth barely moved when he spoke but his eyes were tense with irritation. "Right. Kira," Fry amended apologetically and cleared his throat. "The storm started with Kira just like the storm terminating at the hospital isn't a coincidence."

"But the way the storm pattern moved," Norm spoke impatiently over him "that pattern moved along the ley lines. Smooth as anything. Beginning and end though, it followed our girl."

"From the impression I got off Ken on the bridge, this was the first time their daughter manifested any Kitsune attributes," Rumy came to stand near the head of the table, he put a foot on the bench between Chris and Livy, everyone shifted around to make space. "It's pretty impressive," he set down his cell phone onto the tabletop, connected it to a port that directly interfaced with the tabletop. Images he took from the bridge, the car crash and storm came into view and aligned themselves in a line. "Bennet, could you do that thing?"

Bennet shoved the last of his snack into his cheek, licked his fingers clean of the bacon grease as best he could before wiping them on the back of his jeans. He looked sheepishly around the table before he came around alongside Roman and started to work on changing the image surfaces to show the temporal effects of the storm.

"That is a beauty," Kate gave a cat call as the end effect while she peered over Chris' right shoulder while they all stared down at the manipulated imaging effects. "The residual trails in the sky match the ley lines exactly."

"This is about an hour after the first strike and the power hasn't faded remotely," Norm pushed his glasses down a bit to admire it fully, his voice came across nearly wistful. "There hasn't been a documented case of a fledgling Kitsune this powerful, to carry a thunderstorm in her back pocket on a whim. Not in a hundred thousand years."

"Well, it wasn't on a whim," Kate explained. She slid the photos along and brought up others taken from accident earlier on, when first responders arrived. "The other kid on the bridge, Jackson Whittemore, his attack stimulated it. And from what Kira told her parents and what I've suspected for a while now, he's a Kanima."

"Figure that has got to do with Tyhurst's open report on the school library," Axel looked to Chris
who gave him a curt nod.

"He should have died," Roman mumbled looking down over the photos. He marveled at them, a boy nearly his own age, nearly his own height, his complexion, his build and burnt alive on the road 15 miles on the wrong side of the highway from where he had worked the night before. How different might he have felt about the whole investigation if he'd been one of the first on the scene? Or possibly not different at all, since the boy was nothing at all like him but some sort of hybrid-monster.

"Correction, he could have died," Norm said mildly as if sensing Roman's unease. "But he didn't in fact die. He was in stasis until he walked out of the hospital fully healed a few hours ago. Whoever is at the helm, whoever it was who controlled him enough to put him on the bridge in the first place--" his voice caught heat, his hand hit the table with emphasis as he closed out images of a corpse-like Jackson, who reminded him too much that Hunters like his family weren't immune to bites or elementals "--whoever is controlling this kid must have a lot of power to just walk in and heal him. We have got to go over all the surveillance footage to check everyone who visited, examined him, who even walked by his room and could have had close enough access to manipulate his healing processes."

"No can do," Leveque dismissed with a wave of his hand. "Once the Kitsune power kicked into full and upright position the surge sent out a pulse that fried quite a lot of circuitry. That includes all the hospital's surveillance footage going back 2 days. Cameras are still down and they're in the process of buying new equipment actually."

"So, what makes a Kanima get up and heal?" Kate closed out the windows of photographs before her much slower while theorizing.

"And a Kitsune relights the town at exactly the same time in the same place?" Chris finished her thought process from beside her.

"Y'all are kidding yourselves if you think that's a coincidence," Rumy derided, not quite under his breath. He squared his shoulders and looked around the room, "where's Victoria? She would have words about something like this."

"She's dropping Allison off at school," Bennet reminded. "Although I'm sure Allison would have an opinion about this too," he added with a little bitterness about missing his friend. He never liked Allison's exclusion, unintentional or otherwise. Her choice to get invested in the townies should always have been considered an asset he felt, especially in debriefings, but it was a casual oversight, typical.

"The more important thing," Axel grumbled, with a pointed look and brought them back on topic, "why were they on the bridge in the first place? Without a doubt the Kanima scared the Kitsune into self-defense. But the Kanima's Master is responsible for kidnapping Kira, placing the both of them in the car that crashed that left them abandoned and injured on that bridge."

"I dunno," Rumy dropped his leg, rubbed at the back of his neck and talked low nearly to Chris alone, lost in contemplative thought, "the Kanima's Master maybe woulda wanted to get the Whittemore boy all healed up but it wouldn't have wanted to get Kira on the up and up. Someone else was in the hospital protecting them, someone pretty damn strong."

After a moment, Livy took a drag, "were we to watch them thoroughly," then carefully blew her smoke away "without relying on cameras, we could possibly catch whoever is watching them."

The room went quiet.
"Are you recommending putting someone in the school?" Rumy snapped. Thoughts of 24-hour surveillance trailing his god-daughter disgusted him. At what point had she earned such distrust? He glared openly at Livy but when he quickly looked around the table he only saw Bennet and Roman with downcast eyes, the two other teens that were likely projecting and the rest were Hunters looking considerate and willing. He didn't dare turn around to look at Chris. Instead he glared back at Livy and wished her head would explode.

"Someone needs to bloody well say it," Livy sat back and leveled him with an even and calm gaze. She flicked her cigarette into a shot glass and got her ashes in without looking. Perfect aim. "As Hunter, sitting about imagining things will sort themselves out isn't what we're meant to be doing. We're meant to be assessing, explore and diffuse any hazardous situation. Now is it?"

Rumy shrugged but said nothing. The room let a low murmur around and sometimes a shuffle of feet. Kate started to walk nearer as if she meant to get in between and stop a brawl.

"I believe sitting off and waxing lyrical whilst the town is thrown into the dark ages is not on the to-do list, gypo." Livy's mouth stretched into a smile, her lips turned up at the ends and Rumy's glare softened while he considered rising to her taunt.

"And yet the only one here making with the pretty speeches is princess buttercup," he said calmly, shaking his hair out of his eyes, spraying droplets of shower water down onto her. Livy squeezed her eyes closed and gave a shudder but did nothing else. "You can't just spy on kids because you've got an itchy trigger finger, Livy."

"You've all got orders to follow," Chris interrupted, his voice lead and commanding. "You managed the hospital well, Livy. Your Intel is great and you locked down any hazardous leaks that could have compromised those kids or any of us. Thank you for that."

"As you say; I had an order, I followed." She tossed her ruined cigarette into the shot glass and sat back with arms crossed and a scowl across her perfect features. "What next, lord and master?"

At that the door gave off the sound of dispersing air as Victoria Argent entered the room. The door bleeped into life and while it couldn't move at any faster speed than programmed it gave off an impression of expediency.

Her fair skin looked flushed which made her pale eyes look laser by comparison, so when they shot around the room everyone was left ill at ease. She shrugged off her coat, tossed it onto the hook latch attached amenities, crossed the room in three strides and punched in the command key to shut down the table before she caught her first breath.

"Everyone out," she said after a deep intake. "Not you," she glared at her husband Chris "and not you," she pointed at her sister-in-law Kate.

"Ah," Roman shuffled by, keeping his voice low but not low enough that his bitterness wasn't noted by the meandering group. "And so ends another effective council." Axel grunted at him and shoved him aside so he could move passed. Norm rolled his eyes as a wordless reminder that there was a time and a place and within earshot of the Argents right, any Argent, even a cousin was probably a crap idea. Bennet tsked and gave a smug smirk from across the table, pleased with himself for not being the one in trouble with the elder Hunters.

"Anyone want to have a friendly target competition outback?" Bennet offered instead, happy to have his coveted weaponry back and eager to stay out of the house for a bit.

"Yes," Leveque said gruffly.
"God yes," Ulrich followed.

"Just nowhere near that Lodge," Norm had no intention of roaming from one uncomfortable situation into another. A few murmurs of consensus as he sealed the door behind them.

After he hung back for a bit Rumy spoke up. "Well, it's a bit stuffy in here," Rumy scratched at his neck while he took a large step away from the table. As Sergeant to Chris, a title he particularly hated, it meant in times of real struggle, he only stood down if Chris said so. And as the world's best-friend, that title he had grown to loathe, he would wait for Chris to give him that little 'wink' of assurance that fiery Vickie Argent wasn't going to kill him this time, then he would run, not walk to the nearest exit. Until then he had to show face. But as people emptied out Victoria looked more upset than angry, and so Chris started to look more concerned than startled and gave him the sign to 'leave already.' "Anyone want to step out for a smoke?"

"Lord love you, Rumy yes," in a similar call to duty Livy stood unmoving and eerily still by one of the booths. She virtually loomed with an etched expression of boredom that was practiced, while underneath it was tension and resolve. As Kate's first Lieutenant, she wouldn't leave her leader's side without a direct command from Kate. Norm should have stayed behind because he was a rank above her but he wasn't Kate's best-friend and Livy would have torn his heart out if he attempted to supersede her at this.

And when Kate granted her leave with a raise of her brow she felt such a relief she took the little man up on his invite, she regretted it the moment she pulled the silver cigarette case from the pocket of her dress and he nicked a cigarette as soon as she opened it.

"Gonna move it or what, cousin?" he called back spryly as he put distance between them.

Livy took out another cigarette. Before locking the door she paused and said, "Much as it pains me to acknowledge this, it's been impressed upon me of late that murder is frowned upon on the premises. This seemed an opportune time to reiterate." And she lit her cigarette, looked around and added just before she locked the door "and it stands to reason it's a bitch to get the smell of decay out a room with such strict ventilation. Darlings, best not make airing out this room any more difficult than it already is."

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**Track 14 - Sweater Weather (The Neighborhood Cover) by Kina Grannis**

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Allison walked the halls. She hugged her arms around her and her footfall made no sound while she aimed herself toward the library without thought. There was numbness to everything but her quickening thoughts. Sure she said she was mad but it was almost practice, she was always getting upset when afraid for her friends. Watching her Werewolf friends under the methodical gaze of her Mother in Hunter mode was a thing of nightmares. She shoved at them to move along, hard enough to knock them against each other and send Scott falling into Stiles and Stiles falling onto a bench. It didn't matter unless they just got on with it.

It brought to mind the last time she put her body in the way of Isaac and her Aunt Kate, when she surprised them at the Hale house, but this was different. This was her fault and this was going to have a lasting, unpredictable affect. Each time she shoved at them harder until all three of them practically raced out of reach, off to the safety of the lacrosse field where they heard angry Coach Flinstock yells. When she looked over her shoulder, her Mother had already driven away but it hadn't made her feel better.
When she reached the library entrance for study group she realized that was not the place for quietude to sort out her thoughts. Superficial repairs were nearly completed, what was left was organizing books, dozens and dozens of displaced or damaged books. She had no focus for that. She stopped at the door and leaned her weight against the wall. Lydia was right, her Mother found her out for hiding Werewolves underfoot, for not only keeping their identities a secret but for having them right under her family's roof. However, all she thought about was their welfare. She hadn't stopped to think about what her family would do to her until now.

Allison realized they could send her away. She had compromised their investigation. She would be no good to the Hunters if she wasn't trustworthy, keeping her around would be a liability. They might push her on Kate when Kate leaves. They might send her off to her Grandpa; she hadn't even seen him in years, even so she hadn't heard good things. Worse yet, she might never even see her friends again and only hear vague reports of what became of them (god forbid, cold robotic reports written by Tyhurst). Yeah, she was upset with them for standing curbside but she wasn't mad at them at all. She was furious at herself and frightened. Terribly frightened at what would become of her and she needed her best-friend to talk to. But when she peeked into the library, Lydia, the 'smartest at BHHS' wasn't in her throne room.

These thoughts plagued her for a long time, in a frozen time that was probably 30mins. So she hugged her khaki jacket to her for safety, a shell to protect her from the whirring of new people joining the volunteers, while each imagining became worse and more detailed. While distracted she'd missed the buzzing of her cell phone in one of the many jacket pockets. And the buzzing of the text after that and the text after that and the next. Finally, the phone rang but only after it rang for a while and nearly went into voicemail did she come up from her fog.

"Unbelievable," Lydia sounded irritable. However, from where they had left things, it sounded like the drive had given her weighing thoughts some air. Well, for some of them it seemed as she added "either something's killed you or I've got dibs to."

"I'm sorry," Allison meant she didn't understand but Lydia took it to mean she apologized.

"Alright, fine, but you better move it because I'm not doing this without you," she sighed.

"Doing what?" Echoing sounds in the background left Allison confused and displaced. Lydia sounded in the last place she would have expected her.

"What?" her voice rose in disbelief "Swim Team! You pestered me into this, Allison. I've been waiting for you."

The appeal of girl time as promised blocked out the fog of fretting and Allison stood upright, "I'm on my way," she said as if she were accepting some sort of mission assignment and she hurried along.

In the girls' locker room Lydia wore braided hair loose and messily over a shoulder, an official BHHS swimsuit with a towel wrapped around her waist and an expression of worry.

"Swim Team. Just us. I totally remembered," Allison said while dumping her bag and stripping her jacket off.

"Allison, stop," Lydia stood beside her suddenly, placing a hand on her arm. The room was peppered with people moving back and forth along their way and Lydia gave them the evil eye. "Put your stuff in my locker," she cocked her head toward an open locker beside them with a familiar designer satchel bag slouching over with loose notes, last night's spare clothes, accessories and what seemed to be yesterday's worries, "meet me by the bleachers at the side of the pool for
some peace and quiet and tell me what's really going on."

"Uhm," Allison articulated expertly through her fried brain, exhausted from acute stress.

"Get a move on. Allison, I promise you I will leave you to drown," Lydia scolded in jest, smacked her arm lightly, and it made Allison smile.

Near the bleachers, Allison floated at the end of the pool, leaning with her arms crossed on the edge. Her soaked hair leaked chlorine water into her eyes and over her shoulders but the coolness eased her nerves. Lydia sat beside her and dipped only her legs in while she listened intently as Allison unburdened all her fears.

"I'm sure saying 'I told you so' at this point would just be implied so saying it would be unnecessary so I'll just say, next time listen to me because I'm always right," Lydia smirked playfully. Her shoulders rose elegantly in a gesture of haughtiness.

"So, do you have any 'always right' advice for me?" Allison rested her head on her folded arms and grinned up at her.

Lydia bit her lower lip and gave it brief thought; she looked around the room and admired the rest of the girls practicing their butterfly stroke.

"Get ahead of this before it gets worse," she said low and Allison made a tiny grunt noise as if she didn't understand. Lydia knew Allison didn't want to understand. She eased forward and lowered herself into the pool beside her best friend. Allison moved to face her and with the advantage of water (and not solid floor placed beneath) Lydia could stare at her at eye level. "You need to tell our friends. Take responsibility for this slip up, then we'll deal with what happens next."

"They're going to be disappointed in me. Scott is going to be disappointed in me," Allison's emotions crawled up into her throat and made her voice small.

Lydia looked displeased; she leaned further toward Allison and gripped her shoulder hard. She looked as though she were about to lecture her, instead she shoved her head underwater. Allison came up spurting and coughing and stunned.

"You'll be lucky if that's the worst that happens, Allison. Plus, it isn't just about them," Lydia insisted, her stern voice left no room for argument. "They're going to be okay because we're going figure a way through this together," but as her words slowed for emphasis she raised her chin defiantly and added fiercely. "And so what if your parents send you away. You know there's such a thing as social media. I'm not giving up my best-friend. I'm not giving up on you, so stop giving up on yourself."

"All right," said Allison as she rubbed clear her eyes. She accepted that Lydia did seem to be right most of the time and what she said made sense. They had to start working like a team sometime and if this was a galvanizing moment at least it wasn't because of a violent act, at least it could be because they wanted to stand up for each other.

Coach Helisek blew his whistle insisting that everyone get involved. Lydia looked back to where the girls took lines, messily because they were still learning. Some, like her, were only just joining today and when she turned back to Allison she got splashed in the face.

"We should catch up with the Team," she laughed and swam off before Lydia could splash her back.

Only Lydia knew it wouldn't mean the Swim Team. No, not for long. And as they made the third
go around for practice drills Allison had disappeared from the Gym and Lydia was left alone as she suspected this expenditure would turn out anyway.

Trudging through the forest for archery practice was strike one, strike two was wasting good boozy cherry vanilla floats for girl's night on scheming boys who kept sneaking into Allison's bedroom which lead presently to strike three. There wasn't enough Haagen-Dazs in the world to make up for leaving her to join the Swim Team.

Track 15 - Youth by MGMT

"We had all the municipal services covered," Victoria laced her fingers and propped her chin on top her hands. "Why didn't we think to place someone at the school, too?"

"Probably because the first dead teen to turn up was last night," Kate offered.

Chris shook his head, "these were miscalculations. Bad choices. We spent time here in our teens. We should have suspected as much."

"I mean, a Kanima did just wreck the school library. That's not even bringing up the whole Northbridge incident," Kate's gaze rested on her brother. His anger was bottled up far better than his wife's.

Victoria stared down at the expanse of desk. She couldn't bring herself to look at either Chris or Kate in case she might dissolve into shouting.

Victoria nodded "I think Chris's right."

"Chris always thinks he's right, Victoria." Kate said after a moment of extended silence. "Don't feed his ego. You've got to be more specific than that."

Victoria's gaze snapped to meet Kate's "I think we should follow my husband's initiative. We should have placed someone in the High School earlier. I think I should go-- Allison has made questionable contacts at the school."

"Oh? Spying on the girl?" Kate kept her voice airy but her eyes darted back and forth between the two. "Aren't we above that? Come on, we have more relevant things to surveil."

Chris' interested couldn't be diverted from the concerns of his daughter, especially after having just been robbed of his Daddy-Daughter time. He wanted to know about her questionable contacts "Of the supernatural variety?"

"Werewolves," Victoria stood up, her hands gripped the edge of the table. "More than one."

"Listen, you're envisioning Werewolf instead of teen wolf. You've got to lighten up," Kate said. She leaned back in her seat, her expression stillness and her mouth upturned at the ends but she read of a little nervousness.

"We shouldn't even have let her go there. We could have home-schooled," Victoria's voice was louder but not angry. Anger had drained away and left her only aching with worry.

Chris put a hand over hers and locked eyes with her, his tone was steady and demanding "do you
think she knows who?"

"She knows."

"Of course," he pulled away and pressed his palms against his eyes, as if to rub away his upset. "She's too good not to pick up clues. Why wouldn't she report back to us?" he asked and looked between the two of them as if they could know the mind of his teenage daughter.

Victoria sat back down at the table, her mouth pressed into a severe line as she plotted the next steps. "I can make some calls. Kate, you can get Fry to create a staff opening. I'll make my services available before the end of the week."

Kate watched the fidgety nature of both parents, she tilted her head back and exhaled loudly. "Aw, come on. You guys are overreacting." They stared blankly. "Why don't you guys practice a little trust?" They continued to stare. "Trust her."

"She didn't report back?" Chris finally said after he cleared his throat.

"Maybe she didn't feel the need," Kate shrugged. She kept her voice lifted and dismissive. "Maybe there isn't a need. Maybe she will report back if and when there is a need."

Chris considered it. He could clearly envision Allison, her heart-shaped face framed with dark hair, with fierce dark eyes and flushed with anger that looked bright pink against her pale skin. And she stated her argument, she wasn't screwing up in field work, in school work or at home; why shouldn't he give Allison the benefit of the doubt? And he considered, too, how well he listened when his Father tried to control his participation with the kids at Beacon Hills High.

"Victoria," he said after a long silence, he stared at her. "Are you certain this is the best course of action? There's such a thing as stringing the line too tautly, it will only make it snap."

"That doesn't matter now!" she hissed losing her temper.

"Doesn't it?" Kate's voice was low and careful, her smirk was telling.

"You knew," Chris leaned forward. Since Allison was young, she and Kate had always kept a little playful alliance between the two; it started with presents of weapons that he didn't consider exactly appropriate for kids, it graduated to private holidays away at exotic training camps to simply secrets between the two good friends. It was perfectly natural, which meant he couldn't judge it but that didn't mean he ever had to like it.

"Yep," she smiled.

"You didn't think to tell me?" he gritted his teeth in frustration.

"I didn't think I had to," her eyes had gone large and thoughtful.

"We're her parents," Victoria frowned, her voice kept a flat tone.

"And if I wanted to take her across state lines or to get a tattoo I would," Kate replied reasonably but Victoria's face began to take on a reddish color.

"Kate." Chris warned.

"Chris," Kate mimicked his tone exactly. After a moment she pushed on, "Am I still the leader of a team? Then we're good." She pretended to ask only to point out the fact her brother loved to forget;
technically they stood on equal footing. It was one of the two reasons why she was on the inside of the Meeting Room's door. The other being that she was family. "Allison confides in me. As long as it's reported to a team leader, then that's how it should be."

Victoria took a moment to process then asked "so she confided in you? About all of them?"

"About all of those Werewolf friends of hers that stayed under our roof last night, yes." she waved a hand with flippancy.

"Jesus Christ, Kate!" Chris looked at her with hard and curious eyes. "The Sheriff's son wasn't it? I knew it--" he continued to mutter to himself.

"Unbelievable," Victoria groaned.

"Believe it," Kate leaned forward onto her elbows. "I'm good at my job, Chris. You know the 'collecting intelligence' part. Now, do the two of you want to catch up or are you going to need a minute of Mommy/Daddy time?" she gestured between the two of them, motioning at the manner with which they were lost to their grumblings. "I can step out for a run if you like? Pop some off at the shooting range?" she popped finger-guns off at them, when they glared in her direction she knew she had their attention fully. "No? So, back to business?"

"Business. Fine." Victoria shifted her weight and stilled her expression. "I'd still like to option down the line for a Hunter to be placed at the High School for intelligence gathering."

He watched his wife's face curiously "that's why I agreed to let Allison go to begin with." Victoria looked defeated. Her passion to protect her daughter left her overreaching, she felt that. And from the looks of the Argent siblings she was overruled. Allison would be their informant.

"Never underestimate the tenacity of a green operative eager to prove herself," Kate repeated from heart. Her lips lifted at the end but the smile didn't exactly reach her eyes.

"Gerard did," Chris explained. He nodded with a little more confidence. "The Argent Family hasn't been the same since."

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Track 16 - Problem by Natalia Kills

On the landing between the first and second floor Allison caught sight of a familiar gait hurrying along, draped with a red hoodie. He wasn't cloistered with his usual entourage. Bolstered with an intense want to deal with things head-on, she approached him, also because she was certain he knew where the rest of his friends were. They all seemed to have a sixth sense for one another (which she was fairly certain was an actual thing).

When she called Stiles' name he swiveled around with enough velocity that should have toppled him.

"Oh. Hey." He tried for a smooth voice afterward but nearly missed the wall when he tried to lean on it. He explained that his Dad just came back to the school and they were hanging around the office to get the enrollment information. In her chest she felt lightness, she felt genuinely pleased until she remembered why she stopped him to begin with.

"Just come right out and say it," Stiles insisted. "You've got a whole--" he waved a hand around her
"Freaking you out how?" Allison worried. She'd spent months deceiving Scott and barely skirted his radar. Whatever it was that Stiles picked up on her now she feared must seem toxic by comparison? What did betrayal sense of?

"Like a lollipop rolled in cat litter, except in monochrome."

Allison stepped back stunned. "Really?"

"Nope," Stiles grinned. He punched her lightly in the shoulder, relieved to have made her smile. "But it is weird that you seem more nervous now than committing larceny."

She gripped the strap of her bag tighter but let out a breath in relief "Outside the school, I had a moment with my Mother. It wasn't great."

"How bad could not great be?" Stiles looked her up and down and chewed his lower lip. "Did she find out we broke into the room? Did she find out we took info from your family?"

Her voice left her so she shook her head. He squeezed her shoulder and let out a breath in relief. "Great, then! We're golden." He insisted, "anything else we'll just put our heads together and--"

"I outted you."

He quieted, which in itself was a phenomenon. He kept his hand on her shoulder and studied her face with pursed lips. "Not you exactly," she braved on although her voice cracked a little. "All of you. By accident."

He nodded. "I am really, really sorry..." she couldn't continue. Not just because her lower lip had begun to tremble terribly but because she could think of nothing else to say.

"Ok. Ok." Stiles said finally and rubbed her shoulder encouragingly hard enough he shook her straight down to her feet. He held up a finger and asked her "no names?"

"No, I didn't say any names. I just slipped about Werewolves in the school--"

Stiles rolled his eyes dramatically and threw his hands up in the air "Of course! They're going to think it's us!" He rubbed his hand over his face and looked around the hallway, then back to Allison. "Makes sense. Did you tell the others?"

She shook her head, "I was just about to."

"But you could have just told Scott and asked Scott to tell me," Stiles wondered, a sly grin grew with each word. "It didn't seem right," she grinned back. "I don't seem like a 'lollipop in cat litter' anymore?" she waved a hand by her face.
"Nope. Too good for that," he shook his head and considered something. "I could always tell Scott and Isaac for you. We'll be fine."

"No. I need to do it," her smile dropped a little but it remained.

He watched her face curiously. "Are you going to be fine? I mean with your family and everything?" when he posed the question her stance stiffened and she stepped back.

"We'll see," she licked her lips and said the words experimentally. "I hope so. Why are you trying to be easy on me?"

"Because I'm sorry I was hard on you before," Stiles leaned on the wall beside Allison. He kind of liked the idea his nearness rattled her.

"No you're not," she scrunched her face up in disbelief, just shy of rolling her eyes.

"No, I'm not," he moved around, turning fully until he stood beside her so he could bump shoulders with her. "I've been trying to figure you out. But I think I have a better idea after last night."

"Yeah?" she looked up at him, batting her eyelashes in a ploy of innocence, "Is this your way of saying thanks?"

"No," he smirked but clumsily ducked behind her to keep from his father's sights. The Sheriff only walked by the office door, not even intending to look for his son just yet and then continued to talk to the weekend staff who were less capable at helping. Stiles peeked back over her shoulder, he cringed in awkward apology, and she glowered up at him. He patted her shoulders and continued undeterred, "I'll figure out a good way to say thanks later, you'll see."

"Oh, okay," and then she rolled her eyes, "I'm looking forward to it."

"It's just gotta be real good," he said near to her ear "I mean you kept Lydia off your family's radar."

"Pfft, of course," Allison stepped away and readjusted her jacket collar from where he'd yanked it nearly off of her shoulder.

"And I guess you never actually reported Scott," Stiles stepped around to stand beside her again, shoved his hands deep into his hoodie pockets to cause a slouch effect to his shoulders, implying an innocence he was incapable of.

"No, I'd never." It was her turn to spin toward him. Her look was hard and full of judgment.

"You weren't going to report me and Isaac?" he leaned back, rolling on his heels and a smirk crept creepily across his face.

"Do you have to ask?" she grunted and stepped into his shadow which made them seem all the more clandestine.

"Yeah?" his smiled dropped, worry creased his brow.

"No, Stiles," she insisted and stood taller, shoving her face a little insistently toward his, "I never wanted to turn your names in to my family." When his eyes searched her face for signs of lying and found none she gave him a nod. She wasn't insulted, in fact she felt she had jumped a hurdle.

"You really are a job to figure out," from beside her, he smirked down. "'cuz you say this now and
you still run a straight line with your family." Their eyes trailed together toward his Father
puttering back into the office. "I could learn a thing or two from you."

"Well, I could say the same," Allison wondered softly after a pause, "I mean you're kind of a
puzzle."

"I'm as open and honest as a person can be," he sounded more offended than a person who wanted
to share.

"Really," she took in a deep breath and held it before she blew it out with a sigh. After readjusting
her shoulders in a display of her demeanor change, she presented herself as the investigator once
more. "You've spent the whole night taking intense notes pretending there wasn't another X on
your map."

"Right."

"The same X that was on your Dad's map in his kitchen. A map I have a picture of in my phone
that connects the attacks now to yours 6 years ago."

"How did you get those?" Stiles' displeasure was trumped by his intrigue.

"The day Lydia brought us over to investigate your possible reappearance. I also saw your Dad's
notes, not in chicken scratch but in hi-res," she said it with a tease of consideration to offer him a
gesture of friendship. She hoped it was nearly as aggravating as his enticing her with his notebook
in her kitchen the night before.

"You've had that? This whole time?" he watched her with his head turned at a tilt, analyzing her
intent. "You didn't say anything?"

"No," Allison answered, a sly grin growing with each word. "Your Dad had a lot to say, I thought
maybe you might like to see it first before sharing it with the group." She remembered the Sheriff's
handwriting beside photos of young Lydia and young Scott reading "Juvenile. Unreliable
Witnesses. Post-Traumatic."

Stiles leaned back, his mouth made an 'Ah!' in silent acknowledgment, a solid up jab on her part
and her dark brows made a sinister display of cocky delivery. She came forward for a second jab "I
think I'd get a much better idea of you if you answered one question."

"Shoot."

Her eyes kept their glint of humor but her smile fell away and her scent became dangerous,
something between threatening and threatened "These answers I'm helping you find, are you doing
it for justice or for revenge?"

"That's a good goddamn question," Stiles sucked in a breath. He understood the scent of fight-or-
flight she gave off. He imagined he must have stunk of it.

She put a hand on his arm, a steadying grace. She pulled him from abject oblivion before she
finally spoke, before she finally blinked and explained.

"I see your face and I remember what this feels like." Allison rolled up onto her toes, her eyes intent
and daring as they bore into Stiles' eyes, "Because there is this tradition among Argent factures at
around our age when we're made to choose; do we just hunt or do we kill?"

"Ha," Stiles scoffed and had to step back. He had to wipe at the egg on his face because a Hunter
and her goddamn 'Become a Hunter/Killer' coming-of-age ceremony was the thing he related to most in the world at that moment "And then?" he stepped back toward her, closing in on her.

She shrugged and smiled softly "and then I'll have figured you out a little better, Stiles."

Stiles opened his mouth to say something else, whatever words of comfort or thanks or whatever were cut off by his Dad calling him away to the Main Office. When he turned back to Allison she had already made it halfway to the stairwell and cast a wave over her shoulder.

Track 17 - Change by BANKS

Within minutes of goading Allison, Lydia's own unpleasant consequences came at her in the embodiment of Jackson standing at the gymnasium door.

When it wasn't official practice or meets Swim Team members made staggered entrances and exits because they shared (Assistant) Coach Helisek with pretty much every athletics department. So Lydia collected her things not too long after Allison had gone. Sure, she could use the credit for any college application but she definitely didn't need it. She definitely didn't need it since she'd been swimming since the age of 4. Or since she'd been obsessed with 'The Little Mermaid,' her Grandmother would take her out boating and swimming endlessly at her lake house, all she had to do was ask. Or that she'd won several badges in Brownie Scouts for swimming and diving. Considering all that, while she liked swimming very much the only reason she entertained the thought of coming to Swim Team left when Allison had. But partway to the girls' locker room she should have accounted for a reason to want to stay. Simply put, to avoid bullshit.

Lydia inhaled deeply and stood up straight although she felt exposed. Not because of the swimsuit she wore but because of how well Jackson knew her. They'd been intimate before and more than just seeing each other naked. They'd shared each other's lives in and out of school, with gestures and looks that spoke volumes, they told each other secrets for months. As he turned the corner and charged toward her she sensed his accusation and knew she didn't have an explanation, only speculations.

"What the hell did you do?" Jackson's eyes narrowed.

"I don't know what you're talking about," as he neared her she backed up into the doorframe.

After Jackson closed his eyes briefly, they looked fiercer when he looked down at her and then he sighed and said something that wasn't a question. "You came to visit me at the hospital?"

"You came to visit me when I was in the hospital at Fairvale," she countered, lifting her chin obstinately.

He eased back, momentarily startled "you weren't supposed to know."

Lydia shook her head, "what difference does it make now."

"It makes a big difference," he paused. He clenched his fist until they shook "you shouldn't have come. You did something."

Again, not a question.
Lydia gulped, she looked him over for a sign of softness but saw none. She bit her lip, "I just wanted to see you. They said you should have died." She meant that he could have.

"I should have." His jaw tensed. He meant that he wanted to. Some sort of battle seemed to be raging inside of him.

An argument rose up in her throat, but at least they were on the same page when it came to discussing the abnormal. Falling into step with their practiced arguing habits, Lydia eyes flared and her voice rose "Are you out of your mind? You lived because you're supposed to--"

"No. Something is happening," his expression clouded over and he shoved her away from him. "I tried to stop it. You shouldn't have gotten involved!"

Lydia held up a hand not in surrender but for him to stop, "I don't have a clue what you're talking about." She half-lied. She reached to touch him, she reached to cross the cavernous and growing gap between them. "Whatever it is that's happening, we can figure it out together."

"You're lying," he noted the way her heart rate increased. "You ruined it! You ruined everything!"

Frightened off, Lydia jumped back from his sudden and burning fury. Jackson gestured toward her menacingly at first, but it lost heat as he lifted his arm and shook off the impulse. Instead he stormed off aimlessly and Lydia stared paralyzed down the hallway after him. Once he was out of sight she let out shuddering breath while running the conversation over in her head until the sound of someone splashing off of the diving board pulled her out of her trance.

Track 18 - Ghosts and Creatures by Telekinesis

When they were on the field earlier in the morning it was impossible to get Jackson's attention because he was so focused on running drills. Scott and Isaac thought they could catch up with him in the locker room but by that point he was off chatting up a classmate in the hallway. They could sense how focused Jackson his conversation and it was nearly intimidating, not at all in a threatening way. In fact, it was the most in control they had sensed Jackson in the whole time they had ever known him. It only added to their curiosity.

Coach Flinstock hadn't taken well to their hovering and staring at classmates in the hallway. He assigned them extra weight training while everyone else went to 'volunteer' at the library. Jackson hadn't turned up for library volunteering at all and then Flinstock hadn't complained about that at all. Nope, not at all.

Allison texted throughout and Scott had to admit he wished he felt worse about blowing her off.

"What do you think it's about?" Isaac asked in a breathless whisper as he added more weights to the Machine Shoulder Press.

"I don't know," Scott shook his head, "but I can meet up with her after practice. Then I'll tell her about Jackson." He hefted the bench press, annoyance speeding him along "maybe then I'll have something to actually tell her. And I won't jeopardize her safety to find things out. And I won't have to awkwardly apologize again or get her in trouble with her parents."

"Scott," Isaac slowly released his weight and leaned forward, his tone was soothing as he tried to calm his friend. "Maybe you should--"
"I'm not imagining things. You saw how pissed she was this morning," Scott groaned and took his grievance out with his exercise routine.

"Scott, I meant maybe you should take a minute," with an eyebrow raised comically high, Isaac pointed toward the weights placed at a world record breaking high that Scott lifted with a Werewolf's ease. "And reevaluate how pissed you are."

"Shit," Scott dropped the weights before anyone noticed. He shot to sit up and knocked his head on the bar. He rubbed his head and swore under his breath for a minute more. "I'm not pissed," he grumbled, "I'm worried. What if we're asking too much of each other?"

"What do you mean?" Isaac inched forward.

An expression flickered across Scott's features that Isaac hadn't seen before, something he had seen aimed at Stiles but not toward him but he hid it behind a smile. "I just mean these things we're going to go up against, not all of them are going to be Monsters. Could you still -- you know?"

Isaac blinked and sighed deeply, he hadn't put a lot of thought into that. He thought of things in terms of 'I want to help person A' and 'I don't trust person B' but he hadn't thought of 'could I hurt person C' as if 'person C' wasn't some sort of EVIL creature in his mind's eye.

The period bell rang and Isaac bypassed the question, he clapped a hand on Scott's shoulder and insisted they hurry and find Jackson.

"Don't worry about that now," Isaac assured him in the locker room as he hurriedly dressed to catch up to the practice with the rest of the team. "Unless there's an emergency, I'm going to help you with this."

Track 19 - Taxi Cab By Vampire Weekend

"There is one thing I'm going to need from you, kid." He rubbed at his nose with the edge of the bunch of documents out of nerves, not from an itch.

"Anything," Stiles grinned. He tried to hide his eagerness but he practically circled his Dad like a shark circled prey. They stood in the school's courtyard and discussed his entrance in BHHS, his very livelihood with the offhandedness of the weather.

His Dad smirked and put a hand on his shoulder to still him, "I need your school transcript."

"Oh," Stiles had put some forethought into this but with the week's activities he hadn't had a chance to put his plot into action.

"A 6 year absence isn't something they can blur over."

"I thought you had pull," Stiles chuckled unconvincingly to which his Dad gave a quick and twitchy smirk. "Isaac could probably help with that. I can't remember all the school contact info and he's done it before."

The Sheriff's bullshit detector came alive. "We should contact your foster parents," he demanded. They managed to skirt the subject for quite some time.
Stiles refused to look up from his phone and make eye contact. He punched a coded SOS message out to Isaac and thought of a way to avoid bringing up the 'other' parent. He hated feeling like he'd cheated on his Dad with the Hales but that was what it came down to.

"They're kinda out of the way," Stiles sniffed and cleared his throat. He hadn't realized he'd shrugged out of his Dad's hold until he noticed he was already a step further away. He gave a small smile of encouragement. "They live on reservation land up in this mountain and reception is shit. We normally came down from the mountains once or twice a week to get supplies. Plus, we did home-schooling." He noticed his pronouns switch from 'they' to 'we' as he went along but he couldn't stop it.

"I could go out with you to get them," his Dad offered self-consciously. "I'd like to meet the family who took my kid in and kept him safe."

Stiles knew some part of his Dad wanted that out of earnestness another out of suspicion that they were some sort of cult that kidnapped kids. Stiles scoffed lightly, "I'd like that but--" A sick part of him would, he couldn't help but imagine the warped scenario where his Dad would hike up with him and meet what ravaged numbers were left of the Hales in the hills. But that wasn't his home anymore, and sticking around Beacon Hills was important "--you can't take time off from work."

"Hey guys!" Isaac panted as he came bursting through the school doors into the courtyard. "What's going on? How're t-things goings Stiles? Stiles' Dad?"

"Isaac," the Sheriff acknowledged with a nod.

"Hey what a coincidence," Stiles failed at a bluff. "You showing up here-- after I texted."

"What's going on, son?"

"I just figured we should ask someone who," he pointed to the panting mess beside him, "someone who's gone through the red tape before."

The Sheriff looked between the two boys and took in their nervous glances. He measured their uneasy smiles and the way they both sealed tight when he asked about their foster family.

"Can I ask you both a question?" they nodded, Isaac first and Stiles slowly, almost unwillingly afterward. "Did you guys run away from your foster family?"

They answered quickly 'no' but their emotions behind it were both unhappy and bitter. He gauged something behind there was bad and worth investigating but Stiles was right, he didn't have the time to take off work and investigate. Not to mention it was out of his jurisdiction.

"Son," he said to Isaac, out affection not out of relation "who have you been staying with?"

Isaac snorted lightly, masking his discomfort.

"He's fine," Stiles answered quickly.

"I've been fine," Isaac replied in quick succession.

Sheriff Stilinski shook his head. He had so many more questions.

Track 20 - If You Were There, Beware by The Arctic Monkeys
Isaac wondered how long 'lunch with the folks' ideally lasted. 'Dinner with the folks' seemed to be an all-night endeavor from what he noticed with the Argents and he really didn't have time for that.

"I actually have practice, Sheriff." Isaac let slip eventually.

"That's great," he said, he meant it encouragingly and not at all sarcastically. But the Sheriff still didn't give Isaac leave to go, instead he continued to prod as to why was lacrosse an interest? Did it start when he arrived at Beacon Hills? Or were he and Stiles athletically inclined before they got to town?

Unfortunately, Isaac and Stiles' answer agreed on nothing.

"See," Stiles insisted, aggravation coloring his tone. "Just like real brothers."

"Actually, more like two guys who lived under the same roof and have pretty much nothing in common except our foster family, some TV shows and the same types of girls," Isaac added flippantly, he leaned onto the table with both elbows due to a lack of a doorframe to place his nervous self.

"Again," Stiles rolled his eyes and snapped at Isaac. He had to restrain himself from smacking Isaac from across the table. "Is that being helpful?"

Isaac shrugged. "I thought were supposed to be really getting to know each other," he gestured to the Sheriff.

"Fair enough," Sheriff Stilinski cleared his throat and tried to hide a grin. "That sounds pretty brotherly to me."

Stiles tried to ease off at the sound of his Dad's ease but his glare toward Isaac turned intent with the promise of punishment.

For a moment it felt familial. That was, until a change ran through the air and Isaac's expression shifted while they locked eyes. They sensed an intruder, they sensed an oppressive impression that hummed on some low frequency moments before a sudden spiked with a force that threatened violence.

"I've got to go," Isaac jumped to his feet. He hardly excused himself as he raced to the nearest exit. Stiles grabbed hold of his arm and yanked him back.

"You can't go alone," Stiles insisted. He looked down and noticed his claws had embedded themselves into Isaac's arm without meaning to.

Stiles reminded with a hard warning look, "what if we're just being baited?"

But Isaac's anger changed the color of his eyes. "Maybe, but someone's got to make sure another kid doesn't get hurt." He looked to Stiles and to the Sheriff. And he could see a little of Scott's earlier point-of-view, he didn't want to risk Stiles' family happiness on a hunch, but he couldn't be content with waiting anyway. And maybe this could even bring him that much closer to a Monster that had captured the last remaining member of his pack, the thought made him growl with low bitterness, "but you can sit here and perfect the art of doing nothing."

At that Isaac shook off Stiles' hold, he spun around, stormed off through the school's double doors and ran like hell toward danger.
Track 21 - My Moon, My Man by Feist

At the bleachers closest to the goal end of the field where the lacrosse team practiced, Allison found herself in the company of Melissa McCall. It was no use pretending they hadn't seen one another as they were the only ones in attendance in the middle of the seats.

"They're looking good this season," Allison observed uneasily.

"Well-rested," Melissa said reminding straight forwardly that her son hadn't been home the night before.

"Ah, right." Allison said unsteadily, she shuffled in her seat. "I can sit somewhere else."

"Don't be silly." Melissa looked over at the girl finally. She smiled genuinely, "you're not the one I get to ground."

"You don't blame me?" Allison gnawed at her thumb nervously and dropped her hand into her lap when she noticed the nervous habit. She hoped Lydia would hurry over after Swim Team. It wasn't a spoken agreement but she felt pretty strongly or maybe desperately in assuming as much. And she wondered if Stiles would turn up at some point to cheer their favorite Co-Captain on, and you know to play co-punching bag/buffer with her in the bleacher seats. Or had his sixth sense warned him off?

Melissa shook her head and her clever brown eyes gleaned with a scheme. "It's okay. The way I look at it, Scott is his own man. And he deserves every consequence from his actions. Would you like to know how?"

When Allison leaned forward with interest, Melissa scooted a little nearer, "I would like to know, yes."

"Like watching his girlfriend and Mother get along and talk about him throughout his entire practice," she grinned devilishly and looked toward the field. "Hi Sweetie! Looking Good!" she turned toward Allison, "isn't he looking good, Allison?"

She couldn't help but get caught up, "uhm, yeah."

"You should tell him then."

"You're Looking Good, Scott!" Allison cheered cupping her hands around her mouth for effect. She had to admit it; there was a sick joy to the act. She settled back in her seat and looked to Melissa.

"So," Melissa started in asking in a voice that sounded girlish, endearing but genuine at the same time. "How romantic was it to have him turn up last night?"

Allison knew with Scott's Werewolf hearing he could no doubt hear her and this wasn't just suggested torture, this was actual punishment. She tried to be as merciful as possible, "he didn't come over to be romantic."

Melissa narrowed her eyes and glared through her skull as if to burn out the truth.
"It wasn't just romantic," Allison amended. "He came to say he was sorry because he was a jerk to me. And that he loved me and he told me he wouldn't see me for a while because he was grounded. He really did mean to stick by the grounding Mrs. McCall."

A smirk insisted Allison not divert the subject and a hand slithered into hers and pulled her away from any back pedaling.

"Scott is really a good guy. He didn't just check in with me, he checked in with my Aunt and friends before he was heading home when the Sheriff told him to stay put. He always tries to do something good and it bites him on the-- it just always gets him into a mess," Allison words slowly died on her lips.

Melissa turned back to the field, they watched as Scott got knocked over, evidently not for the first time during practice. Allison pitied him not having at least one friend on the field to cover him, with a good chunk of his teammates missing. Even Melissa flinched in sympathy and squeezed Allison's hand.

"I know," Melissa conceded. "He's going to get himself killed," she said as a euphemism and Allison nodded slowly, afraid that Scott's Mom might be too right.

"Once when he was 12 I grounded him, for no good reason, just to take his bicycle away because I knew a storm front was headed our way," she laughed lightly than sat forward, releasing Allison's hands she clapped obnoxiously loud and cheered Scott on. Allison followed in suit. After a minute or two and without goading Mrs. McCall finished her recollection. "It wasn't just about keeping him out of the weather. It was about keeping him from trying to bring me food during a double-shift. He kept calling 911 until he got the Sheriff on the line personally; he told them it was an emergency to make sure his Mom got fed, because she taught him that breakfast was the most important meal of the day."

Allison's eyes were wide with amusement. Then she turned toward the field, stood and cheered louder than she felt her lungs could manage. She didn't care that it got Scott trampled. He would heal. Melissa clapped along but then pulled Allison to sit back beside her.

"Don't encourage him too much," she said with a little laugh and sighed exhaustedly. "That sort of chivalry comes at a cost."

"It's probably going to be his bike again," Allison said with a smirk after she gave it some thought.

"Probably," Melissa shrugged. "There's only so much you can let him get away with no matter how well intentioned." With that she sat upright, an expression of confusion washed over her face, she glanced around. She frowned slightly out of worry, "where did he go?"

Allison knew. She looked down at her Android phone and pretended she received a text but really looked through her camera and zoomed up across the field. She had gotten carried away and nearly missed it; Scott stood at the edge of the field opposite where the track team practiced. His helmet was off, his expression was steady and unnerving and his eyes gave off an iridescent golden-yellow light. She stood slowly and excused herself.

"I don't know," she lied smoothly, "but this is an ideal time to use the bathroom. I'll try to get back before he gets back." Then she returned the phone into the depths of the many pockets of her Khaki jacket and she clutched ring daggers from one of the others. Allison waited till she got beneath the overcast of the bleachers then ran off undetected.
After Lydia broke through the water's surface her hearing felt echoey and thick, it felt impaired. The swimming pool area had nearly cleared entirely but she sincerely doubted their retreat was what affected her ability to sense them. She was afraid to admit it but the Banshee's receptiveness was in the progress of becoming as dangerous as it had become familiar.

Although she knew the feeling of deregulation would resolve on its own there was no telling when, instead it stretched and overwhelmed her with the sound of pounding feet trampling on a crumbling path. She blinked away the water from her eyes but couldn't clear up her vision; the shapes that flew toward her were misshapen shadows fencing her in. She bit her lip to keep her panic in and reached back to grab a safe hold for balance but felt only liquid giving way under her touch.

Clenching her eyes shut she focused on calming her mind but only heard the cracking of tree bark and taunting growls. Which caused an intensity to pick up in her chest and his ferocity sent him charging through the foliage toward danger. She gasped to recognize Isaac's harsh breaths and understood his pain as if it were hers. But she felt incapable to save him from himself when he narrowed in on the villains in the woods that goaded and lured him further away until finally Isaac fell into the terrifying dark. And Lydia fell with him as they both fell alone. She couldn't reach up, she felt her limbs wounded, limp, tangled and weighed down. In the empty room she dropped unseen to the swimming pool bottom and screamed unheard into the water. She screamed until there was nothing inside of her and no space left to take anything in.

There was blindness to his movement as Isaac moved through the school. He knew some of the doors were meant to be locked but when his hand went to their handles, they gave way easily, whether he broke them or not. He launched across the edge of student parking and the students practicing on the lines of the field designated for the track team scattered while he tore through it.

Soon, trees surrounded him and thickening patches of green and brown bushes reached up to meet his footfall. He launched over rocks and clawed onto branches to fling himself farther but the target evaded him. Every time he thought he neared it, he sensed a mockery in its presence and suddenly he felt miles apart or like it was behind him. It riled up his senses and made his control fragmented. Yes, Stiles was right, he'd been baited. And by the time he realized he was surrounded and trapped, he was too lost to run for help.

"Come on!" he growled and took a stand. "Let's do this!" he stuck his stance low to the ground and steeled himself for a brawl. His hands felt gnarled and claws were nicked from the chase, his fangs were extended and eyes were focused to the point of seeing red but he wasn't ready for the sight that came forward.

Twice the size of any Werewolf he had ever seen before or any illustration he had ever seen in any textbook not to mention twice the power of any Alpha he had ever known. His hesitation cost him his ground and the thing before him back handed him hard enough to send him flying up and sideways into a tree trunk. The hit stunned him, it left his bones feeling rattled even so, Isaac staggered to his feet and ran forward, determined not to stay down. The growl the scar-faced Werewolf let out shook him to his bone but didn't unnerve him and Isaac laid a blow on its face
just before an uppercut left him seeing stars. All Isaac remembered was the sight of the scar split down his face and the amused snarling expression as it pulled out a tree and prepared to strike a blow.

"Stay. Down," it growled in a barely pronounceable guttural vibrato. And it sent Isaac into a mindless rage where he wouldn't recall twisting out from beneath the aim of it and clawing at the Werewolf's throat. Or using the leverage of weight to throw it several feet but it wasn't enough to have a lasting effect.

Isaac could sense somewhere off in the woods his friends nearing and he hesitated, partly for fear of their well-being and partly in that they might cut in on his action. But in that moment of hesitation cost him and arm's length of fighting ground. A thick and massive arm grabbed him at the wrist, sank claws into his forearm and twisted back hard enough to simultaneously snap his elbow and shoulder out of place. While howling in pain, Isaac didn't hesitate to pivot and swing around to kick him in the face. He used the counter weight to jump, and after locking his left hand around where their wrists still held, he wrapped both legs around the extended arm length and dragged the man down with him. Once on the ground Isaac kicked at his head and when his scarred face was exposed he clawed at it with his good hand. The other Werewolf rolled out of Isaac's pin and spat blood. Isaac laughed at the other Werewolf's pain, he laughed through his own agony and hoped their noise was enough to bring help because he wasn't sure how much more he could hold out.

But as his opponent hopped up to his feet Isaac realized his greater mistake was to fall into the ditch removing the tree from earlier had created. Isaac panicked to realize he'd have trouble climbing out of so narrow a hole with the crumbling soil even if he'd had two good arms. He felt as though a coffin were being sealed up around him. His fear of enclosed spaces crippled him to stillness and made his throat turn to a wheezy mess of tubing. His strength drained from him with his small breath of "please."

"Stay. Down," the scarred colossal mass growled at him with penetrating Alpha-Red eyes just before slamming the tree back into its pit.

Track 24 - Bullet Train (feat. Joni Fatora) by Stephen Swartz

Trudging along through the brambles of what the county arguably called landscaping to the highway but should just have been an extension to the woods, Allison caught her breath between bursts of sprints.

She searched the landscape for any signs of movement but only saw signs of wreckage. A mix and match of tracks showed a chase had gone awry, there had been enough twists and turns in a short interval it might as well have been a merry-go-round. Despite that, there was no discernible direction with which to follow.

"Allison," she heard Scott whisper her name before she saw him.

The dagger clutched in hand, she aimed toward her feet as she ducked low and leaned her weight against a tree and barely breathed his name. Within seconds he raced to her side.

"What are you doing here?" he searched her up and down for signs of harm but only saw signs of preparedness.
"I followed you," she spoke softly and put a hand up against her brow to block the sun from view. She could see his shins and forearms were scraped up from tumbling through bushes but they looked to be healing up quickly.

Scott put a hand out to touch her face, to make sure she was real and safe and within reach. A quizzical expression clouded his face and he asked "then how did you get in front of me?"

She gave a sly smile, readjusted the bag strap on her shoulder "because I'm a better tracker than you." Her expression turned straight faced afterward, "what are we chasing, Scott?"

"I don't know. But you shouldn't be here," his attempt at chivalry was undercut by the severity of her glare.

"I shouldn't be here? Aren't you in the middle of lacrosse practice?" she looked him over skeptically and a smile, incongruous and strange, spread over her face. He returned a similar crooked grin, they much preferred to be in this together. "You could have called me if there was trouble, I would have come."

"I know," he replied in a tone the implied reluctance. She looked skeptical to his restraint, they were meant to be partners in all-things, especially when trouble arose.

"Scott, do you?" when she asked he nodded and she wished she could pursue this conversation. She couldn't sense whether he lied or told the truth, whether he felt angry or really worried that she followed him. Not to mention too many things were going unsaid lately and the best she could come up with was to assure Scott this was good enough for now. "Okay."

Scott inclined his head to listen for signs of violence. "I sensed something at the end of the field. At the last game I sensed it-- but at the last game I sensed a lot."

Allison spoke to Scott in a whisper "you sensed a lot of things at that game. Too much. And you collapsed." Her eyes skirted the landscape and glanced back to Scott's face. "You need to focus, Scott," she slipped her free hand into his and pressed their palms flat together.

Scott gave her a pensive, searching look before he closed his eyes and leaned forward to press his head against hers. The smell of dirt from the pitch mixed with Scott's sweat and Allison pressed her head gently against him and held tight. She remembered him crumbling to the ground and clutched his hand tighter, letting go wasn't an option. Kneeling there for another moment, they waited for their hearts to slow down until Scott eased back, his eyes fluttered open the color of bright gold.

"Isaac," he spoke softly as he pulled away.

"Isaac?" Allison realized she brought out her weapons in duplicate, a dagger for each hand spun out in readiness. "Is he okay?"

"No... He's over there. He's dying." Scott rose quickly, Allison took up beside him. Her mouth went dry but her mind became clear.

While Scott sensed out the way with sure steps and Allison pointed out tracks signs of blood and evidence of fight. "There are so many different footprints. It looks like there might have been a small army," she said low.

"It doesn't feel like that," Scott moved around debris of a fallen tree. "I only sense one person now."

Allison concentrated her anger because that meant there was only one person out there,
somewhere. And she had a sense of how things turned out and they needed to find him, immediately.

At the sight of the fallen tree Scott's stiff hesitation reminded Allison of that expression 'walking over your own grave' and she sense she should take the lead.

She hauled herself over the collapsed tree trunk and pivoted to land on the lip of the pit that peaked on the other side. Her weapons fell to the ground and she covered her mouth with her hands at the sight of Isaac crushed into the earth and buried half-alive. After the briefest hesitation she skidded down into the hole alongside him and wedged herself as close as she could without adding to the crushing weight.

"Is he--?" Scott asked after he raced around the blunt end of the tree. He stared over Allison's shoulders, not able to follow into the small spaces she could manage.

"I can't feel his heartbeat," she groaned in frustration and looked up at Scott. Dirt already streaked her cheek and showed signs of tears she struggled not to shed. "I'm not getting anything. We have to get him out of here." She let out a breath in a sudden exhale as the loose earth caused her to slide further under the tree. Scott called to her but she dismissed his extended hand.

"Scott, we need to move the tree," she instructed, he looked confused and worried. Allison looked around and insisted. "Look at these marks," she lifted Isaac's left arm while running the fingers of her right hand along the elongated tear marks on the tree trunk. "He tried shoving off the tree. It almost worked but this prevented him."

A tension fell between them as Scott gauged the scene and tried to follow her assessment.

"He didn't start to heal?" Scott finally asked.

"He is, just too slow," Allison leaned back cautiously to give Scott a better outlook. Allison went onto explain, "These cuts weren't lethal but they're too precise and deep. There is too much contamination for me to be sure but if I had to guess, these are Alpha's claw marks. They take longer to heal-- need special attention."

"Allison, this is killing him," Scott's eyes weren't colored but they were impassioned as he pleaded with her. He stood up closer to the tree and dug his claws into the wood to keep from sliding in. He held out a hand for Allison this time she took it and climbed out.

"Tell me what to do. We need to do it quickly." When Scott wiped her hair from her face the dirt left streaks along her cheek, he cupped her face to help ease her babbling panic.

"T-the tree," she turned away from the tree and kept her attention on Scott. "The soil is loose. We can slide it out and off of him, we just need leverage."

"Okay," he smiled and looked back to the scene, then to her. "Leverage, cool. What does that mean?"

She shook her head and dropped to the ground where she left her weapons and dropped her bag, from within she pulled out her compound bow.

"dis isss not-- much," she said through clenched teeth as she gambled and bit a knot to cinch a cord onto the right arrow with the wrong sized arrowhead. "I need you on that side," she gestured over toward the blind side of the tree trunk, "and this will help guide you." She stood tall and put an arrow with a cord attached high up into a tree 30ft away.
"How?" Scott didn't argue as he moved around to where she pointed.

Allison gestured toward the cord. She instructed him to string it through a break in the tree trunk the fight provided. Between them they knotted it tight and created a rough pulley system with the arrow on one end and Allison's tight grip on the other.

"So what do we do now?" Scott asked. Allison nodded at him and looked toward the barely visible body crushed underneath her.

"You pull. I push," she tried to smile. Before he could question her she dropped her weight into a skid and let herself fall into the hole beside Isaac.

The dirt suffocated her more the second time around. She remembered to wrap the cord around her wrist, a familiar pained sensation of torque and weightiness. When Scott called her name again she called out to him. "Now, Go!"

For a moment he couldn't move despite her urging. Scott looked around the wooded area, the disaster of a battlefield, his eyes large and confused. Then all at once he seemed determined. He moved slowly from his position at the foot of the tree where the tendril root end of the tree dangled ominously and he moved to align himself with her, to align with Allison. Locking his cleats into the ground, Scott reached up into the bark, with eyes glowing in fierce determination he sank his claws deep into the layers of tree trunk so that cracks could be heard echoing.

When the roar came next it wasn't like any growl Allison heard from Scott before, it made a shudder run through her and caused her heart to jump. The rush she felt made her hands steady and it felt easier to brace her legs as she took position much like a beetle on its back, ready to kick upward the small space and leave a small gap just under her for Isaac to lay unaffected if not a little filthier. She shoved upward with her legs while lacing the cord around both arms and clenched in her fist she pulled with all her weight. Underneath their efforts Isaac let go of the last groaning breath of life his lungs had held onto this whole time, his eyes fluttering open to watch the silhouettes of his friends fighting for his life.

At the very first heave the tree slipped away, not very far but very fast and it startled Allison to nearly lose her footing. But Scott held fast and kept a steady pull on the tree and with the second heave they were able to make enough progress that Allison could make out the outline of Isaac's entire body, and unfortunately all the crushing damage done to it. After a third and fourth heave they were certain it was far enough to drop their attempts, between Allison's sore wrists and Scott's uncertainty when it came to keeping control they didn't wish to tempt fate.

Allison turned over, careful not to crush Isaac with her weight. She climbed on top of him and placed herself between him and any chance that the tree might roll back. If adrenaline weren't influencing her thoughts she might have thought clearly that her non-Werewolf body wasn't likely to survive the impact but she knew for certain Isaac wouldn't.

Quick to detangle and uncover she retrieved the ring daggers from the depth of her jacket's pockets, using them as spades she dug at the earth around Isaac creating slack. Scott climbed part of the way down to rest beside the right of Isaac's head. He let out a whistling breath of shock, the sight was worse than he'd imagined but kept his dismay quiet. Scott took hold of Isaac's shoulders and waited for Allison's go-ahead before the two of them dragged Isaac safely out of the wreck.

"I thought I sensed something," Scott whispered beside her. He looked all of feral with the calm of a sage.

She didn't want to give him false hopes but even knowing that people opened their eyes, spasms
after death were natural she couldn't help but hope.

"We had a plan," Scott insisted. He looked to her blinking tears away, "but we had a plan." He shifted to kneel nearly in Isaac's face, his voice rose to nearly a yell, "you can't give up! You came too far!! We had a plan!"

"Scott," she reached to touch his shoulder but brought her hand back at the familiar reverberation she felt climbing up her spine. There was a real threat he might lose control. Scott's raw emotions hadn't come so close to the surface since the early days of his full moon shifting. But something different was occurring, Allison could feel it as well, Scott caused the shift in power not something great or earth shattering but something that made the air around them feel alive and vibrant. "Scott," she said again with conviction in her voice and knelt beside him.

"Isaac!" Scott roared as he held his face in both of his hands, held delicately in clawed hands "you're stronger than this! Wake up!!"

With that Isaac's life came back into his eyes, the color of yellow fueled them and a rattling breath of life turned into a howl before he collapsed to the ground.

Staring in shock, Scott looked to Allison but she moved quickly and searched Isaac's face for signs of clarity. Scott looked to his hands in curiosity, they were still cake with blood and dirt and he felt more than a little terrified that he had done something, something powerful that should not have been his to do. That quite possibly might have been influence by his estranged Alpha. That was a concern wasn't it? Someone had brought that up, Lydia maybe. But Allison seemed to think better of it.

"His breathing is shallow," she said raising her head up from his chest, she slowly smiled "but he's breathing."

Scott gazed at Allison in awe and when their eyes meet there was disconnect; her Hunter-self left her hard-hearted while Scott never felt so felt open-hearted.

"You've got to go," she instructed. Allison looked to be calculating everything, especially the risks.

"You're right," then Scott's eyes darted through the trees. He remembered their world outside of their secret society of drama and violence. Lacrosse practice was waiting 5 minutes away. It took that for him to collect himself and return his features to their natural state.

"I've got this," If she felt unsure she didn't show it, she knew better than to doubt her skills.

Scott stood and stared down incredulously at them, sat on the ground, Isaac half-dead and Allison covered in his blood and dirt, her weapons strewn every which way.

"Scott, go!" she shouted.

"I should help," Scott said biting down on his lip.

She shook her head, "how? You can't just call an ambulance and explain these injuries away. And you can't just walk him into the school and explain how we knew how to find him?" her words insistent but she knew the winning tactic "your Mom is there, waiting."

Scott stepped backward, looking as though he'd gotten slapped. Then after a pause took another step "this doesn't feel right."
"It's okay," she forced calm.

"No, it's not," he kept his eyes on her as he slowly turned away. He felt like they should have discussed this longer, like they didn't have enough time to talk. "No, it's not right."

"It doesn't - it doesn't mean anything," she pressed her lips together and smiled slightly, conveying confidence.

"But it feels like it does." He said and when she couldn't reply he looked away then started to walk, then picked up his pace and then started to run back to the field.

Track 25 - End Credits by EDEN

As distance grew while Scott ran through the trees he felt gratitude that Allison hadn't come along. Not that he didn't always want her beside him in some part of his heart but he sensed her hot temper earlier and wasn't sure how she would take it if he told her he sensed someone coming toward them.

It might not have mattered if he told her it didn't feel like a threat because whoever it was, they were running right at them. In fact, he was pretty sure it was someone trying to play with them and as ill-fitting as it seemed there was something sparkling in his soul that wanted to play back. He would have ignored it if he didn't want Allison and Isaac to be discovered in a vulnerable state. So he ran toward it and raced with it. Eventually he outran it and tackled it on a hilly slope, practically catching his classmate mid-air and tumbling to the ground with her in his arms.

And she was familiar, a beautiful Asian classmate he had seen in peripheries wearing the BHHS track suit. More than that he sensed something about her, something unique and strong, stranger than anything he had sensed before but not in the manner of strength he's sensed before. Like warmth and static wrapped up in an echo.

"You're in my History class," he said awkwardly with her lying flat on top of him.

"I was running!" she gapped in wide-eyed surprise. "Did you see how fast I was going?"

"I could feel it." The realization clicked into place and Scott gripped her waist, then corrected the intimacy of it and grabbed her shoulder. "You were running really, really fast."

She grinned happily, "you were running really fast. Why were you running anyway?"

Scott shook his head and rolled her off of him, he didn't sense any threat off of her but he was certain if he had to he could outrun her again, "Kira, right?"

She nodded emphatically and tightened her ponytail. Her voice started to reek of worry "I didn't know I could run that fast, but I didn't know anyone could run that fast. How did you-- why did you--"

"My friend," he kept it vague, he ran his hands through his hair leaving it standing at odd angles and caked with dirt. At least he looked earnest. "He was in trouble."

"Is he okay?" she glanced over Scott's shoulder in the direction of the others until he stepped in the way.
"He will be," he considered Allison and Isaac for a moment and struggled to put them out of mind. He had to have faith they could care for each other, instead he asked "Why are you running around out here? How come you can run like that?" Scott asked, honestly worried for her rather than of her. She stumbled into something far more dangerous than she was prepared to handle and definitely more private than his friends were ready to share.

"You looked-- I saw you look really upset and run away. I was worried," she smiled nervously and Scott couldn't feel any lie off of her. What he could sense of her confusion and overwhelmed him but he didn't have time to process. "And I've always liked running but I've never run that fast before."

Scott looked her over, "are you okay?"

"I think so," she seemed to absorb all this new information. "Please, don't tell anyone?"

"I was just about to say the same thing," he grinned. Without communicating it aloud they'd started back toward the school. "I'd like to talk to you about this again though?"

"I was about to ask you the same thing," Kira tried to keep her voice controlled but she sensed of relief and delight. Her steps were light as if she felt a little freer. Whereas Scott felt burdened with yet another secret.

In the silence left behind Allison felt robbed of the magnified sureness she felt when Scott was beside her because he was her rock, her anchor and as much as she knew in her head the tools to proceed, she didn't know what to do next. Isaac's wounded arm bled openly across her lap, she pressed her hand to his forehead and could feel a fever had begun to spread. She moved closer and slid legs underneath him because lifting his weight was out of her physical abilities. She examined the collisions to the right side of his body, his head, his shoulder and most of his ribs. It seemed the soil had compacted most of the impact from the blow leaving mostly heavy bruising, maybe some internal bruising as well but nothing she could examine from the angle she sat at.

Passing a hand over her face, she worried that with his enhanced healing capability slowed to a crawl he might just die again in her arms. Evidently she wasn't the only one.

"Allison," Isaac said in a small weary voice.

"Yes?" she had to lean low curling over his head to hear him.

"Don't disappear on me," he pleaded, his blooded hand trembling as he tried to move it to reach for hers.

"No, of course not," she scoffed a little too cockily as she clutched at his hand, squeezing it a little too hard. She was uncertain whether he smiled or winced up at her. "You're not getting rid of me that easily."

He lost consciousness immediately afterward, an easy sleep and Allison gave off a dry sob. She would not succumb to crying. But she had resolved to how she would save him and with her free hand she dug her cellphone out of jacket pocket.

"Mom," she kept her tone clipped and commanding, determined to keep the warring emotions from her voice. "I need your help."
CREDITS/ROLL CALL:

Argents - Team1; Victoria, Chris & Allison.
• Rumy - [Sergeant] specialized in Recon; Special Forces & espionage. Chris' right-hand & Allison's godfather.
• Axel - [1st Lieutenant] expert tracker, marksman & Allison's 2nd cousin.
• Bennett - [Field Officer] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old & friend to Allison.
• Leveque - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Terrain-Orientation & Mechanics.
• Ulrich - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation.

Argents - Team2; Kate.
• Livy - [1st Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Force-Orientation, R.I.F. & close-combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's right-hand.
• Tyhurst - [Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation, Cyberwarefare, has CIA background & is ranked with state detective credentials. Referred to as 'try-hard.'
• Norm - [Sergeant] specialty in Medical Intelligence & as a Longbowman; an archer who uses the longbow, w/various arrowheads. He' JR's brother & Roman's Uncle.
• Roman - [Field Officer] specialty as a Marksman/Sharpshooter, 19yrs. old & a weapons expert skilled in precision shooting. He's JR's son & Norm's Nephew.
• Fry - [Field Officer] specialty as a Tactician & general officer, while his marksmanship is low he is still in high regard for his brain.

Argents - Team3; Gerard.

Hale (Present Day) Pack; Derek Alpha
• Isaac - [Omega] in search of a pack.
• Stiles - [Omega] on a quest for answers to what destroyed his family(s).
• (missing) Cora - [Beta] missing, presumed dead.
• (missing) Boyd - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.
• (missing) Erica - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.

Hale (Heyday) Pack; Talia Alpha
• Peter - [Beta] Talia's brother, Uncle to Derek, Laura & Cora.
• Laura (age 17) - [Beta] was last seen struggling between trying to pull survivors from the fire & defending her mother, Talia from her Uncle Peter's attacks.
• Derek (age 15) - [Beta] was pulled from the flames by his sister Laura & ushered to safety by their emissary… until the Treaty was made.

? Other;?
• Jackson - [Kanima] characterized by claws that secrete venom which temporarily paralyzes their victims, a double row of sharp fangs, & a tail. Unless a Kanima resolves what in its past caused its mutation, it will eventually cocooned stage & emerge as a winged creature. Unlike a werewolf, a Kanima seeks out a master instead of a pack. It will carry out whatever vengeance its master bids. *chapter 12
• Kira - [Kitsune] "There hasn't been a documented case of a fledgling Kitsune (manifesting attributes) this powerful, to carry a thunderstorm in her back pocket on a whim. Not in a hundred thousand years." *chapter 18
• Lydia - [Banshee] ‘A Banshee screams preceding a supernatural death not as a premonition but to highlight the likelihood of supernatural events that result in deaths.’
  *chapter 8*

**Twins' Pack; Aiden & Ethan Carver Alphas**
• Marta - [Beta] she's an older motor head & 1st Lieutenant.
• Bridy - [Beta] the packs' spy because she's easily underestimated.
• Gus - [Beta] referred to as psychotic now & again, but his very few (& dwindling) close friends' are his touchstone.
• (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, bi & partnered to Naylor, formerly to Bozeman.
• (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
• (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
• (deceased) Coot - [Omega] Deb's partner & killed by the Monster.

**Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha**
• (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed 1st Lieutenant, possibly romantically entangled.
• Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali & closely bonded to Huntington.
• Santos - [Beta] while loyal to Kali has mentored many, without regard to packs. Helped the Twins first learn to shift together without losing their identities.
• Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed & with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
• Levi - [Beta] neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
• Huntington - [Beta] has strong empathic senses, is very good friends with Gus' from Twins' pack & Lark.

**Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha**
• Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' Lieutenant Werelynx from wiped out Shapeshifter dynasty.
• (missing) Dr. Kane - [Omega] both a medical Doctor & their torturer.
• (deceased) Quint - [Omega] eager to please teen & Dr. Kane's son.

**Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha**
• Søren - [Beta] 1st Lieutenant, Danish man of even temperament & a skilled negotiator until his temper is peaked.
• Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
were (you) relieved

Chapter Summary

In the wake of revelations uncovered in Allison's home the night before; Stiles and Isaac's growing fixations lead them on exactly the dangerous, unmistakably life-threatening paths that Lydia had predicted, while dragging their friends down with them. While the guys might have unwittingly enlisted new unlikely allies, doing so could have cut off their friends for good. But while Scott managed to walk the middle path in his life, by bringing both friend and family together under one roof, a belated revelation falls into place jeopardizing his place with everyone.

• Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/19-were-you-relieved

Chapter Notes

Previously On:
While leaving the Argents (finally) toward school grounds Sheriff Stilinski, Natalie Martin, Chris & Victoria Argent take an opportunity to give the kids positive reinforcement. Only in Allison's case she accidentally outs her friends as being Werewolves. And while her own friends were working on their reassessment of the burglary of the night before; 1) Isaac and Stiles continue to test the bonds of their family relationship 2) Scott, Stiles & Isaac decide to step up their investigation on finding Cora on their own 3) Lydia decides to investigate the scientific more reliable side of Shapeshifter/Supernatural state.

Meanwhile the Argent Hunters relate what information they've collected recently throughout the town and consider placing an agent within the high school.

Meanwhile in the high school;
• Kira returns immediately after she frightens herself with her growing ability
• Jackson heals at an unnatural which unnerves everyone who witnesses it
• After sensing a threat near the school grounds;
o Isaac heads into the nearby forestry and comes faces to face with danger and ends up just a little dead
o Scott follows the threat and ends up finding Isaac dying
o Allison follow Scott and assists in recovering Isaac from deaths door -- doing so she' push to finding resources in the Hunters.
• While Lydia banshee ability left her exposed sensing chaos and death, she was left drowning in the schools swimming pool.

How ya' doin kiddos?
1) You Should Read The Re-Cap I Wrote While Sleep Deprived. Its AMAAAAZINC. wow. Such Sass.

2) I've split this chapter in two. It's the third chapter I've done that to but the first not time related. There's just so much to process and I don't want to overwhelm. Plus-side, next chapter should update soon. I mean it IS done, I would just like to go over it with my beta at least once without her crying so I can get accurate feedback. s'all I'm
Track 01 - She and Him by Omniflux

{Saturday Morning}

After Allison's emergency call to her Mom, her longtime partner Bennet was the first responder on the scene. He arrived within minutes on his preferred KingQuad ATV, zipping through the foliage effortlessly. He hopped off the bike and left the engine on to race to her side, assessing the scene. Once he knew the blood on her face wasn't hers and the fight that went on didn't physically involve her he was more civil about things.

Then he called Victoria on the SAT phone and gave her the heads up that he'd found Allison and things were relatively 'All-Clear'. Victoria was nearby in the mini-van; it was only a matter of getting Isaac to her.

Victoria turned up minutes later with a med kit in her hand, equipped with sedatives and splints galore. While she tended to Isaac, Bennet backtracked from the field to the scene of the incident and met Allison at a halfway point. She looked anxious to walk too far away from where her Mother kneeled beside an unconscious and vulnerable Isaac Lahey.

"We've got a couple more markings here I think," he said analyzing some lingering scraps embedded in trees.

Allison went over to help, she used her ring daggers to obscure and reshape the markings. She had an artistic talent with stripping bark. Bennet kept at finding any evidence along the ground that could look remotely like blood or claw marks and he collected them or made them disappear as well. This was the sort of basic Hunter work they'd been doing since they could walk and now they could manage this mastery in 5 minutes or less.

"Done," Bennet chirped. He had a hand on her arm, a steadying grip to assure her before she wandered off for a second or third look. "We've got everything, Allison. Definitely everything."

"But what if--"

"Definitely everything, so maybe you should chill and come with me to the ATV," Bennet smiled kindly, his eyes were steady on her when she looked uncertain and she convinced herself to trust him.

"I should have known," she said after a few more minutes of tying together poles and a tarp to create a makeshift stretcher.

"What?" Bennet grinned a little cheekily, sensing Allison had begun to come back to her senses and the shock of events had started to slide away.

"You told my Mom about the Werewolves at the school?" she let out a breath in a scoff. They gave a three count and then lifted one end of the stretcher onto the end of his ATV.
"Well," Bennet felt remorse over one thing, "I thought the Werewolves figured out you were a Hunter. I should have known you knew there were Werewolves in the school and had it handled." He dusted off his hands and gave her a side glance. They stayed leaning against opposite sides of the KingQuad to catch their breath. Bennet cracked his knuckles out of nervousness and started to wonder aloud when they stopped talking, when it was they stopped checking in with each other. "I miss my partner."

To Allison that word had been reinvented several times over of late. Despite that, she knew what Bennet meant and she felt ashamed. "I know. I miss you too."

"Was I wrong to--"

"No, I shouldn't have put you in the position to report about Werewolves in the school--" even though the statement was true she didn't know what the alternative would have meant.

"They're right. I should have enrolled in the High School with you." He groaned and exchanged a knowing glance. He kept his voice easy to hear but low anyway. "I should have been there before things got out of hand and had your back."

"That's stupid. Bennet, don't change your mind," Allison shoved her hands in her jacket pockets, kept her head low and moved around the bike to stand close beside him. "You wanted field work. You wanted to be put to work and to learn techniques from people who aren't going to keep you under a glass like your Mom or your Dad."

"Yeah," he said, still unconvinced.

"You've got my back right now. That's what counts," Allison bumped shoulders with Bennet and her dimpled and sly smile melted his anxiety. "I can trust you to help me smooth this over with my Mom and Dad."

"Oh, sure!" he rolled his eyes dramatically and wrapped an arm around her shoulder. He gave it a squeeze hard enough to make her squeak. "Now she checks in with me!"

"Bennet, I'm serious." Her smile dropped incrementally. "They're not going to trust that I know what I'm doing. But I do. I do know."

Bennet didn't say anything. He just watched Allison and waited.

Her eyes flashed and her voice grew intense "I need you to trust me too. That guy, Isaac." She quickly amended, "When he wakes up he'll be surrounded by Hunters. I need to be next to him, not them. There is a big difference between being a Hunter and a friend to him and I'm not just going interrogate him the moment he wakes up."

"I get that, but you figure they are." The smile that was on Bennet's lips twisted out into a long line as he gave it some thought but his arm around her shoulder still gave her comfort.

"Of course," she was loathed to admit it. Allison leaned her head on his shoulder for just a moment and heaved a sigh before she stood to walk away.

"What do you need me to do?" Bennet gave a small nod.

Allison grinned once more, brighter than before. "Run interference. Just like we used to."

Bennet nodded more determinedly and climbed onto his bike once more. Allison reached to the back and ensured the ties that bound the stretcher were still secure, then climbed onto the back and
wrapped her arms around Bennet's waist as he drove the ATV over to where her Mother was concluding her intricate work.

Isaac looked better. Or at least he had more color in his face and all open wounds covered up. The evidence that she and Scott had performed some daring rescue had been cleared away and the area where he had nearly been crushed to death looked only as though a tree had fallen over and no harm had come to anything other than a change in the landscape.

Despite their years of experience, Allison and Bennet had yet to learn how to clean scene at quite that level of expertise. But Victoria was on a different level, considered a polymath even and they were lowly acolytes made to catch and carry the body through the woods. Not that Allison minded riding the bike backwards, watching Isaac's body rattle with every bump and swerve along the way.

It was 6 minutes without traffic from the High School to the Argents' home. It took them an additional 3 just to lift Isaac into the mini-van and they managed to get every red-light along the way. After the 12 minutes it took for them to finally get home, it felt like years had been shaved off of Allison's life, she barely had enough time to breathe before the negotiations started on where they would place their 'guest'. It was the way Chris said it that frightened Allison and threw her off her game, but Bennet had her back.

"Allison's room of course." The stares that aimed at him were lethal (with the exception of Rumy's which was laughable). "As far as he knows she knows he's a Werewolf at this point. But he doesn't know we know. And if he doesn't know we know he knows, she knows how to question him better than we know."

'Bless his heart.' Allison stared at him in abject adoration as if there were no one else in the room. There was little other argument after that.

Track 02 - The Long Shadow by Barn Owl

An hour earlier, an early lunch break had been broken up as Stiles watched Isaac storm off toward an uncertain threat. He stayed back, left at lunch while feeling unsteady as his extrasensory perception that stretched to great lengths. He had to will his fingernails back from claws while he couldn't prevent his ears from hearing hundreds of thundering stray sounds.

"Is everything okay?" the Sheriff came up behind him, his voice smooth. Isaac's leaving left a tight feeling in Stiles' stomach. That combined with his Dad's kindness, he felt smothered.

Stiles jumped slightly. He'd half expected to be jumped upon by a predator despite knowing his Dad's scent so clearly now. He breathed it in before he turned around to center himself. He gulped down one breath, then another.

He thought about what Isaac said, about keeping the next kid safe. It made Stiles prioritize, the anonymous kid would be a dark mark on his conscience to lose but not at the expense of his loved ones; his Dad counted high on that priority list as did that idiot Isaac. He would see to them one at a time and then-- and then he'd do something good.

When Stiles looked down at his hands again the claws were gone and he felt certain any affect his eyes might have given off had left his eyes and returned them to their natural brown.
"He's just being his usual competitive ass," said Stiles. He knew his Dad would take it to mean with lacrosse, but Isaac was often the first idiot to run into the foray of a fight. That is, when he wasn't peddling his Zen bullshit.

"Well, Scott's on the team, too" the Sheriff reminded, his expression bemused. "Maybe he'll teach him some good sportsmanship."

"Yeah, you're right," Stiles didn't make the connection earlier and he prayed that were true. "Dad, I think I should go check on him." He started to step away without giving his Dad much of a choice, "I promise I'll check in later," he remembered their agreement. "Love ya," he said while disappearing behind the double-doors.

Only he stopped on the other side and listened until he heard his Dad make it to the cruiser.

For a moment Stiles thought about running after the car and jumping in with it, making sure his Dad had all the safety and security against the Monster 24/7. Whenever Stiles paused to think about being home in Beacon Hills finally all he could imagine was how much he wanted to keep it in the chrysalis of his mind's eye, but there was no way of protecting that except by removing its threats. Once he could no longer hear his Dad's car he spun around and ran full pelt to the end of the hall.

From what Stiles could follow, Isaac had broken into the sub floors via the locked equipment room. At which point Isaac could have had access to the locker rooms, any of the gymnasiums; the swimming pool, the basketball court or he could have peeled right through and headed to the open field. By the time Stiles reached the sub floors another level of presence washed over him.

Stiles couldn't sense Isaac anymore and he couldn't even sense whatever threat there was from before, in fact the world became so overwhelmingly full up with noise and hurt, everything turned into white noise. Doubling over in pain, Stiles clutched his head to keep it from exploding, to try and steady his vision as the world began to melt from his sight; his breaths came in heavy pants as he stumbled against the walls aiming for the open doorway to the bathroom for a place to collapse.

Track 03 - Corpse Road by Keaton Henson

The world tasted of chemicals and smelled of harshness. Lydia coughed when she breathed because it felt like breathing in bricks until she coughed and everything was air again. She felt cold and clammy and trembled all over and when she opened her eyes the room was draped in darkness. Her coughs echoed in the emptiness of the school's pool and when she felt a little more clearheaded she rolled onto her back and stared up at the ceiling. Her breathing felt steady but quicker than she anticipated because something in Lydia's panicked state convinced her that she would never again feel okay in her skin.

It was unclear how she ended up on the side of the pool. It was foggier what caused her to drown to begin with, Lydia's never ever had a problem keeping aloft before under any circumstances and when she replayed it in her mind she only remembered shadowy images and sounds that were impossible to connect to swimming at all. The longer she lay still and waited for them to settle the more she remembered a vision of Isaac dying and tears or something like it, some water kept cold on her face and guilt weighed her down for what felt like hours.

Finally, a bell sounded reminding the change of periods. It wasn't a regular school day and if there
was a changeover there was a good chance she might get locked in to the school. It took a great deal of strength to turn onto her side and try to stand. She cried out as a sharp pain shot through her right arm when she tried to lean on it. She crumpled under her own weight and curled into a ball. After a minute or two of full-fledged sobbing Lydia climbed up onto her knees then stood at a stumble. She aimed with all of her strength toward the girls' locker rooms. It was a blurring mystery how she stripped from her swimsuit and slipped into her dress. She abandoned the idea of a coat, however light and draped a cardigan over her shoulders, hugging her designer bag under her good arm. With the strength of sheer and stubborn will power Lydia made the slow and steady trek to her Beetle. At most she might have seemed a little stressed rather than injured which was less embarrassing and she could live with that.

After fishing her keys from her bag and stabbing one of them into the lock, Lydia got into the driver's seat and leaned onto the wheel. Weariness claimed her into sleep but until then she cried from frustration. She wanted to know the truth about what happened to Isaac. Was she really too late in helping to save her friend? Was she really too late in making things right with him? When she felt him going under how could she not have thought of something better to do than run away? How had she gotten herself from the bottom of the pool? Why was she even alive at this point? Why was she always so goddamn weak?

Track 04 - The Weight of Us by Sanders Bohlke

On the field when Scott rejoined his team, he noticed some significant changes. Stiles had reappeared from nowhere, as did Jackson and they'd definitely noticed each other with the menacing looks they were throwing around. Not to mention his Mom looked particularly disgruntled to be in a full-on high-volume arm-flailing conversation with Coach. It might have been worth it to stay in the woods with Allison and Isaac.

Practice looked called to a halt, players were disgruntled. Scott figured he was one of the deciding factors for this. That and Jackson's lateness, but from his freshly showered appearance and the sense of disorientation he felt pouring off of him, Scott figured it couldn't have been helped. But there wasn't a note you could write that explained 'Kanima is acting up again.' Stiles wasn't faring any better, covered in sweat he looked ready to explode from his seat. He gnawed through every nail left on his left hand after having chewed through his right and glared murderous daggers at Jackson.

Given the options of which fire to put out first Scott knew where his duties lay.

"Mom," he put himself between her and Coach, "what going on?"

"Where have you been?" she asked, her eyes skirted over him from top to bottom taking in the signs of blood and mud still caked in some places. "Are you okay? What's going on?"

"It's okay. I'm okay," he assured her with a soft tone, his crooked smirk and a gentle hand on her arm. She wasn't buying it.

"See, he's fine," Coach waved his hand dismissively. "He can handle body blows--you get used to them after a couple dozen in a row. It's continuity that builds character." With that, he smacked Scott on the back hard enough to make him wince and handed him back his helmet and lacrosse stick before disappearing to yell at some other student.
Mellissa's worried face hardened. "Scott, one minute you're here and then you're gone. This is why I shouldn't work so many hours. It's fine until it's like we're living two very different lives and you get hurt and don't come to me first."

"Mom, no! You love your job. I don't want to mess that up for you," Scott insisted. His feelings churned. Scott sensed riling between Stiles and Jackson and it was drawing him away into that other life she worried over, their anger and disquiet baiting him to lose control of his mind. As troubled as he felt, her worries were real, realer than their ugly unaired squabble and he focused on her alone, on their life and their home and the value he placed on it because without her as his touchstone everything else spiraled out of control. "It's just a misunderstanding. I ran into Allison on the way back from the bathroom. It's not that big a deal. You're upset about me, I can see that and you can check me this blood isn't even mine."

It was scaring him how good he was getting at lying. But the little bits of truths thrown in there would help her see what she wanted to see. He dropped his equipment and hugged her, she whispered that he was an idiot into his shoulder and lingered when she held him back. When the Coach whistled for all the players to rejoin on the field Scott was pretty sure, like 95% sure his Mom flipped the Coach off behind his back.

Scott needed to trust Stiles would keep his temper a little longer as he walked his Mom to her Chevy Malibu. When he gave her the keys she lectured him a little, the meaning was there but there was little heat in it. His Mom banished his bike for sure and insisted he take the bus for a week. He gave no argument at all. She included that he clean the house and take on cooking duty, he nodded along silently. And when she asked that he not point out when she repeated herself when it came to punishments he grinned a little. She tacked on that when she had double shifts again he was absolutely to bring her food at work, he agreed but right before she slipped into the driver seat he hesitated to ask a favor.

"Actually, more like a complete adjustment in our lives." He knew it was now or never. Their lives couldn't afford to be split any longer. Desperation must have read in Scott's voice because she drummed her fingers along the steering wheel as she waited him out. "It's about Isaac, my friend. He might need a place to stay for a little while."

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**Track 05 - Who Are You Really by Mikky Ekko**

Even as Jackson stared and recognized the detail, the perfect cheekbones, crystal clear blue eyes and $55 haircut, he couldn't recognize what he saw staring back at him. As he gripped both sides of the sink and held fast as though he were pressing it downward into the ground, he could acknowledge only one truth. He had no control.

He'd lost another gap of time and came to with grime on his hands, skin under his nails and when he looked in the bathroom mirror he wore only a towel. If he stared too long and tried to speak he vomited snakes. Jackson knew it wasn't real, he knew it was a delusion but he knew whatever happened in those gaps weren't fake. And what shocked Jackson most is he wanted to be held accountable. After he'd reawakened in the hospital with a new understanding that Jackson could put a name to a face, he learned he could maybe find a way to regain control at times; he wanted to know the honest truth.

But every time he looked at himself in the mirror, every time he felt like he came close to the honest truth, his blood boiled, not in a metaphorical sense at all. His blood would surface black and
oily and drip from his nose or eyes or ears, drowning out his chance to sense out something real. And the snakes, they were new. The snakes that choked out his yell of frustration, spilled from his mouth, slid down his arms, wrapped around his hands like cuffs and kept him from touching the mirror, the snakes that came from within kept him from reaching that Jackson in his reflection, the one unaffected who watched in suppressed disgust and disappointment.

And in a blink it was over when behind him came an unsteady moan and sputter from the other end of the line of sinks as Stilinski rose from unconsciousness. In an instant they went from confusion to anger, ready to come to blows with little to any reason.

"You," Stiles accused and Jackson was pretty sure whatever Stiles said next he could have been guilty of, he had no assurances otherwise. "Where did you come from? Where the fuck've you been? What the hell did you do?" Stiles looked him up and down. He stumbled back while taking to his feet, his sneakers squeaking against the tiled floor as he came to stand.

Jackson didn't exactly have answers for that and while he wanted answers for those questions, he definitely didn't want to answer to Stilinski. In fact, he kind of wanted to rip the guy's head off.

At that they were interrupted by another lacrosse player, Greenburg, who had been sent on a busy errand. Coach didn't think he'd actually find any missing players, he just meant to keep from having to look at his face while the players were delayed but it was enough to break the two apart before their tempers got hot enough to tear apart the bathroom altogether.

Track 06 - Everyone Who Knows You by Royal Forrest

Minutes later--

"What the hell is going on?!" Stiles yelled in a red-faced, strained small voice. His hands were gripped like crab claws, ready to tear apart the air and Scott gently pulled them down and held them fast.

"Allison's got it. Isaac is healing and she knows how to take care of it," Scott made his voice as soothing as possible but he could sense Stiles' nerves twisting around.

"It was Jackson," Stiles insisted.

At that, Scott gripped his friend's hands tightly before he took chase. "You don't know that."

His eyes flashed, his bared his teeth without fangs "do we know what Kanima attacks look like?"

"Well, no--"

"Do we know where he's been?"

"Uh..."

"Do we even know who is controlling him? How he healed so fast? How powerful he is now?"

Stiles snapped his hands out of Scott's hold, his voice raised to the point of shouting.

"Stiles!" Scott moved to stand in his line of sight with Jackson. That didn't keep him from casting an occasional glance to Jackson as well. "We don't know the answers to any of that but we do
know that Isaac needs our help right now. We need to be calm. And think."

Stiles huffed, looked down and kicked the toes of his sneakers into the ground. "You didn't see him before in the bathroom Scott. He's crazy. Not like athlete 'I'm on 'roid so let's riot' crazy. I'm talking 'I wanna eat my own hand' crazy."

"Shit." As Scott ran a hand through his hair, he tried to imagine what it was like. When his nightmares were at its wildest and he lived in someone else's skin at worst he woke up 3 miles into the woods, worried he might have vicariously attacked a rabbit. He couldn't fathom walking through the light of day as someone else's puppet.

"A Kanima only loses more control over time," Stiles gave him a pleading look but came up short with an argument. The reasoning he gave failed him at the thought of his recent collapse and his missing minutes. He suddenly couldn't bring himself to confess that to Scott, not after he might have gone through something similar without even knowing.

"We'll figure it out," Scott insisted, maybe if he said it often enough it would just happen. "We can ask Allison about that later when we check in on Isaac. Right now, let's just be thankful things are okay and enjoy it for a little bit."

Stiles stepped back, then stepped back again and balked at him. "What does that mean?"

"Eat. Shower. I dunno, rest." Scott shrugged looking baffled that he couldn't make this any clearer. "Isaac is healing up. Allison and her Hunter family have already cleaned the scene. Jackson looks like he's already headed home. There is nothing we can do for now."

"Are you kidding me?" Stiles' eyes were wide in disbelief and his voice low. "You just want to go home," he waved his hand in the air as if to openly display the concept in all its absurdity.

Pressing his lips together in a failed attempt not to smile, Scott gave a nod.

"Never heard anything so irresponsible in my life," Stiles grumbled and left in a huff.

Grinning, Scott shouted after him, "I'll call you later."

Still sulking, Stiles waved over his shoulder.

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Track 07 - Play Dead by Bjork and David Arnold

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{Saturday Noon}

An impression was left on her face when Lydia had come to lying against the steering wheel. The second's rest she meant to take after hauling herself from the gym and across student parking, had matured into hours. The bone-tiredness that plagued her earlier had halved but oxygen deprivation still left her feeling like she had been hit by a car.

The sun wasn't overly bright, in fact overcast skies were her friend but it felt torturous anyhow. Her iPhone chimed with the notifications of missed phone calls. Lydia groaned toward it with all the contempt she could spare. Rolling her head against the steering wheel, she looked toward the phone. In doing so, she felt her head loll about and dizziness came with the act. Lydia took in a deep breath and with every sense of conviction she could muster, she sat upright. Aligning her
spine took pressure off of her lungs and after some slower 'breathing techniques' she felt better in control.

But her phone continued to chime inconsiderately and when she opened her eyes again the sun had slid significantly lower. Lydia assessed the situation again; her body felt sore but her mind felt clearer, she felt in control. She turned on the car and waited a minute for it to get comfortable while she checked her messages. There were a few urgent texts from Allison but nothing detailed. She missed two messages from her Mom asking when she would be home to which she texted back immediately. (She texted because she didn't trust the steadiness of her voice.) Lydia explained she was still at the school (which wasn't a lie) and needed to pick up her car, (which was little bit of a stretch but she had to say something to misdirect) and wanted to check in with Allison before she headed home. She shook hard as she tried to text, it took three times as long and that made her want to cry more than anything else. Then there was a voicemail from the florist, they just said to call back. That felt like the more pressing one.

The florist felt like the petty and pretty distraction she needed. It felt like real life because it felt like normalcy, no drama, no dying, no monsters, no mayhem, just a box of overpriced chocolates and the biggest most beautiful purple foxglove Lydia had ever seen in the most awful arrangement she'd ever seen. When they tried to overcharge her credit card, she talked them down because of their god-awful arrangement, and even so Lydia knew she would have to struggle a while to pay this off it felt stressful. It felt normal. Something finally felt right.

After picking up the flowers, in the parking lot of the mall Lydia sat and ate the chocolates. It didn't heal her bruising she felt worsening her arm but it helped her grumbling stomach and her depleted sugar levels. When she pulled the hem of the cardigan away from her right arm she discovered the swelling formation grapefruit-sized discoloration on the collarbone leading toward her shoulder that gave off intensely sharp pains when she carried the flowers to the car, coupled with finger-shaped bruising on her bicep. If she had to make an educated guess it looked like mild ligament damage, verifying she definitely couldn't have pulled herself from the pool. It looked like whoever rescued her from the depths of the swimming pool yanked her out hard enough to separate her shoulder. Not that they thought to apologize or even leave a note after the act. Not like she could cover this up with a few well-placed accessories or owned enough cover-up makeup.

Lydia came back around the trunk, the only space large enough to keep the arrangement without it tumbling over or crushing itself. And she made an executive decision; 1) after digging around for a bit to find shears floating among her roadside supplies, she was going to take out her frustration on the gross flower arrangement and 2) she was most definitely going to finish all the chocolates.

A good twenty minutes later, Lydia felt accomplished. She also felt better for having eaten a meal of containing fistfuls of chocolates and ibuprofen washed down with a coffee from one of her favorite gourmet coffee shops. Admiring her work, she sipped slowly from her cup in her left hand and tapped her phone against her thigh. She nearly got through convincing herself she was ready to emerge into the messed-up world. Lydia hadn't gotten another text from Allison for hours and Scott hadn't checked in since before practice, with an ambiguous 'we should all have a meet-up after practice'.

Somehow their angst felt less of a priority on her list of things than discovering who pulled her from the pool. Surely if it had been Scott he would have been straightforward and said or texted as much but there was radio silence there-- of course there might be something keeping him away. Lydia doubted it was Allison because she wouldn't have abandoned her at the side of the pool and left her to her wounds and questions. An ambiguous sense told her Isaac was an unlikely candidate.
but-- Stiles was a more likely candidate since she hadn't heard from him all day. She worked in her mind to figure out what circumstances would leave them so divided but before she could figure out who to call first, her cellphone came to life in her hands.

"Stiles?" she asked, already tossing her belongings in her bag, slamming the trunk shut and she rushed toward the driver's seat before his voice came through. "What's going on?" It was instinct, the weariness in her let up just a little and tightness in her chest told her not to rest just yet.

"Are you doing anything right now?" he asked sounding strained. In fact, he sounded strained with the act of trying to sound laid back.

"Stiles," Lydia's voice went harsh, cutting through his façade and she listened impatiently. Without even a direction she began to drive, her aching arm forgotten as one arm went over the other with the wider turns of the steering wheel.

Stiles let out a breath, part relief part anguish. "I think I might have gotten myself in over my head. Literally."

Track 08 - Overtime by U.S. Girls

"Well, I came through the front door this time instead of the window," Isaac mused weakly.

Allison did not find him funny at all, she squeezed his hand intending to convey as much but forgot both of them had been injured to the point that had he been an average guy, a double-amputation would have been likely. He winced and drew in a sharp breath that reminded her as much.

"Crap." She eased back along the edge of her queen-sized bed. "Crap. Crap."

"No, come back," he whispered. "Talk to me. I don't want to keep thinking."

She tucked her hair behind both ears, sighed deeply and scooted forward. Allison had an idea of what Isaac meant but she prayed he didn't bring it up because as much as she could keep up the façade, she still had trouble processing the act of recovering him from death's door.

"What do you want to talk about?"

"What did your Mom say when you picked me up?" Isaac gave her a smirk, half amused half terrified. Allison gave a little laugh.

"Not much," it was now or never, "she had a good idea you were a Werewolf already."

"Oh," he leaned back into her headboard, he looked ready to laugh a lot but his lightheadedness needed bracing.

"I slipped up," she bit her lower lip, her face scrunched up with her whispered admission. "That's why I was so pissed at you this morning."

"Because you slipped up?" his brow went up in disbelief.

"She suspected I had a Werewolf friend."

"Uh-huh," he tried to cross his arms but the effort just left him with his arms placed straight
forward on his lap.

"I confirmed I had a few," Allison said and her voice went up a pitch when she did.

"Which pissed you off at us," Isaac smirked.

"Somehow," Allison let out a breath she hadn't realized she was holding.

Isaac looked away, deep in thought for a split second then came back to her, his tiredness made his voice sound all the more sagely. "Do you really think you were upset at being caught or do you think you are upset to be friends with us?"

"What?!" she scooted further toward the head of the bed. The pain in her voice surprised Isaac to the point he banged his head into the headboard. She stopped to think straight and rubbed at her head to think clearly, "I was pissed because I failed. For one moment I lost sight of my values and I failed all of you. I didn't know how I could look you guys in the face. I still don't know how to make it up to you and I'm not sure my family will give me the chance to--"

"Well, saving my life is a pretty good start," Isaac said with a quiet firmness and a hesitant smile.

Allison eased off her babbling. "Isaac, I would never-- I was just really disappointed in myself."

"Don't be," he shrugged and it took a little bit of effort. "The town is full of Hunters. It was bound to happen." He moved his hand and dropped it onto her in an attempt to hold her hand. She took the hand and grasped it. "At least with you keeping an eye on each of us, Allison, none of us ended up as a statistic."

Her sigh came out as a little laugh. "I don't know what's going to happen next," she whispered.

"Hey, me neither," his brows went up with a little humor and with it his bandage dropped. She reached up and adjusted it. "You scared?"

Allison found she didn't have to give it thought "no. We're going to figure it out."

As she explained that Scott promised to text later, probably after he got home and away from his Mom's watchful gaze, Allison also promised once she got an idea of what her Mom found at the scene she'd let him know but she didn't get into that too much for fear of upsetting Isaac and his recovery. Before they could cover anything too terrible they were interrupted by Bennet's polite knocking, playing out the tune of 'Shave & a Haircut' against her bedroom door.

"Hate to disturb this peaceful moment but the 'rents are asking for you." He looked to Allison, his dark brown eyes soft and with a weak smile, his tiredness ran throughout. Bennet looked like any other student who would sit alongside him in Algebra I. Like Allison, the gruesome reputation of Hunters he had been sold throughout his youth did not fit him.

"Isaac, this is my friend," Allison explained. Then she scooted backward and quickly took her hand away from Isaac's hoping Bennet hadn't seen. She gestured toward him amiably and wore a bright and genuine smile across her face. "My partner, Bennet" she amended.

Of course he noticed Allison's closeness but said nothing. Instead he came to the center of the foot of the bed so that Isaac could see him fully, as he wore a perfectly average grey quilted hoodie with a red crewneck underneath but still smelled of dirt and gasoline from driving Isaac safely out of the woods. He gave a cheerful little peace sign and a weak smile, his tiredness ran throughout. Bennet looked like any other student who would sit alongside him in Algebra I. Like Allison, the gruesome reputation of Hunters he had been sold throughout his youth did not fit him.

"Hate to disturb this peaceful moment but the 'rents are asking for you." He looked to Allison, his dark brown eyes soft as he clapsed his hands in a gesture of apology.

"Well, this was going to happen eventually" she heaved a sigh and slowly stood. Allison looked
between the two, her mind started to race and it became obvious from her expression, an expression that became similar to Bennet's very quickly. "Can you please stay here with him?"

"You want him to babysit me?" Isaac miraculously found the strength to sit upright.

After considering it, Bennet looked at Allison skeptically before he responded "no, she wants me to guard you." Isaac became quiet and the room turned very still and chilly after that.

Finally, Isaac spoke up, "what did you cook?"

"What?" Bennet scoffed and turned to look at him. Allison nibbled on her fingernail and didn't pretend her nerves weren't getting the better of her.

"At the dinner the other night, the pot-luck? What did you cook?" Isaac became insistent, his smirk spirited.

"The bacon-wrapped-shrimp," Bennet answered cockily crossing his arms. If there was one thing he was proud of learning from his Father, it was learning how to cook.

Isaac eased back against the headboard once more, tiredness catching up with him. "Alright, I trust him," he breathed a little easier. "For now, anyway, but try and hurry back."

Bennet laughed lightly and turned to Allison, while she hid her red face behind her hand. "He's right. 1) you should hurry up, 2) my food is awesome." With that Bennet gripped her shoulder and spun her around gently pushing her toward the door.

Track 09 - Falling by Bastille

"Stiles, it looks like you found a tripwire," Lydia observed as she came to stop a few feet from where he swung in the air like a pendulum, his right ankle wrapped up tautly with a cord that disappeared high up into the canopy.

"Could you have walked here any slower?" Stiles' sarcasm was strained through clenched teeth.

Taking care not to dislodge her bag, she stepped gingerly over torn earth and roots as she came around the area full circle ignoring his nattering complaints. The more upset Stiles got, the more the cord that held him swung back and forth like a metronome. Once he realized that exhausting himself trying to swing around to face her, he gave up and suspended his hands like a rag doll from his efforts.

"I'm looking for any other traps," Lydia explained touching the trunk of a tree for balance as she hopped over a stone and landed with an imbalanced wobble.

"Well, there's got to be a release somewhere," Stiles explained. He lifted his arms from their dangling position and crossed them, while a smirk placed itself expectantly across his face. "So, can you get me down?"

Lydia stopped her wandering and gave him a withering look.

Stiles face was bright red from all the blood that rushed to his face and gave a huff to calm down before he added, "Please?"
After a thoughtful pause she nodded. "Just give me a second to figure out how." She continued circling the area, looking mostly up at him but also at the strangeness that meant someone set up this comically archaic trap over the branch of a tree and stabilized it to a weighted point somewhere.

"How did you get up there anyway?" Lydia asked as she climbed slowly around the terrain. She noticed a deep hole dug in the ground made from the collapsed tree nearby. But it seemed suspicious that the tree would land so far away. It looked more like it had been thrown.

"I came here to investigate something." Stiles said cagily.

"This is where Isaac was attacked," Lydia answered sitting on the end of the fallen tree looking mournfully into the ditch. She knew this place too well.

"Yes, actually." Stiles said. "How'd you know?"

Lydia didn't answer, just stared into the depth of the ditch and wished she didn't have a feeling that going in there would feel as familiar as drowning underwater.

"Never mind," Stiles interrupted, his voice sounded half apologetic and half encouraging. "So I'm pretty certain I finally heard you scream this time around."

"Oh," it was her turn to look apologetic. "But I tried not to," she said incredulously, admitting it even to herself for the first time.

"Well, if that was you trying not to, you nearly blew a hole through my skull," he scoffed and from the troubled look on her face he knew he overstepped. "Not literally, of course." Stiles hadn't made it seem convincing enough because Lydia's expression seemed only to add calculating to distressed. So he tried a third time, hoping for the win. "It just teaches me to be more specific about what I wish for," he cocked his head to the side, watching her for a better understanding. "I should have requested adjustable frequencies for your Banshee scream so I could hear you easier." When he smirked she smirked in response but then rolled her eyes and looked away.

"I should get you down," she turned back around to the safer side of the fallen tree and shoved off onto the ground. "I think I figured out how. Just hold on a minute."

"It's not like I'm going anywhere," Stiles replied.

Grabbing the gardening shears from her bag Lydia held the sticky cord with one hand and cut through it with the other. Before Stiles could protest he dropped the 18ft to the ground, tumbling the additional 8ft into the ditch.

"What the hell was that?!" Stiles voice came at a garbled yell while he dizzily clambered out with the loose dirt sliding beneath his grip.

"Word of advice Stiles, next time you find a tripwire don't trip it," Lydia smiled, placing her convenient although mildly mucked up shears back into her purse.

Stiles looked like a madman, his hair wild in a crown of spikes and eyes dilated. He stood at a crooked gait with a massive limp, entirely covered in a sheen of sweat that made the diminishing red in his face still glow like a beacon, while dirt coated all of his front but none of his back. More obviously his right leg still wore the tripwire tightly wrapped like a sausage binding cut through his pant leg, not that he took note.

"I guess I'm supposed to thank you for dropping me in a ditch of death," Stiles gestured toward the
hole in the ground. "The ditch! Where death happened!"

"Stiles, you're not dead or dying," Lydia rolled her eyes, reached out and grabbed him by the arm and pulled him away from the possibility falling back into said ditch. "But I do think we should probably get you away from here."

"That's why the rope was sticky," Lydia sighed and nodded her head in recognition.

"And why I couldn't just rip the cord and drop down. I couldn't even get my hands on it," Stiles explained. "I don't know what those Hunters wrapped that thing with but it stings like a mother!" he groaned intensely. Without intending to he leaned more weight onto Lydia's shoulders.

There weren't more than a few yards from the ditch to parked car but his limp was worsening with each step. And while Stiles wasn't willing to accept his weakening state Lydia definitely noticed the coloring in his face go from red to ashen.

Whenever Lydia tried review what she learned of Wolfsbane poisoning, (their types and the effects on Werewolves) Stiles would get anxious at her silence and whined like an infant.

"You can't keep running off idiotically. What were you doing out here alone anyway?" she grit her teeth and kept her tone controlled.

Stiles figured the tightness in her voice was annoyance and he was resolved to discourage it, except his mind refused to run at full speed and his answer was an uncertain sounding, "I had a backup." He looked down at her, while giving her a light hug/leaning onto and clearly anticipated her look of skepticism. Only she didn't rise to the bait, her focus was on her footing, perfectly measured left then right, followed by left and oh, what was that? Ah, here comes the right.

"My grandmother could go faster than this. My grandmother's grandmother could go faster... but then rumor was she was a drift car racer," Stiles babbled, his voice quieting and rising in random intervals.

"I am going as fast as I can without special-strength," Lydia grunted and shifted her weight. She tried her best to mask the pain that pierced through her clavicle every time Stiles stumbled against her too harshly. Of course the only resolution to keep him from stumbling and to keep her steady and cause less agony to her bad shoulder would be to walk slower. And of course, the only way to explain things would be to over-explain them and it wasn't the time or place. Which made Lydia feel very bitter toward someone she felt very concerned for, both things that she hated, "You try carrying 147 pounds of dead weight and sarcasm, at 5'3" wearing 4" heels through the woods!"

Stiles looked contrite but it didn't prevent him stumbling. "Good point," he mumbled and when she grabbed at his waist to haul him further upright, he tried his best to put weight on his bad leg but that only lasted three steps before Stiles needed to lean onto Lydia's smaller shoulders.

"Its fine," Lydia assured him, tugging his arm to keep him leveled. "It's okay."

"What was that?" this time Stiles paused and caused her to stumble.

"Nothing," she insisted, her voice had gone strained, a little above a hiss.

"It's not nothing, you winced," his gaze narrowed, penetrating hers and she had to look away.

"It's nothing. I thought I twisted my ankle earlier but I just stepped wrong," she tugged his arm
along once more. With a tilt of her head she motioned that the car was near. He looked over her head and could see the color of the roof of her car but something felt off.

"That was your other shoulder," he withdrew his arm, his tone was firm.

Lydia looked back at him, her expression helpless and her stance stiff with agitation. She considered the fact that Stiles would sense a lie off of her but he couldn't see the pallid color his skin had taking on. Maybe he could hear her heartbeat but he couldn't read her mind, and her sore shoulder wouldn't make up the distance over the time they were losing.

"I would feel a lot better if we weren't anywhere near here, Stiles."

Stiles glared, his nose flared with a huff and Lydia knew he would have stomped off if he could.

"Okay," he looked off toward the car, "I'll go with you, but I'd like it on the record that I'm not pleased about this whole keeping secrets thing."

"No secret, I just had a slip up with the Swim Team. Now?" she put out a hand for him to hold and left no room for him to refuse.

Knowing her aquatic history, Stiles looked disbelieving and this time she looked away first. But biting his lip, he said nothing else but took her hand and limped very slowly alongside her to the car. Every time he winced she looked like she would grab him and 'Fireman Carry' him all the way to the car. But each time Stiles pressed his lips together in something close to a smile and kept his eyes on Lydia's face instead of looking ahead, instead of looking down, absolutely determined to stay following her lead.

Track 10 - The Enemy by Mumford and Sons

{Saturday Afternoon}

Scott had fallen asleep on the bus ride home. His legs turned heavy and his head had gone light with exhaustion and he so nearly missed his stop. When he hopped off he stumbled and his walked along the street to his door was sapped of all strength.

Once he kicked off his sneakers, shifted off his jean jacket he dropped back onto the couch and ended up taking an unintentional 3½ hour nap, it was exactly the recharge he needed.

It would have been on Scott's schedule to make the afternoon cram session. But even if he hadn't slept through the first half of it he would have skipped it, he was too preoccupied. Not that studying didn't make the cut. He was failing two classes and promised to do better, and Scott couldn't go back on his word. He spread out his school work on the kitchen counter and considered his options. He didn't have Stiles' scorched notebook or Lydia's heavily notated iPod, but he knew if he obsessed over it, the material they'd collected would drive him mad. What he could do was distract himself for a few hours and then come back to it to better merge his divided life. He had learned from study group that it helped sometimes to switch off subjects to change focus and come back to a problem with a rested mind and a clear perspective.

Taking on World History for a little but something he normally found fascinating but for the time Scott found troubling. It seemed like a joke to think of a time when Monsters weren't the cause of the world's problems. He moves on to English Lit were he seemed to have a grasp of the
knowledge but struggled to put it on the page. Eventually he pulled the play Hamlet off the shelf. It was suggested reading off the syllabus just like it he had been the same in middle school but he never found it interesting then, not interesting enough to get pass the first Act anyway. Now, it seemed common knowledge, everyone else did it and he could totally cheat and Netflix Kenneth Branagh's film which the internet suggested as the most accurate version but if everyone else went through this rite of passage he as well have.

After reading it, Scott stared off through the window along the horizon toward the direction he knew Allison was; toward where he was convinced he could sense her even over the distance. And where he knew his restlessness stemmed from the most.

Hours earlier Scott demanded that Isaac come back to life and somehow Isaac had. But he didn't feel like it was something he did on his own, he felt like Isaac had let him in and it was something they wanted together and it made them strong enough to do something impossible. Scott deliberately avoided thinking about it all day. And the effort of to avoid thinking about it was exhausting. And he was avoiding it because of the look on Allison's face. Scott couldn't-- Scott wouldn't have been able to do something like that if she hadn't been beside him, but afterward for a split second Allison stared at him like he was a stranger.

It made him think about the play; when Scott was younger he tried to identify with the lead but now he was convinced the guy was an idiot. He was also convinced of something else. The "Monster" was his Alpha.

When connected to Isaac, for a moment Scott was afraid that incredible strength came from his Alpha and maybe that was where Allison's doubt came from. Scott knew differently now because his Alpha gave him dreams of death, not of life. Scott knew differently now because he felt without a doubt the draw of being part of a pack and it made him unafraid to consider even while under his Mom's grounding, that both her and Isaac would be safe under the same roof.

In the play it started with a guy who listened to his dead Dad, his absent maker. And then ran around trying to avenge him at the cost of the lives of everyone in his kingdom. When Scott merged with the mind of his Alpha, he too felt a rabid craving for vengeance. Of course when he woke clearheaded he felt the responsibility to fix it and like Hamlet he didn't always tell his friends the truth of what that ephemeral Monster motivated him to do. It wasn't till Scott read the play that Scott realized one of the files in his hands, the dead girl-- through his Alpha's eyes, he dreamt of her and it was on the list of victims by the Monster. It was as if his Alpha were mocking him.

The realization seemed so obvious and simple. He figured out an identity (sort of), even a motive (sort of) even if he still couldn't figure out why his Alpha attacked who it attacked and this was a big leap forward. He needed to tell his friends because it could mean their deaths. After all, if his Alpha still had its hooks in his subconscious and vengeance as its motivation, then there was no knowing who it would go through to get it. Or who it would try to use. Possibly Scott.

And stupid Hamlet maybe didn't think to be honest with his friends from the outset to stop it but Scott had no intention of being that much of an idiot or a downer. Despite that it didn't mean he knew how to tell his friends.

A shower helped a little and by the time he got out he had a second chance to do what he said he would. To better merge his divided life. His Mom texted, her tone was light with amusement.

- It's just a late shift. Nothing extraordinary. (˘ ³˘)♥

Scott microwaved two frozen hamburgers. He threw together the last of the chopped salad, heaped it onto the burgers and deemed it a deluxe. He packed it in a Ziploc box with a banana squeezed in
for good measure. He rode the bus and texted Allison while en route. When he texted Allison that he wanted to see her soon the message didn't go through. It worried him for a second until he thought about where she was and he thought about the "Meeting Room." Instead he called and left a message that said very little because he then remembered her parents probably listened to her messages. So all he said was that he missed her at the second cram session but finished reading "Hamlet." Scott said he thought it would have been better if Horatio, Golden--Rosen whatshisname & Ophelia had been in on it from the beginning. It would have been over in half the time and the kingdom probably would have been ready for the actual invasion in the end which was totally more interesting than the lame King. Then he hung up forgetting to say goodbye because he didn't know how to say that without saying he loved her.

Scott texted Lydia next when he realized he hadn't seen her since this morning's two brief drive-by appearances and that didn't exactly sit well. She blew him off with a one-word reply saying she was 'fine.' but Scott felt like he could come by, he wanted to come by. He remembered how insistent she was to have a face-to-face after her theory that none of them should be left alone in case they were susceptible to manipulation. Of course it made sense now, just like all of Lydia's theories made better warning signs then suggestions but they didn't have time for them. He asked again if he could come over, see that she got home okay and to apologize for not checking in earlier.

- Not right now, Scott.

Well, that seemed fair. He wouldn't press for now but Scott made a mental note. He was going to check in with Lydia more often. A big part of him even wanted her to be the first he told his theory to. Not just because he wanted Lydia to know her theory was probably right but because together they could be better at not being crazy.

Scott didn't text Isaac because he wanted him to rest. And Scott definitely didn't text Stiles because that was a conversation he wanted to have face-to-face. Also, he was a little afraid to get blown off, especially after the way they left the last conversation he wanted to make sure any unreasonable flailing would be translated within reaching distance. Okay, so maybe talking directly to his friends was something he was going to have to grow better at.

Once he got to the hospital there was a lull in intake and his Mom was able to take her break right away. For the first time in a long, long time they were able to have a conversation without conflict, although there was a little wrangling over who got the bigger half of the banana as they shared a meal together the first time in nearly a week. It felt surreal to feel normal and he would fight tooth-and-nail to keep hold of it.

Chapter End Notes

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CREDITS/ROLL CALL:

Argents - Team1; Victoria, Chris & Allison.
- Rumy - [Sergeant] specialized in Recon; Special Forces & espionage. Chris' right-hand & Allison's godfather.
- Bennett - [Field Officer] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old & friend to Allison.
- Leveque - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Terrain-Orientation & Mechanics.
• Ulrich - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation.

Argents - Team2; Kate.
• Livy - [1st Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Force-Orientation, R.I.F. & close-combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's right-hand.
• Tyhurst - [Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation, Cyberwarefare, has CIA background & is ranked with state detective credentials. Referred to as 'try-hard.'
• Norm - [Sergeant] specialty in Medical Intelligence & as a Longbowman; an archer who uses the longbow, w/ various arrowheads. He' JR's brother & Roman's Uncle.
• Roman - [Field Officer] specialty as a Marksman/Sharpshooter, 19yrs. old & a weapons expert skilled in precision shooting. He's JR's son & Norm's Nephew.
• Fry - [Field Officer] specialty as a Tactician is & general officer, while his marksmanship is low he is still in high regard for his brain.

Argents - Team3; Gerard.

Hale (Present Day) Pack; Derek Alpha
• Isaac - [Omega] in search of a pack.
• Stiles - [Omega] on a quest for answers to what destroyed his family(s).
• Cora - [Beta] missing, presumed dead.
• Boyd - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.
• Erica - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.

Hale (Heyday) Pack; Talia Alpha
• Peter - [Beta] Talia's brother, Uncle to Derek, Laura & Cora.
• Laura (age 17) - [Beta] was last seen struggling between trying to pull survivors from the fire & defending her mother, Talia from her Uncle Peter's attacks.
• Derek (age 15) - [Beta] was pulled from the flames by his sister Laura & ushered to safety by their emissary… until the Treaty was made.

? Other;?
• Jackson - [Kanima] characterized by claws that secrete venom which temporarily paralyzes their victims, a double row of sharp fangs, & a tail. Unless a Kanima resolves what in its past caused its mutation, it will eventually cocooned stage & emerge as a winged creature. Unlike a werewolf, a Kanima seeks out a master instead of a pack. It will carry out whatever vengeance its master bids. *chapter 12
• Kira - [Kitsune] "There hasn't been a documented case of a fledgling Kitsune (manifesting attributes) this powerful, to carry a thunderstorm in her back pocket on a whim. Not in a hundred thousand years." *chapter 18
• Lydia - [Banshee] 'A Banshee screams preceding a supernatural death not as a premonition but to highlight the likelihood of supernatural events that result in deaths.' *chapter 8

Twins' Pack; Aiden & Ethan Carver Alphas
• Marta - [Beta] she's an older motor head & 1st Lieutenant.
• Bridy - [Beta] the packs' spy because she's easily underestimated.
• Gus - [Beta] referred to as psychotic now & again, but his very few (& dwindling) close friends' are his touchstone.
• Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, bi & partnered to Naylor, formerly to Bozeman.
• Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
• Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
• (deceased) Coot - [Omega] Deb's partner & killed by the Monster.

**Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha**
- (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed 1st Lieutenant, possibly romantically entangled.
- Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali & closely bonded to Huntington.
- Santos - [Beta] while loyal to Kali has mentored many, without regard to packs. Helped the Twins first learn to shift together without losing their identities.
- Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed & with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
- Levi - [Beta] neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
- Huntington - [Beta] has strong empathic senses, is very good friends with Gus' from Twins' pack & Lark.

**Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha**
- Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' Lieutenant Werelynx from wiped out Shapeshifter dynasty.
- (missing) Dr. Kane - [Omega] both a medical Doctor & their torturer.
- (deceased) Quint - [Omega] eager to please teen & Dr. Kane's son.

**Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha**
- Søren - [Beta] 1st Lieutenant, Danish man of even temperament & a skilled negotiator until his temper is peaked.
- Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
The steps Allison must take to keep her friends protected from an Argent spy end up being far more difficult than just taking on the assignment of spying on her friends. Isaac heads to the McCalls’ home to recuperate and explore the intensifying connection that saved his life, as Scott hesitates to share distressing truths behind his Alpha, which could affect everything. In a similar means, a terrible fight with Stiles and a horrible nightmare reveals to Lydia the source of the missing Beta, Quint. The likes of which result in unrest and nightmares plaguing Beacon Hills, especially Jackson, sending him on a pursuit of his own.

**Playlist Available** - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/20-were-you-sleeping

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**Previously On:**
After school not turning out as normal as they’d meant it to be—

- Allison returns home and is put in a position to seek aid from her Hunter family, so her partner Bennet joins up while Isaac recuperates in her bedroom.
- In another lost gap of time Lydia wakes confused, and can't remember how she collapsed in the swimming pool or how she survived drowning.
- While Stiles gets himself strung up in a Hunter's trap while investigating Isaac's place of assault and fatal experience.
- And Scott puts together the Monster (1 of the 2 committing mass murders thru Beacon Hills), is likely his long-time hidden Alpha.
- Also, people should really pick up their damn cellphones sometimes. It could be helpful, a little bit, maybe.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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**Track 01 - Pray by Kodaline**

"Why wouldn't you just let me cut the rest of it while we were on site?" Lydia asked as she rushed to the right-side rear door to unlock it for Stiles.

Once they had reached her Beetle, it was as though Stiles abandoned all attempt at strength.

"Because it was a Hunter's trap," he grunted rolling over to lie on his back, stretching his neck as he did so. "Which meant it probably sent a signal for the Argents to come and get the murderer who probably returned to the scene of the crime."
"So then why didn't you just call Allison to come to begin with?" Lydia paused before putting her key in the lock and stared at Stiles' profile, waiting for a reply.

He only shook his head.

Lydia stepped back and glared at him. "Stiles, how many people did you call before me?"

He strained to stand further upright. "Injured guy here," Stiles made a wide gesture up and down his person.

"How many, Stiles?"

"No one," he grimaced.

"You didn't call Scott? Your best-friend with super strength," an expression of hurt blossomed across her face.

He shook his head again.

"And didn't call Allison because she would have told Scott but you called me because you assumed I'm not going to tell anyone you were out here investigating on your own. Again!" She stepped forward, her garden shears brandished toward his face. There was no real anger just a sort of warning gesture but the hurt and frustration behind it was real enough.

"Lydia, come on," Stiles whined. He put up his hands in mimed surrender when she neared him.

She ignored his gesture and unlocked the car door, too furious to make eye contact.

"Sit," she snapped at him.

Awkwardly and speedily, like a crab trying to flip over, Stiles pulled himself backward in the rear seats of her car. She climbed in afterward and squeezed in to lock the door. It had reached the point where bending and stretching his right leg had become ragingly painful and Lydia insisted he try to keep it as straight as possible.

"I got this," Stiles insisted but at the sight of his leg when Lydia peeled back the fabric of his jeans he went lightheaded. "I don't got this."

"Just let me look at it for a minute," she shoved him back into the seats. After finally getting a good look at the details and between his symptoms and the material presented, and after ignoring his noises of complaint she could finally make an educated guess. "The cord had serrated silver edges laced with a Wolfsbane called Carmichael's Monkshood."

"That is great! That's just great, I'm dying! They've poisoned me!" Stiles immediately reacted by moaning into his hands as he covered his face.

"It's not poisoned, it just seems infected, but we shouldn't rip it out of you because it can make things worse," she said with a careful sigh.

After hearing the words 'not poison' Stiles ignored her warning. When he tried to yank them loose he hissed because they burned worse, tightened and dug deeper into his ankle.

"Stiles!" Lydia shrieked at the sight of the tripwire executing it's intended trapping design. The sight of serrated epidermis opening up along his ankle and calf as black blood flowed easily from it grossed Stiles out. Without warning he became horribly dizzy and with a small whimper of 'oh god'
he toppled over head first onto Lydia's lap, so abruptly she panicked.

Lydia tried to slap him awake and when that failed she shoved forward the passenger seat and squirmed out from beneath him. In the fetal position, he practically took up all the space in the back seat of her VW Beetle. She considered driving him to Allison's to ask for help but she thought of how adamant he was not to get discovered combing the attack site -- It infuriated her that Stiles was right to assume she would keep him secreted away, for now.

Instead Lydia slipped into the driver's seat and drove with awkward caution to the only place she felt assured she would go mostly unnoticed and undisturbed so late in the day and on the weekend; the Beacon Hills Elementary School. After an illegal turn from the woods onto the highway they blended into traffic and avoid main roads via the High School. Highway construction was in full swing and their 5-minute drive turned into 14-minutes. The slow driving that would normally annoy this time gave her the opportunity to move forward while checking in on her backseat passenger without being at too much risk of rear ending anyone.

The strange nostalgia of Elementary School created a safe zone once she parked by the rear parking lot. Their old school had very little, if any, weekend activities and the playgrounds kept them hidden from the view of any commonly used streets. Once sufficiently convinced she'd hidden them away, Lydia killed the engine, sighed and headed to the back. After she climbed over Stiles' legs, she pulled them both onto her lap. She couldn't flip him over to make it more convenient but she could manage working curled up in the corner instead of squeezed between the front seats and leaning her weight onto her bad arm.

As Lydia methodically snipped each part of the tripwire with her shears and plucked out what lingering pieces of silver remained with surgical precision, she let her mind wander. Stiles had run off to the woods to search out evidence of who hurt Isaac because he felt guilty for not standing beside him. Noble or foolish, that didn't really matter considering the outcome wouldn't have changed. It only would have added another body to her vision. But it did answer one of her questions; Stiles couldn't have saved her from drowning. It seemed like Stiles had been with his Father the whole time she had her vision and his reaction to her injury solidified that notion.

"Oh god. Is that it? Is it done?" Stiles awoke and immediately threw an arm over his eyes. "Am I going to live?"

"Hand over the flannel," she put her hand out insistently.

"What? No," he clasped his hands to his chest, gripping them tight into the fabric of his shirt.

"Stiles, listen to me," Lydia bent toward him over his long legs and grabbed the collar of his hoodie. She peeled it back from his shoulder one over the other despite his squirming while she continued to explain. "Carmichael's Monkshood prevented your Werewolf healing. And now that I took the serrated cord out of your leg it's going to keep bleeding. We need to keep the area clean and apply some pressure. Since they've already been compromised your pants should go--"

"This is really not how I imagined this going down," Stiles' eyebrows shot up. He shoved himself to sit upright and tried to scoot backward, with no luck in the small confines.

"Either you give me the button-up or I'm going to have to use the hoodie," Lydia's face took on an expression of morbid amusement even as her voice turned hard and no-nonsense.

Stiles looked mortified at the prospect and stayed utterly still.

"I don't want to have to use the hoodie either so why don't you hand over that tacky plaid shirt, save
the friendship," her brow went up as a grin spread prettily across her face.

Stiles gaped then flapped around, shifting out of his hoodie first then the flannel leaving him trembling in his feverish sweat and a faded Ramones T-shirt.

"You're the devil," he muttered through clenched teeth as he watched her tear his shirt into strips.

"On my good days," she glanced up and grinned before tearing up another strip off intentionally loud. But when she returned to focusing on his wounds her concentration was steady, while she theorized any prospect available to speed up his healing.

The bestiary said that "Pain Helps", but these guys always suggested that 'Pain Helps' which was stupid because Stiles was in enough pain. Each time she placed her hand on his bare ankle as his pain increased a little he swooned. She grumbled that she didn't have enough of the bestiary memorized to know which herbs counteracted which Wolfsbanes but suggested that if they 'bloodlet' it might remove some of the toxic attributes Carmichael's held, and by proxy it would remove elements of silver, and speed up his healing. At that suggestion, Stiles whined, tugged on his hoodie, made for the door and suggested she let him walk it off.

"Well, too late," she winced, "I already did it."

"Did what?" Stiles looked at her skeptically.

"While I was tearing up your shirt," Lydia held up the garden shears tentatively. "I placed a few intersecting cuts against the wounded area. I guess you didn't feel it because the area had gone numb but it looks better now. The swelling has gone down and the stream has gone from black to red."

"The 'what' now?" although his breath came easier he still felt skittish, anticipating the next awful thing.

"I mean your blood is running clear," she added mildly anticipating his uneasiness. He looked a little nauseous at her description but tried to steady himself.

"But it's okay now?" Stiles asked.

"Okay is relative. The Wolfsbane has done significant damage. And your wriggling around while you were suspended only helped circulate it." She delicately carried his legs off of her lap and placed them onto the car floor so that they sat beside one another. "Be patient. It's going to take a while for your metabolism to work through this."

It was only when his face turned a little green at noticing the blood stains across her lap that she noticed them too. She groaned and shrugged off her cardigan and tied it around her waist, flattening it over the stains.

"Better?"

He nodded emphatically. Another item of her wardrobe ruined for the sake of friendship but she didn't bother to point that out in his moment of suffering. She looked away and felt adrenaline catch up with her. Upset caused her hands to tremble so she kept them busy cleaning the gore and debris from her utterly unhygienic garden shears.

"What were you thinking?" Lydia frowned and wiped fastidiously at the edges of the blade until there were no stains remaining.
"I thought I could find something, you know, Werewolf senses," Stiles tapped the side of his nose to emphasis the point.

She delicately snorted in derision "definitely found something."

"Isaac wouldn't have been out there alone if I hadn't hesitated to follow. I just wanted to learn something-- I just wanted to figure out how I could have prevented losing someone else." For a moment he couldn't trust himself to speak, after clearing his throat exaggeratedly he continued. "What's wrong in wanting to find out if I could have done something better?"

"Why can't you learn, we all want the same things? We want you safe!" Lydia's head snapped up but she stayed facing forward. Stiles remained in startled silence until she dropped the shears to the ground, she groaned in disappointment. "We would have helped you. Any of--All of us."

"You don't know that," Stiles' eyes narrowed.

Lydia turned to stare at him in disbelief. "And that's worth putting yourself in harm's way?"

"I don't care, if it can help a member of my pack," Stiles said, in a repeated attempt to excuse away accountability.

"That is the prob--I need air from this bullshit!" she took that as license to throw open the car door and stomp off toward the playground.

"Lydia! Lydia, wait!" Stiles called out. After some fumbling between yanking on his hoodie, he shoved open the door and finally pulled himself up by its windows. "Come on, I can't chase after you like this!" he pleaded, his voice half playful, half urgent.

When Lydia spun around her face was flushed with the effort to keep her emotions in check. She measured her steps back to the car and Stiles eased up, afraid despite the fact that her car stood between them.

"Get in," she instructed inarguably.

Stiles struggled to the passenger seat, clinging along the roof of the car. Stiles barely yanked the seat into its upright position a second before Lydia started the car with a jolt.

After they settled in for a quiet awkward moment, without eye contact, they drove onto the main road and Lydia turned South, the direction opposite from both of their homes.

A fact he was cautious to point out.

"That's because I'm taking you to the hospital," she answered in a strained voice.

He felt that was entirely uncalled for, a fact he was not cautious to point out, at high volume.

"It isn't your place to involve the authorities!"

"You are not an authority on when it is or isn't a good idea to involve the authorities, Stiles!"

"What can they do to help in this situation?" he made a flourishing gesture toward his leg.

Lydia's temper got the best of her finally and she pulled over onto the side of the road, halfway into someone's driveway, halfway still on the street. She shut the car off with the flick of her wrist and stayed frozen in her seat for a breath. She stared across the divide, her mind a whir, all of her thoughts a jumble of angry spikes. "Look at you! Do you think this helped?"
"I'm healing!"

"Barely!" Lydia leaned across the small space, her intense stare destabilizing Stiles' ready smirk. "See, that's the problem with you. You don't care about getting hurt. But you know how I feel? Devastated. And if you die again--"

"Come on Lydia, I didn't... I didn't even die the first time."

"Correction; you didn't just die the first time," her eyes flared, she brought her hand near to his face, near enough to cause him to flinch. She took a deep breath and regained her composure. "You died and came back. Dying didn't just happen to you, it happened to everyone around you. The people left behind standing at your grave."

"Lydia. Come on," Stiles touched her arm to soothe her but it only made Lydia flinch away. He continued in jest "I was only a little dead."

"Don't," she warned in a petulant mumble. Lydia rubbed her arm where he touched her, her wounded arm, a pain that reminded her of exactly how fragile they were despite how extraordinary. How differently he would be acting if the shoe were on the other foot. So she pleaded instead, "don't blow this off with a joke. Think about what it'd do to your Dad. What it'd do to each of us?"

"That's not fair," he pressed his lips together, and looked away. The calm he struggled to maintain was betrayed by the beating of his heart, he could feel it hammering through his brain. And Stiles wished he were sicker so that he might blame it on a fever.

"You're right. Life's not fair." Lydia leaned further into his view, ducking low to prevent Stiles from looking away. When his eyes met hers, his eyes were storming with emotion and he bit his lower lip to keep it at bay.

"I'm sorry." With a winded breath he leaned back in the seat and partly against the window, a hand covered his mouth like he needed to hold back a laugh but when he watched her he looked like he held back the waters of a dam.

After a beat, as Lydia searched his face her eyes clouded up and mouth fell open in dismay. "What is it you're trying to make yourself sorry for?"

"No, this was--this was a mistake," Stiles looked gutted and unsure both expressions Lydia was unfamiliar with ever seeing on her friend's face. "I'm sorry," he repeated in a hurried mutter as he rushed and stumbled out of the car slamming the door closed behind him.

Last time, in the 'Meeting Room' she saved him without asking. Maybe it had been too much to expect her to save him again without question, but Lydia was an interrogatory sort of person. In fact her questions tore through his soul and left him feeling more wounded than the Wolfsbane that ran through his veins.

"Wait--No, Stiles wait." Lydia moved to get out of the car and follow but realized her car would definitely get towed. And she had just gotten it back. She looked back up to see Stiles had managed to make it as far as the end of the block when she called out to him again.

"It's okay," he waved back, and gave her a big smile that didn't reach his eyes. "I'm fine. I'll just walk it off!" And he hunkered his shoulders down, shoved his hands down into his jean pockets and limped along.

"Shit," she muttered into her hands once she got back in and locked the car. She grossly misjudged
her self-control, considering how royally fucked her day had been. Between sensing one friend die on her (however temporarily) and nearly dying as well, to finding another precious friend drugged and strung halfway up a tree in the span of one afternoon, she had reason to feel a little frazzled but no reason to be brutal however good she was at rationalizing things away.

It suddenly seemed wrong to assume, well to completely assume Stiles felt unaccountable, he called after all. It made more sense to assume Stiles had gotten his wires crossed; both Scott and Lydia would go blindly into the woods after him but while one brought claws the other brought shears.

While maybe Stiles still found them inseparable in his mind's eye that didn't make them interchangeable she intended to make him see, she, unlike Scott, would not internalize, she demanded for him to say the words 'I give a crap' and 'thank you' out loud.

Or text them.

She yanked her bag from the backseat, carefully fished around in it and pulled out her phone, ignoring the neighbor's glare from inside the house.

- alright I'm sorry too.

Which she meant sincerely because her emotions had gotten the better of her, not because she was wrong. She sighed, threw the phone into the seat opposite and glared at it that she didn't get an immediate response. Then grabbed it up again.

- don't ignore me. this is not over. you don't get the last word by walking away.

Lydia started the car, intending to pull up next to him and insist on getting him home. Then she realized, before she even left the driveway that he had vanished from her rearview. Trying to process things reasonably before giving way to panic, Lydia snagged onto one chilling detail too late. Stiles shouldn't have even been able to walk.

Track 02 - You Do It Well by Saint Motel

When she entered the Meeting Room Allison found it wasn't just her Mom and Dad as she had hoped. The Sergeants and First Lieutenants were in attendance. It felt like a tribunal, which should have unnerved her but this had become commonplace. These meetings were drilled into her at this point to make her steel in anticipation of the day when she would fill her Mother's seat.

Rumy and Axel were seated on the side with her Dad. And Norm and Livy were seated on the side with Kate. Allison strode right up and stood beside her Mom.

Surprisingly she got accolades for tracking Werewolves in the school. Her Dad didn't seem cool with it but Norm and Axel did, the Sergeants did which was a big deal and made her feel at ease until she remembered Kate's story in the Diner. It made her a little queasy to get praise for something she hadn't exactly done, just like Kate had been 'hero-worshipped' for burning the Hale House.

When she looked, Kate smiled encouragingly and Allison decided to speak up. She took control of the narrative. Sure, she suspected Isaac she had to admit that much because Bennet had and because right now he was convalescing in her bed. But she didn't see him as a threat and she mostly
"Until he admitted it was Derek Hale," Allison sighed, tiredness crept up at the confession. She remembered the way Isaac sold out his pack members at the Diner. And how disgusted Lydia was. She felt filthy for what she was doing but she knew Isaac would understand because right now she wasn't telling them anything Kate wouldn't within the next 24-hours anyway. "The day of the fire. He went there looking for clues to find Derek and instead set off a booby trap that nearly killed him."

Chris looked skeptical, but he spoke knowingly "he went alone? He didn't go with the Sheriff's son?"

There was no helping it. The story was already writing itself, she just had to make it through with their spin. And her Father wasn't subtle about suspecting something of Stiles' too convenient reappearance in Beacon Hills.

"Stiles? He was already there. He's smart. He's just smarter and likes to take the lead," Allison admitted and smiled when she said so.

"You sound like you admire him." Rumy chuckled as he leaned forward onto a lifted palm. He was utterly engaged.

"I do."

"Do you trust him?" Rumy asked a little quieter for concern.

"I do," she said steadily. She blinked back the shock of his cross-examination. "His motive was like the rest of the Alphas. He has pack members that were murdered and he came back to Beacon Hills for answers." It was a stretch of the truth and she felt confident to stick to it, but she had to look away. Allison could tell herself it wasn't a lie over and over as long as she wasn't looking in those grey eyes.

"Does he trust you?" Livy asked with her tone steady and cool as though she were asking something as simple as if Allison liked the décor.

"Yes." Because that was not a lie, it was easy to stare down those dark and penetrating eyes.

"Do they both trust you?" Livy continued, her voice grew pleased at the prospect.

"They did come to me for help," Allison retorted, irritability growing from the back of her spine.

"My dear," the edges of Livy's lips curled as she said dear to make the word sound crude "that is not an answer."

"They both trust me with everything. Their secrets. Their lives. Their pack's lives. Everything," Allison placed her hands along the table, palms hard on the edge in a gesture that conveyed control and left little room for argument. What she didn't say was that they trusted her because she would rather die than betray their trust again. But what mattered was posturing in this room; that was something she learned early on. Leave no room for questioning and it won't turn into an inquisition.

"But if their Alpha's dead, then they're just Omegas," Norm looked to Kate, his leader, rather than Allison. "They're not ideal bait for the Monster. Why would it attack them to draw out bigger prey if there isn't bigger prey to draw out?"
"Maybe it doesn't know that?" Allison decided to take part in the conversation, to become part of the investigation in a way that didn't make her the focus.

"There is no way for it not to know," Axel groaned, "that shit was a holy mess. Not only did it shut down the park for days but it was all over the news."

Victoria put a hand on her daughter's shoulder and gave it a gentle squeeze. Allison looked up to her Mom, surprised at the gesture not only for its kindness but how public it was. Her bright eyes locked on her daughter's brown ones. They were steady but hard, her expression was nothing like the severe one she remembered from that morning but it conveyed just as much seriousness.

"Those boys in your school, they might not follow the ideal victimology but they are vulnerable," she said. "We need to keep a close eye on them. Can you do that for me?"

Allison nodded, she knew this crossed yet another line yet it was better her reporting back to her family than someone else. "Yes, I can do that for you."

"Good," Victoria's expression lost all softness as it went back to business. She turned to the table, her hands clasped in front of her tightly and her pose straight as a rod. "We have to consider just because this kid got attacked by an Alpha doesn't mean he won't get attacked again. It just means the Alphas are attacking."

"Tyhurst said the packs' Alphas had grown volatile," Kate shrugged her disappointment. "The bigger problem is which one is it?" she looked to Allison and slowly the rest of the table did as well; from the sharp wary educated Norm to the determined rueful Rumy.

"I'll go question him and see what I can find out," Allison accepted the mantle. She moved stiffly toward the door as the conversation continued without her. She wished she had the presence of mind to eavesdrop while walking away but all she could hear was wind between her ears while thinking of what to say.

As the door closed behind her Allison sagged against it and knew two things for certain. Sticking as close to the truth as sanely possible would be the only way to survive without fail. And the other thing, they never mentioned Scott or Lydia.

Track 03 - Wolf and I by Oh Land

{Saturday Late Afternoon}

Scott raced up his front steps and his grin of eagerness quickly turned to one of distress at the sight of Stiles' injuries.

"Can I pass off something like this as a lacrosse injury?" Stiles asked while Scott cleared the way for him to hobble his way along dramatically.

"Not really, no." Relieved at his friend's good humor Scott propped Stiles against the kitchen counter and willed the stains to lift from the tiled floor later with a little soap and elbow grease.

"Damn. Because I totally would have joined the lacrosse team if I could use it as an excuse," Stiles whined. "I totally sense dumb injuries like this in my future that will need a lot of explaining... Dude, do you have something I can change into? I mean I'm not even bleeding anymore."
"Yeah, sure" Scott tossed him some stuff overhead he yanked out of the dirty laundry and Stiles hobbled to the bathroom to change. "There's a story behind this?"

"An epic tale. Spoiler Alert; I do not come off looking like the hero," Stiles said through the bathroom door, his voice occasionally smothered by fabric. He came out still limping, less encumbered than before and looking spry for it, despite the mildly dingy Heathered Sweater, ill-fitting denim jeans and sporting his customary borrowed red hoodie.

"You're going to have to burn those," Scott jested referring to the clothes Stiles held clumped up in his fist.

"I heard that somewhere," Stiles rolled his eyes and shoved them into a garbage bag and tied it off, he spun back around and gestured, pointing obstinately at Scott with a singular finger "now I should preface this by asking while your Mom is out can I stay here. I don't want my Dad to see me like this.

Leaning over the kitchen counter, shaking his head in amusement Scott looked up at him "I already texted her. She's just glad we're not diving off into the Mad River again. She said you should call your Dad and stay for dinner."

"Awesome!" then Stiles expression flipped from elation to concern, "I'm not used to asking for permission. What do I say?"

"I already texted your Dad and asked if you could hang out and stay for dinner," Scott turned, grabbed two cans of soda from the refrigerator and strutted to the living room sofa. "He's just happy we're not racing bikes off the highway's construction ramps."

Stiles gasped, he had a hand to his chest in exaggerated offense, "we're going to have a talk with those two and the low expectations they have of us.

"First, why don't you get off your bum leg and tell me why aren't you healing?"

"I'm healing. I'm healing," he grumbled bitterly, snatching up the can of Coke, dropping to sit beside Scott. "Nothing really happened, nothing really good anyway but it gave me an idea for a good plan." He took a long slurping sip while keeping an eye on Scott, a daring glare to keep his interest engaged.

Scott laughed lightly but would not rise to the bait of begging for Stiles' great tale or giving up and changing subjects, not that he didn't have his own subject in mind but at this rate they had all night. And it seemed of worthwhile interest to find out what messed up thing caused his Werewolf best-friend not to heal. That was nearly as important as covering what it was to bring Isaac back from the dead-- or back from Allison's house.

"Sorry, it's going to have to wait." Scott looked away, pulling his Blackberry out of pocket. "Allison says I need to check up on Isaac. ASAP."

Stiles was on his feet, (downing nearly all of his Coke) before Scott finished reading the text aloud. "Well," he slammed the can down onto the end table, "what are we waiting for?" as he limped a few feet he noticed Scott hadn't moved to follow. When he turned and looked to Scott, he found him texting still.

"I'm texting my Mom," he looked up sheepishly and reminded, "I need permission to borrow the car."
When Allison returned to her bedroom, her grin was a tick too tight and her eyes were pinched slightly at the edges, the same way they were when she and Bennet were first assigned as partners and she struggled to save face in front of her family. Bennet recognized the expression and gave her a wink while he casually tossed Reese's pieces into his mouth.

"We're playing 'I Never'" Bennet explained with a grin, "because he's never played 'I Never' with a Hunter before. How could you deprive the boy?"

"You've played 'I Never' with a Werewolf before?" she asked plopping down on the foot of the bed.

"In Pasadena," he answered with a grin "because, you know, I'm good at my job. And you?"

"Beacon Hills," she said after a moment's hesitation, she didn't seem to want to lie to Bennet although she seemed reticent to tell the whole truth to him either. Yet, reminiscing on times spent nestled in Scott's bedroom throwing parties for 2 while avoiding Lydia's bombastic post-game parties felt like revealing too much too quickly.

"You guys must play 'I Never' all the time," Isaac suggested, to which got him the immediate chorus of 'noooo.'

Allison laughed, relief wracked through her and she dropped onto the foot of the bed to watch the two sitting across from each other, Bennet on the windowsill and Isaac at the head of the bed a spread of Reese's pieces on the bedside table between them. "I've grown up with this guy. All I've ever done--"

"--we've ever done together. Except 'I Never' befriended a Werewolf," Bennet popped a Reese's into his mouth. After that, he took a handful of Reese's and then considered that as a sign to leave the room. "Careful," he whispered in passing while he petted her shoulder on his way out the door, which he left open.

"He kept stealing pieces," Isaac grumbled. "I don't think he even knows how to play the game."

Allison smirked and moved to take Bennet's place at the windowsill. From that short distance away from him she could keep an eye on Isaac, the front door and the house's perimeter through the window; all points of entry and weakness. "Bennet knows how to play the game," she said with a weak smile. "How're you feeling now?"

"Like I need to make a break for it," Isaac sulked. He didn't look as comforted by her presence as she had hoped. "Am I being held captive?"

She shook her head and watched the way Tyhurst walked the grounds between the house and the Lodge. "No. I think I am though," she recovered from her anxious statement with a quick smile "if you feel like you can go and you want to--"

"No, I'll stay," he looked apologetic. "What did they say to you to freak you out?"

"I can tell you, but I'm afraid it'll freak you out."

"Oh, I get it." Isaac stretched his arm out and picked up a few pieces of chocolate and brought it up to his mouth with only a little strain, his arm almost entirely internally healed. "They said it wasn't
"They confirmed it wasn't the Monster." Allison stood nearer as if she made a play at going for the candy but only meant to observe his healing. Her eyes traced the length of his bandaged arm and took a long time before they came back up to hold his gaze. "If you knew it was just an Alpha why did you keep chasing after it?"

"I thought maybe," he exhaled sharply through his nose, an expression of frustration. "Maybe it was someone who I came across on the road to Beacon Hills, someone who helped tear up my pack and I wanted to make them pay. I have Cora in the back of my mind now." With his right hand still in a splint he made a circular gesture toward his head, it looked less like he meant a thought and more like he meant to swat at a bug. "I've got all these people in my life now and it pisses me off that they could just destroy it. And for what? A fucking misunderstanding?"

"Well, was it?" she cocked her head to the side with her piqued interest.

"Was what what?" Isaac startled at her cutting in on his train of thought.

"Was it one of the Alphas who broke up your pack on the road into Beacon Hills?" Allison considered.

"Are you seriously interrogating me for your family, right now?" his voice rose, while his hurt played across his face more deeply than the gashes on his arm.

Allison knelt beside the bed and propped up her chin on her folded arms at the edge of the bed. She looked up at him with delicate interest, between his injuries and his wounded outlook she felt humbled by his words. "Isaac, you said before it hurt too much to belong anywhere. But now, look at you-- you're doing it anyway and I feel the same."

"You were like this," his eyes softened and he looked from her face to where their arms nearly touched. "When I came back, you were right there next to me."

"Yes, I was," her dimples showed when she smiled this time. "I want to find who did this to you. Help me do that."

"Allison, I don't know who this person is. They were twice as big and twice as strong as anything I felt before, but they weren't the Monster or one of the Alphas on the road."

She wiped her face in frustration. "I know all the Alphas on the road that day," she shook her head, after biting her lip intensely for a few seconds she explained. "If I knew which Alpha it was I could have gotten to them. I could have found a way to make them pay." With that Allison was on her feet, arms crossed over her chest and pacing in frustration, "with someone new, someone different, how do we find it if we're starting from scratch?"

"Allison!" Isaac called out to her in a low voice and caught the fabric of her shirt as she made another go around. "We'll figure it out. Plus, we're not going on 'nothing'. I've got his scent."

Allison sighed heavily, it obviously wasn't enough but she stayed herself from pacing.

Isaac looked quizzical then easing back into the bed he looked to her with a grin. "That is not the only familiar scent I caught."

"You're looking very nice, Lydia," Bennet said by way of 'hello', his charm working to the 10th
Lydia preened, tilting herself toward him at a shifting angle to give a partial turn to swish the new
dress (non-bloody), tilted her chin toward him and flash her flirtiest smile. She slipped through the
-crack in the door, crossed the threshold before he had a chance to argue and presented him with the
purple foxglove as a gift for the household.

"For Mrs. Argent," she said sweetly, "is she here?" she gambled.

Bennet shook his head and struggled to set the plant down on the hall table. They admired the
arrangement together while Lydia explained they were a rare variation of Mrs. Argent's favorite
flower and the best surprise/thank you/sorry present therefore she wanted to stick around to give it
in person.

"I had to go through three different florists to find it," Lydia over emphasized. Bennet nodded,
numbly caught up in her preamble. "I just had to be careful, you know, because I didn't want to get
her a plant that contrasts with the collection of Monkshood she has growing in her gardens."

"You're right," he confirmed for her. Bennet stepped closer, barely noticing the tension that grew in
his arms that normally came when he readied for a fight. "It definitely would have conflicted."

"Not just aesthetically either," Lydia steadied her voice, pulling her hair back as she inclined her
head toward him as her questioning came to a point. "Their properties conflict completely.
Foxglove and Monkshood, they cancel each other out."

"I wouldn't know," his brows knit in concentration, devouring the clever sight of her; small, fragile
and intimidating as all hell. Bennet tried to deflect "I'm not the gardener of the house."

"No, but Mrs. Argent sure does have a lot of Foxglove. I just didn't want to mess up her quantities,"

"Why are you really here, Lydia?"

"Lydia?" Allison stood on the landing above, her hands on the banister as she loomed like a
judgmental deity. "Isaac's upstairs," she all but directed.

"You're here to visit Isaac," Bennet said, his brow went up and she kept his gaze with a glare for a
moment. When she finally looked away it was to look at the beautiful flower as if it held an
answer. He looked at it as well and finding none he flicked a petal.

"My boyfriend," Lydia reminded while smirking at Bennet. With a dismissive toss of her hair, she
spun around and climbed the stairs quickly to disappear into Allison's bedroom. Bennet followed
slowly and met Allison on the landing.

"Right, she's dating Isaac," he gave Allison a nod. He remembered, but suspicion tasted raw on his
tongue. As if tasting in sympathy, Allison licked her lips nervously before biting them and nodding
back at him. "Should I be worried?" he asked.

Allison stifled a scoff and turned around to lean on the banister with her elbows. She stayed back
with him and played with honesty. They both looked to the room but wouldn't disturb the
'Lovebirds' and she shook her head.

Before they could go any further Tyhurst came through the front door in a rush, seeing the two of
them hovering on the steps he demanding they make themselves of use.

"Get everyone you can find to the room, 'Family' meeting." He kept his hand on the door knob as
he prepared to head out to the lodge.

"My 'Family' is already there," Allison raced half way down the steps and called out after him before he could take off. "Tell me, what's happened?" she insisted in her commanding voice.

"In the woods by the school," Tyhurst snapped, stepping backwards as he spoke. "A trap's been set off. We need to send a Hunting party before whatever it is gets away."

With that Tyhurst was gone. Allison spun around to look to Bennet. His face twinned hers, colored with the upset to hurt the person who hurt her friend and the conflict to want to stay beside him while he healed.

"GO!" Bennet grabbed at her and shoved her upstairs. "I'll get Rumy! We'll figure it out! I promise."

As Allison rushed by she closed and locked her bedroom door, so that when the others passed by they would not peer in and she trusted that even without having to say it aloud, Bennet would have her back.

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Track 05 - Watch Over Me by Teen Daze

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{Saturday Early Evening}

"How did you figure out where to find me?" Isaac looked at her, a little unnerved.

"I didn't. Not exactly. I came to see Mrs. Argent and talk to Allison. I almost forgot you were here," Lydia answered nonchalantly as if her ambivalence weren't unnerving. Her movements around the room were easy, reminding him Allison's turf may as well have been hers despite being a Hunter's home. Maybe it was because she wasn't raised to fear Hunters like he was or maybe it was because she trusted unwaveringly in Allison. Either way she found it easy walk around the bed, drag the desk chair with her and drop her bag on the bed stand before leaning toward him, propping her chin up on her hand.

"Stiles called," she confided secretively. Lydia's eyes danced around his face waiting for a reaction. "He asked me to meet him where you were attacked. I was relieved he said you weren't dead. I mean that you didn't stay dead." She bit her lip to punctuate the conclusion of her explanation, her breath hurried just a little as the feeling in her rose that this confession would bring them closer. It would touch on the threshold of death they shared and no one could really know.

"How did you know?" Isaac whispered and edged toward Lydia. The act of dying; a memory he'd bottled-up, found its way surface with painful clarity only to be reflected in her dark and haunted eyes. "Of course you knew," Isaac sighed and rubbed his temple, bewildered over how they'd gotten to a stage where he had the ability to talk to Lydia about, just, everything.

"I'm sorry I didn't tell anyone," closing her eyes Lydia shook her head, her hair fell forward as if to veil her shame. "It just came over me so quickly. I felt overwhelmed-- but not nearly as overwhelmed as I felt to know you were getting better. How did you survive?" as her words sped up and her interest was piqued she sat forward again, her hands demanding and animated.

"You're upset I survived?" he gaped and then scoffed. The words came easier when he remembered how easy it was to bicker with her.
"No," Lydia flinched then reconsidered, adding mindfully "Yes, I just can't wrap my head around it."

"Lydia, you're a Banshee." Isaac said calmly, reminding himself that as smart as Lydia was she was coming in late in the game. "You're not the evening news. The things you see and feel don't always happen."

She looked doubtful at first. When he offered his hand she looked a little offended but took it anyway. After taking his hand in both of hers, Lydia pushed the bandage back and ran her fingers from Isaac's palm up along his forearm. She wasn't harsh or forceful but it wasn't tender either, it was analytical as she assessed the damage. Lydia made mental notes of the gouge wounds, the slow healing puckered brown and purple gashes stripping the length of Isaac's left arm. But she didn't seem put off by them the way Allison had been, instead Lydia looked resigned to work with it.

Finally, she sighed softly, "okay." Lydia kept hold of his hand. Well, placed one hand on his forearm the other clasped his hand as if she were part of what kept him together.

"Guess you have to accept my apology now," Isaac scoffed lightly, just to make her roll her eyes, just to make the air a little lighter between them. "But I'm still not sure how I came back," he dropped back to lean against the headboard. His face was as neutral as he could keep it. Remembering still unnerved him, even with her to hold him fast. Isaac tried to focus on something that made him feel better, something that made him want to stick around. "I know Scott and Allison did it. A Werewolf and a Hunter, you wouldn't think they would make a good combination, nobody ever thought they would that could ever work together--"

"No, I get it. They're pretty great together. Kind of gives me hope this might all work out." Lydia chuckled softly, and looked more light-hearted than he could remember seeing her in, well, ever.

Which ended at the sound of Allison's bedroom door slamming shut and locking closed.

"What's happening?" Isaac tried to sit upright but Lydia pressed him back into the bed.

"Don't worry. It doesn't matter, it's just Allison," she insisted although she took to her feet anyway. "She knows I have the keys to the door. She must be trying to keep someone from coming in." They stayed quiet and moments later the foot fall of several people came racing through the hall toward the 'Meeting Room.'

"Well. Crap." Isaac exhaled loudly, "what could have suddenly happened to make a house full of Hunters scramble around?"

Almost immediately, Lydia threw her head back to make room for her massive sigh of relief and the snickering that followed.

Track 06 - Wait For Me by Moby

"Do you think this a mistake?" Allison finished her text with one hand and with the other gnawed her fingernails down to the nail beds.

"I think this is a mistake," Isaac spoke up from the bed on the other side of the room.
"No one asked you," Lydia snapped at him from the entrance hall. She pulled Allison further away from his prying (Werewolf, going to hear anyway) ears and tried to soothe her best-friend's anxiety away.

"So you don't think this is a mistake," she tried to twist confirmation out of Lydia's kind gestures.

Lydia closed her eyes and hugged her friend close willing her strength to pass along from one to the other. "Oh, I absolutely --" she paused as she pulled away she saw the fear in Allison's eyes and she gave it some thought. "--support whatever you decide," she tried to smile as she took the coward's way out.

After Allison rushed into the room when the latest family drama concluded Lydia connected the dots and informed them that the alarm that went off by the school was a false alarm. False-ish. Nothing to worry about. But it made Allison's anxiety sky-rocket, a fact Isaac had to bring to light.

That was when Allison revealed her brilliant/tragic plan. She would break up with Scott. Not pretend break up either. Lydia gave Isaac a sharp squeeze on his wounds to keep quiet before he cried out for an explanation and let Allison monologue.

Which Allison did explain; Isaac being interrogated in his recovery bed, Stiles getting injured/captured and Lydia getting interrogated at her front door solidified her choice. Her family was going to keep a strangle hold on her from here on out. She could keep helping her friends at a distance but the role of girlfriend blurred her priorities. Right now, Scott was their safest friend and asset, but he only stayed that way if he were to stay far, far away from her.

There was logic to it, yes. And there were flaws. Kate knew, as Isaac pointed out. But Kate valued her secrets, Lydia pointed out, and right now she wanted to hold it over Allison's head. Then, of course, there was selling the break up to Scott.

Both girls stood side by side, leaning their backs against the wall clutching each other's hand waiting an eternity for Scott to arrive. When he texted he was downstairs and Allison jumped to read it she jolted upright as though she had been shot through the chest with an arrow. Lydia breathed in short breaths as though she were the one more terrified and Allison looked the calmer, tightening back her hair and straightening up her hoodie. Lydia wiped at Allison's cheeks, pushing away invisible smudges before she gave her a confident grin.

Once the door closed between them, Lydia's face fell and she looked at the blank space where her friends stood and wondered why bad things never happened to the truly bad-bad-bad people because she had a few skull crushing blood boiling ideas rolling through her minds she wanted to do to all the Alphas and Monsters out there, and it meant liberating her friends from this senseless hurt.

"You think this is a mistake," Isaac questioned her quietly, sensing her greater inner, practically outer thoughts as she dropped into a seat.

"Breaking up with Scott? I Absolutely think this is a mistake," Lydia rolled her eyes at him and glared at the bedspread instead of keeping his gaze. Lydia found it hard to defend this stance because when she broke up with Jackson, she remembered her justification outstripped her hurt but not by much. Allison's reasoning may have been sound but her decision didn't feel justified, and she unlike Lydia was still very much in love. "But it's her mistake to make and my job to pick up the pieces."

"But?" Isaac asked in earnest, sensed the lingering worry that wasn't on the surface.
"But Scott." Lydia looked pained. In the hall she felt beside Allison, but once the door split between them she felt again connected to part of Scott's story. It felt like a she was a part of Scott's heart and it was about to be broken and Lydia imagined the ignored, throbbing bruise along her chest was symbolic of that. "I never in a million years thought I would say this, and I'll turn your Werewolf ass into a fur coat if you tell a soul, but he's too good for this."

Track 07 - Silhouette by Of Monsters and Men

The kitchen door was dim and lightless, only the garden lights were kept on keeping shadows thick and easy to slip through. Stiles stayed resting in the car, since Allison told Scott 'this will take a sec'. When the door opened Allison poked her head out to assure of his presence before she stepped on the stoop, hovering on the precipice.

When he chirped 'hello', she only nodded.

"We have a little bit of time," Allison said softly anyway, as if they could be overheard. "Everyone is out searching the woods for something that isn't there."

Scott looked to Stiles snoozing in the car, "I think I know something about that." When she didn't step aside to let him in he stared around the property, anxious someone would pop-up over a hedge despite her assurances otherwise. Her twitchy gaze did nothing for his confidence. Finally, when she didn't start the conversation, he groaned, "I can't believe you brought Isaac to your home, there is nowhere in the world he hates more than this place."

"I know," Allison said, her face looked mildly irritated, and mildly unhappy at the prospect. "I had to."

"Wasn't there anything else--?" Scott said nearing while raising his whisper in insistence. Their flow shifted in the fearsome magnitude 24 hours couldn't account for. He tried to think of what he could have done wrong, what could have changed between them-- but things kept changing in such quick succession it was hard to keep track.

"No, Scott." She snapped tiredly, shaking her head. She put her hand to her temple as though a headache had come on. When Allison looked at Scott again he couldn't tell from her expression if she were furious or hopeless. The tremor in her voice reminded of the other day, after his arrest, when his Mother was in the hospital and it seemed her heart was about to break. And her voice rose with each word that passed her lips. "We're just a bunch of teenagers, we can't handle this! Don't you get that? It doesn't matter, I told my family about the Werewolves in the school."

The blow back forced him down the kitchen step. He stared wide-eyed "You did what? Why would you do that?"

"But I didn't tell them about you," her lips trembled, Allison looked like she wanted to reach to touch him, instead she shoved her hands into her hoodie's pockets.

"That makes it better--" Scott felt like she was intentionally trying to drive him away.

"Stiles and Isaac already know," she cut in mildly. Allison looked up briefly and blinked back tears before taking another breath, and explaining "It wasn't on purpose. I tried telling you earlier and I just wanted to tell you to your face."
"Oh, okay," his voice as neutral as he could keep it.

"To say that I know you needed to talk after everything with Isaac but I can't, and I'm sorry."

"You don't have to say you're sorry," he started with a low mutter and worked up into a low steady pitch. Scott couldn't imagine a life where they wouldn't know to find each other's hand in the shadows, it would be impossible if Allison weren't beside him in the dark. "We can talk about it another time. We can figure things out."

Allison just shook her head. "I'm sure Stiles and Isaac can figure it out with you. I'm sorry. For everything and for what I have to do right now," her hands clenched and unclenched in her pockets and her voice earnest.

"It's okay," Scott came back up the step and leaned into the little light Allison's kitchen door afforded them. His smile made her sigh and shake her head even more.

"No, it's not." She insisted, tears she fought finally spilled over and ran down her cheeks. She struggled to keep her lips from trembling as she said "Scott, I'm trying to break up with you."

"I know," Scott said, his eyes tracing her face while he ran a finger along her cheek wiping away her tears. "And it's okay."

Allison brows rose and she gave a delicate scoff. She stared at him, not for the first time and hopefully not for the last, in complete and utter wonder. "How is that okay?"

"Because I can wait."

"I can't" her throat closed up on the words but she persevered "make you wait for me." He always managed to say the things she wanted to hear but right now it wasn't what she needed to hear. She needed to hear he'd be happy, he'd move on, he'd stay safe. "I'm not going to do that."

"You don't have to," he tried to smile but it was in his eyes and not his face. His fingers ran along her jaw and she wasn't even sure he thought about doing it, it was just the way his body moved to meet hers. He believed these words, body and soul. "Because I know we're gonna be together," he struggled to say and gulped around unshed tears.

Scott eyes darkened watching Allison, just as captivating as the first time they set eyes on each other. He pressed his lips into a smile, just like the first time by the lockers between classes and she leaned into him for a tender kiss. Except this one meant goodbye.

"We should go," Isaac gave her the scapegoat she needed as he snuck up behind her. He gently pushed by and pulled Scott along with him, dragging them both away into the shadows toward the car that held a sleeping Stiles. Over his shoulder, he gave Allison an encouraging half-smile and something similar to a wave but not quite.

Allison stepped back and nearly lost the will to stand, couldn't remember what to say and caught herself up into Lydia's ready hold.

"Come on," Lydia instructed in a smooth and steady voice. "There are people coming up the driveway. Let's get upstairs." Which they did, swiftly.

Once curled under the covers, without the effort of changing clothes, Allison rested her head against Lydia's good shoulder, in the crook of her neck. They laced fingers between them and their legs curled outward at different angles. They pretended Allison wasn't silently crying and talked about tomorrow's plans, and Lydia's boy troubles, possible party plans for after the mid-terms,
what to wear what not-to wear, oh god damn those midterms, how Lydia was totally dropping Swim Team.

"Can I sleep over at your house?" Allison asked suddenly.

Although Lydia stared wide-eyed, it wasn't in surprise, it was at the volume. She just grinned up at the best-friend kneeling excitedly over her, bouncing at the prospect before she even nodded her head in agreement. Ah, the 'Denial' stage had begun.

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Track 08 - Hard Time by Seinabo Sey

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"I went from having 0 places to stay to having 3 different homes in the span of a day," Isaac snickered. "To think, all I had to do was die."

Scott sighed and tapped his fingers on the edge of his notebook making sure to lean over most of the notes themselves.

"I asked my Mom before I knew Allison was going to take you to her house," he explained. Not that he felt sorry either way, he would have taken on the task a million times. Lifting Isaac's lifeless body from a hole in the ground gave Scott great perspective and he wanted better footing among his friends, he wanted it unmistakably. "You don't have to stay here but you can, you should. We share in chores, and there's a lot of them but there's room for you."

Isaac scratched at his jaw line while thoughts rolling around in his head as he vividly imagined the prospect. "You know Stiles is just waiting for his Dad outside to distract your Mom." They looked to the window, through to the partly obscured view of Stiles sitting aside with Mrs. McCall; it was the touching picture of maternal care.

"I figured," Scott nodded.

"Plus, it makes sense to stay with a nurse," Isaac dropped his slowly healing left arm with a thud onto the counter top.

"Is that all?" Scott smirked.

Of late Isaac had grown suspicious of notebooks. Although there was an array of schoolwork and a neat display of textbooks before them, he suspected Scott had more on his mind than midterms. Plus, "I'd rather stay here anyway," he admitted with a shrug. "Allison might have the experience and Stiles might have the right intentions but it just doesn't have the right fit right now, while he's settling back in with his Dad. I've spent weeks figuring out how to fit in, what my strengths and weaknesses are with you."

Isaac dragged his eyes slowly over from Stiles with a little bit of somberness as if a sense of betrayal came with it. Except he wanted to respect there was that Stilinski borderline of family to keep clear in mind, even if Stiles still had trouble acknowledging it. With these new thoughts uncovered a need he didn't know lay just under the surface. "And I nearly died, Scott. I think I can only figure out how I survived with you."

Scott suspected that was a drawing fascination and he smiled, turning his notebook face up toward Isaac. "I want to figure that out too."
Every time they ran together during lacrosse games, ever since he met Scott on his first day of school, ever since he spotted him goofing around with Allison in the arcade at the mall-- it drew Isaac in that a Beta could function so well without an Alpha. He wanted an explanation how. Then it sorta scared him. Then it sorta amazed him. Now Isaac sorta wanted in and Scott almost twisted his arm to come into the fold, metaphorically of course because his real one was still pretty sore and he really wouldn't mind if Mrs. McCall took a look at it.

Track 09 - Bleeding Out by Imagine Dragons

Despite the fact that his leg had fully healed, Stiles still struggled with a fever and had he listened to Lydia and rested fully he probably would feel closer to 100% better by now. But realistically he figured there were more variables as to why he felt 'less than' at this point and if he could milk it, why not?

Inside, Scott and Isaac worked head to head at some scheming thing. Sure he could no doubt help but it felt right to step back and distract. Scott and Allison had managed to rescue Isaac from certain death, he was sure they had a lot to iron out but Stiles honestly just wanted to sulk a bit.

It wasn't long before Melissa noticed Stiles, silent as the dead waiting on the front stoop for his Dad to pick him up. "The nearly dead," he corrected with a groan. Despite Melissa's offering for him to stay over Stiles was determined to spend the night in his own bed, "it just matters a lot."

When he repeated himself 3rd time she felt compelled to ask "to who?"

Looking unnerved Stiles subverted the issue "to whom."

Melissa pursed her lips as she unamusedly reached across and patted his hand.

The bench beneath Stiles felt too hard and small for him and he couldn't keep still. After vanishing a minute to return with meds, Melissa stayed beside him unmoving as he rocked himself into an inconsistent state of dozing.

Melissa sat beside him and talked at him but after a few seconds of polite bedside manner she assured him, "let me tell you something, you don't have to prove anything to those people."

"Wha-Who?"

"Stop trying so damn hard to prove how badly you want to stay with them. Those people are crazy about you. Your Dad. Scott, Lydia and definitely Isaac. And you better believe I am, so stop killing yourself to show us you're alive." She held placed her hand steadily on his shoulder.

Stiles felt a desire bubble up in him. Yes, a sort of insane need to explain himself that almost pushed him to sit upright, to prove himself. He felt a compulsion to do what was right just like she said but she pushed him to lean back.

"I have to--" Stiles started to say but felt he couldn't finish the thought.

"Shh. Sit, Stiles. I'm sure you can handle the big bad wolf tomorrow. Right now, take it easy." Her worry made her smiles of assurance lose a little shine. But the weighing weariness caught onto Stiles and dragged him down.
"Thanks," he mumbled. Stiles missed the sort of comfort that came with bedside assistance. The Hales gave him a lot of assistance and instruction, even affection, but they never felt quite as intimate as this. Between the wisps of the Hunter's rare Wolfsbane poison and Lydia's Banshee call, Melissa's bone-seeping warmth was exactly the healing touch he needed. "Thanks, Mom." He whispered as he drifted off to sleep.

Melissa sighed and watched him intently. She knew his Stiles' Mother would have loved the irony. Years ago, there were also times when she sat at the bedside of Claudia Stilinski's, where she would end an evening holding her best-friend's hand through a warring migraine after she drove herself to feverish collapse from caring after her family and friends too much. And Melissa wondered if Claudia would consider Stiles inherited resolve, as a good thing or a bad one.

When the Sheriff showed up minutes later, he had a misty and nostalgic look in his eye. The familiarity wasn't lost on him either. Stiles woke just enough to find his feet, but they each took a side when he made his way to the passenger seat. It seemed like things were falling into step a lot sooner than they had anticipated.

"We've got to except that some things are just out of our control," she said.

Sheriff chuckled sticking his head through the driver's side window. "Can I just say that's not exactly the motivating speech I was expecting from you."

"How 'bout this one," she grinned, leaning against the car at an angle to look at them both. "You should be proud. Even without your guiding influence he's just as stubborn as you."

"Slightly better," he let out a relieved laugh. If Melissa could see both him and Claudia equally in Stiles, even in the most disturbed way, that was a comfort. When their bossy-yet-friendly personal nurse ordered him to 'go home and rest' with his kid finally under his roof while mulling over that parallel he figured he finally would get some rest.

Track 10 - Windshield Smasher by Black Moth Super Rainbow

The bathroom of the 24-hour Diner named Tony's just on the edge of two towns was accustomed to things of all sorts. And despite clear instructions otherwise, people still used it for reasons other than it was intended; such as bathing, screwing, cleaning their clothes and the occasional medical procedure. Like when the youngest Werewolf of Ennis' pack, Quint, had decided to commit little surgeries to his side in that same bathroom two weeks earlier.

Quint hoped in vain to aim his claws with needle precision under the skin to reset the placements of bones and muscle, and (to replace bandages) just shove his clothes over it. It wasn't hard. There were already significant chemical burns, he just had to take the rotting stuff out and slow the spreading. But there was no sign of help in Beacon Hills.

All Quint really wanted was to get free... coffee. Not re-fills. Free Coffee. Someone had to have pity on him, he'd just been walking down the highway in the middle of the night with a spreading wound along his ribcage and a hankering for 'Benny's Best Beans in Beacon'. Quint sat at the counter and promised the waitress he was still 'just looking' while he eyed three things; 1) who to hit on for a free meal 2) who to lift a wallet off of or 3) who to hitch a ride off of, which would probably make the first two moot.
He could flirt better when every breath didn't feel like it would be his last.

He had money back at the Motel but a warzone didn't exactly leave room for packing.

Which left option three, but without food for strength or something to pay a driver with, the option was only looking slightly better than doubling back the way he'd come.

Weeks had gone by watching three powerful Alphas put their heads together, come up with the genius concept to get answers for every dead Werewolf (barring natural or ritualistic circumstances) along the California coastline. They found the last son of some Werewolf pack he'd never heard of strapped him to a basement wall to torture him 24/7. As the son of an experienced torturer Quint could attest to the fact that all it really got you was more torture, which was great if you liked torture. So there was no way he was turning to the Alphas for answers, while they still let their people die poisoned, mauled or crushed underfoot because they chased through Derek Hale’ jail break.

Quint waved the waitress over and ordered, deciding if his last act on earth would be a dine-and-ditch on 'Benny's Best' that would be his finest accomplishment. He would prefer that to being remembered as Kali's human shield. Once, Herveaux said her old Alpha referred to their Betas as 'Pawns' right before cutting them down one by one to feed off of their strength. But Herveaux outlived her pack. She had evolved and was no longer a pawn and because of that, Ennis respected her. Quint feared Ennis might start 'sacrificing his pawns,' even though his Father promised it would never get that far, but then Ennis started calling them 'foot soldiers' and his Father stopped promising. That just made Quint try twice as hard to be useful and it put him right in the front line, just like a pawn.

Early that evening, at the abandoned entrance by The Ponds, where the three Packs kept their so assumed greatest secret, Quint stood guard. Although moderately bored Quint was fastidious in his duty but with two nicks to the neck he went numb and paralyzed to the ground. Fuzzy brown murky water slipped down his throat before Quint felt his Father drag him out of it and into the presumed safety of the service station. Into the mayhem of a contained war zone, where two terrible enemies tore through several tribes like piñatas. A humanoid lizard tossed aside friend after friend. Then Quint saw Ennis grab up Derek, a powerful Alpha who had been tortured for days without surrender, and use him like a rechargeable battery. Ennis stabbed his claws deep into Derek's spine and syphoned Alpha strength from him as if he were leaching marrow from the bone. Quint wasn't afraid to die, but he was afraid to go down without a fight and watching that made him feel sick. That and the swamp water. Of course then there was Kali, strong in her actions as well as her conviction. Fending off the other shadowed figure like a ninja, moving like a master and using Quint like a shield.

Unless Quint found someone who knew the right combination Southern Blue Monkshood and toxic material that were fired into him, then it wouldn't matter how much of it Quint dug out. His Father mentioned a Veterinarian, but that didn't sound like a chemical warfare expert. Plus, Google maps said there were 3 vets in the area and it didn't feel like he had a lot of time.

With each time he cleaned the wounds, he regretted not begging his Father to come with him. Quint could use a Doctor. And he missed his Father's voice. And he really wished their last conversation hadn't been over Ennis' choosing to make a martyr of Quint rather than cure him. It was humiliating, and Dr. Kane just allowed it to happen. The prized torturer beside the Alpha, Ennis when in that moment he should have just been a concerned Father instead -- onto greatness Quint could only guessed.

At Tony's 24-Hour Diner he figured it would be easy to hitchhike, to find a way through Fairvale
and into the Mountain ranges. It made sense the more feral the vet the more likely they might be able to help with his cause but there was no way he'd be able to walk all that way. There were plenty of other people in the 24-Hour-Diner to pick from to get over the town line with and so he focused on that. There were properly burly sleep-deprived truckers in for the long haul and families travelling through the county. But there were the scattered one or two seemingly in either from the Motel or on their way out of town just like he was.

"You alright kid?"

"Hanging in there," Quint side-eyed the lady. She seemed an unlikely candidate leaving her bespeckled partner at their booth to pick up the check.

"Do you smell something weird?" she sniffed, pulled her wavy light brown hair back and made a disconcerted face as dropped on stool beside when she came to the counter from her booth.

"Just swamp water," Quint explained, pressing his hand against his side, digging right into the sore as if he could smother out the smell of rot. "I came up from The Ponds."

"There's nothing much down there," the woman waved the waitress over and dismissed the man at the door giving her a glare. The man at the door with the thick rimmed glasses and the annoyed glower pushed out of the Diner with a huff.

"It looks like your date's leaving," Quint pointed out, trying to keep the hope from his voice. If she only picked him up at the Diner then she wasn't attached and if she wasn't attached then she might not be opposed to picking up a wayward lad heading out of town.

"He's just a friend," she shrugged. When her coffee came she rotated the cup in her had like she handled a sacred item and Quint wondered if she was intending on staying a while or taking off because he wanted out, out, out and would do whatever he had to do to motivate her to do the same. "There are a few of us. We were just checking out of a Motel around the bend. He wants me to go and pack up but I've got a roommate and she can cover me."

"Oh, yeah?" Quint knew the Motel too well. His pack was hauled up there and he didn't want to head back either. Maybe they could connect over that. Maybe that was a stretch.

"Yeah. We were just gonna pass through town, but you know Beacon Hills has got a lot of interesting things going on. We were thinking of sticking around," she sipped her coffee and watched him with pointed interest, her eyes lips were somehow turned up even on the lip of the cup.

"This town has got too much going on," Quint groaned, mostly in pain rather than disgust and sipped his coffee in commiseration and that's when he caught sight of the gun holsters under her dark blue Moto jacket.

Quint had come across Hunters before and the experience had been marginally less than pleasant but then again he had never been alone. But the fight or flight instinct in him had been triggered and before he thought to do so he flung the pot of coffee at her face. Then he wished he hadn't, he wished he had just walked out but he wasn't sure how far he would have gotten without causing a scene by not paying his check. So Quint panicked. It wasn't long before she had his arm, his bad arm, and had him pinned to the filthy, tiled ground.

The Hunter came right out with it and asked him who was he and why he was in town. Quint didn't have a reason to hide it but he insisted, "who the fuck're you?"
She admitted she was an 'Argent' but when the waitress said she would call the Sheriff's department the Hunter hesitated and Quint used all of his strength to grow claws and growl, to collect enough strength to throw her off. And he was out the door.

If he could use the last of his strength for anything at least this way he had the feverish idea he could use it to keep the secrets of his pack with him as he went down.

Of course she couldn't follow her instinct and do something stupid like just shoot after him. When she heard the sound of her ATV taking off and she realized he stole her bike's key, then she at least had to take chase.

Kate's spray pattern was accurate and the bullets would have hit home had the kid not flinched. Flinched? More like folded over in agony. She couldn't calculate for the way Quint buckled over in pain, so her first bullet clipped him in the throat, the second hit its mark in his shoulder but the third hit the gas tank. He swerved the bike into that one.

When the bike burst into flames, Kate took only a split second to convince herself it was alright because he'd attacked first. It wasn't the first time in her life she'd had to convince herself that a situational death was justifiable to make peace with it. After all, the Werewolf expressed no pack alliance, the boy seemed feral and in the end he attacked first. It was her duty to protect the patrons, neutralize and detain him. Yes, definitely by their rules she was within her rights.

The bullet she shot had only been meant to stun him, to hit him in the leg not to hit the gas tank. But then again the kid was in enough pain it was probably a thing of mercy. Hell, if he had stuck around long enough and she explained to him how dire his circumstances he might even have thanked her for how painless she made his death, after all the kill shot was immediate and her bike was ruined for no goddamn reason. Had he stuck around for the next 12 hours he would have melted inside out and felt every second of it, not that he knew and there were two people on the West Coast who knew how to deal with it; veterinarian #3 that he drove away from and the one who exposed him to the toxin. So, small mercies.

But power doesn't always come with the story but with the telling. So Kate made sure to tell the good Dr. Kane that she burned Quint up slow like and on purpose, because pumping Carmichael's Monkshood into his veins just to heal him up again with Digitalis didn't get them any answers, but telling him they burned his son alive got a rise out of him. And then answers came pouring out. Not that Kate stopped inflicting pain. Not that it stopped Hunters from asking the same questions over and over. Not that it stopped the bloody onslaught that Dr. Kane had no answers to and Lydia could only begin to get the sense of, something so far along the river bend even Kate's poisonous contaminations had nothing on it. And it was terrifying.

. Track 11 - One More Day by Lydia

. When the nightmares first started Allison could only think on what to do when people have seizures. Whenever Allison sensed her muscles tense before one of Lydia's nightmares came on, within 2 minutes she was shaking and screaming so Allison went through protocol in her mind; keep Lydia from falling-- keep anything from falling on her-- keep her from getting caught up and tangled in anything or anything from getting caught up or tangled in her mouth-- and for the love of god, keep her safe. Their little protocol diverged from the norm afterward to hold onto her sometimes if she needed it or sometimes when she didn't want it lay down near with Lydia's little dog in-between them. Allison's skill was to know all that without being asked.
They had a plan. But this time afterward Lydia kicked out, she sat up and turned away. She walked to the door and let in her puppy Prada who whined at the door. She chose to sit by the window and hug the puppy up to her chest instead of 'the norm'.

"What's going on?" Allison came to kneel on the bed, rubbing the sleep from her eyes just too quickly and replaced it with concern. "How bad could it have been?"

Lydia bit her lip, tucked her chin in and sighing, she answered. "It was pretty bad. I was just thinking about Stiles." The sweat on her collar that Prada licked at was indecipherable whether it was night sweat or anxious sweat. Ignoring the action, she hugged the puppy closer.

"Did he do something?" Allison understood Stiles and Lydia were close and that intimacy afforded them some access but she still didn't know the guy close enough to know his boundaries. And she knew when they managed to get out of the 'Meeting Room' the other night she never got the full story. At the time Allison felt okay with it, but now she wondered if she should have pushed, if she should have asked why Lydia let her estranged and eccentric-bestie push her buttons in a way she had never witnessed before. At least not live with their dignity intact afterward.

"He set off your family's trap by the school," Lydia's face turned sour with worry, Allison's went bright with fear. "I got him out of it, of course. I'm always getting him out of trouble."

"You don't just walk off Carmichael poisoning," Allison believed that if there was someone in the world she believed stubborn enough to try, it was Stiles. "Although he seems the type," she tried for levity but worry tensed her body all over. She came to the very edge of the bed and peered around to try and catch Lydia's face full on, to try to read ahead of the story.

"Well, he wanted to," Lydia looked up with a little smile of relief but it was quickly replaced with pursed lips. "I took care of it though. The scissors I used to cut him free, they had foxglove on them. It sterilized the wound."

"That's really lucky," Allison said softly. She was relieved to realize she really was relieved. If Lydia hadn't been there to save Stiles' ass he seemed the dumb sort to rub the same type of Wolfsbane into the wound and convince himself that would cure it. Those two worked really well together.

Lydia shook her head and said "That isn't luck. It was because of your Mom's flowers." Prada jumped down, Lydia continued. "Your Mom is growing a lot of foxglove lately, Allison. Have you noticed?"

"Oh," she answered with resolve. It wasn't the first time Allison picked apart her family's intentions but it would be the first time she had a genius riding shotgun.

"Allison can I ask you a couple of things... about your family?"

"Okay."

"When we slept over your house and your Mom texted you all night to come to the Lodge for some family meeting, why didn't they just meet in the 'Meeting Room'?" Lydia's eyes caught the keenness they did when she had a subject in mind that made her blood boil, when she was about to made a grand project of something.

The little dog stood on its hind legs at the edge of the bed and licked at Allison's fingers.

"What?" she came back with nothing clever.
"Why wouldn't they just meet in the 'Meeting Room'? It wasn't like we could disturb them or overhear them unless they were hiding something in the Lodge, don't you think?"

The air left Allison's lungs like it had been ripped out by the fistful. She looked toward the dog for the answer and found baleful eyes of compassion insisting on being petted. So she did.

"They never explained why they wanted me there," Allison answered quietly without looking up. She tugged up the edges of her wide collar so that it would slip back down around her shoulders. Allison's placement on the floor felt unstable and despite her constantly shifting in place she couldn't manage to get steady footing. "I don't know what happens in the Lodge. They don't let me in there anymore."

"Allison," Lydia's voice said softly like a question then again like a steady demand, a thread pulling them firmly back together. "Allison, can you think of a good reason why your family is making extra poisons and cures, and hiding things in the Lodge--"

"Aside from holding a Werewolf in the Lodge?" Allison breathed out in a soft groan. "It makes sense though. But it doesn't break any of our laws to just bring someone in for questioning."

"Torturing them?" Lydia knew the answer but needed to ask it aloud, she needed to feel like she was standing up for something even when she knew she wasn't being a hero tonight. "Why would they do this?"

"Because torture isn't killing?" Allison painted a picture of a system that worked in checks and minuses and answered to no higher order. Even if she didn't put faith in it she grew up following it. "We protect those who cannot protect themselves, by any means necessary. And we don't kill if we don't have to. Torture isn't killing so they haven't broken any of our rules."

"The 'Man' in question," Lydia articulated, 'Man' reminding exactly that the prefix 'Were' translated exactly to that, not just some animal. "His name is Kane. He isn't a good man but Kate is going to cross that line. Whether she means to or not, she is going to kill him." Lydia paused to let the fact sink in.

"This was your dream," Allison felt steady on like Lydia shouldn't have had to carry this burden alone. "If we got into the Lodge and got by all those Hunters we could save him. If he's even alive?" Allison's hands steadied on her bare thighs, tugging at the edge her boxer shorts, which were once Scott's blue and white checkered boxer-shorts, which she wore under her clothes and close to her skin as conscious and secret connection of their shared strength. To remind of how much stronger she felt for having him with her, stronger for having him to fight for.

"Even if you tried to run to his rescue Allison, it won't work," Lydia lied, pushing aside Isaac's insights into Banshees for the sake of Allison's good conscience. Lydia came forward toward the edge of the chair, hands on her knees and sat with her back straight and chin held a little high. Her eyes were still haunted from her nightmare even if her voice came across as steady. Lydia knew if they made the attempt they could possibly maybe find the guy. Maybe he died already, maybe he would die tomorrow. Lydia didn't feel his death like she felt the others', she only witnessed it but Lydia understood what it would cost for Allison to betray her family at such a precarious time. And she understood that Kane was a bad man and that her vision wasn't fact, it was a possibility. Just one of many options, so she made the hard call for Allison because she wasn't the hero she was the best-friend and she needed to look out for her and protect her, especially from herself. And her fucked up family.

"Banshees dream of death, not of people just getting beaten up." After a careful pause, Lydia added caustically, "And you would think after the Senate Intelligence Committee Report on Torture you
guys would have figured out torture doesn't get you anywhere."

Allison looked defeated. She stopped petting Prada and stepped off the bed. She paced a few steps then turned to face Lydia. "You can't know that for sure?"

Lydia looked up from under her tangled hair, her fingers anxiously gripped at her knees and she shook her head. Her eyes went sharp suddenly and jaw went tight, she chewed on a thought before breathing it out.

"If it makes you feel any better, I think the reason the other night your Aunt Kate was so insistent to get your Dad down to the Lodge was to tell him about it. The same way she wanted to tell you."

Allison scoffed lightly, "and that's supposed to make me feel better how?"

"Because I don't think your whole family is in on it," a slow smile spread across her lips.

"You're right," Allison nodded. Her eyes grew determined as she stared into Lydia's eyes. "My Dad would never have agreed to torture. And there is no way in hell my godfather would be on board. But Kate-- this seems like the sort of thing Kate is capable of." At that, she sniffed loudly and Prada disagreed with the aggressive change in demeanor, hopped up and raced to the end of the bed before turning in circles and finding a comfortable way to sleep.

"So," Lydia stood so that they might decide on this next task eye-to-eye, "Do we tell the guys?" she anticipated a drawn out argument, something about the value of transparency or of working as a team but something clouded over Allison's eyes. Of late Lydia learned more of how she and Allison shared the sentiment of choosing duty over romanticism.

Allison reached across and squeezed Lydia's shoulder, as if she were the one needing coercion. "Later. Right now they have enough on their plate."

Track 12 - Between the Bars by Elliott Smith

"She's getting powerful," Isaac griped, sitting bolt upright a second after Scott. Although they barely managed to get into bed after studying late, Lydia's scream knocked them right out of their sleep.

Scott stared at his phone, willing it to ring and when it did, to his surprise it was Stiles who called and not Lydia. After assuring him that this was perfectly normal, they hung up and waited for Lydia to call. After ten minutes, Isaac offered to text Allison because he knew it was all Scott really wanted to do. So he reached out to Allison while Scott texted Lydia.

"Everything's fine," Isaac answered. Tossing his phone to the side in frustration after reading aloud her reply.

Lydia in turn never replied.

"If we're not talking to each other how're we supposed to be helping one another?" Isaac asked, his impatience replaced the sleep across his features.

Scott shook his head, chewing his lower lip he said, "Maybe it's better this way. Maybe if we were 100% honest 100% of the time we would just scare each other away."
After a moment Isaac laughed. "You don't believe that. You're just trying to make me feel better."

"Maybe I'm just trying to make myself feel better," Scott sighed and dropped back onto the bed. He looked sidelong over to where Isaac camped on the ground. "Everything has been looking pretty dire lately--"

"I'm okay now," Isaac glanced up at Scott, and smirked. "If you think a little thing like dying is going to keep me down, remember I walked into town along with a kid who died 6 years ago, as part of a pack that was burned to the ground, what 15-20 years ago? Apparently that's just what we do."

Scott shook his head and looked away grinning, restlessly crossed and uncrossed his legs at the ankles. "That doesn't make it easier to understand any of this. Maybe if we did talk to Lydia?"

"She might be able to put everything together," Isaac shrugged, "but after the whole dying thing she's pretty shaken up."

"If we're going to be okay with the idea that our strength as a pack made you strong enough to come back from death-- while my Alpha who still messes with my head is the psychopathic Monster-- the same Monster that's probably got another 'previously assumed dead' pack member, Cora, captive-- which is happening in the middle of huge Werewolf war, the Hunters just got involved in because we revealed ourselves-- then this is just how it's going to be every day, which I guess makes sense." Scott straightened up, leaning up onto his elbows, "but what doesn't make sense is why didn't I hear Lydia scream when you died?"

"Oh," Isaac followed Scott and struggled to see the puzzle until it came to the missing, Lydia's place in recent events. "Uh, well she was there... and she did," Isaac stared blankly, while remembering her expression of the panic and guilt when she first set eyes on him at the Argents'. The mystery of being crushed to death and waking up beside his friends didn't bother him very much because he did wake up beside his friends. Knowing that he shared the experience with Lydia but she went through it alone was disheartening. "I don't know Scott. You'll really have to talk to Lydia."

After a great sigh, Scott dropped back onto the bed and covered his face with his hands. "She does make a good study partner," he admitted but Lydia made a better friend. He had no doubt she sat alongside Allison at that moment, he would have to wait for the morning at the very least and pray she'd signed up for Sunday cram-sessions.

"Track 13 - Mad Sounds by Arctic Monkeys"

Once again, Stiles hands clapped to the sides of his head in an attempt to kept the world steady and his mind from fracturing. Only this time he didn't have the luxury of collapsing to the floor in unconscious, because the Banshee jolted him awake.

The realization Lydia's screams could be deafening from across town terrified him. After falling from his bed with enough velocity to dislocate his shoulder, it became easier to imagine something so impossible. It wasn't that big a deal, the shoulder thing. With the experience of having dislocated his shoulder dozens of times before, it was an easy thing to reset before his Dad came bursting through the door. Stiles laughed it off his fall and said maybe it was the last of fevered nightmares or he was just getting used to the bed. His Dad darted out of the room with a solution in
mind and Stiles didn't move to stop him, he had other worries to address.

Forgetting to grab with his good arm first, Stiles fumbled for the phone. The flinching response of his messed up shoulder clued him into something else dark and worrying about in Lydia's posturing, the confusion made his finger hover over her name until he thought to call Scott for clarity instead.

"Do you think Lydia is okay?"

"Oh," Scott chuckled but sounded uncomfortable. "You heard her too?"

Two thoughts occurred to him at once;

'Well, that's not going to kill me eventually' was Stiles' first cynical thought, followed closely by a genuinely concerned, 'Christ, if this is how bad a banshee scream is just to hear-- how much worse has it gotta be on the receiving end?'

After a sound came across the hall to him, "My Dad's coming, Scott. Can you--"

"She's okay."

"How do you know?"

"We'd know," Scott insisted, sounding surer with every second. "She'd tell us if there was something wrong."

"Of course she would," Stiles nodded along as he gulped out words, trying to convince himself but the nightmare sapped him of any bravery and the soreness of his healing shoulder gave him reasons to doubt it. As his Dad crept into the room Stiles insisted, "Scott I gotta go."

"Ta-Da," his Dad presented him with a pillow. Stiles cocked an eyebrow, not sure at the correlation but not ready to despair. "It's your Mom's. You used to--"

"I used to steal it," Stiles drew in a sharp breath and let it out slowly. "I used to say I couldn't sleep without it."

The room went still.

"If it's too much--" his Dad eased back out through the door.

"No!" Stiles jumped to his feet and snatched the pillow, hugging it to his chest he glowered comically at his Dad. "Just give a guy some warning if you're going to emotionally whammy him like that."

"Yeah, well, I hadn't thought about how you would take it. I'm not exactly awake and--" he rubbed at his neck, looking sheepishly and Stiles closed the extra foot's distance between them and hugged his Dad.

"I'm taking it. Gesture and everything," he mumbled burying his face in his Dad's neck, for the night his nightmare forgotten.

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Track 14 - Before I Ever Met You by BANKS
Unused to eating alone at lunch, Jackson struggled to find his poise. When he did, he played it dark and brooding and made it look good. As things slipped out of control more and more, Jackson put a safe distance between himself and his friends, between himself, Lydia and Danny but somewhere he had tipped the scales.

But as he sat alone the brooding vibe turned into sulking. And when people kept their distance, it wasn't because of awe; it was because of fear.

"Here," Kira said. "Take a bite of this apple." Jackson caught it as it sailed through the air with careless ease.

"Cool," with a bright smile Kira openly admired him. Sitting across from him, she looked confident and pretty with her dark hair, with a deep part on the side flowing over one shoulder in waves, her lips red and made shinier with her bright sweet smile.

Drinking in the sight of her, Jackson sat back. He wasn't going to let a second go to waste.

"What are you doing here?" He asked and took a loud bite from the apple. "You shouldn't be here," Jackson said in a tone he hoped conveyed his seriousness. He'd hoped to put distance between them too.

"You shouldn't be alone," she reached across the table and took hold of his free hand. When their hands touched, it felt like his skin caught fire. As Kira traced her fingertips along Jackson's knuckles, she left tiny fissures in her wake. It frightened him to like it. The edges of her mouth turned up slightly and he thought about biting and venom and the way she paralyzed him without doing much.

But when Jackson looked to where their arms met, his hands were scales and fingers were gnarled claws. When he opened his mouth to speak words of explanation or apology or warning he felt as though a monster would crawl out. Instead he flinched away in shock, swallowed down the vomitus violence bubbling just underneath and he looked to her in unconcealed shame.

The cafeteria was suddenly empty as Kira came toward him. She towered over him, standing on the table top. Her silhouette cut the universe and she ran her hand along the midnight fabric at her throat to and across her waist. All throughout, Kira kept her eyes locked on Jackson's as she stepped further and with a firm touch, whipped her hand outward, tearing away a strip of inky black fabric from her mid-drift, revealing subtle muscles, hips low-slung pants now draped off of and a sword she'd whipped into shape from the material around her waist.

The solid metal sword went down Jackson's collar and slid through his chest without resistance. Kira's smile never wavered and he sighed with relief at the sight.

"That's better," he didn't even choke to say and Kira's brow rose delicately with interest, fascinated by the clarity of his speech, as the fangs of his teeth and venom of his forked tongue retracted while the point of his chiseled chin returned to him.

"To be broken?" she withdrew the sword with a swift motion, a stream of blood followed in suit. They stared into each other's eyes, her fathomless dark and his unblinking serpentine yellow into bright blue as Jackson fell forward and Kira knelt to catch him.

"But I hope to be better because of it," he said slowly. The Kanima slowly turned into man and where they touched either felt slick with blood or scorched from Kitsune as they pulled each other upright.
The night air managed to keep most of its warmth from the day. It only started to let go of it at around 7pm, and by let go we're talking fling it out of the window by 10-15°F. It wasn't spectacularly uncommon for winter to not make up its mind as to whether or not it wanted to settle in or move on but it made nights where the moon hid behind the clouds feel bitter, but the night felt like it could walk on peacefully forever.

Unless you weren't the sort to bring peace with you when you walked along. In the Spaulding District, the noise ordinance made it complicated to make noise complaints when the dogs barked in a chorus along avenues, lanes and cul-de-sacs. By the time one block stirred it quieted in quick succession and neighbors couldn't pinpoint the source of the upset. If they had they would have back tracked where construction left Spaulding virtually locked off with the exception of one or two vulnerable spots due to the expansion. Those blind spots led to closed off backroads along the sketchy under path onto empty roads leading onto an empty stretch of road that cut a path into the forest green. The city ordinance didn't have a fence high enough to secure their safety from the wildness that tracked along while they tried to sleep. It was made worse with the warning barks, the yowling cats, clacking and hissing birds, and the assorted cacophony of agitated house pets.

Its course went fast at first, casting unseen shadows in the moonless night. Power attracts power, and brought the Monster slowly to the Whitemore home, the easiest to spot among the blocks. It wasn't subtle in its showiness, a mastery of modern art unlike the growing prefabs in the blocks adjacent. And floor to ceiling stainless steel doors and windows lined outskirts and protected the residents from harm. Yet despite the police/military tested safety protocols, drawing closer to Jackson only strengthened the Monster's resolve.

Due to subconscious fear of a predator the night drew to its quietest decibels. Some people checked their phones for missed calls. Others twisted in their sheets from worries of the day brought to the surface. While others turned in their seats to see if someone was in the room with them. And in the newly sold home across from the Whitemores', a position more vulnerable than others, Jennifer Blake's perception of events was more sensitive than others'.

From the window of the room she'd decided would be her bedroom, where the bed, one dresser and half a bookshelf had been set up, she could see nothing. Even without her window shades installed she couldn't get a clear view of the street. She hadn't had a chance to install a security system, pet or otherwise, so she grabbed up a curtain pole as a weapon. Putting one foot in front of the other she made a slow decline to the first floor. And by the time she touched her toes to the ground her front door splintered into pieces.

Even through his nightmares and smothered by a beefy, fur-swathed fist, larger than the size of her face, Jackson could hear the sound of her scream. In his boxers he was out of his bed, through his bedroom window, over a hedge and across the lawn with his lacrosse co-captain expertise. Adrenaline got him through the door but the size of the Monster tearing through his history teacher's den left him inert. Only for a second, but drawing strength from their nearness Jackson's blue eyes changed into serpent color and shape. His fingers turned to claws, scale-like slates advanced along the line of his spine, spreading the expanse of his neck and his chest. And as the Monster started up on a terrible roar to taunt and force Jackson back a manic madness riled up inside Jackson. Mindlessness coursed through him and caused him to attack. The rationale didn't strike him that he had no hope of winning, and neither did the idea that what grew before him was
the stuff of nightmares. Instead he wanted to play just as he sensed the Monster did.

Ms. Blake lay prone and unconscious, her head bleeding from a small gash above the temple. But after a few seconds she woke again to see her hardwood floor being upheaved by the silhouettes of creatures that looked like they should have been carved on a medieval shield. She dragged herself to sit upright despite her dizziness leaning heavily on the stair banister. When she formed coherent thoughts, she gave up on making images of shadows. Instead her eyes travelled through her busted front door to across her lawn to where the Whittemores' garbage cans were knocked over once more.

The recesses of her mind also told her the ceiling fixture was old and needed coming down. "I really should have installed that security door sooner. After all, it was right beside the doorway." Her clearing mind also said the animals in the neighborhood have started up again and it was going to take some doing to get them to shut up.

It wasn't until the shape of what could be mistaken for Jackson at a squint came skidding toward her at high-speed that her mind cleared up enough to catch up with her instincts. She threw out her hands, bent at the knees slightly and readied to spin out. They fell in a resounding heap at the bottom step, she lay underneath him and although her head still spun she felt her mind become clearer and her limbs solid while she tried to push out from under him with all of her strength.

It took longer for the Kanima venom to have an effect on the Monster, even as it did so the Monster seemed more like an angry drunk than an animal about to go down for the count. In the lightless house, Jackson, more animal-shaped than man-shaped pulled out of its hold and, as a Kanima, let out a rasping hiss of a noise. He got onto his hands and knees, and swaying he readied himself to leap into an attack.

"No! No!!" With each word of practice Jennifer's voice rose in steadiness and volume. "Let it alone!" she exclaimed. She threw herself forward and tried to grab hold of him. She sort of did, she threw her arms around his neck and hauled him back with her weight but more because she stumbled than because she wrestled him down.

They dropped into a heap of limbs and watched the Monster stumbling angrily, drunkenly toward and through the front door, then along the street howling in distress. While doubtful it would make it all the way back wherever it came from there were still plenty of places for it rest up between point A and point B. More relevantly, Jackson and Jennifer had a chance to catch their breath and rationalize events.

Quick to his feet, Jackson tried to save face and rushed to the door just to see that the streets were safe. The sound of animals tracing the path back clued him in surely but he wanted inarguable evidence so he could get out of there and back to his home. At least Jennifer managed to sit up without aid, but with a hesitant touch her fingers traced the tender side of her head and came away bloodied.

Out of formality more than concern Jackson returned to ask if she was okay but she answered by holding up her bloodied fingertips. His reply was a groan of annoyance as he stepped up to the obligatory task of care. With little resistance, he placed the security door where the door should have been. A little light headed, Jennifer stood and stumbled down the one step into the sunken living room. Jennifer mumbled about the deposit she had on her home, she even joked about possible complaints of the neighbors. Jackson muttered he would complain if she didn't take 'this' already as he handed her paper towels wrapped around ice for the side of her head.

When Jennifer asked if he was okay he grunted in reply. "This place is a mess," Jackson looked around. His eyes drifted out through the bay windows, his home seemed further away even now.
"You're telling me. Hazard insurance is not going to cover this," she said quietly and then she added, sounding uncertain, "thank you."

Jackson's eyes shot over to her and wavered. Jennifer's weakness made him uncomfortable. He could see her bloodied and injured but apologetic and it made him feel genuinely queasy.

"Why did that thing come after you?" Jackson crossed his arms over his bare chest and tried to glare, he only looked more unnerved. "It should have ripped us to pieces-- you know you shouldn't stay here."

After taking the ice from the side of her head she licked her lips while considering, and she dropped to sit on the single step. Her dark hair matted to the side of her head and made her look younger in her unkempt state, made worse with the way she wiped excess mess from the back of her hand onto her pajama pant leg. Jennifer unraveled the paper towel and rotated the ice cubes in her other hand, she hummed a little in thought before answering. "Are you saying we should run away together?"

Jackson shook his head and narrowed his eyes, but he dropped his arms, padded over with bare feet, ignoring the injuries the splintered floor gave him. "Come on," he pushed her, his expression a rare display of open earnestness.

"Get a girl a drink first," she pointed toward the cupboard over the fireplace. Jackson did as instructed without question. And when Jennifer interjected "No! The good stuff," he got a vintage flask she pointed to.

By the time he returned with a glass for her to put the ice cubes to use she had already taken a long swig. She handed it to him but he didn't drink, just poured her out a cup.

"The bastard won't come back," she nodded in thought and said with no real heat in her voice, bitterness but tiredness too. "It could have killed me with one hit but it wanted to intimidate me. This was a warning."

"What sort of warning?" Jackson sniffed in disbelief.

Jennifer looked back and forth between both hands, one still a little colored with blood the other holding her cup looking through the light on the glass. She frowned and held them up for him too look at, "we're expected to come away with clean hands and more choices. It's ridiculous!"

"You've had too many knocks to the head," he shook his head and readied himself to stand.

"You know exactly what I mean," she said forcefully. "We have to help each other. We have to watch each other-- to protect them. And it's not like we're out of prospects even if you let the last one go."

Jackson dropped back onto the step and glared her way. He wasn't mad, he felt ashamed and from the look in her eyes he could tell she felt something of the same color but it was shielded behind determination. Jennifer had spent a longer time working on this plan than he had and she had so much more at stake.

"Good," she blinked a number of times as her cunning came across as sweetness. She nodded and crushed the bloodied napkin into mulch in her hand, the room around them looked like a warzone but her conviction felt unwavering. "We're going to get through this. I promise."

"How many more of my friends are going to have to die?" Jackson gripped the vintage flask in his hands, even his strength was not enough to put a dent in the heirloom.
"Who are you kidding, Jackson? You don't have any friends," Jennifer's tone may have seemed soft but her words were hard, the practiced directions of his Master. She looked from his eyes down to her glass for a moment before downing it, the burn that seeped through her throat made her voice raspy and her heart calmer but did nothing to cleanse her conscience. "Besides, last time it was my friend who had to die."

"Right," he nodded, running his fingers along the pattern on the heirloom flask with triple circles coming together in a knot. The Triskele emblem once used to focus the troubled mind and he used it to point his toward the long game.

Chapter End Notes

CREDITS/ROLL CALL:

Argents - Team1; Victoria, Chris & Allison.
• Rumy - [Sergeant] specialized in Recon; Special Forces & espionage. Chris' right-hand & Allison's godfather.
• Axel - [1st Lieutenant] expert tracker, marksman & Allison's 2nd cousin.
• Bennett - [Field Officer] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old & friend to Allison.
• Leveque - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Terrain-Orientation & Mechanics.
• Ulrich - [Field Officer] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation.

Argents - Team2; Kate.
• Livy - [1st Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Force-Orientation, R.I.F. & close-combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's right-hand.
• Tyhurst - [Lieutenant] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation, Cyberwarefare, has CIA background & is ranked with state detective credentials. Referred to as 'try-hard.'
• Norm - [Sergeant] specialty in Medical Intelligence & as a Longbowman; an archer who uses the longbow, w/ various arrowheads. He' JR's brother & Roman's Uncle.
• Roman - [Field Officer] specialty as a Marksman/Sharpshooter, 19yrs. old & a weapons expert skilled in precision shooting. He's JR's son & Norm's Nephew.
• Fry - [Field Officer] specialty as a Tactician is & general officer, while his marksmanship is low he is still in high regard for his brain.

Argents - Team3; Gerard.

Hale (Present Day) Pack; Derek Alpha
• Isaac - [Omega] in search of a pack.
• Stiles - [Omega] on a quest for answers to what destroyed his family(s).
• (missing) Cora - [Beta] missing, presumed dead.
• (missing) Boyd - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.
• (missing) Erica - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.

Hale (Heyday) Pack; Talia Alpha
• Peter - [Beta] Talia's brother, Uncle to Derek, Laura & Cora.
• Laura (age 17) - [Beta] was last seen struggling between trying to pull survivors from the fire & defending her mother, Talia from her Uncle Peter's attacks.
• Derek (age 15) - [Beta] was pulled from the flames by his sister Laura & ushered to
safety by their emissary… until the Treaty was made.

? Other:?
• Jackson - [Kanima] characterized by claws that secrete venom which temporarily paralyzes their victims, a double row of sharp fangs, & a tail. Unless a Kanima resolves what in its past caused its mutation, it will eventually cocooned stage & emerge as a winged creature. Unlike a werewolf, a Kanima seeks out a master instead of a pack. It will carry out whatever vengeance its master bid. *chapter 12
• Kira - [Kitsune] "There hasn't been a documented case of a fledgling Kitsune (manifesting attributes) this powerful, to carry a thunderstorm in her back pocket on a whim. Not in a hundred thousand years." *chapter 18
• Lydia - [Banshee] 'A Banshee screams preceding a supernatural death not as a premonition but to highlight the likelihood of supernatural events that result in deaths.' *chapter 8

**Twins' Pack; Aiden & Ethan Carver Alphas**
• Marta - [Beta] she's an older motor head & 1st Lieutenant.
• Bridy - [Beta] the packs' spy because she's easily underestimated.
• Gus - [Beta] referred to as psychotic now & again, but his very few (& dwindling) close friends' are his touchstone.
• (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, bi & partnered to Naylor, formerly to Bozeman.
• (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
• (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
• (deceased) Coot - [Omega] Deb's partner & killed by the Monster.

**Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha**
• (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed 1st Lieutenant, possibly romantically entangled.
• Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali & closely bonded to Huntington.
• Santos - [Beta] while loyal to Kali has mentored many, without regard to packs. Helped the Twins first learn to shift together without losing their identities.
• Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed & with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
• Levi - [Beta] neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
• Huntington - [Beta] has strong empathic senses, is very good friends with Gus' from Twins' pack & Lark.

**Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha**
• Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' Lieutenant Werelynx from wiped out Shapeshifter dynasty.
• (missing) Dr. Kane - [Omega] both a medical Doctor & their torturer.
• (deceased) Quint - [Omega] eager to please teen & Dr. Kane's son.

**Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha**
• Søren - [Beta] 1st Lieutenant, Danish man of even temperament & a skilled negotiator until his temper is peaked.
• Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
were (you) certain

Chapter Summary

Beacon Hills is wrought with treachery and violence as the Werewolf packs balance out the actions of the Hunters. After recent life changes and realization have rocked his world Scott struggles to maintain his cool. His distraction set him on new unexpected path away from his friends even when they try to help him through it but this might not be a bad thing. Stiles steps out of his comfort zone and tries to keep up with his friends, both Scott and Allison. Meanwhile Lydia finally gets an answer driving her nuts but what to do with that information is just as maddening.

- Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/21-were-you-certain

Chapter Notes

Previously On:
After their first typical Saturday back at BHHS—
- In order to protect her friends from a spy, Allison not only agrees to take on the task of spying on them but decides the only way to keep Scott truly safe is to breakup with him.
- Isaac heads to the McCall's to both recuperate and explore the growing connection with Scott that saved him from the brink of death-- while Scott, in turn hesitates distressing truth that he believes his Alpha to be the psychopathic Monster plaguing the county.
- A terrible fight between Lydia and Stiles connect antidotes grown on the Argents' to torturous methods that are being conducted on Werewolves within the Lodge on the edge of their property.
- A prophetic nightmare revealed the deadly outcome of Ennis's missing Beta, Quint and Kate's involvement in his murder.
- Nightmares plaguing the town continue, especially Jackson, summoning up visions of Kira spurring him onward but to what end?
- The butchering Monster now revealed to be Scott's Alpha, continues to plague Beacon Hills not the least of which Jennifer Blake... who has been revealed to be the Kanima's Master.
- What other murderous secrets will Beacon Hills reveal?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Track 01 - Paradise Circus by Massive Attack

{Saturday; Late Night}
There weren't too many outright bars in Beacon Hills. The ones nearest the highway turned seedy, the few scattered around town were homely little pubs that didn't offer up more than neighborly pints and then there were the cop bars. Not exactly cop bars, more like the one café with a half-bar between the Sheriff's station and Memorial hospital that also served a handful of appetizers at all hours that the overnighters appreciated.

Semi-professionals stumbled in, sleep-deprived, looking for something better than what the Hospital/Sheriff's dept. break room offered. Nik didn't have to try very hard to fit in. In fact, she just tousled her hair and wore a deep V-neck tee. Even if eyes drifted toward her they would question more 'what was her phone-number' than 'why was she there'.

Now that the packs were screaming bloody war, it wasn't like Hunters were going to be reliable with their Intel if they thought it would be spurring it on. And it wasn't like Ennis would be levelheaded enough to go to for just about anything or Kali, trustworthy enough. Which put Deucalion in the position of sending in a thief and Nik was his best. Under such short notice, the old "seduce up an officer in the bar and steal their keys" routine was the easiest option. Nik didn't like it, it was beneath her level of expertise and the one with the most flaws but desperate times called for desperate measures. With her distinct flair of course.

Staking out the ideal place was far easier than figuring out the ideal mark. Deputy Parrish was out of the question. Parrish had access but he was Sheriff Stilinski's shadow which made him impossible to get a hold of. Deputy Clarke had obligations at home and made a ritual of home and work, home and work, and repeat. Nik would never be able to work that angle. Deputy Graeme had a boyfriend who worked at the hospital, which meant her attention was in all the wrong places. Which left the less than ideal Deputy Haigh. He was a wild card; his eagerness meant he paid too much at times but his vanity meant he bragged about every case he was involved in.

The Jukebox played classic rock and lingering, Nik pretended she pretend she couldn't make up her mind. Man, what a shame she had an extra selection left and no idea what to pick how fortunate Deputy Haigh came along to help her figure it out. First they talk about music, then they shared a few beers and criticized both local beers and local bands, and then Nik bragged about being able to out drink him by a mile, which of course she could. Haigh grew louder and prouder the more he drank and remembered the perfect song. Man, she would love this one. Wow, everything he said was so fascinating, Nik said as she leaned in close, her blue-green eyes intent on his dark-dark brown as she ran her hand down the Deputy's arm, wanting to hear another heroic story. Another round?

"I-- I think I should get some air," Nik said, hopping of the bar stool with a wobble. "I guess I don't have the tolerance I thought I did."

Haigh looked concerned but foggy-eyed with inebriation.

"It's alright," she insisted, "pick another song." She swayed a little to the music. Her height made it seem airy and angelic, not drunken at all. "Get us another round while you're at it."

Outside Nik clutched at the doorframe and tilted into it with a giggle. Never having felt drunk before, she could only process slowly that the music felt delightful, that her head spun and felt light and that someone caught her off her guard. Caught off guard, things were worse to be vulnerable still in the middle of town and without back up. Of course, that had been a possibility but Nik hadn't realized that feeling drunk meant she wouldn't care as much as she probably should.

The Deputy too had been too drunk to keep his guard up and never notice when she stole his keys. After a second or two or three of fumbling Nik managed to unlock the car door and collapse into the driver's seat. She looked around in the dark and saw no one following her but her Werewolf
senses were cut off from her and she couldn't feel out anything more than the gross belchy smell of beer and pretzel threatening to come back up. After figuring out how to turn on the siren, Nik plowed through the main street, and after sometimes swaying through the meridian she nearly made it the long drive back to Deucalion's house in the hills. Nearly.

Just after turning off the service road, when a motorcycle cut her off, Nik nearly spun out. But the familiar lines of Echo Lane called her home and she thought herself safe until that same motorcycle stood parked in the center of the lane, with two figures immobile on either side of it. Had Nik been sober she might have been able to navigate between or around them but her vision made them twin and blur. She hit the brakes violently and screeched tilting, rear wheels spinning out and into a ditch at the side of the road. After a few seconds to regain awareness, Nik trembled in shock and breathed in short breaths, regaining the wind that got knocked out of her. The two on the road came slowly toward her, climbing over the rocks and through branches. Nik touched her arm where it throbbed after being pinched between the door and the chair and marveled at the fact that she wasn't healing. Once Nik opened the door she felt both relief and a wash of new pain, so she kept her arm folded tight against her side. Despite the shadow and her blurred-ish vision she recognized the men coming toward her.

"Kali sent you? Really?" Nik said incredulously and limp clear of the vehicle. "I'm a thief, I'm not even a threat to her."

"Don't take offense," Santos answered without preamble. "It's a strategy thing." With his quick swing at her head she more fell under his blow then ducked. She stumbled to her knees, twisted at the waist and punched upward. She had aimed for his balls, missing that she uppercut him in the gut. He stumbled backward onto his ass ruining his smart suit.

"Deucalion has a thief. We need a thief," Huntington circled around the hood of the car, cutting off their graceless dance.

Nik spun around to face him and stood tall, even on her bad leg, while she kept her chin high and stated, "we're loyalists. I won't be turned or tortured."

"I know that, Nik," Santos said, his voice turning harsh, his claws coming out and grabbed her from behind. He dug his claws into both arms and she cried out in pain, jerking hard to the right away from the throbbing agony in her arm.

"In the end it's about numbers," Huntington added, "Kali would be satisfied knowing there is one less nuisance around." He yanked her forward by her good arm and pulled her along toward the motorcycle, climbing up to the edge road.

"That's a lie," she said, her mouth trembled from pain more than insecurity. "You're not that simple Huntington." Nik felt if she kept them talking her sobriety would return to her, but she had never felt intoxicated she could only work off of the things she'd seen from movies and play off of those stereotypes. She did know Huntington a little bit, more like got an impression off of him that he didn't like getting his answers the physical way. Santos however, she'd heard his reputation garbled through her friend Meyers' lips while his jaw was being reset after half of his face had to heal from fractures.

Santos shrugged, and reminded gruffly "We'd rather have you off the board." He marched along her right side, ensuring she would on the rocky ground.

"You won't kill me," Nik said low. She pried his hold from her arm and shoved off, tipping forward to nearly fall but caught her balance before her face hit the floor.
"How do you know that?" Santos scowled and pulled her upright by the jacket collar.

"It's why you sabotaged the jukebox," her words slurred and her steps slowed. "Some subsonic weapon, to do your dirty work then just kept your distance. You want to figure out what I know."

Huntington looked to Santos, silent questioning if they should interrogate her now or when they got her back to The Ponds. "You would say anything to stay alive."

"Which is it; taking me off the board or a numbers game?--" Grinning she swung around to test her theory. She watched them intently, too stubborn to be moved and waited for the first one to try and put another hand on her. "I would never betray my pack."

"Then what good are you to us?" Santos tsked and threw another wide right to get her off balance.

Nik ducked low not noticing Huntington circling under her guard and around her back yet again. This time she dropped faster under Santos' reach and followed through with her upper cut into his gut. She moved under his reached and came back with an elbow into his right side. As Santos tripped forward Nik came around behind him and used his momentum to throw him into Huntington. She kicked Huntington in the shins to ensure they both would fall to the ground giving her a running chance to make it back to the road and hopefully to the still running motorcycle.

As Nik made headway with her limp, Santos grabbed at her from behind, both arms wrapped like a vice pinning them to her sides. She screamed against the flood of pain, remembering again the agony of whatever ligament had been stretched out of place in her left arm, the shock of which threw back her head and smacked him flat in the nose. For good measure, Nik took the time to elbow Santos in the throat with her good arm.

As Nik turned back to the road she was met with Huntington's fist to the face, at a downward arch sending her skidding to her knees. Even at a block, the blunt blow of it sent her back a pace. She aimed for another gut shot and this time nailed him in the groin. It was shocking how often men left that area unguarded. Huntington didn't crumble, he did wobble backward for a few feet while she wobbled up onto hers. She towered over him and made the same arching blow downward to send him to the ground. His face had turned livid, colored with pain and fury and the growls she heard come off of him told her he would heal faster and come after her like a beast. Nik lifted a nearby stone high overhead and dropped it onto Huntington, knocking him out briefly.

If they were going to get all Wolfed out on her, she was going to have to beast out on them to survive. She turned to see if Santos had regained some ground and barely missed another punch to the face. Ducking under it she used the open advantage of stumbling forward and tried to elbow him in the head. When her misbalance pushed her too far, instead she went with kneeing him in the stomach. Santos pushed her weight back fully and threw her back far enough and fast enough she hit the side of the Deputy's car. Once again Nik had the wind knocked out of her and her back stung like she had been whipped. She slid down half in and out of the car, her eyes were squeezed closed but she could hear clearly when Santos swung the door back and slammed it closed on her bad leg. She fell further onto the ground clutching onto the driver's seat. With her lungs still unable to take in a breath, in too much pain to scream out. Nik opened her eyes in time to watch Santos loom over her with gleaming eyes as he swung the door toward her head.

"Stop!" Nik managed to cry out, while throwing her hands over her face. Desperately she gasped, "I know where Mars is!"

"Wait!" Huntington grabbed hold of Santos' arm. She remained trembling, curled into the crevice of the car door while Santos and Huntington communicated in silent glares. Finally, Huntington won out and stepped forward spreading the passage open. Nik slid further toward the ground, and
she nearly came to lay flat on her back before she pulled her arms away from her face.

"What did you say?" asked Huntington, his usually boyish faced looked black and blue, carved with stone and blood all along right side from crown to collar bone. He spoke with carefully clenched teeth. "You know where Marsten is?"

"Yes," Nik answered crawling up on her back. Evidently her fight-or-flight instinct sped up her clear-headedness. She knew if she kept them talking long enough she might even heal enough to take them a second round. "He's being kept alive somewhere in Fairvale. For now."

"She's lying," Santos protested, wiping at his bloody nose. Nik grinned again, which was a mistake because it only made him advance.

"No. No!" she climbed to her feet, her good arm outstretched in earnest. "I'm a thief. Wouldn't just it be bad business ethics if all I sold were lies?"

Evidently this wasn't good enough. Even if Huntington believed her Santos wasn't satisfied with this answer and he yanked her forward, straight by Huntington and threw her to the pavement. "How long have you known?"

Nik groaned and rolled onto her back, she was met with a kicked to her side. She rolled over, staying on her stomach this time and tried to climb up onto her knees. "Since the first night," she mumbled over her pain. She was definitely healing a bit quicker, but the bruising on her ribs felt like he might have broken something. "That night, the Monster killed my... Mac. Mars was supposed to meet Mac to make a trade for a rare weapon. When she was late to check in I just figured her car crapped out again. But the next morning Mars called petrified, feeling obligated to give me a head's up, that if she turned up at all it wasn't going to be alive. And that was it."

"Why would he call you?" Huntington shoved her lightly back to the car, just out of Santos reach. His frustration growing, "he's not a member of your pack."

"Dishonor among thieves," she coughed around a laugh as she shrugged, clutching her bad arm to her chest, more to shield her injured ribs than to anything else. "He stole from the dead? Why else would he have felt obligated to call? When the cops found her car they thought it was a robbery gone wrong, not just because she was torn up but because all of her gear was gone. Cops contacted me because they thought her daughter might be clued in on what would be valuable enough to steal and kill over, but Mars always had a better idea of what was going on in Mac's head than she ever let me know. What I do know is the Monster wouldn't have wanted gear. It wouldn't have needed it, only Mars would have taken it if he were going to ground. After that, of course I had to look for him myself."

It was a half-truth. By Mars informing her about the death first, before Deucalion, before the authorities, without having to say it aloud, he bought her silence with information. Marsten didn't want his pack to know he would disappear and she would keep it quiet of course, as long as it serviced her needs. Thieves were good at trading in truths but better at keeping secrets. It tended to extend their lives.

"You're going to tell me where he is now!!" Santos grabbed her by the hair and slammed her against the trunk and the car tittered back and forth on the curb. She felt dizzy for more reason than one. She still felt a bit buzzed drunk; she really almost liked being drunk until she just really didn't like being drunk anymore.

"He's safer than in Beacon Hills anyway," she chuckled, grinding her teeth against pain. "That's the thing with sleight of hand. You've all been looking at disaster while there are Monsters all over this
"Tell us where to find him or I'll claw the truth out of you?" Santos leaned his weight into her back, and he dug claws into her bruised ribs.

Whimpering, Nik sagged before she could manage to answer, her stubbornness trying to buy time. "Why? So you can have him fight in a war for you? Don't you get it, if I tell you the whole truth, then what's the point in keeping me alive?"

With his claws in Nik's side Santos lifted her up and flipped her over onto her back. She stared wide-eyed up as he reached back, claws extracted with that same gesture that would normally leave him vulnerable for an upper cut but she wasn't up for the task "--Wait! Wait! Not the face!" she cried out.

Huntington laughed at that, it was so uncharacteristic toward her belligerent nature, "you understand Nik, we might have to keep you alive but we don't have to keep you in one piece."

"I get that," she coughed back a laugh a watched as Santos once more looked to Huntington, silently for permission for continue his barrage. Then a growl came out as he let her lose preparing for a fight. "It's just my ex-girlfriend really likes my face. You really don't want to piss her off," Nik nodded over Huntington's shoulder toward Herveaux just before she grabbed him by both sides of his back, kneed him in his lower back, then growling, flipped him backward overhead before flinging him at Santos' face.

Nik took that as a sign to stop, drop and roll beneath the Deputy's car while waiting for the worst of it to pass.

Track 02 - Damn Your Eyes (Etta James cover) by Alex Clare

Several minutes later the weight of the car rose and began to tug toward the roadside. Nik took that as a sign to crawl out. Aside from some aches and a few tears in her wardrobe she felt very much herself and much better about the evening overall.

Laid out unconscious and bloodied, Santos and Huntington were neatly lined up along the meridian. Tone in a flimsy tank top, on lean legs cut off at short-shorts Herveaux stood blood splattered but healing, with eyes still colored bright and beaming gold. Ennis' spy; normally unseen but Nik grinned to notice Herveaux' familiar face. For some time, Nik sensed her on the peripheries, but suspected Herveaux would eventually show face whether or not Ennis asked. There was both their appeal and the problem. A spy and a thief could make wealth of everything in their relationship except trust.

"Do you really know where Marsten is?" Herveaux swiped at her nose, then reached and pulled twigs from Nik's hair. Her expression was soft with relief and a smile came slowly almost unwilling across her features. She was probably instructed not to get involved, Nik smirked in return.

"I don't have a reason to lie," Nik quirked a brow. Herveaux knew Nik well enough to figure she could do a lot of questionable things, lying wasn't one of them. Nik felt that was Herveaux's forte, and her expression said as much.

"So you're keeping him captive," Herveaux sounded disapproving. She turned and walked back
toward bodies. She jutted her chin, a gesture for Nik to follow.

"I have no reason to do that," Nik grunted while she helped lift Santos and carry him to the cruiser. They couldn't leave the bodies in the road and while they were still figuring out what next to do it only made sense to keep them in the car which had a gated back seat. After locking the door Nik dusted her hands as if touching them were somehow filthy, "Everyone keeps thinking the worst of it is happening here in Beacon Hills, they forget this whole county has gone to shit. We're just in the eye of a storm."

"The eye is the calm part," Herveaux laughed.

"Mmhm," Nik groaned in recognition, not recanting her statement in the slightest.

"When will you tell Kali?" asked Herveaux, as they walked over to the motorcycle. Nik shoved her hands into her jacket pockets and looked to her feet. She owed something to Marsten and secretly Mars stole from her. Until that got sorted out, her lips were sealed.

"So you're just as bad as Santos?" Herveaux turned to stand in her way. Herveaux stood slightly taller by a mere inch but there was no doubt she was the more intimidating of the two. When she ground out her words it sent chills down Nik's spine and caused her canines to grind down. Their eyes bore into each other's as she demanded to know, "are you just trying to keep another player off the board."

"It's war Herveaux." Nik's frowned, she sounded fierce but Herveaux could sense sadness off of her. "Maybe it is a numbers game... and maybe it's also about taking players off the board." Suddenly she stepped nearer throwing Herveaux's senses out of whack, all she could smell was Nik's sweat and pheromones. When Nik placed a hand on each of her shoulders and leaned up to place a kiss on her forehead, she closed her off and all she could hear was the breath close to her ear and the sigh as she pulled away. "Can you do one more thing for me tonight? Kitten, please don't fight."

When she eased back Herveaux's senses came flooding back and she noticed the street filled up with Deucalion's pack. Despite Nik's request as she stepped back, Herveaux's instinct had her jumping forward, fangs bared and claws out.

Deucalion stood on the center of the divide, beside him Søren, hair clipped short and looking militant with a hand on the shoulder of a fierce blond with bright eyes lined with charcoal and a smattering of ruby red that made her fangs look like gleaming knives. Flanked on the right side of the road stood Jonsen with dark skin and darker wilder curls, her growls cut through the night's chill. On the left side of the road stood Meyers, looking twitchy with anticipation. When Herveaux looked back to Nik, she stood beside the Deputy's car, shaking her head she mouthed the word 'please' and so Herveaux surrendered without a fight.

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Track 03 - About Her by Malcolm McLaren

"It's good we did it your way," Deucalion said gratefully, to his thief with a voice full of pride. "Now we have the department access, 3 Werewolves, their transport... and the Deputy's car."

"That part was incidental," Nik said meekly, rubbing at her sore ribs. "We should probably send that back."
"You were right about thinking small," he said in an undertone, "this was a much better score." Nik only nodded, tiredness weighed on as she watched Søren and Jonsen drive the cruiser to the main house with Santos, Huntington and Herveaux confined in the backseat.

"I'll copy the Deputy's keys for now. Then drive the car back into town," Meyers said, popping over into their conversation.

"Take Reíka with you," Deucalion instructed, "she needs something to do." Meyers nodded and whistled with two fingers to get the blonde's attention. She looked dubious but after following him to the motorcycle they took off toward town.

"She uses the name?" Nik asked, following Deucalion as they made the slow meandering walk back to the main house. There was a shortcut through onto their property that the guys from Kali's pack hadn't realized they were so very close to. She had nearly lured them onto it, just a mile off but it was near enough for the trap to work anyhow. She just had to distract them with a little fisticuffs until her pack could catch up.

"Remember where we all started out," Deucalion said after a little thought. He looked Nik over and something in his expression, in the candor kept her thinking about their little home and how far they had come to become a family. "She needs something," he reminded. Nik nodded. They all once needed a life worth fighting for, it wasn't just that Deucalion gave them that but he let them find that in one another. They found loyalty in each other because of it but words were not enough, Reíka was finding that out, which meant letting go of everything that came before. She thought about Marsten out there captive with strangers and what Deucalion would really think of her if he knew the truth. Nik thought about knowing her Mother, Mac was dead 2 whole days before Deucalion did, and wondered if that loyalty to Mars or to Mac really did save anyone any grief.

They walked a long way in the silence of the night, but Nik listened to his heart and waited until hers fell into step with his before she asked "Deuc? If you're going to take Herveaux to the basement-- not the face?"

"Do you want to be there?" Deucalion gave a light-hearted sound that was near laughter but it was more for her benefit than any truth to his sentiment. He waited for her to catch up beside the porch. The car was parked around the back, away from any unlikely passerby to see and waiting for Meyers and Reíka to drive it back to town. Deucalion knew Nik's loyalty was stretched between Herveaux and the pack. After all, Herveaux didn't have to come to the rescue tonight, not to mention she was never a target to begin with. Plus, there was a value in holding another pack's second in command captive.

Swallowing a breath Nik continued her internal argument outward, "I was there when you received my half-brother, his wife and Reíka. If you're telling me I have to be there when we receive Herveaux I will be but if I could sleep off this hangover instead?" Her face was still but her breath was quick in her chest and her eyes large with heartache.

"My loyal Nikola," Deucalion brushed a hand along her cheek. She squeezed her eyes shut, uneasiness pressed down heavily on her. "You are free to do whatever you choose, always. I hope you know that." He meant the statement with every burdensome syllable. Nik nodded, pressing her lips together to keep from saying anything foolish.

When the sound of a nearing motorcycle with their friends' interrupted them she escaped into the main house and left her Leader to teach his lessons to someone else.
The Argents' contact Tyhurst was able to provide a first name, 'Quint,' to add to their list of victims. And explained to the Sheriff, sure enough the kid had been added to a 'registry of missing teens,' but details were still vague. Sheriff Stilinski didn't like vagaries. And when a fully rested Jordan Parrish turned up with one of the gallon boxes that the sinister Dunkin Donuts provided, he realized two things; 1) adding the investigation of a missing kid the same age of his previously missing son meant moving this probably, maybe, definitely to the garage, and 2) the night's rest was well-timed for a day off spent at his investigation board.

There wasn't a direct correlating line from this kid to the events from the past couple of days but the timing couldn't be an accident. And if his gut had anything to say, then it had a testimony set and ready.

"This boy, Quint and Derek Hale's body were the only posed victims," Parrish supposed. He played with the lip of his paper cup. It had been mutilated to the point of being paper mâché.

"Being dumped at the Hale House is obviously a statement." With intent eyes, Stilinski matched new evidence to old locations on the board. His deep frown said grave things even as he kept his voice controlled, "but as long as the Argents' man is giving us misinformation we aren't going to figure you what the message is or to who?"

"You're sure Tyhurst is giving us misinformation?" Parrish leaned forward, his voice dropped to a low firm tone.

Stilinski shook his head. "All the information he's giving us checks out but what he's telling us is half the story." He sat back down on the lawn chair, dragging it back to the patio table that served as their new home base. The map on the board had filled up with strings like tinsel on a Christmas tree, but this time around he felt as though they were getting somewhere despite each new setback. As long as he kept an open mind and consider for 2-steps forward there would be the inevitable 1-step back. "Tyhurst is an asset. And he's a liability. I saw the way he looked at the marks on the door. He recognized them. He's playing his cards close to the chest. He says the kid has shown up in a database but the family won't release the whole name."

"Do you think it bears any relevance to the pattern?" Parrish studied the crude markings Stilinski redrew from memory. They didn't bring anything to his mind, but Tyhurst wasn't the only one with connections. He thought about his Military connections and considered if there was anything there. If he could think of someone-- so he suggested as much.

Stilinski nodded in gratitude, but the upturn of his lips were short lived. "We're going to have to move forward as if it doesn't." He moved on, like so many times to their core motivation, their growing list of victims.

"Hey Dad," Stiles gave a knock-knock before popping his head into the garage door, he didn't wait for an okay to step in. "I'm going to head out to Scott's."

The two leaned toward the door, with discerning seriousness and considering their investigative décor Stiles did not take offense. They didn't have to move to hide a thing, considering they'd prepared for this sort of thing and positioned their investigation board opposite the line of sight of the entrance and their folders kept "CONFIDENTIAL" despite having been brought home. It
would have been too obvious if Stiles tried to sneak a peek. Plus, the point was he just wanted to make certain to check-in this time and because of the anxiety his Dad didn't think to question the earliness of the hour, so he had that going for him.

"Alright son," he said after an awkward pause but the smile that followed was genuine.

Stiles grinned in return, and quickly replied "thanks Dad." He paused at the door as if he wanted to say more but just smiled while practically hopping in place before he darted away, unintentionally slamming the door behind him.

Parrish didn't ask how things were adjusting but it was obviously written across his forehead when their conversation didn't pick up.

"He's a great kid," Stilinski startled him with his admittance.

"I don't doubt it," Parrish said as he sat upright, wide-eyed and with a pressed smile quickly plastered across his face.

"A trouble-maker."

"I've noticed."

"It's a little difficult getting back into the groove of things," he grimaced a bit, re-living some bitterness. "The neighbors seem to be having a harder time of it then we are. Staring, excessively waving, and sometimes snapping pictures of him with their phones. It's everything I can do to keep him out of the papers."

Shuffling papers in a failing attempt to refocus, he gratefully grabbed up the notes Parrish handed back. Stilinski needed the work, not just because of his devotion to the town but because of his dedication to get his life back on track.

"So it's everything you hoped it would be and more?" said Parrish, half in admiration and half in jest.

The Chief grinned at that. "As a Dad," he said with pride dripping in his voice, "there is always more." He took a moment flipping through the notes of the victims. He no longer hesitated when seeing his wife's name among the dead and knew it was because Stiles was home. He looked up again at Parrish who started to focus once more on the work and admired the dedication of this newly inducted Deputy.

"As a Sheriff there will always be more as well," he conceded and Parrish gave a grunt in acknowledgment. "I appreciate your help with balancing everything, but I think I might have to ask you a little more."

Deputy Parrish looked up, excited and bright-eyed once more but from the stern and now well-practiced fatherly expression Sheriff Stilinski showed him, Parrish's eagerness quickly lost its shine.

Track 05 - Kids by MGMT

There were so many "The Plan's" going around Stiles had lost track. And since he felt his newest
one trumped all he wanted was an early start. It was a small blessing the guys hadn't stayed over at his house like originally planned. His Dad and Parrish having taken up the first floor of the house made it an easier choice.

Stiles didn't want to admit it aloud but after the latest cheat with death, with Isaac's valued new lease on life, he wanted to put a pin in Cora's rescue plans but wasn't sure what the others' take on that would be. Not after his earlier pushier position. He wasn't giving up on her, not ever but after Allison presented him the optional photo of his Dad's investigation board, and the loss of his coveted notebook, Stiles wanted to put a little bit of reasonable distance before acting. First, he chased a lead right into the Hale House and almost got his friends blown up, then swore not to get his friends in that situation again. Then instead Stiles put himself in danger, alone, strung up and poisoned after telling them he wouldn't do something like that, after promising he would stay in town and safe, for a long, long time. So he wanted a bit of fresh perspective and a little more insight from a friendly neighborhood Hunter.

As Stiles raced up the steps to the McCalls', he sensed a little something out of whack. He caught up with Melissa as she headed out to an early shift, she met him happily at the front door, pleased to see his progress healthwise, but she let him know right away the boys weren't home.

"They left before the sun came up," she sounded a little put out. "When I reminded them the house wasn't a lacrosse field they decided to leave early to field practice." Melissa's eyes went from soft to squinting with discomfort, and Stiles could hear the strain it took to keep her from complaining about the damage to her property. "You can probably catch up with them at the school."

Well then, that made it a little bit easier to avoid his own house and his obsessive Dad with possibly more secrets than even he had.

It wasn't the worst thing to catch up with them at the school. Stiles did still have to study up for the placement exam, even if they were still waiting on his transcripts. And he heard it from a birdy that a certain Argent and company had volunteered in the tutoring department. It was still a few hours off before students would come trickling into the library for that.

Until then Stiles easily found his brothers crushing each other on the lacrosse field, something a little more than entertaining. After a brief wave and grin he settled down on a side bench to watch, occasionally shouting incomprehensible direction.

"Do you even know anything about lacrosse?" said Isaac, hands on his knees, keeled over and panting.

"Sure... like from when I was 7 or 8." He shrugged grinning, "Basically, there is putting the ball in the net and I don't have to be as crap as you two."

Isaac looked to Scott with mild alarm on his face.

"Stiles wants to join the team," Scott looked apologetic and tossed the ball back into the air, smashed it back into the air several times with the end of his lacrosse stick.

Isaac glared at him and stole the ball out of spite.

Stiles never quite explained why he arrived so early; he didn't want to spoil the moment. That would happen soon anyway as was their luck when Isaac and Scott explained their sleepless night and early practice. Followed up with how they wanted Stiles' help with teaching Scott how to
survive both with and without his Alpha.

Track 06 - Is This The End - Brøthers

"Come on, I only just figured it out," Scott squawked as he dove for cover.

"Simple as that, 'my Alpha's that Monster'," Stiles looked incredulous. He had grabbed up the lacrosse stick and insisted Scott stand as goalie. Ball after ball he swung nearer and nearer to Scott's head with vicious intent. Scott didn't have a hope in hell of catching one; in fact, he barely had a chance at dodging for his life. "Way to bury the lead!"

"This isn't learning maneuvers," Isaac offered lamely from the sidelines. Stiles gave him a silent glare to keep off unless he wanted to be under fire. After a harsh gulp, Isaac remained chastised and stared toward the end field.

"You should have called me, that's," WHACK "all" WHACK "I'm" WHACK "saying!!" Stiles grunted and dropped the stick to the ground once he ran out of sports equipment to hit, in a wise attempt to keep from hitting something else.

"I wanted to!" Scott dropped to the ground panting, having caught the last ball between his shoulder and the left edge of his helmet. He lay flat at twisted angle, collapsed under a mountain of sweat and lacrosse supplies. After a second to catch his breath he leaned up onto his elbow and tore off his helmet to be heard clearer over the distance, "but by the time I could get a hold of you, you could barely stand, forget about talking!"

Stiles shook it off and tossed Isaac his lacrosse stick, he tried not to focus on where he was instead of at the time his best-friend had this terrible realization. Yet again, another milestone in his transition and he had no one to help him through it.

"You're brooding," Isaac grumbled up at him, as he drew close to sit beside him on the bench. "It doesn't look good on you."

"Shut up," Stiles failed at trying not to smile. "What else happened while my back was turned? Any other near death experiences I should know about?" He caught Isaac off guard while his eyes skirted along to the opposite end of the field, where the trees and the running track collided.

"You're a riot, Stilinski." He sniffed, it was kind of funny. Then he leaned forward and frowned remembering the other reasons for their early morning trip to the lacrosse field. "We're trying to work through some stuff, like figuring out if there are more Alphas around than the ones that got us on our way in into Northbridge."

Stiles fell silent, a rare sight and with a mouth slightly gaped and brows knit tight he waited for a follow up.

"And why this new Alpha decided to put me 6-feet under--""

"Jeez, another one who decides to friggin' announce the coming of the end like they're broadcasting the weather."

"I'm doing just fine." Isaac assured him. "And before you think about arguing, it was better that you stayed with your Dad and took care of him. If you came with me, we both would have just
ended up pounded into the ground."

"You don'--! You don't know that," as his anxiety spiked, Stiles adamantly shook his head. He hadn't sensed Scott come up beside him until a calming hand clamped on his shoulder.

"Nothing that happened is your fault," Isaac craned his neck to see Stiles' face full-on, but all he could see was a face of confusion and anger that Stiles more often aimed at traffic jams, complex math equations and someone he was ready to brawl with. "Tell me you get that."

"Then whose fault is it?" Stiles scoffed.

"Allison is looking into that. But at least we know it isn't someone we know," Isaac explained, he went onto to add he was willing to share with her his testimonial of events. Isaac seemed eager to work with the Argents, a significant change of heart from 24-hours ago. It seemed it was true what they said about near death experiences, they did cause permanent damage due to lack of oxygen to the brain. In any case, Isaac freely shared accounts of both events and descriptions of everything he sensed.

"You're saying it wasn't Jackson," Stiles didn't seem relieved or disappointed by the revelation, the fact is once the fever had run its course and he could put his observations of the attack site into context he surmised as much. Stiles stared down at the hands clasped between his knees and wondered at how the Hunter's findings would be any better than their little group could come up with.

"Upset?" Scott had trouble sensing out others at times, but Stiles' stillness was certainly unfathomable to him. Maybe he was one of those Werewolves who was a master at inhibiting their scent, or maybe he was so absorbed in his thoughts he was transported to a different place altogether.

"What? No." Stiles came back to the surface, remembering his concerns in the forefront. "You've got Jackson going beast on a whim, a Monster climbing into Scott's dreams and this other Alpha prowling around campus. There could be any other supernatural wandering around these grounds... I wonder what the Argents have figured out about that?"

Earlier, at the mention of Isaac working with Allison, Scott struggled not to feel emotional. But this second time around at the mention of what the Argents might know it wasn't the thoughts Allison where Scott's mind flew. Instead there were thoughts of Kira and her secret he sought to keep safe. He didn't like to keep things from his best-friends, he definitely felt it was always best when everyone knew the truth but he wasn't certain what her truth was yet. He sensed her speed, her strength and the way she enjoyed feeling super-powered but there was something about her that was still off. His curiosity drove him to distraction.

"If you're going to suspect just anyone who has special abilities you could throw Lydia into the mix," Isaac mentioned just to point out how ludicrous Stiles' speculation was.

Looking toward the racetrack, but unlike Isaac not thinking of the attack Scott muttered "there's more things in heaven and earth, Stiles, than you can dream of."

At that both Isaac and Stiles' heads whipped around to look at him, curiosity and amusement plastered across their faces. Scott took a moment to come back to attention, his expression matched theirs only with an impish grin.

"Studying Hamlet for your English Midterms?" asked Stiles.
"Yep," grinned Scott.

"Nice." Stiles considered, nodded his approval and moved on.

"You okay with us working with Allison?" asked Isaac and Stiles broke off from his brooding when he realized the question wasn't directed toward him.

"Yeah," Scott claimed sounding like he had a frog in his throat. After a gulp, he realized he'd clamped the head of the lacrosse stick enough to warp the shape, and the lacing sagged loose through it like a hobo's sack. "Yeah, I'm okay," he insisted despite the evidence to the contrary. Scott worked slowly through the process of reshaping the lacrosse stick, reminding himself (without chastisement) that he couldn't afford to replace this thing and he couldn't afford to lose his cool at the mention of Allison's name.

"And that's another item on the list," Isaac looked to Stiles, a dark humor in his eyes. "Scott needs our help."

Stiles' eyes darted between the two and though he sensed the same cageyness from the night before, this time it was caked with a stench unfamiliar to Scott, "what's wrong with you? You smell terrible."

"Yeah it's called heartbreak. About two billion songs written about it," Scott said glumly, after first taking a deep breath he dropped the sports equipment then he dropped onto the bench on Stiles' left. "Every time I think about her I feel like someone is hitting me in the ribs with a hammer." And when he spoke, even without opening his eyes the other two could sense Scott's strain to keep their color from changing, to keep his claws from extending and himself just within the restraints of control.

"Logically, we figured" Isaac flipped over a ball on the head of his lacrosse stick, "taking him out for a walk might be smarter than keeping him locked up indoors."

"Alright, that works for right now but," Stiles paused, if the drop in his tone didn't convey enough of his worry certainly the gentleness that crept behind his dark eyes nailed it. Scott had been alone with this burden of change long enough, there was no way he would let him alone one second longer, "Scott you've been good without your Alpha for this long-- now that we know the identity you've got to keep it together."

"I can't." Scott closed his eyes as a weighing realization pressed in on him. He never had doubt before because someone beside him supported him so thoroughly there was never any room for it.

"Of course you can," Isaac assured him, the conviction in his voice was matched only by his astonishment that Scott didn't know this about himself yet. Then he added with care, "just anchor yourself."

"Allison was my anchor!" rejected Scott as his voice strained with agitation. It was obvious from the way his body stiffened and his fingers curled into his palms, while he looked between the two, shamefaced, that he never meant to come off as bitter. Just as he never meant to take out his hurt on them either. He was just lost in the thick of it.

"Dude, we're going to be here for you." Stiles said calmly, speaking easily on behalf of both Isaac and himself.

It was a difficult thing for Stiles to wrap his brain around 100%. He didn't grow up with a Dad around but growing up among Werewolves he had no lack of Alpha presence in his life, and so no
earthly experience where Scott was coming from. Even so, Stiles moved nearer and spoke lower to his friend, undeterred by his agitated state. Because even if he wasn't 100% sure what was going on or going to happen next, he knew how to be Scott's best-friend. And he knew that he would never let him go through anything like this, whatever this is, alone. Although Scott's breaths were still harsh he didn't jump when Stiles slung an arm over his shoulder bringing them close together, butting their heads slightly.

"You're gonna get your heart broke man," Stiles promised smugly. Which made Scott groan half in dismay, half in amusement as Stiles continued, "and then you're gonna be a better, kinder man because of it. We're going to help you see that because we're stronger together but in the end, you gotta be your own anchor."

Track 07 - Help Me Close My Eyes by Those Dancing Days

The only time special exceptions had been made for Liam Dunbar they came with negative exemptions. When he transferred into BHHS it was because he had been kicked out of Devenford Prep for his violent outbursts, but those same violent outbursts brought him to Coach Flinstock's attention. Sure, Liam really liked lacrosse but he didn't like the fact that he didn't score a place on the team because of talent. And he definitely didn't like that Liam sat on second line.

Every spare breath, muscle and moment he dedicated to lacrosse in hopes of earning the approval from senior members of the team, in hopes of getting their support and maybe impressing Coach enough to get called into a game because of talent, not because they needed a ringer.

After his usual 3 mile run along jogger's path, along the Preserve and behind the University, Liam headed into the field extra-early to work on this aim playing 'Wall Ball' against the closed goal cage. Pretty much what he did every Sunday except this around, despite however improbable, 2 of his teammates made it onto the field earlier than he had. Out of both of the Cyclones Co-Captains, Liam responded better to Scott McCall's easygoing natural than to Jackson Whittemore's more demanding tactics. Liam was already pretty demanding of himself as it were, so it helped to have someone taper his temper. But turning up and discovering someone had swallowed up Liam's opportune moment at the opportune place with the opportune mentor sat raw with him.

After struggling with his anger issues since the beginning of the term, Liam aimed to catch the interest of any senior player to practice up with him but no one had the patience. McCall's even temper would have made an ideal match but whenever Liam mentioned something like it, Scott sheepishly explained home life never left room for something like training together. Then Scott would make a vague promise that in a future time there could be something else they might do, like spot each other when they weight-train or maybe speak up for him to Coach. And with that, Scott would backpedal out of the conversation before he finished his sentence.

Yet Isaac Lahey had been on the lacrosse team barely 2 months when Co-Captain McCall took him under his wing. Soon they would disappear from endurance runs, just the 2 of them, and turn up like human tumbleweed 20 minutes later. Then they would get into fights at school they would be inseparable the next day. They were practically double-dating with Allison and Lydia from what everyone in the lunchroom gossiped about. It was like something out of a buddy sitcom. Liam tried to sit well with all of it because Isaac did have natural talent at lacrosse (that all his sleepless nights of practice couldn't match up to), and to add to that Isaac was a sophomore, seniority simply got you places and Liam wanted to get to those places on his own merit. So Liam told himself over and over again, he was fine with that, as he trained even harder to sweat the bitterness out.
From under the bleachers, Liam watched the wiry sporadic technique the Sheriff's estranged son brought to the sport he obviously didn't understand and choked down his intense feelings of envy. He couldn't tear his eyes away from witnessing Co-Captain McCall and Midfielder Lahey take some non-teammate under their wing effortlessly and Liam wanted to wreck something but he couldn't even look away.

The team's goalie chanced upon him an hour or so later, when he walked from student parking to the team's entrance of the locker rooms after his boyfriend dropped him off. While leading Liam away from his obsession and toward the locker rooms, Danny offered some words of insight; he told Liam there were plenty of worse things to deal with than feeling overlooked, like being the center of attention. They looked toward Jackson's truck swerving into two spaces in student parking after narrowly missing a Kawasaki speeding out toward the road. Danny looked particularly perturbed but Liam felt utterly unconvinced.

After overhearing this, Coach Finstock had a different outlook entirely and felt a crushing need to remind Liam that crazed intensity is what got a freshman on the team to begin with. This incident at Liam's old school that nearly destroyed his old Coach's career, but his new Coach considered it a tryout for the team and not to mention some sort of karmic retribution for an old grudge between Coaches. The intensity of Coach Finstock's spite surprised even Liam, who knew bitterness all too well.

With that, Liam replaced the feelings of jealousy clogging his throat with thoughts of ambition smashing his mind to prove his worth as more than a token added to the last quarter or playing at being the little brother to the mentor. The next time all eyes were on Liam Dunbar, it would be because of greatness he achieved on his own terms.

Track 08 - What You Need by Flume

It could only be assumed Allison and Scott were one of those couples who texted each other good morning the moment their eyes opened, to say 'god bless you' each time they sneezed. At least it seemed that way from how Allison kept checking her phone. Eventually, Lydia texted Scott and Isaac that they were headed into check in for tutoring in case anyone needed either Allison or her while they were at BHHS. After everything the day before and the nightmare that followed, it seemed Allison needed a little more time to recover but still wanted to make herself available without outwardly saying so. Lydia sent a second message alone to Scott, concerned with his break with Allison;

- "Talk later. I'd make a bad buffer anyway."

Lydia wasn't wrong although she wasn't being entirely honest either. When she drove Allison into school she had no intention of checking-in for their cram-session. She knew Allison wanted to tie her hair back, cuddle up in her favorite flannel and transport into the quiet normalcy of her tablet. It was never Lydia's intention to leave the school grounds. After dropping Allison off in front of the school she drove around to student parking and waited long enough for the turnover of athletic students to inconspicuously slip into the field entrance. Lydia marched without suspicion toward the swimming pool despite there not being any team meets today. The defrost from the fickle winter weather made every Coach eager to get their teams onto the field every spare moment, with whatever team members were willing to turn up. It meant people were in and out often enough locking up wasn't the most practical habit. She'd anticipated Coach Helisek's lapse in judgment and
found the swimming pool area shut down but not locked down.

Walking the edge of a place where her life blinked out for who knows how long-- Lydia wasn't the sort of person who believed she survived because of a bigger purpose or grand destiny. From Lydia's perspective, it wasn't that she was lucky to be alive, it was that whoever was trying to hurt the people she cared about was damn unlucky she was still around to ruin their plans.

While Lydia slowed toward the corner of the swimming pool where she woke bruised and spewing chlorine water she felt her chest begin to tighten as if she were once again underwater, trying to breathe. She refused to let anxiety get the better of her, especially since she intended to figure out who yanked her from the water to safety and that wouldn't happen if she ran away now would it? When she dropped her cross body purse to the ground beside her, it sent an eerie echoing sound throughout the room. It just began to dim by the time the sound of her pumps clanging to the deck was audible. With the far away sounds of lacrosse practice twisted in the mix each sound bounced back and forth, reverberating through her reminding her of the vague, here-and-there sounds of listening to Isaac running through the woods.

After sitting on the edge of the pool, Lydia considered the evidence from the day before; the idea that there are new and different players on the field, a new Alpha in the mix and possibly paranormal bold enough to come onto the school grounds. Although Lydia's kept in mind the influential powerful an Alpha would have over her Beta friends, it had been a while since she considered the actions it would be devising. Before she knew it her bare feet slipped soundlessly beneath the surface of the water, swaying back and forth. The soothing optical illusion of being near and far made her think clearly for the first time in a while. The altercation in the woods wasn't an attack, not in the way everyone perceived it and even if that was what she sensed and saw in her vision, with emotions high and her inexperience as a Banshee who would believe her? In fact, with only a weird watery idea, she hardly believed it herself.

Disrupting her peace of mind, causing her to kick out and sit back, Lydia reached over to see who else texted her this morning.

- I heard if you add an excuse with an apology than you're probably just going to do it again, so I'm sorry about this.
- But then, you DID say I needed practice apologizing so here goes nothing.

Stiles. Typical.

Lydia considered replying that discussing the dynamics of an apology was not, in fact, an apology for trying to manipulate her the day before. Not that it didn't make her chuckle humorlessly. She wasn't of a mind to deal with Stiles just yet, in truth he could probably try and do it a 100 times and 99% she would let him. (The 1% it wouldn't just be to keep him on his toes.) The realization sincerely bothered her, in fact it hurt more than the act of manipulation so she felt maybe a little distance would be good. Remembering Allison's facial expression when she talked of Stiles the night before, it was something born of concern with a flicker of pity.

When Lydia climbed to her feet and tugged her purse strap over her sore shoulder, she remembered there were still things she wanted to look into while everyone else was preoccupied with studies or practice. As long as her Beta friends' reliability was in question and her Hunter friend reported to her family she wanted to keep this piece of herself secret for a while.

When her phone buzzed again, (and again and again) she managed to walk without tripping as she read each text but replied to none of them. She couldn't imagine how to explain (without coming across as a hypocrite) that for now, things had to be this way.
The library reeked of desperation, populated with twice as many students expected for a Sunday study/cram session. The repairs caused low attendance for Saturday's sessions, bringing the numbers up to an oh-so whopping number of 17. The stress of having midterms begin the next morning made it all that much easier for Stiles to slip in among the masses.

Mr. Harris insisted Stiles sign-in of course, which he did without fuss. It wasn't a deceit since Stiles had to study up for a placement exam later that week but when he flustered to be assigned a tutor, even his fast-talking didn't get him around Mr. Harris' dour disposition (especially since the first impression he had left on the man was a failed attempt on detention from the week before).

Of course Allison clocked his bumbling entrance while she thankfully finished her first Starbucks for the day and before he could catch her 'odd-man out' seating on the balcony. So she offered to tutor, she said waving him up toward her. His idea of finding Lydia had been thrown off by the appearance of Allison. A thousand questions danced through his mind (of course one of them being where he could find Lydia, but he could get to that) he couldn't pass up an opportunity like this.

"Sweet," Stiles said dropping into the seat across from Allison. He flipped through the notebooks she had on the table while she continued to poke at her tablet. He commented on the great view, observing access to every entry point while at the same time keeping the wall behind them to reduce a chance at surprise attacks.

"It's Lydia's reserved seating. Don't look too disappointed in me," Allison half-jested after putting her tablet to sleep. When Stiles stared at her startled and doe-eyed she smiled lightly and pushed a Human Anatomy textbook toward him. After explaining sincerely, she was there to study "go on quiz me."

Stiles considered the options and flipped to the pages she had marked, divided with lined paper and desperate markings. After a few Q&A's Stiles grew upset, "this is what you're up to?" her frustration with the material frustrated him. "How am I supposed to catch up to this material in a day?"

Allison covered her mouth to keep from laughing, "And this is why we study."

Stiles shook his head, as someone trained to keep her emotions in check, she did a damn good job of simply reflecting one thing. Disappointment.

"You're doing a good job," he sighed and finally said after a long pause.

It was obvious their topic of conversation had changed drastically. Allison stared at him unblinking, her eyes went tender and she gnawed on her lip to keep it still.

Stiles looked around, not because he imagined someone would overhear them, but because he felt uncomfortable. He imagined that she had a million things to say. He certainly felt he had a million things to say, but without any feedback this was going to be a weird conversation. He had not only never become friends with a Hunter before but he had never had a sit-down heart-to-heart with his best-friend's ex before and he wasn't sure he was doing this right. He scooted his chair closer under the desk and tucked his hands between his knees, hunching further into himself to keep his voice
"I get why you called it off with Scott. It was a bold choice and the right thing to do."

"fuck you," she whispered like it was a secret. Allison didn't say it with any anger, she said it like he had hurt her but he sensed the relief coming off of her like a wave.

"Yeah, okay." He breathed out and nodded, accepting that. "Your turn."

Allison tilted her head and folded her arms across her chest while she considered the prospect.

"6 years. Where have you been?" with that her expression went from introspective to haughty with a smirk. "I'm talking location not metaphysical."

"New Mexico," Stiles said after a beat. He shook his head and leaned back a bit, narrowed his eyes and wondered not for the first time how it was she went undetected for so long when everything about her screamed crafty little witch. "Why was it you took the photo of my Father's investigation board in the kitchen?"

Allison shrugged, "instinct." She leaned upright and pulled her Android out of her back pocket, making a gesture of goodwill to text him the photo straight away. He yanked out his Samsung immediately and stared at it, willing his cellphone service to work quicker already.

The moment he got the photo he zoomed up on it and started to analyze it, memorize it. He knew he wouldn't delete this and there would be no gesture of throwing it into the fire, not this time. "Has Scott seen this?" he asked without looking up.

"I'm not sure," she said frankly. With her Android out as well Allison decided to follow Stiles' example and look through her copies of the picture. She wasn't sure what he was catching on first glance, possibly not the same things she had seen after staring at it dozens of times. She wanted to question him but it didn't feel like the right time. "It's not likely. He's avoided your house and even if he went through the kitchen he doesn't like looking at pictures of the attacks. He wouldn't have looked at it for more than a second. He definitely would have tried to forget about it. I think it reminds him too much of, you know, his own incident."

Finally, Stiles looked up, all stillness and seriousness on his face, "did you show this to your family?"

Allison gave it a split second's thought, then shook her head no. It honestly never occurred to her to share it with them.

He let out a soft breath that sounded like a scoff but was more disbelief than relief, "thanks."

Allison wanted to say 'anytime' but knew she couldn't promise that to him even though she wanted to. Instead she shrugged and shoved her phone back into her jeans.

"You spent 6 years in New Mexico, you left everything behind and say you never planned on coming home. It must have been pretty comfortable where you were," Allison said questioningly.

Stiles looked amused and put his phone down on the table, the line once again being blurred between this family and that family. "It was home."

"Derek couldn't have raised you," Allison implied.

are you asking this now? Why not when you were attached to Scott's hip?"

"I don't know." She stopped and thought about the question. For a moment she went back to
flipping through the notebooks on the desk and Lydia's genius notes on how to get through Mr.
Harris' Human Sciences went flying by. "I guess because I'm not like Scott or Lydia. And I don't
 útil you're going to stick around for a bit. Which means I'm not going to have a past between us
to rely on and I'm not a very trusting person to begin with, but I think we're the same like that." Her
eyes flicked up to catch the way he glared at her, angry with how much he couldn't deny what she
said was true. "And I think we're the same in other ways too. We're pretty good liars. But when it
comes to caring about those two... there's nothing we wouldn't do."

"Yeah," Stiles said trying to sound easy but his voice came across gruff. He looked out over the
balcony, eyeing the exits out of anxiety before he looked back to her. "You'd kill for them wouldn't
you?"

Allison didn't hesitate to nod. She didn't have to ask him right back to know his answer but she did
have to bring the tone down before she knew things would go south. She'd questioned Werewolves
before but she'd had the benefit of a room built with Hecatolite in the walls.

"You were really young. Isaac and the rest of them wouldn't bond with the Pack for at least for 4 or
5 years, so you must have been really happy with the Hales until then. Or else you would have tried
to come home no matter what the circumstances. Why can't you just tell Scott and Lydia that?"
Allison knew enough of transformation that during the first transformative healing experiences, the
craving to go home, to go someplace safe is so strong, young Werewolves had been known to
terrorize entire towns.

At the moment Stiles couldn't get used to a Hunter knowing him better than his Werewolf best-
friend. He sucked his teeth and nodded in consideration, "and you? You must have kept Scott
really happy during his first turn? That... that sounded a lot less smutty in my head."

Allison chuckled. "It was tough with Scott. He was scared so that made it worse but we found an
abandoned old subway station at the edge of town to campout at and lock ourselves up in for the
night. After the first time he trusted himself more, we had worked it out and it became less
intense." Stiles looked skeptical but nodded along anyway, "see. I just mean don't you think it
would bring you some sort of relief, or them to know you weren't in danger?"

"Every once in a while," Stiles said subconsciously rocking in his seat, "we hear about a Hale out
there. They don't always know what they are, they just have their first change because of puberty
and it's a mess. Or maybe they were in hiding but get found out as a Werewolf and everyone in the
Homestead goes nuts to bring them back safely. They have a system but if everyone feels crazed
about being there I never got how that meant safe. If that meant safe than why were there still so
many Hales out there in hiding, you know? I don't know, after all this time growing up in their pack
I still don't know anything." He scratched his jaw in thought and realized he had rambled and not
really answered the question at all, "was I happy? Yeah. Safe? After you're run off a cliff and
trapped in a car where you and your Mom are left for dead when you're 10, safe is relative."

"I killed once." Allison said nonchalantly. Stiles shuddered and snapped to look at her with a
startled expression. She gulped thickly as she clarified and spoke more honestly "Actually, I had
help kill them. It was a Berserker. Once they've been turned they aren't a man or woman anymore.
When you realize they can't be brought back from being a mindless monster threatening to kill
their own family, threatening to kill my partner, which makes me a defender not a murder. It's
about perspective." Allison leaned forward onto her elbows and when she did, a necklace came
loose from her flannel and knocked against the tabletop. She picked at the ordinate emblem
nervously with her fingernails but looked at him in earnest. She admitted in a low steady voice, "telling the people close to you does take the burden off of you."

After a long moment Stiles came to realize he was holding his breath and he let it out in a low whistle. "That is a helluva game changer Allison," he said lightly and came to lean forward on the table toward her. She shrugged trying to seem light about it but her mood felt heavy.

"The truth is, they didn't want me to come home. They were afraid for my safety," Stiles gave a weak smile and folded his shaky hands on the table before him trying to steady them. "I would get these flashes of anger at the idea of coming back here and finding out my Dad might have, you know re-married and maybe gotten a bunch of step-kids or even made a new kid, and I was just a distant memory. Maybe I wanted to come back sometimes but I couldn't hold my anger in like they could and the Hales could take the hits my family here couldn't. She was teaching me to keep it all together and then sometime later it was too late. Talia got sick, my second Mom died just like that, cancer. Fucking hilarious."

Allison reached over and squeezed his hands. As a trained soldier she had prepared herself for violent deaths throughout her life, but sickness wasn't something she considered. Stiles looked to where their hands joined and stared at it like it was a strange phenomenon.

"It's alright. It was a while ago," he assured her, although he squeezed back with a tenderness that seemed to say otherwise. "It just bothers me that everything she taught me about family made me realize I keep being crappy to both of my families."

"You know, you really are good at bullshitting," Allison said after a moment and smiled softly. Stiles took a moment to look artfully offended. "Which part?"

"For one," her shoulder lifted in an awkward narrow gesture of apology, "playing up the comparison to Peter Pan. You might as well have said you flew up to your house, there was a new boy and the window was locked closed on you."

"Damn, I didn't think I laid it on that thick," Stiles suppressed a smile. It was Aunt Kate's crappy comment of comparing his pack members to 'Lost Boys' that gave him the idea. There was sincerity behind his anxiety and anger over coming home but he had hoped Allison would have read it as something pitiable instead of something principled.

"You're a Werewolf who bailed on his family because you wanted to protect them," she grinned briefly but petted his hand a tad roughly. "Try to remember you're talking to a Hunter who just broke up with her Werewolf boyfriend to protect him from her lethal family. I'm not judging. I promise."

"Fine," was all he could say with a little laugh finding himself in a rare moment in short supply of words.

"I know they didn't keep you there. You were terrified but thought you'd grow out of being a coward," she bit her lip in consideration before launching onward in supposition. "Being a Werewolf doesn't change your mindset or emotions it just made you feel them stronger. Becoming braver never happened for you, did it? This whole incident with Derek getting kidnapped in Beacon Hills forced your hand, didn't it?"

Obviously this was something he had gone over in his head a million times before. Stiles nodded and added considerately, as one would a shopping list. "I should have been helping bring other Hales home and I should have been helping bring my Dad peace. I just was too afraid to know how
to do any of that until the moment this chance came up."

"But none of that is why you didn't tell Isaac about Beacon Hills?" Allison realized.

"Nope." Stiles said, his mouth making a pop with the letter P at the end of the word.

"Did you tell anyone in your Hale pack about your family in Beacon Hills?" her face pinched with curiosity.

Stiles’ mouth turned crooked as he chewed on one side in awkwardness to wordlessly display his discomfort and acknowledged there was no way in hell he wanted to talk about it then, never the less did he feel all too comfortable talking about it now.

"Not even Talia. She died thinking I was a failure, too, I'm sure" he admitted.

Allison felt crushed by his admission. All the while she had kept her fingers pressed into the pulse of his hand, Werewolves might have their abilities to sense the emotions of another but Hunters could read others in another way. And she could feel the way his pulse jumped at the recollection with the talk of Mothers which only made sense.

"Just so that you know, parents tend to let their kids off for a lot of stupidity." Allison said gently patting his hand as she released her hold, she went back to fondling her necklace before she tucked it back under her shirt. She couldn't help but remember the theft of her Mother's access to the bestiary. She could only hope her Mother forgave her for the act if she ever found out.

"No kidding," Stiles scoffed, laughing a little too loud. He received a dirty glare from nearly everyone in the library. It didn't help that Allison laughed at his laugh. For that alone Stiles brought her back near to him across the tabletop. "Just look at how he accepts that Isaac is my foster-brother. No question, no documentation, no problem."

Allison hadn't actually thought of that.

His face scrunched up in a stray thought, "actually I'm beginning to think he even likes him a little better than me."

"Really", she scoffed. "Then why is Isaac staying at Scott's?"

Stiles had given this a lot of thought when he woke up without his foster-brother under his roof. He didn't want to admit it was a thing that made him feel insecure but instead gave it the assumption it deserved. Scott needed all the post-break up support he could get. Especially since, while Isaac and Stiles could wrap their brains around emotion upheaval, Scott was too invested to understand the long standing effects. In fact, it almost seemed hilarious that Allison hadn't considered that. There was, of course, another reason.

"I guess," Stiles shrugged affably "because Isaac wants to give my Dad and me some time getting to know each other again. To know how we fit. As a family. Without Mom. Plus, it's good for Scott and Isaac."

Allison looked doubtful, it didn't help that Stiles kept making faces because he didn't seem to know how to hold down an expression of sincerity. "I think they just like it", Allison added.

"I think they're feeling each other out", Stiles sniffed.

"I think they're feeling out how they fit as a family with you," Allison said after some thought. Stiles nodded.
"Like I said," Stiles shifted in his seat, with growing discomfort at trying to find comfort, "I think it's good for them."

"Like this is good for us?" she looked on amused, crossing her arms once more across her chest and leaned back in her seat. "You're just as interested in me as I am in you. You're not just anyone. You're Scott's best friend. He trusts 2 people in the world. His Mom and a guy he hasn't seen since he was 10."

"He trusts Lydia," Stiles challenged.

"Not really," Allison wished she felt otherwise, but she'd heard Scott say so more than once. She had seen the way Scott reacted too many time when she suggested they talk it out to believe otherwise.

"He does," Stiles insisted in a low irritable tone. He took on a stance identical to her for the effect of stubbornness. "He just doesn't know that he does. And he trusts you, too. He told me he felt..." Stiles struggled for a way of rephrasing the things Scott said in private without betraying Scott's trust, "anchored when sensitive to the effects of Mother Nature and the Moon and he has on--"

"Scott doesn't have menses," Allison groaned and rubbed her forehead. "Please stop talking like a tampon ad."

Stiles leaned back in his chair with enough force to cause it to scrape the ground, he made a grimace of pain to reject his own thoughts of disgust. "Right. I'll do that back in time, where I will now travel so I can scrub my mind clean that this ever happened."

"Scott never had to say something like that out loud. I knew," Allison sighed and felt her inside deflate with ache. Since the breakup she tried not to reflect on their more intimate moments. Nothing of a sexual nature but those quiet, shared moments like when they lay on the roof of her car and they talked and talked about nothing and everything and he wasn't the wolf and she wasn't a hunter but they were unafraid and in love.

"It's some Hunter thing right?" Stiles asked.

"A girlfriend thing," she scoffed lightly, "that's how we learned to trust each other."

"Oh. Right." He remembered that while his brother in all but blood moped outside, as this girl went and did exactly what Stiles wanted her to do since he first set eyes on her. Allison separated herself from his best-friend for Scott's protection and Stiles couldn't help sense how it tore her up inside. Not just that but from the moment Stiles met her he had been watching the slow decline of everything she loved, every delicately constructed thread of her life, every artfully placed lie. "So sorry my foster-brother outted you as being a Hunter." Stiles said quickly on instinct but on second thought was unsure if it was true.

"Actually I'm not." Allison shook her head. Even if it cost her relationship in the long run. It was inevitable but it could have gone so much worse and violent and deadly.

"Good." Stiles said thoughtfully than added smugly "That's-- I like that you said that. First 100% honest thing you've said in this study group."

"Thanks," she snorted delicately, laughing she flipped over some pages in a notebook remembering that they were in fact supposed to be studying. She noticed the way his eyes glanced at his phone without touching it, as if expecting it to hop up at him and give off some sort of great announcement. "You didn't come here to just study either. You don't have to pretend to be an idiot
just to try and get on Lydia's study group."

"Hey, I'll have you know I am not pretending at anything!" Stiles thrust a finger in the air to punctuate his statement. "I just think it's rude to not reply to a guy after he leaves you a few-- 9 million texts."

"I think I'm not the only one who has to work out their trust issues," Allison didn't look up from the notebook she flipped through, obviously not reading. Stiles looked to her curiously. "I mean if there's anything yesterday taught us, it's that relationships based on secrets only leads to more secrets. And how stable is that. It's horrible isn't it?" she rolled her eyes indelicately to punctuate her point, then gave a gentle smile, "honesty is pretty hard but it's stable."

"You... are a jerk." Stiles shook his head at her in dismay and dropped a textbook on top of his cellphone so that it might stay out of sight as he went on to pretend to study along with her. "What is it you're pretending not to know?"

Allison shrugged, looked up from a notebook, handed it to him and asked him to quiz her. He refused. She insisted and said if he quizzed her for 10 minutes she would answer his questions.

"She can get disconnected sometimes when she's working things out. You guys are just worrying her so much," finally she answered sympathetically. He breathed out, a huff in offense. "But you more than most. Now, 10 more minutes," she then insisted.

Stiles mock-gasped in exasperation with the academic blackmail she held over his head, the goddamn useful academic blackmail the horrible Hunter-lady was using. He never knew a lady as sinister as that.

Track 10 - Leave A Trace by CHVRCHES

The sports teams had free reign of BHHS on the weekend and Kira intended to take full advantage of it. Not just because Coach Helisek felt her growing team spirit was the best kept secret their athletic department had in years (which he was eager to exploit and quite vocal about) but because the more awkward her parents were around her since the roadside accident days earlier, she was looking for every excuse to get out of the house.

So, Sunday morning, even though there wasn't a formal track team meet up, Helisek told her she could use the track to run if she liked, since the lacrosse team would be on the field for practice and the facilities would be open. Kira was welcome to hang around in case it sparked any more team spirit on her part. It hadn't occurred to Kira that she might even have forgotten her whole predicament with her weird crazy escalating abilities if it hadn't been for the boys' voices drifting through the wall into the rather empty girl's locker room bristling with business. But it wasn't the same as her secretive parents or being blown off by Jackson. Hearing Scott McCall joking around and laughing nervously at the jibes of his teammates, (reminder, lower ranked teammates since he was the Co-Captain) it totally distracted her on the track. She enjoyed running. Like really, REALLY enjoyed running but she had to remember to curb her growing speed and ability when she was so distracted with watching the team that she sped right off the track and tripped head over heels into the shrubbery at the edge of the field. Figures super speed didn't come with super brakes.

After that, it just made sense to go over to the field end where the team practiced and outright watch before she really made a bigger mess of things. She didn't bother to change out of her track
suit, only tugged on a hoodie and lightly jogged toward them in an attempt to catch McCall's eye without being too obvious. She wondered if it was too soon to cash in on talking privately. From the bright-eyed grin Scott flashed her before being knocked over by a teammate Kira could only assume as much. Not only did super speed not come with super brakes, it did not come with the super ability to stop being clumsy.

Coach Flinstock was furious at her for being a distraction while Coach Helisek was delighted she was in attendance. (Under these circumstances, Assistant) Coach Helisek insisted she stay and behind the benches and where players came back and forth switching off and checking their equipment. Soon enough Scott made an excuse to run over to her, grinning and all.

"Kira, you're here!" he said delightedly.

She froze, then said instead of hello, "you remembered my name."

Scott looked baffled then fumbled onto the bench in front of her and pretended there was something wrong with his shoes, tying and retying them. "Of course I did. Aside from the couple of classes we've got together there was, you know, the incident in the woods."

"Of course!" she flushed, embarrassed and shook her head, rubbing her head in dismay. "This is just really a lot to take in."

Scott froze and read something of frustration in her embarrassment, "Did you think I would pretend not to know you? Like--" he made a fluttering hand gesture to make it seem like something blew away in the breeze.

After a regrettable moment, she finally, nodded in honest uneasiness.

"Oh," he said then sat a bit upright, forgetting the guise of tying his shoes. Flinstock yelled something about talking to his girlfriend later, which he forgot to remember to intentionally ignore and just didn't hear. "I wouldn't do that," Scott stated frankly.

"Me neither," she agreed quickly to have something to say back before she realized there wasn't really a need to say anything back. True to his word he seemed to not mind her presence very much at all despite knowing something was deeply wrong with her. Kira's smile slid from shy to tight, "Coach is coming this way."

Scott didn't look away but his back got stiff as a rod, "can you stick around after practice?"

She nodded briskly and drew further and further back terrified as Coach loomed overhead. Kira definitely saw the advantages to controlling their special abilities with the way Scott dodged the Coach's swing to his head and even the brilliant throws toward other teammates. And Kira saw the restraint Scott had when handing off shots to other players when he could very well have made the goal himself.

If she couldn't even manage to run a straight line Kira wondered how it was he could manage running among so many other players, among so much adrenaline and not mess up. Until he did. It shouldn't have been super surprising. How had she forgotten Jack Whittemore was the other Co-Captain of the Cyclones or that he, like she and McCall were something special and they were not exactly the most reliable when it came to self-control. But yeah, there it was, suddenly there was a skirmish on the field, McCall on one end of it Whittemore on the other. And a wild lacrosse ball came flying into the stands.

Kira was too terrified to think of what to do which was fortunate because had she stopped to think
she wouldn't have had her instincts to rely on. The same instincts that had her yank up a lacrosse stick from the heap of equipment beside her and flip it in her left hand to stand up right and catch the fly ball one handed before it struck the face of Lydia Martin where she sat two rows behind her, innocuously taking stats down on her phone.

The reactions all around her were a mixed bag; Scott looked grinning with pride, Jackson looked startled to find her even in attendance, Coach Helisek cheerfully turned to Flinstock and said "see, I told you." To which Coach Flinstock responded by shouting at her "Hey! Have you ever played Lacrosse before!?" Lydia's glare was probably the most telling, as it came with a seat change, in that she actually moved two rows nearer and said nothing at all.

Kira dropped the stick in alarm, shook her head in reply to Coach Flinstock's question, gulped a number of times and then dropped silently onto her bench beside Lydia, determined to will herself back to the invisibility of just one week earlier.

Track 11 - Teenage Rhythm by GRMLN

"Hey!" Jackson called to Isaac, despite Isaac's actively expressed attempts to ignore him. "Looks like your boyfriend's cheating on you." The titters around him bothered Isaac more than they should have. Isaac knew Jackson wasn't involved with his attack the day before. At least his brain knew that.

But his nerves knew something else entirely. He wanted very much to be a team player but their team was becoming fractured. Not just the lacrosse team, which was becoming this split of people who enjoyed being vicious brutes and other, you know, rule followers. But off the lacrosse field there was a split, Werewolves and Non-Werewolves which was weird because he was not 100% certain where his loyalties lie.

Sure, he grew up with Stiles, but Stiles was pretty much loyal to himself first and then there was Allison who was a fighter for all the people she loved and she just happened to love Werewolves. Then there was Scott who was great to him and Lydia who could be horrible to him but they both made him feel welcome, in their own way, when no one else did. Not to mention he just died so he didn't exactly have a category onto himself, not to mention his "Gift" at a second chance of life came with the torment of reliving the act of dying every time he tried to sleep. Suffice to say, things were pretty crappy in his head and when they left the McCall's in the early AM's he thought burning out his frustrations on the lacrosse field would be ideal but he hadn't account for Jackson.

Or for all the resentment he carried for the lizard-man even if he didn't remember whatever he did in his Kanima form, he still did bad, bad things.

In Isaac's restless conflicted brain it validated his carnal urge to attempt to rip out Jackson's throat, even if there were like 20 or so witnesses.

"Scott!!" Lydia screamed in demand, looking toward the field.

Without hesitation he turned in the direction of her sights and raced, too late toward where Isaac threw himself at Jackson. But amidst a field filled with other lacrosse players. With Jackson's dodging instead Isaac launched himself at Danny. At the last moment Jackson grabbed hold of his best-friend's right arm and yanked him, hard out of the line of fire and threw him out of the range of
harm. He turned back to Isaac and jumped him from behind, punching at his still helmeted head, hard enough to leave a dent. Several other students tried to stop them but were only thrown back, when Scott arrived, he tackled Jackson and pinned his arms behind his back and screamed at Isaac to stop, screaming his name with such force everyone around them shuddered.

Lydia and Kira watched on gasping.

"Did you see that?" Lydia asked.

"Lydia," Kira said candidly "I think everyone saw that."

Lydia gave her an irritated glare, not a hurtful one just a disappointed on before she ran around the bench and onto the field.

Kira watched on, biting her lip. She maintained her ground and even stepped back a few feet. She didn't have the balls to go nearer, for fear that somehow she too would be exposed.

"I should suspend you!" Flinstock yelled into Isaac's face. "The both of you!!"

"Coach!" Scott protested, standing shoulder to shoulder with Isaac "I wasn't even here!"

"Exactly," he raged, "What sort of Captain takes all the glory but none of the responsibility?"

"Coach," Jackson broke in, he interrupted, he tone surprisingly tenderly "it was my fault. I goaded him. I injured Danny." He looked over toward where Coach Helisek, their resident expert in sports' injuries tended to Danny and Jackson looked shamefaced.

Isaac and Scott looked to one another in disbelief. There was no way anyone would believe Jackson's story and yet -- "fine."

Coach shook his head in dismay. In a rare moment of earnestness, "look, I appreciate teammates sticking together but you can't just turn on each other because you've had a tough couple of days. We need each other out there. We need each other's backs because pretty soon we're going to be facing off some real assholes. Can't you save the murderous impulse for them?" after an awkward pause he added, "or at least try?"

"Sure Coach." They agreed in an awkward off-beat almost unison.

"Meanwhile," he hesitated and looked amongst the three of them, "McCall would you get the hell out of here so I can deal with these two nitwits!"

"Oh," Scott balked and after casting Isaac a glance of sympathy he bolted from the scene.

"Danny," Lydia called out as she dropped to her knees beside him.

He groaned in discomfort as he rolled onto his back. The Coach tried to take more of his gear off but Lydia had much more experience than he did pulling off a player's uniform. Sure enough, as she expected Coach Helisek's review from his brief examination of the bruising and Danny's responses "I think you're shoulders been separated. But it's a good thing your friend pulled you out of harm's way when he did. It looked like Lahey would have taken your head off at the speed he was going."
"Yeah," Danny said disgruntledly.

"Yeah," Lydia responded thoughtfully, familiar with the sort of injury she had just seen delivered she had an idea of how to treat it. "Let me help you home. Trust me, you're going to want to keep it immobile and put this on it," she squeezed to activate the instant ice pack she withdrew from her purse. Danny gave her a suspicious look to remind he would ask later why she would carry medical supplies in her purse but she ignored it. Instead she handed it off to Helisek with the explanation (not for the first time) that she 'had a lot of practice with these sort of injuries lately.'

"It's going to get pretty bad in the next couple of hours," Helisek put light pressure on the exact placement, while putting Danny's hand over it guiding him to keep it in place. With that he helped Danny to stand with Lydia hovering beside him. With a comforting grin he looked between the two "you should be thankful to your friends though."

"Yeah," Danny said little above a groan as he shambled along to the benches.

"Not just her." Helisek looked across toward where Flinstock reamed Isaac and Jackson new assholes. "As much as the bruising sucks, in the long run you'll be thankful to Whittemore for saving your life in the morning," with that he petted Danny on his good shoulder, asked if Lydia could take care of him for a bit. She insisted emphatically that she would.

"You just love this whole damsel in distress dynamic we have going on," Danny tried to smirk but mostly sneered with pain as she helped him to his feet.

"Oh, obviously." She grinned investing in his charm and her goodwill resist the disturbing realization that Jackson had to have saved her life at the pool the day before. And worse yet, considering Jackson's memory gaps he probably didn't even know he had done so.

Track 12 - Human Nature by Gauntlet Hair

"You stayed!" Scott said relieved. He half jogged toward where Kira paced a slow and meandering path toward the locker rooms.

"Yeah," she hugged her arms to her. He looked mostly relieved to see her. The rest of him looked smattered with bruises and blades of grass caked in mud. "I wasn't sure that I should," she said low in secretive tones despite there being no one near.

They looked around and then he smiled nervously, "you didn't have to if you didn't want to, but I'm glad you did."

She sighed with relief, deeply enough to sage a little. Her hands dropped to her side and she nodded thoughtfully, "I'm glad I stayed. I wanted to ask you if you were okay."

"Sure," he said as if her question were ridiculous. "I heal pretty quickly." Then it was his turn to look around anxiously. He particularly stopped to note how far off people like Isaac and Lydia were from where they spoke. And since he felt it wasn't far enough he gestured for her to follow him.

A few moments later they reached the equipment shed behind the bleachers that only maintenance accessed before and after official games.
It hadn't occurred to him the door would be locked. Kira's disappointment read clear on her face but something inside Scott, something that wanted to both show off and show that he could be trusted convinced himself it was totally cool to use a bit of his extra strength to maybe pull the door open anyway. He hadn't meant to rip the knob off but that's just how it goes sometimes.

"Wow," Kira said in the dark when he closed the door behind them, "do you think I can do that too?"

"Probably," Scott confessed and quickly realized he was in over his head. "That is if you're like me."

"Like you, how?" she stepped back, not exactly afraid but unsure enough that she needed room to give him space to explain himself.

The shed was small and made of shelf space that carried nets, goalie bars and LED floodlights sandwiching aluminum benches tight enough make sound reverberate around them. It should have been suffocating but somehow, the sounds of them together and alone cut the world away and made it easier to click.

Scott took a deep breath, closed his eyes and steeled himself as best he could. He had only really done this before when things were intense. He had only been able to tap into some primal strength when he had lost control of his emotions, when he had felt really angry or really excited or just really, REALLY. But in the back of Scott's mind he felt right now it really mattered to him and it really mattered to this girl, to gain her trust and it really mattered to gain control for himself. He reached inside, searched in his core and imagined every cell in his body circulating and understanding them at once and maybe, just maybe commanding them instead of having them commanded. He dug his nails into the palm of his hands and from that point of pain outward and reset the focus of control and ran his sense of self to know he was both animal of man and that was perfectly okay.

When Scott opened his eyes again he could sense they had colored but he felt entirely in control, he didn't feel claws or fangs but he saw the world vibrant and bright in the dark.

"ohh," Kira stared wide-eyed stepping forward instead of further back. "Wow," she came forward with a hand outstretched, then snatched her hand back retaking control of her impulse.

Exhausted, Scott blinked and shook off the effects of change as though it were smoke or fog filling up the room.

"So cool," Kira smiled brightly over at him. She suddenly thought of something that caused her to close off and after a moment she reached into her hoodie pocket. "I want you to see something, too" she explained as she took a step forward, fingers clenched even as she handed over her Nokia.

Whatever reaction Scott was expecting, he hadn't expected Kira wanting to take a selfie with him. But her smile was shaky just like his confidence so Scott followed her lead as she brought his hands up to point at her. "I want you to use the flash," in her own shy way she was insistent he take a photo of her as she stepped back and back again until her back hit the shelves. The flash in the dark left strobes behind his eyelids for a few seconds but he could hear Kira's breath speed up in the dark. She reached to touch the cellphone where it met his hands.

When Scott's vision settled her gentle expression hardly matched the sense of nervousness she bristled of. A dizzying fear of rejection, that familiar sensation that follows conversion.

"I'm going to show you something no one else has ever seen," and her fingertips brought up the
"cool," Scott breathed out. She wasn't just cool she was remarkable but Scott didn't know the words with which to say that thing.

Kira laughed shakily, in relief followed by a rushed explanation that this had been happening since the storm the other night "I don't know what causes it."

"You were in the storm then this started?" Scott hid his disappointment as he handed her back the phone. So she wasn't like him. After admitting to Stiles that original sense of longing to share his transformative experience then the guilt that followed when he saw the hurt Lydia experienced. In Kira he found someone recently changed who found boundless fascination in her change but once more his connection was denied. She was made to cast light in the dark while wolves were made of only shadows.

"What's wrong? I can tell something is wrong. Is something wrong with me?" she asked, her worry ignored his head shake.

Scott laughed then placed a stilling hand on her shoulder to sincerely apologize for laughing at her. "So, you can sense emotion too?"

Kira shrugged uncomfortably, but very minutely to not shake off his hand. "I can tell more and more when people are off if that's what you mean. I just thought it was because everyone around me was... you know, weird."

"Weird?"

Her mouth twitched slowly into a smile, "like half the lacrosse team feels weird to me now. Or is that just me being suspicious?"

Unsure of how to answer, Scott said nothing. He just gave her shoulder another pat for confidence sake, mostly his while he tried to figure out where to start his story.

Track 13 - Hold On by Ponderosa

Deputy Clarke understood that sometimes the Chief withheld things. She understood that sometimes certain files stood on his desk longer than the average file and sometime there were certain files that went home which probably shouldn't. But what she absolutely did not understand were times when she was expected to file reports that read; "Non-specific animal interface affected the lower lay electrical. Leading to the city wide blackout." Not when she knew for a fact that there were no signs of animals relating anywhere near the source site, otherwise there would have been animal corpse or burnt fur and claw marks or something. Not to mention the only animal sighting were 8 miles up the road on the highway, safely blocking traffic and by one of their own.

But then the inspection experts and clean-up crew handed in their report Sheriff Stilinski said to file it without hesitation. He ordered it without even reading it over, in fact he okayed it over the phone.

There were eccentricities and there were just outright wrongs and she was pretty sure this was getting to the point where she could no longer take it.
The cockiness of the cleaner, a man named Axel as he offered to help stay on and clear up the crash site was enough to crack a crown from how hard she ground down on her teeth.

"No thank you," she said, barely keeping her restraint.

"What was that?" Axel asked unpleasantly, his voice demanding not just of her station but of her small stature compared to broad and sturdy one.

Behind the counter Deputy Clarke's hand went to her gun on instinct.

"She said no thank you," Sheriff Stilinski repeated coming through the double doors into the station. He looked harried and unshaven and ready for a fight. "Tell your boss we appreciate the offer but leave it to the professionals."

They kept their positions and watched the large-ish man back off and slink away. Even after he had gone Stilinski insisted Clarke file the incorrect report. She kept her question listed and ready to fire until he closed his office door behind them.

When the Chief turned on the light, he moved past the overhead and only turned on the desk lamp exposing a whirlwind of paperwork instead of his ready-set file system. Her expression demanded and he received it with a slow nod. Somehow through his unrest he was able to clearly explain his suspicion there was a mole in the works.

"See here," he insisted and showed her going back the last two weeks, evidence logged but missing. Photos scanned but stolen. Misreported incident and conflicting evidence.

Deputy Clarke sat motionless, staring across the desk at this man best known for enforcing the law and here he was performing a deliberate unsanctioned act of entrapment.

"Do you think it's someone at the station?" she asked, eyes dark with outrage, not directed at the Chief but at someone who would bring him down so low.

"Whoever it is, they have access to this station. High-level access, that's for certain," he shook his head, eyeing through the misreport now logged into the system and wondered at how it differed from the evidence he already collected onto his board at home. "I want to see what they're up to before I pull the carpet out from under them."

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Track 14 - I Don't Know Why by Valen

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Despite the option of leaving with the first faction of students, imperturbably Allison and Stiles sat on for the second cram-sessions skipping over lunch entirely.

"Things around here have been a little crazed," anxiety caused Allison to flip through her pages a little fast. "Sorry. I'm sure it's not the home-coming you dreamed of."

Stiles shrugged, and with a smirk admitted "just your average everyday telenovela."

She stopped and propped her chin up on the palm of her hand, her look turned introspective. "Things got carried away. Maybe if we knew ahead of time there could have been a tickertape parade."
"Nah," with his lips pursed in concentration Stiles barely glanced up from where he continued scrolling through his cellphone, "maybe I might have been smart enough to go undercover before the big Werewolf reveal. Or at least not to do it at all."

Allison pursed her lips mildly annoyed but mostly amused. "Well, you've got a smart mouth, which is much better."

That caught Stiles up short and when he looked up across the table he saw her expression and matched it. "It's like you've known me forever."

They dragged their chairs further under the table, scraping their hard wood chairs against the tiled floor to bring them nearer even through the table to be heard better, all pretense abandoned.

"I know you enough to know you're up to something. If I ask--?" she taunted with a cheeky grin. His eyes narrowed in mischief.

Track 15 - Secret Door by Arctic Monkeys

"I am," he stated cockily "creating a convincing paper trail to support our backstory." Stiles displayed his cellphone screen with a bit of pride in his voice. Her brow rose with interest before she took the bait and reached for the incriminating item. Stiles waved back and forth in front of her like a baby's rattle until she snatched it from him. "Now, that I've got my Dad's Law enforcement access into the County records it'll be easier than ever before."

After a moment reviewing his notations, while tilting the cellphone for better view Allison abandoned all pretense, stood and walked around the table to drop down in the seat beside him. Stiles shot upright, startled at her nearness then ducked low to tuck his head beside her to look at the small screen of his Samsung.

"You don't seem to have a problem with messing with the public record," she said critically, handing the item back. "Not your first time?"

"Or even the third," Stiles' itchy fingers still fumbled to grab at the phone even in such close range. He tried to play it as aloof, she rolled her eyes and messed with her belongings on the table, giving him the good graces to get himself situated securely back on his chair. Only then did Stiles explain, "Isaac made a mess of his transcript to get in here. I can't fix that but I can make it easier for him to land."

"So, that's it," Allison slouched back into her seat, and touched her lower lip in consideration. Her voice sounded steady but with a little more criticism than before. "You just look into everyone's lives like that," it wasn't a question so Stiles didn't pretend it needed answering. Allison mentioned before that they were too much alike, now it seemed she wanted only to pull on threads of that theory.

After a moment of Stiles saying nothing she nudge over her tablet and flipped it open with the City/State Records website upended with the CIA access available for their ready use. Stiles ran his fingers through his hair, then rubbed his jaw and pretended for a moment he wasn't going to jump at the chance to use her Hunter family's marginally further reaching credentials. This time Allison held the item steady so his twitchy hands had no chance of fumbling as they went to work rewriting Isaac & Stiles' historic arrival.
Once more finding himself in the shower without remembering how he had gotten there, Jackson understood something else troubling had happened. In the very back of his mind he could still hear Coach's voice and the indiscernible shouts from teammates. But the only sense of clarity he felt came with the hot stream of shower water that burned back what felt to him like scales of reptile he knew slithered underneath.

There was a difference between accountability and guilt and he couldn't feel guilt for something he didn't remember doing but he felt accountable for whatever happened to Danny, for whatever gained him the dirty looks and murmurs the other players, like Lahey threw his way. Not that he didn't glare back in their general direction creating a bit of crowd control and to get them to "Step Off!" with very little effort.

Even after the rest slipped from the showers and after dressing he held back, he moved toward doors of the Coaches' office, toward the shape of Helisek and Danny talking terms.

Through the little dingy door from the office into the locker rooms showed surprise, not upset on Danny's face before he pushed it wide open.

"Hey," he said seeming not at all troubled by the sight of Jackson. And before his best-friend could start with some stuttering explanation or apology Danny tossed him his sneakers and helmet. "Help me get out of the rest of this would you?"

It was obvious from the tiny groan he gave off when reaching to open his locker, that Danny would have trouble changing his clothes. He moved stiffly and had a hand to his right shoulder, a placement like the reverse of performing the pledge of allegiance.

"Sure," Jackson nodded and quickly got to his feet. He helped pull Danny's Jersey upward from the hem at his waist and moved with such gentle precision, it became obvious after a moment the slowness was causing more pain. Both in muscle stiffness and in Danny's shrinking patience. After tossing the Jersey to the bottom of the locker and a curious look he got from Danny, Jackson cleared his throat, remembering himself and went to something near his regular cocky tone. "Look, I'm happy to help my friend out of some act of atonement but if this is a come on, I've told you before, you're not my type."

Despite his tone, Jackson still hesitated to help slide Danny's bad arm through the sleeve of his t-shirt.

"Just do it," Danny looked over at him. He gave a small tight lipped smile, prepared for the pain. Then he added in jest to lightened the mood and remind of their familiarity in one another. "Oh, and FYI: I'm everyone's type."

Jackson gave a dry laugh and this time around he was quicker at helping Danny pull his t-shirt on overhead. Getting his jeans on was no less clumsy but somehow easier. Their words came easier as well.

"So what, you flung me around like a rag doll," Danny went on. His words were lighthearted but between his sore arm and sore feelings he seemed a little off. "I could have moved out of the way. Probably."
Jackson knew from experience what it was like to make excuses for your shortcomings on the field. It wasn't just that you didn't want to come off as weak. It was that you didn't want to let down your team mates, you didn't want to let down your Captain... or Co-Captain. Or in this case your best-friend.

"You're being ridiculous," Jackson grabbed up Danny's backpack for him before he could think to ask or argue. "Are you trying to say you let me beat you up for the good of the team? That's a load of shit. And you better not do something like that on the day of a game because it could cost us more than moral." Jackson took the lead and opened doors for Danny leading the way toward student parking. He knew this wasn't exactly taking accountability but he wanted to lead Danny to blaming him first, he wanted Danny to be mad.

"If something like this happened on a game day you could have ended up with more than friendly fire," Jackson went on.

"That's a funny way to put it," Danny stopped short. He stayed in the middle of the hallway, letting Jackson hold the door open but with a hand out, his good hand insisting Jackson give back his backpack. It rang too true the term that Jackson hurt Danny so thoroughly that even trying to make it right felt like making it worse.

When Danny got the bag back, he twisted the strap around his wrist instead of pulling it up onto his shoulder, like he weighed the options around him. He finally said in a flat voice "I wasn't afraid if that's what you're worried about. I mean, I'm not mad or anything."

Danny looked up and his eyes were kind, tired but kind and Jackson felt injured by that too.

"Come on, be a little mad," Jackson insisted.

Danny gave a tired laugh. "The ground was a mess man. And your instincts were just quicker than mine. Yeah, I could have tried to move out of the way but I wouldn't have made it. This--" he glanced toward his shoulder to keep from gesturing or shrugging and exacerbating the injury "-- is a lot better than a concussion or a spinal fracture or worse."

Moving through the door and around Jackson's kind gesture Danny made his way outside, this time Jackson followed quietly in step. He waited to hear exactly what it was that happened when his mind went under the surface and only the lizard instincts took control.

"When you act like a prick, whether it's trying to scare off my man or tear out my arm, you're still you." Danny looked back toward Jackson, gave him a once over from top to bottom and back again. He rolled his eyes, amused at something Jackson obviously found daunting and Danny found amusing. "Under all the fitted t-shirts and 5lbs of hair products is my best-friend trying to protect me. Which is a pretty great guy, you just got to figure out how to rein it in."

"Maybe," Jackson grunted, not believing a thing Danny said, despite knowing him not to be a liar. Despite listening for a jump in his heart rate and hearing none. "Or maybe I'm just really good at wearing a disguise."

Danny laughed at that then stopped short. Jackson stepped beside him instinctually, ready to protect his friend only to find it was his best-friend protecting him from the sight of his ex waiting not far off. Lydia leaned against the side of Danny's car, obliviously tapping away on her phone but still the sort of thing Jackson was never ready to take head-on, and Danny knew it.

"I'm not the only one who thinks it," Danny said smugly and jerked his head toward her direction, the implication that Jackson could ask her if he wanted verification. Jackson responded with a
glare to which Danny grinned at.

"Look," Jackson said with authority and finality in his voice, "I just mean I can be dangerous. If I'm coming in your direction--" he wasn't so specific as to mean on or off the field but Danny rolled his eyes at the suggestion he might be in harm's way.

"Look," Danny imitated Jackson's tone, "you want to keep me safe? Just aim for the other team."

Jackson's chin jutted, as he smirked in reply rather than rising to the bait of bickering. He had been waiting for the moment when Danny would take on the tone of better-then-thou-best-friend. While he wished it were true only time would tell whether or not Danny was right.

Track 17 - Glad You Came (The Wanted Cover) by Arden Cho and David Kater

While sneaking back out of the shed and noticing the empty field, Scott reconsidered exactly where he was in the state of things. Kira's anxiety and excitement circulated like something contagious throughout his cells but when she asked him not to tell then and only then did it feel like something wrong.

"I don't think that that's okay," he said pressing the door closed behind them. It didn't stay no matter how many times he pressed it into place.

The field was empty around them. They were left behind, like no one really cared to scrutinize them anyway. Earlier the idea of being alone in his evolution agonized him. He had Allison to guide him through earlier stages which was great and it was getting easier to bring things into focus if he felt like he needed to. But Scott wasn't sure if he could do that for someone else, or if he should do that for someone else without an experienced group of friend to lean on.

Made evident by their weird act of tip-toeing across an emptying field, they shouldn't feel the need to keep secrets, to make themselves feel nervous when there wasn't even a need.

"I don't really have all the answers Kira," Scott stressed. "I'm just figuring out what I can do, my friends are helping me. They can help you."

Kira looked uncertain when she nodded. "If you trust them..."

"Absolutely!" he started, imagining in the back of his mind the reason to approach Allison finally revealing itself. Relief seeped through his mind as a smile twice as wide spread across his face.

"I mean, if they're special like us," she said considering his friends she remembered on the field earlier in the day. She looked directly in his eyes trying to convey her confidence and muster up trust in him, though she wasn't sure how she felt. But she wondered and admitted "they've got to have something to say, right?"

"I guess you're right. My friends, since they're like us maybe they have more experience," he should have expected this. It was the same expectation everyone had when they realized Lydia was a Banshee, that their Werewolf friends should instinctively know more. It hadn't occurred to him that Kira would block out an average person, not that she knew she laid the mental smack down on access to Allison.

And it was definitely too early in their friendship to explain something like Hunters to her.
Lost in thought they fell into step besides one another walking along the halls to the locker rooms and he hadn't heard her suggestion or noticed her text him the photos of her Kitsune effects. Once he received them, he still marveled over the image. It snapped him out of his selfishness and reminded of the seriousness they were trying to work out.

"So it's okay if I forward this to my best-friend?" he whispered to her, looking up from his phone.

Kira sat down on the steps; she expected him to say something like that but it was still hard to hear. She shrugged and though she struggled to smile, her eyes were somehow unafraid.

- Got Questions? Tell no one.

Scott sent it on to Stiles with the briefest, vaguest message knowing the intrigue would keep Stiles in check. Then dropped to sit beside Kira on the step. Scott stared at her for a long moment and said nothing before putting an arm around her shoulders to comfort her.

"You're brave," he said as a matter-of-fact.

"I'm a freak," Kira hesitated before she said, matter-of-factly.

After a moment of watching her face, Scott nodded and gave her shoulders a squeeze, "let's be freaks together. It'll be great."

- Track 18 - The Listening by LIGHTS

"I think this whole damsel in distress thing is your kink," said Danny with a wince after struggling to keep the cool façade when his arm spiked with pain at every step.

"No, I definitely think it suits you," Lydia said. She stood upright, from where she leaned against the side of Danny's car.

Anticipating his difficulty to drive Lydia insisted on his keys, with an extended hand and cocky expression she wasn't taking no for answer. Truth be told Danny wasn't taking anything less than a chauffeured escort home after such a display of loyalty to his school. Having Lydia as a companion was an extra treat.

"I gotta say it was a surprise to see you out supporting the team, especially at a practice," Danny said.

"Go, Go Cyclones. Blow away the competition," she answered dully helping lock the seatbelt behind him rather than over his bad shoulder. To which Danny laughed dryly.

"You almost had your head knocked off," Danny noted when she dropped into the driver's seat.

She nodded and turned the car on without strapping into her seatbelt. It would have ached her as well and she didn't want to bring it up.

"You almost had your arm ripped off. I guess you can say it definitely wasn't the most boring practice to show up for," she looked over at him with a playful smirk, even though the car was on she didn't move. Danny glanced down at where her purse lay wedged between them and remembered her readiness for his injury. His brow furrowed though grinning mildly in return. He
could make out the bottle of painkiller and another icepack wedge among her belongings.

"Lydia, are you okay?" Danny asked.

After hesitation, she then returned the car to park. "No," Lydia answered finally and quietly, "are you?"

"No," he answered his smile lengthened a little, then asked for a painkiller and she didn't hesitate to share. He asked again why she came to practice and she admitted she wanted to check in on Jackson.

Lydia turned further to look toward Danny but this time she turned her neck, she pulled back her shirt's collar to show bruising similar to his.

Danny leaned back in his seat in surprised and immediately regretted it. After a second or two he looked again, while she told the story or a mildly edited version of how she (nearly) drowned the day before. And how some rescuer came, yanked her to safety and took off. Danny's confirmation of another one Jackson's unexplained disappearances when he was supposed to be volunteering in the library.

"He's getting worse," she said factually.

"He's just disconnecting," Danny's expression seemed to disagree. "Even if he does his stupid disappearing acts, he does these sudden appearing acts too. Don't you see, he would never do anything to hurt us. It's like he can't help it. You'd think it's steroids or something."

It wasn't only the consideration of Jackson that brought Lydia to the stands that day, it was the sight of him, watching the way he looked around afterward toward Danny writhing on the floor like he wasn't in focus-- it was the same expression Jackson had when she found him in her bedroom late Monday night touching her jacket, wondering after her the night she found Stiles' hovel and the game had gone to shit. It seemed Jackson would always be compelled to care for them no matter how far the Kanima's claws dug into him.

"Or something," Lydia answered, the thought didn't give her the relief she thought it would, it tortured her instead.

Track 19 - New Skin (Shaking Through) by Torres

"You know data isn't people's lives, Allison." Stiles said snappishly, without looking up from a text he received from Scott. When he did, his temperament mellowed. He looked considerately, a searching expression and faster speech. "Lives are the options, resulting in inevitable action, leading to endless collating data. Just ask my Dad's murder-board."

"That. Sounds. Stimulating." Allison punctuated her sentenced partly with sarcasm and partly because of distraction. She overlooked his hacking work as though she were an expert to the task, which she probably was.

There was a little feeling of possessiveness that rolled through Stiles' belly with Allison's practice of sarcasm, as well as pride. He leaned back into his seat and gnawed a little at his thumbnail.

Further engaged, he decided to take up an invisible challenge that had been rattling in his brain for
a while, so vied for her attention.

"Yeah, it is revealing. Like, how you your family bought the house in the summer after the first Werewolf death but only moved in 1 day after the first Omega died. Like their interest had finally been piqued... that happened to be around the day before school started. In a totally non-suspicious manner."

Allison put her tablet down forcefully and rolled her eyes before turning fully toward him.

"What does that correlate to, exactly?" she said struggling to keep her voice low and tone civil.

"It isn't just that," he smiled, eyes bright and curious. "If you account for the past 2 lunar cycles where there's been an increase in reports of strange animal behavior. Birds flying into windows, terrified ungulates--- hooved animals running headlong into traffic, fish going to ground, pets attacking their owners and reports of large wolves migrating in broad daylight, straight along the coast. Easy to dismiss data if you're not looking. Culminating in Argent and Company sweeping in to buy up loads of property here. Real cheap to since rates are plummeting with all things living scuttling away."

Allison's mouth dropped open in offense of his ransacking her tablet. He'd taken a moment when her guard was down and he'd been trudging through not just the school's boring admin system, but her personal case-notes and using the school wi-fi he forwarded it to his cellphone which he displayed smugly.

"Look, I knew my family came here to investigate. That's important, but I don't know or understand what's going on." Allison smacked the offensive item away and glared at Stiles, staring down his smug expression self-assuredly. Her eyes narrowed slightly, but her voice went soft. "They're still investigating, Stiles. It's getting uglier. But if you think I knew Scott was going to be attacked? You think I would let something like that happen to him? To anyone?"

Stiles recalled the confidence with which Allison marched through the woods and lead them to safety the first day they met. How she had doubled-back despite knowing her family would be hunting them out in moments. Stiles now considered how that conflict must have torn Allison up, and how it was still tearing her up to push Scott away to keep him safe. Or the way Allison still tried to smile when she was afraid inside because she felt responsible for everyone's safety and livelihood, and because Stiles had never ever seen her use a weapon with intent to kill despite carrying the label of 'Hunter'.

"No, I don't actually." Stiles said reflexively. His odd little smugness didn't waver but it felt less sincere. "But I think your Family could have prevented it if they wanted to. The dates showed they have agendas within agendas. I've run across Argents before. Strike that, I've known to run away from Argents before. I'm not running from you. I'm here for you."

"Thanks." When she smiled her eyes closed on reflex, like it exhausted her to let go of so much hostility. Her voice was bold, her smiled wider and brighter too when she asked, "will that show in the data?"

"Do you want me to scribble in your notebook '#StilesAndAllisonBFF4EVER' before the end of study hall?" He eased back and laughed lightly, easily.

"Totally." Then after a pause she added, sincerely, "but what would Scott say?" Her mind would always turn to him.

"He'd say 'Awesome?'" He answered, then tacked on "Now what would Lydia say?" After a pause
he remembered his position. "If Lydia says anything these days?"

Allison reached out and petted Stiles' hand on the table, where he covered and protected his phone from further abuse. She shook her head pitiably before reminding, "Lydia, she's Lydia. She can say a lot with a little."

"Right now she is on the side of saying very little. Very, very little. She isn't even picking up the phone. I leave messages. She just ignores them."

"She isn't ignoring them. She just isn't answering," Allison poked and urged him to pick up his phone.

"What's the difference?" he groaned and lifted the offensive device. She mimed a gesture to 'Go ahead!' And while he looked through his text, sure enough every text read as received, read and unreplied to.

"Stiles, the difference is in the data." Allison said finally when he didn't catch on. "Stiles, if she really wanted to reject she would have blocked you."

The recognition hit Stiles with a little OH and he weighed his phone in consideration. Then attached to his earlier jealousy came the recognition "but she's replying to Scott. Is she texting you?"

Allison was reluctant to admit it but eventually did, "Just normal stuff. That she dropped out of Swim Team, to pick up her car, because she drove Danny home from practice, and recommending music or what to wear for a party. But if you bring up something real she has no time for it."

Interrupting their repertoire Allison got a text and it's the sort of thing that threw a gauntlet down. Stiles demanded she check it and even when she assured him it wasn't from Lydia, even though he heard her heart and sensed the truth he assumed she was lying.

"You guys are so alike," Allison laughed in a near bark collecting her things, shoving them into her bag as she prepared to at the end of the period. Stiles followed in step his glower burned a hole in her back and she took it as a badge of honor. "You're both fighting not to fight, which is part of the problem."

It was only after she said it that Allison realized this was where she weighed on the argument. She stopped at the bottom of the staircase and pulled Stiles between stacks of shelves. The newly restacked books stood looming as a reminder for them to keep a peace between them.

"Hunters, Werewolves; we're all weighing in on what happens next. Lydia doesn't feel like she has that right." As much as Allison obsessed on where she stood between her friends and her family, (to spy or not to spy) the recollection of Lydia standing in the rain on the curb outside of Tony's Diner haunted her. Lydia refused to return to come back to them because she felt there was no place for her at their table and it was as literal as it was a metaphor.

"That's ridiculous. She's got an invested interest. In fact, she's got the deciding vote. This crazed Monster Alpha's bite infected her, changed her and she can make him pay--" Stiles' voice rose along with his height as he edged up on his toes, looming over her unintentionally. Hisses from nearby patrons only got Stiles to hiss back at them to shut up.

"Stop, Stiles. Stop." Allison waved her hands between them, urging him to back off "I'm not going advocate Lydia to you." She stared at him for a long time, and after looking over the concern and hopelessness in his face she conceded. "But if I did I'd tell you to stop and put yourself where she's
"I'm following you so far," he nodded his head, a slow and intent bob of determined interest.

"For instance," she said slowly, intently, "I can put myself in your shoes and say the issue you need airing is 'how to deal with that Monster Alpha'."

Jerking back with a jolt, Stiles realized he brought it up the topic without bringing it up. And without an opportunity to highlight his recent revelations. The last time they had spoken about the Monster Alpha, Allison was concerned over whether or not the Monster Alpha could control any and all Betas. His mouth fell open with shock and bewilderment at not knowing where to begin and all over his face read distress over whether or not this was his place to say. Was he supposed to wait for Scott to tell Allison about the Monster being Scott's Alpha if the both of them weren't even talking? Was this a moment where Stiles should advocate for his best-friend? But Allison just continued trying to help Stiles reason out his insecurities with Lydia.

"Meanwhile she's screaming her head off but has yet to speak up for herself. Stiles, she's my best friend, my fiery outspoken best-friend who I'd never try to speak for, but I do understand some data you're just refusing to process." Allison saw his distress and though she misread its cause, she empathized with his condition and tilted her head to look at him intently, to guide him toward reason. "This thing didn't infect Lydia. You can't infect someone naturally immune, like a Banshee, which she always was. That is a fact you guys haven't accepted and it's why she doesn't want a deciding vote. She's just-- isn't anything like you."

The double-whammy made Stiles' breath come in deep-deep draughts. He rubbed at his face before speaking again.

"Yeah but she's Lydia." He insisted, remembering she had survived this Monster Alpha alone already once. "She's never been 'like us' you know. She's been smarter, prettier, just better. That's why we need her. I guess, I see what you mean. I mean, I didn't see."

"This thing living or dying changes nothing for her." Allison insisted, hell even advocated strongly for someone who insisted she wouldn't advocate at all. "You guys talking about 'cures' and 'packs' alienates her. But confiding in friends might help her."

"She told you that?" Stiles brow went up critically.

"No." Allison replied smugly, "she doesn't have to."

"You've got us all figured out pretty well." He looked her up and down, and nodded. His voice was full and teasing when asked, "So then what's your issue?"

"I thought it was obvious," she said. Allison knew moments like these her heartbeat picked up a little, it was read as one thing while her mind went somewhere else. Thinking on the text she received a little earlier from Isaac, telling of everything he noticed and overheard in the locker room with Jackson obsessing over Danny's injuries. She felt spread thin, like a rubber band ready to snap and knew this was just the beginning. Let Stiles read it as worry over their best-friends, worrying over Monsters instead. While she sincerely wished and worried whether things could ever be that straightforward. "My issue is I have to protect Scott from my family but stay loyal to them. And it's probably going to get me killed."

While pressing his lips together Stiles considered this, it almost seemed like he could see through her but he blinked away his anxiety and smiled.
"You're a pretty good friend," he punched her lightly in the shoulder. She rolled her eyes at that and when she turned to lead them both away she made sure to butt her shoulder against his hard enough to knock him into a book shelf.

"Yeah, you're lucky we're BFF4EVER," Stiles said, his tone only mildly threatening while he rubbed his sore shoulder as he scrambled to catch up with Allison.

Track 20 - Easily by Grimes

"I'm still trying to figure out if I'm saving you or if you're saving me," Danny said a little groggily, while the painkillers worked their magic into his bloodstream.

After the epic re-telling of their meet-cute at dusk on a mountain top where his new boyfriend rescued him from potential predator "weirdos or mountain lions or something", Danny emphasized his need for a legit first date.

Lydia responded with a shrug as she pulled into the driveway of his home. Even though regular 'Parties' at her home were legendary, Lydia could hardly explain she didn't feel up to it because she hardly felt regular. A party would be a ready distraction, and it would be a slice of normal to look forward to at the end of this tunnel. If Danny wanted to put on a show for his boyfriend Ethan, she took it to mean he would co-host this circus which she was over the moon about.

"I just want to be myself and party for one night," Lydia sighed and after some consideration she conceded to their deal. Leaning back into her seat she cast her bag an angry glare and squeezed it shut, closing off her medical supplies and obsessive notes.

Danny responded sagely with "Lydia gets what Lydia wants."

She laughed at that, and felt endlessly grateful for Danny's acceptance of her, of her crazy story and the Jackson they shared. And the regularness he expected of her despite everything as he casually suggested --"you know I could hook you up at the party."

"What? Finally going to share that perfect guy?" Lydia replied narrowing her eyes, and with pursed her lips.

"The twin, Aiden" Danny grinned.

Lydia considered it, very briefly and replied "Yes. Sounds perfect."

And when she helped Danny to his house, she left her phone in the car purposely because she would rather have her texts go unread than break the bubble of her peaceable normalcy.

Chapter End Notes

CREDITS/ROLL CALL:

Argents - Team1; Victoria, Chris & Allison.
• Rumy - [Sgt] specialized in Recon; Special Forces & espionage. Chris' right-hand &
Allison's godfather.
- Bennett - [Field OFC] specialized in Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old & Allison's friend.
- Leveque - [Field OFC] specialized in Recon; Terrain-Orientation & Mechanics.
- Ulrich - [Field OFC] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation.

Argents - Team2; Kate.
- Tyhurst - [Lieut] specialized in Recon; Civil-Orientation, Cyberwarefare, has CIA background. Referred to as 'try-hard.'
- Norm - [Sgt] specialty in Medical Intelligence & as a Longbowman; an archer/longbow. JR's brother & Roman's Uncle.
- Roman - [Field OFC] specialty as a Marksman/Sharpshooter, 19yrs. old & a weapons expert skilled in precision shooting. JR's son & Norm's Nephew.
- Fry - [Field OFC] specialty as a Tactician.

Argents - Team3; Gerard.

Hale (Present Day) Pack; Derek Alpha
- Isaac - [Omega] in search of a pack.
- Stiles - [Omega] in search for answers to what destroyed his family(s).
- (missing) Cora - [Beta] possibly held hostage. *Chapter 16
- (missing) Boyd - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.
- (missing) Erica - [Beta] as of the Alpha's massacre at the Mad River bend.

Hale (Heyday) Pack; Talia Alpha
- Peter - [Beta] Talia's brother, Uncle to Derek, Laura & Cora.
- Laura (age 17) - [Beta] was last seen struggling to pull survivors from the Hale House fire.
- Derek (age 15) - [Beta] pulled from the flames by sister Laura & ushered to safety by their emissary.-- next seen, killed in Beacon Hills Preserve *Chapter 16

Other Specials
- Lydia - [Banshee] 'A Banshee screams preceding a supernatural death not as a premonition but to highlight the likelihood of supernatural events that result in deaths.' *chapter 8
- Jackson - [Kanima] characterized by claws that secrete venom that temporarily paralyzes victims, a double row of sharp fangs, & a tail. Unless a Kanima resolves what in its past caused its mutation, it will eventually cocooned stage & emerge as a winged creature. Unlike a werewolf, a Kanima seeks out a master instead of a pack. It will carry out whatever vengeance its master bid. *chapter 12
- Jennifer Blake - [Kanima's Master] *chapter 20
- Kira - [Kitsune] "There hasn't been a documented case of a fledgling Kitsune (manifesting attributes) this powerful, to carry a thunderstorm in her back pocket on a whim. Not in a hundred thousand years." *chapter 18

Twins' Pack; Aiden & Ethan Carver Alphas
- Marta - [Beta] Feisty old lady, motor head. #2
- Bridy - [Beta] Older than she looks, because she's easily underestimated she makes good spy.
• Gus - [Beta] natural-born, loyal highly skilled fighter with a tendency toward the psychotic.
• (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, partnered to Naylor.
• (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
• (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
• (deceased) Coot - [Omega] Deb's partner & killed by the Monster.

Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha
• (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed #2 & thief/tradesman & held captive in Fairvale.
• Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali & closely bonded to Huntington.
• Santos - [Beta] Stern mentor, kidnapped by Deucalion's pack *Chapter 21
• Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed & with a will to leave, romantically associated to Aiden.
• Levi - [Beta] neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
• Huntington - [Beta] Friends w/Gus and partner to Lark, kidnapped by Deucalion's pack *Chapter 21

Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha
• Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' #2, Werelynx -- kidnapped by Deucalions pack *Chapter 21.
• (missing) Dr. Kane - [Omega] both a medical Doctor & their torturer. *Chapter 20
• (deceased) Quint - [Omega] eager to please teen & Dr. Kane's son. *Chapter 20

Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha
• Søren - [Beta] #2, Danish man, a skilled negotiator until his temper is peaked.
• Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
• Nik - [Beta] thief in residence, Mac's daughter.
• Meyer - [Beta]
• Reíka - [Beta]
• (deceased) Mac - [Beta] thief, the Monster's 1st victim.
Chapter Summary

Finally, Back to School just in time for MIDTERMS... and a Roadtrip to the Hale Homestead.

• Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/22-were-you-planning
• Also Available - https://www.youtube.com/user/bhanesidhe/playlists

Chapter Notes

Previously On:
Late Saturday night—
• Without the Argents as a unifying resource, Werewolf packs descend into conning, kidnapping and exploring incidents outside of the town.
On Sunday, finally back at BHHS—
• During a cramming session, after poking at each other’s dark pasts, Stiles and Allison make a tenuous peace.
• On the lacrosse field, Scott tries to further wrap his mind around a psychotic murderer Monster also being his Alpha by transforming back and forth of his own free will. It's a mix over which of his friends support this decision. In the privacy of a maintenance shed, Kira and Scott come clean about their more supernatural abilities.
• A terrible fight between Lydia and Stiles brings her to notice antidotes growing on the Argents' property to poisonous/torturous methods against Werewolves suspected within the Lodge.
• A prophetic nightmare revealed the deadly outcome of Ennis's missing Beta, Quint and Kate's involvement in his murder.
• Nightmares plaguing the town continue, especially Jackson, summoning up visions of Kira spurring him onward but to what end?
• The butchering Monster, now revealed to be Scott's Alpha, continues to plague Beacon Hills not the least of which Jennifer Blake... has been revealed to be the Kanima’s Master.
What other murderous secrets will Beacon Hills reveal?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Track 01 - Frightened by Easter Island

{Monday, Early-Morning in the Stilinski home - Beacon Hills, CA}

Outside of his Dad's bedroom, Stiles' eyes traced the notches on the doorframe where he
remembered sticking his heels in for climbing. He used to need leverage while playing hide and seek to climb up onto the tops of bookcases. These days he could look easily along the top shelves without knocking down even one photo, but the notches stayed scuffed in the doorframe and he didn't remember when he'd forgotten any of it.

"You alright, son?" His Dad's voice slowly edged in.

"Sure. Sure, sure." Stiles jumped and looked up abruptly, his smile grew in confidence as his Dad came into focus.

"Was there something I could help you with?" he asked, attempting to bury any sarcasm in his voice.

"I've got something to tell you, Dad." Stiles ran his hand over his mouth, forcing back his bubbling anxiety before it barreled forth. "I've made breakfast."

Stiles preached that breakfast 'is' the most important meal of the day, while his Dad preferred a sausage, egg and cheese on an 'Everything' bagel. Downstairs, the Sheriff found himself in a kitchen that was clean, with brewed coffee and toasted flatbread with egg-whites.

"Well, my delicious amazing breakfast is healthier," Stiles justified his presentation "especially for a busy day." A muttering rant continued over wanting to keep his Dad around as long as humanly possible, especially he's only just gotten him back, and he's seen the depths of his Old Man's freezer and there was no accounting for taste and definitely not considering his cholesterol level--the Sheriff didn't bother arguing. He accepted the coffee eagerly, bathed the food with condiments and quietly watched Stiles fidgeting in his seat.

"Alright, already. Come out with it Stiles," he conceded. Although he finished the sentence it lost volume and haste after he eyed Stiles' duffel bag.

Stiles rushed forward with the worrisome "First, hear me out--" and explained he wanted to head out to Red River to collect some things he had in storage, not because he was doing a runner but because he did want to settle in.

"I think I should go back to my foster family, for a bit. And I would really like your blessing."

Looking stone-faced, his Dad took a sip of his coffee and contemplated. That isn't to say that he didn't seem hurt but, he was making a mental note of his son's face, the way distress drained Stiles of color and made his eyes twitch.

"If you've got to do this, I could go with you," he said between bites of his sandwich.

Once Stiles settled in his seat and started to pick at his food, the Sheriff's appetite easily came back to him.

"Dad," Stiles sighed gratefully, but was quick to follow up with a mild, dry tone "you can't take the time off of work."

"Agreed," Dad took another mindful bite. "But that doesn't mean I can't still take care of you."

"Why aren't you mad?" Stiles looked mildly scandalized.

"Why?" he repeated, he wiped at his lips a smirk appeared afterward. "Is this trip going to give
you peace of mind?" Stiles nodded in the like. "Then that will give me some peace of mind. Plus, I'm not going to beg you. You're pretty impervious to my influence."

"Oh, yeah?" a similar smirk worked into his tone. This felt like praise from his Dad with a side-slice of judgment but he kind of liked it. "You didn't even think to bribe me? Extortion? Nothing?"

His Dad considered each option while munching along thoughtfully. He had left his breakfast half-eaten and opted to drinking his breakfast, black coffee after black coffee after black coffee.

"If there is anything I've learned from the night before last... and the night before that, is if you want to find a way to sneak out, you'll manage." He leveled Stiles with a gaze so authoritarian it caused Stiles to choke.

"What?" he started to cough, not just on food but on the agony of not knowing what could possibly come next and the torture his Dad put him through while making him wait. "What is it? Is there something on my face? Can you read my mind? If you can read my mind you have to tell me? I'm pretty sure it's the law."

"You can go with my blessing," at his Dad's admission Stiles sagged with relief only to leave him vulnerable for the suckerpunch, "and with my stipulations."

"Sti-Stipulations? What does that mean?"

"Stipulations means specific conditions you've gotta meet before we come to an agreement," he added cockily and started in on his sandwich, his appetite renewed.

Stiles sputtered, annoyed but unable to snap at his Dad. Was this what it felt like when others talk with him? Was this why everyone met him with rolled eyes and groaned through 50% of his conversations?

"That's not a stipulation. That's like a whole human being," Stiles slouched further into his seat, practically down onto the floor.

His Dad washed the dishes, occasionally grinning over his shoulder.

"It isn't like a whole human being. It is a whole human being," he shut off the water and came to sit at the table after dragging a seat closer to his son. "Think of it as a free ride to Red River and back."

Despite his internal suffering, Stiles couldn't help but grin to take in his Dad's amused expression. A lot had flooded through him in the past 48 hours to bring this idea on but nothing more than talking things out with his Dad. That mental image of his Dad and the Hales, maybe somehow getting along. It wouldn't happen, not in a million years, and he wasn't aiming for that, but could aim to align his life. He'd head back in blind hopes of touching base with the Hales or closing that chapter once and for all. Either option would make it easy to make roots in Beacon Hills. His Dad got that without him having to explain, and sending along a Deputy escort was just his way of being there without being there. The only problem with that meant Stiles would have a Deputy around, you know, escorting him.

"Fine," Stiles conceded with a smile, then teased "but he's got to pay for meals. And I'm not talking fast food at the gas-n-go, I want Posole and Sopapillas at Mom & Pop restaurants. And I demand to see the Billy the Kid museum on the way there."
"Whatever you want," he leaned over and squeezing tight Stiles' shoulders, nearly knocking him down off the chair when he kissed him on the top of his head. "Only the best for my son."

"So, when will this Parrish guy get here?" Stiles groaned. He started to eye his duffel bag like it was a thing that betrayed him.

They waited on the front porch steps for an hour and a half as the morning sky grew from tawny to gold. Whenever his Dad asked about his home life, Stiles kept his Homestead stories vague but happy and he tried to change the specifics to something technical. But mostly he changed the topic to observations of the Stilinski home, how his Dad let the lawn overgrow and when he came back he'd fix it or the weak lower step and the doorbell that didn't work.

Stiles hesitated to answer how he felt about the upstairs bedroom, but his Dad knew just how to push. Things were great about the room, sure, but his nightmares weren't just from his fevered infection or Banshee screams. His Dad asked if the pillow even worked to help him get to sleep. "Hell yeah, of course!" Stiles said then knew he had to admit, getting to sleep wasn't the problem. Staying asleep, however... "I kept hearing footsteps echoing through the house. I kept hearing you guys looking for me and I think I was stuck inside the walls. No one heard me. I couldn't reach you and you guys were terrified. I don't think it takes a genius to tell me I should settle down. So I think I should bring my stuff here and unpack. It'd help if everyone could maybe see my stuff around, don'tcha think."

"I think for a smart kid, you should leave the dream psychology to the professionals and not to the travel agents," his Dad answered after a long thoughtful pause. Stiles leaned back against the pillar, stared off and gave a cool nod. "But if you feel like you've got to do this, you've got to do it safely. No more being dragged home unconscious or in cuffs unless it's by my call."

Stiles laughed at that but the laugh was cut short when he glanced at his Dad's expression. Unsettled, Stiles sat up straighter and straighter with the less than subtle line of questioning his Dad took on. "I'm pretty sure if I ask you what else you're up to you're going to lie," although he asked anyway with his expression unchanging but after shifting his weight uncomfortably. "But I'm getting better at getting a read on you and I've been wanting to ask you about the night of the storm, were you and your friends even being safe on the road?"

"Suure," Stiles answered but sounded uncertain.

"Did you see anything?" his voice went harder but not harsher, a more careful tone over all. "Anything out of the ordinary? Anything dangerous?"

It had been a mistake to get too comfortable with his Dad so when Mrs. Catrina called over with a wave as she walked her dog Stiles composed himself. He read his Dad as he would the features of the old house, the lines of age and sun had turned harsher the lines he thought were laugh lines but were from the pinch of stress and burden. And when Stiles used his hyper senses he felt the same frazzled emotions when his Dad scrutinizing the board in the garage. That furrowed brow meant business and it meant Stiles was becoming part of something more than just a footnote in the investigation. "Like what?" In his mind he zoomed in on features of the photo on his phone and gave a silent thanks to Allison for having the fortitude to give him a leg up.
"Like an animal? Or something?" his Dad played at nonchalance, he took smoothly to his feet and kept his back to Stiles while he paced.

"Like with the accident that killed Mom?" it wasn't too far a leap to make but it was hard to get the words through his teeth. It was part of his own investigation and thankfully not the Argents', but saying it out loud broke all sorts of illusions that he could keep his Dad at a safe distance any longer. Except it was clearly the wrong answer to give because it gave his Dad quite the morsel to chew.

Although his Dad first, the Sheriff always, stopped in his tracks and faced his son. An expression of grief flashed across his face before he sealed it away and asked, "What do you remember about the accident?

If his Dad could call him out on making that comment, Stiles wasn't about to let that connection go unpoked at. Had Allison's photos been more recent, and the sightings listed on the board been up to date, then they might have led to the location of the Monster. Or they could just list more animals migrating madly. Stiles needed to hear his Dad mention specifics, "What do you remember about the accident?"

"What?" the Sheriff took a step back, he felt comically thrown by his son's not remotely insulted but utterly snooping nature.

"What?" Stiles repeated, taking to his feet but he paused just shy of approaching.

"Stiles?" his confusion simmered into concern and he came beside Stiles against the column. After a moment of stillness, they waved at Mr. Abrams one house over who lingered too long while picking up his paper just to stare at them as if he were watching some reality TV show. With the forest fires, power outages and freak storms, it's the neighborly spying that really kept the town abuzz.

When Mr. Abrams had gotten his full and edged back behind his door, closing it without a word or a wave, Stiles flipped off the neighbor and sighed at the effort these phony smiles were taking out of him. Then he flashed a meek one toward his Dad. "Sorry."

"No, I'm sorry." his Dad butted their shoulders together. If there was any energy for questioning, it had all been spent. "This is probably upsetting you."

"No, no Dad." Stiles shook his head emphatically, "It totally isn't. It isn't, I just didn't know you were still ... upsetted." He lied a little, which was okay because his Dad expected him to lie anyway and because he wanted his lie to be true. He didn't want his Dad to be upset about the accident anymore now that he was home.

"Of course." He spoke in a low, calming voice. "Of course, you idiot." They were interrupted by a pick-up truck pulling up. It was as if both of them forgot why they had occupied the front porch to begin with. The Deputy stepped out but didn't turn the motor off, and he looked ready for the long haul in civi clothes, t-shirt and jeans with the aviator sunglasses that screamed he was a cop ready for fun. His Dad put up a hand for Parrish to hang back for a moment.

"Go with Parrish, he's upsett--," he amended Stiles' phrase despite his son's grin and he emphasized what piqued both of their interest. "He's also unsettled by these animal attacks. We're keeping track of them, so we'll be keeping closer track of you."

"Great," Stiles pressed his lips together in the closest he could muster into a smile, which was fortunately smothered out by his Dad's bone-crushing hug.
It had been too obvious both from his return and from his amateurish reaction to the questions that Stiles could not play off his connection to the Monster. Between his Dad and the Deputy, as much as he wanted to hate the idea, which he totally did, he could see an asset in this.

Track 02 - Basically, I by Robert DeLong

{Monday, Morning at BHHS - Beacon Hills, CA}

Without the best-friend buffer and considering the distance she had put between the weekend drama and midterms, Allison confronted her feelings in the most mature way she could think of. She drove Lydia's car to the school early enough to avoid interacting with anyone. In fact, by the time she arrived, the overcast kept the navy color from the night before longer than was reasonable. Prizing the shield of her mohair coat, she tugged it tight against the enduring chill while waiting for school maintenance to arrive and unlock the doors.

For contradictory reasons, Lydia had her Mom drop her off early so that she could throw herself into midterms. She wanted normalcy, she wanted good grades and she wanted positive feedback from someone who wasn't looking to get something out of it (ideally, academic staff).

Finding Allison hunkered down in her preferred seating in the library during zero period (the last minute refuge for test-takers everywhere) wasn't surprising. In fact, Lydia anticipated it enough to bring Allison along a morning coffee. A decent one from one of the gourmet cafés in town, not that double-roasted froo froo nonsense they overcharged at Starbucks.

Beside Allison was a pile of Lydia's 'Sciences and Anatomy' notes waiting neatly untouched while instead she absorbed herself in the extracurricular works entitled 'Biochemistry and Molecular Biology of Plant - 2nd Edition', 'Botany: An Introduction to Plant Biology' and 'Botany-Lab Manual. Lydia made certain not to comment on Allison's fixation but took it as a cue she could delve into her own topics of interest without remark.

So while Allison researched her Mother's gardens for effects and counter-effects, Lydia cross-referenced between her written notes and iPhone tried to uncover common base components (if any) of the bi-pedal transformative supernatural (comparing the 'natural born' to the 'turned').

At first Scott thought her act of obliviousness was intentional, that she was actively ignoring him because Allison wasn't the sort of person to be caught unawares. But as time passed, after he had taken a seat at the table behind her, Scott realized Allison was so involved in review she really hadn't noticed him. It seemed impossible that days earlier she could sense his distress from across a lacrosse field but now she couldn't feel him take a seat even when their backs aligned. He considered maybe they were being watched, like Stiles suggested, then talking directly wasn't ideal. But if she weren't hearing him over the subject of botany then what was the point? He'd memorized her class schedule and botany definitely wasn't on it and he didn't want to admit to sulking but it hardly seemed fair that review stole everyone's attention; even Lydia seemed just as absorbed in her subject without prejudice.

Unapologetically, Isaac dropped his books onto the table across from Scott. Lydia looked up at them, Allison sat up straight but refused to turn around as Isaac continued direct his words toward Scott but spoke to all of them, "speaking of awkward social meet ups, did Danny tell you he invited
the whole team to his blowout this weekend? You'd never guess where?"

A direct surge of agitation aimed toward him and Isaac took it as a hint to step off, he sidestepped instead. Scott stared at him in mild alarm but it was easier to deal with than Lydia's narrow-eyed glare, so he dropped to sit across from Scott and ducked low enough to keep her view obscured.

"Alright fine," he lowered his voice, "let's talk about something else, instead. Have you talked to Stiles this morning?"

Scott shook his head. Isaac tried to catch Lydia's eye again, her twitch of annoyance was enough to convey 'of course not!'

"You guys should know-"

"Isaac, not now." Scott cut in, his voice tight and rattled. With a grip on his textbook tightening, Scott ducked lower, pretending to read it, pretending to not directly speak to Isaac at all. The weirdly identical body-language between Scott and Allison in the depiction of students innocently studying made Isaac realize this was Scott's attempt to talk to her without seeming like he was talking to her.

Quick to his feet, Isaac grabbed his things and came to Lydia's side, "come on, I need to see you for a minute."

Lydia, however was not so slow on the uptake. "No. I was here first." But when she looked over to Allison and saw the way she gnawed at her fingernails she took it as a sign. "Fine. But if you start bickering like an old married couple over how you two are 'just friends', I'm getting a new best-friend and finding a new table."

After grabbing her belongings, Isaac marched Lydia along the aisle, she shrugged off his hold forcefully and gave him a warning look. With graceless gesturing he insisted she follow him into the stack so that he could use his hyper-sensitive hearing to listen to the conversation.

"Why did we have to get up so that we could listen in? I could hear fine from right there."

"Because if Allison's family is watching and they will put her under the microscope, if she wants to talk to Scott she has to make it look like she's not talking to Scott," he mumbled tilting his head toward their table.

Lydia huffed, she looked from the clock toward her hastily packed bag. "What makes you think she wants to talk to him anyway?"

Isaac replied with shushing.

"If he had something to say why didn't just leave a note in her locker like a normal little stalker," she grumbled but took a huddled position beside him. After some mild to severe gnawing on her lip she asked, "Well, what are they saying anyway?"

"I know how this looks," Allison whispered low. Low enough that normal people could not pick up but Scott could hear clear as if she whispered it against his ears. "I'm stressing out or being emotional. I'm not. As long-

"No, I get it." Scott said. He noticed a glance Tracy gave him while she went by and picked up his phone instead, pretending to talk into it while he continued to speak. "It would be easier if I were
"I don't want you to be normal Scott, I want you to be safe. With a new Alpha intruding and the residing packs fighting, now my family is investigating Werewolves overrunning the school. There's going to be crossfire." Allison was careful to tick off the worries that didn't directly include the textbooks laying in front of her on the table.

"We're stronger in numbers," Scott countered. He wanted to respect her decision to stay away from him but at the same time he needed her in his life. At least as an ally. "Think of how we helped Isaac. I'm getting better at shifting without having to be angry."

Allison rubbed her eyebrow as if she could press away her anxiety and told him the other thing that had begun to really worry her. "If I were talking to you right now I would warn you that if you keep forcing your change it'll eventually break your Alpha's bond. But your Alpha will sense it, It will try and bring you back by calling you out against your will."

Forgetting the pretense Scott anxiously gnawed on the edge of his phone. It was now or never, "Allison, I know the identity kinda. My Alpha is the Monster."

She stayed very still but her heart hitched and rose up into her throat, keeping her silent. She couldn't imagine reporting something like that to her parents or even sharing it with Bennet. How much more vulnerable could Scott become? Letting out a slow breath she envisioned Scott beside her on the dirty ground lifting Isaac to safety. Their determination had been so focused, her blind ambition and devotion married to Scott's heart and mind had been so good as to drag their friend back from the brink of death. How could she make her family believe Scott came from the lineage of evil but that didn't make him a murderer? Her family might be torturing Werewolves for answers, but with a Monster-Alpha at the reins of her boyfriend's ambitions she couldn't imagine a worse fate. Correction, Ex-boyfriend.

"I need to disconnect from It," he spoke sometimes and higher sometimes lower, again into his phone. She only shook her head in response, not in denial but in dismay. "The next time It calls me I get that It might kill me or have me kill someone else. If I want to do it safely I'm going to need your help."

"You have a strong connection," she interrupted. "A link that you can't understand but you'll never be able to snap completely. After you learn to control your abilities, you'll be able to sense him. Teaching someone who is bitten takes time. Stiles and Isaac will help you." And then after a moment Allison considered what it was she'd said without thinking. She meant to advise Scott on how to avoid the Monster but instead she had given him direction right to the murderous beast. Lydia would kill her if she knew.

"You make it sound so easy," Scott's mumbling grew pitiable. He wanted her to want to work with him.

"None of this is easy," Allison replied shoving her books harshly into her bag. "I promise. It will get easier."

"Which? Disconnecting from my Alpha or doing this without you?"

"Both," she started to stand but hesitated "I'll always believe in you, I just can't be with you right now. Please don't try and make me feel worse about breaking up with you."

"I'm not trying to hurt you. I thought you could-" he paused. Scott realized part of him did want to argue and win Allison back but mostly he didn't know what it meant to move forward without her
beside him. He doubted he ever would.

"Hold on, are you seriously telling me I'm the last to know that Scott's Alpha is the Monster murdering people?" Lydia snapped toward the side of Isaac's face (because he still peeked around the corner toward Scott and Allison, refusing to look at her full on).

"Well, if you ever picked up your phone- now would you just," Isaac grumbled toward her.

Lydia chewed on the thought for a moment, hugging her purse to her side before she acknowledged, "Although if you think about it, by my calculations I was actually the first to know. I did warn everyone that this Monster had a stronger effect on unaligned than the moon, especially on Scott. Considering none of the other Alphas turned up in Beacon Hills until after the murders, who else could have turned him... or could have bit-" Lydia's thought caught fiercely onto a hypothesis. She didn't have the privacy or the time to chase the thought so she followed what was second best; research.

"What else are they saying?" she asked, leaning in against his arm.

"Something about staying connected to each other- and disconnecting-" Isaac made a disgruntled noise. "I don't understand exactly."

"Why am I even asking you?" she complained. "You can tell just by observing body-language that they're dealing with the issue of being sickeningly in love with each other and needing more than a desk between them to make the break up official. Allison is going to tell me everything they say anyway."

Isaac sighed and finally whipped around to face her. "You know I would have a better chance of using my enhanced hearing if I could actually hear something other than you."

Although she pressed her lips together in silence Lydia's glare said plenty. She didn't have to wait long to have to have the last word when a moment later, Isaac nearly dropped to his knees in agony as the school bell announced the change of periods, assaulting his enhanced hearing. Lydia stepped pointedly around him, smugly offering, "I'll let you know what I find out from Allison. Well, that is, if I remember to pick up the phone."

Track 03 - Pieces by Andrew Belle

{Monday, Noon at BHHS - Beacon Hills, CA}

The break up was too fresh and raw. Unable to focus through it, Allison made for the VW Bug in student parking as an escape. Lydia wasn't about to abandon her best friend to fixation and tried to follow, but lost sight of her in the mass of students rushing in through the main doors. Through a window she caught sight of Allison in student parking and waved. She even called her, but when that failed she made for the west entrance, the exit nearest the parking lot, but the moment she caught sight of Jackson's back she spun around and headed in the opposite direction.

Whereas Allison, in an attempt to burn off her anxiety, nearly walked around the campus and came up through the east entrance, but in doing so she nearly ran into Scott. Her ineffective attempt at escape sent her skidding through one main office door and out the other. And slamming right into
Lydia.

After a brief exclamation of "oh, thank god!/finally!" they clung to one another and together, doubling back to the west-end stairwell and headed up to the second floor to dump the last of their things in their lockers before heading to their classrooms for their first tests.

Scott tried to avoid contact by leaving through the libraries fire exit and return to the school through the field entrance. He climbed the stairwell up past the locker rooms, up the main stairwell. Despite his attempt at avoidance, it felt like he sensed Allison, or he could have imagined it. But just to be sure he doubled back and ran directly into Kira instead.

"Hi. Would you... like some company?" she asked in a way that made him feel like suddenly he did. Shrugging his backpack further up onto his shoulder, Scott nodded for her to come along. They walked in companionable silence until the second floor halls when they ran into Isaac (who was actively avoiding Lydia). He babbled at an explanation while they got to class at which point Kira excused herself, nearly stepping on Jackson's feet, and rushed ahead into her seat.

Danny stepped agilely around the growing angsty pile-up crowding the aisle before he could get to his seat. When he finally dropped into his seat beside the window, he took in the scene and admired it for its irrationality.

"Hey guys, where is your resident smartass? Isn't is his job to break the tension?"

With that, Scott sat instantly upright. He turned to Isaac, who answered with a hapless shrug and lift of his hands as if to say, 'I tried to tell you.' After all, he did try to bring up Stiles earlier in the library and had been abruptly blown off.

"Mr. McCall," Mr. Harris broke into their pantomimed discussion "Would you like me to repeat it? Or are you happy to take the failing grade before starting the test?"

"No. No sir," Scott answered dutifully. He suspected an impending danger to his cellphone when Mr. Harris neared with an empty trash bin. "If you have any cellphone or electronic devices, you may want to turn them in. Anyone caught with an electronic device will have their test invalidated. You have 90 minutes to complete this test, beginning now." He loomed over Scott's desk, preventing eye contact between him and Isaac while he enunciated each word with authority, "and anyone caught communicating in any sort of way will have their test invalidated."

"Got it," Scott replied finally (long after dropping his phone in), when he realized Mr. Harris wouldn't move on otherwise. He thought to himself, Stiles could keep out of trouble for two periods, so he could focus on his test but after spending nearly a minute forgetting to write his name on the sheet of paper he knew that was very unlikely.

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Track 04 - Celebrating Nothing by Phantogram

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{Monday, Afterschool from BHHS to The Martins' home - Beacon Hills, CA}

By the time Scott made it into the hallways after escaping Natural Science (and managing to get his phone back from Mr. Harris) Allison and Lydia had vanished from sight. Isaac told him he noticed the two headed off for a drive in Lydia's VW Bug.

"Probably just blowing off some steam," he explained sheepishly, "she seemed a bit pissed after I
told her the thing about your Alpha."

"You mean you told her you heard me telling Allison the truth about the Monster," Scott groaned, hitting his phone lightly against the side of his head in aggravation. As Isaac apologized Scott started to walk away, waving off the need. Scott should have been the one to tell Lydia first but he let other things get in the way.

Sure, telling Allison was vital but not exactly the right time and it wasn't like she offered much help or comfort even. Instead she catalogued it and directed him to look to his other friends for what NOT to do. But Lydia's more analytic nature meant she probably had a 10 page hypothesis with 2 pages of footnotes already. Plus, Scott wanted to be the one to assure Lydia those wild theories of hers weren't crazy.

"I can fix this," Scott insisted, "I can fix this," he repeated trying to will it into reality.

Stiles chuckled for a long while before he said breathlessly "good luck with that."

"If you were here you could help with that," Scott sighed, shook his head and sank further against the doorframe. "You could, you know break the tension."

"And explain how you were too busy with your secret girlfriend to walk up to the bleachers for two seconds and whine about your tragic past- I don't think so dude" from Stiles' stilted amusement and vagueness it seemed like he didn't want to be overheard on his end of the line. "If there is one thing I know for certain, Lydia doesn't take well to being ignored. Hell, you'll probably have an easier time winning her over if I'm not around."

Watching the door, keeping in view the ever present entourage of classmates and friends circulating, Scott keenly felt the lack of his.

"Stiles, where are you anyway?"

"Road trip," he answered quickly. He'd been waiting for that question from the moment Scott's name popped up on his caller ID. "I tried to tell you about this idea yesterday but- don't worry. I'll be back before you notice."

"Trust me, I notice." Scott answered just as quickly. The sound of wind whooshing through a car window on Stiles' end was the only response for a few long seconds.

"My Dad got me a chaperone with a badge and everything," Stiles seemed less amused about this than he tried to let on, which only made Scott grin wider. They were cut off by the sound of a school bell ringing. "Talk soon, Scott." Stiles assured before he cut off the line.

Undeterred, but alone to the task of fixing this lapse in judgment, Scott headed straight to Lydia's house after school. Except having to take 2 buses across town instead of his bike took longer than anticipated. Watching the view change at a slower pace made Scott remember how much he used to look forward to childhood playdates at her house. Not because her neighborhood was luxurious, because honestly all that luxury could be cold and intimidating, but (to Scott at least it seemed) Lydia's place always had its doors thrown open and a party happening. Not always posh parties either. The ones he remembered best were pizza parties by the pool with dress up themes like dinosaur wars (Jurassic versus Cretaceous Era).

That nostalgic sense of excitement didn't come from luxury or money. It came from that feeling of welcoming and inclusion the Martins exuded. Lydia still kept that up with her post-game parties,
and from the looks of it her Mom still kept up the tradition.

When Scott arrived, Mrs. Martin didn't look surprised to see him although she looked delighted.

"If you're coming to ask about the hors d'oeuvres, don't worry. We remembered all of your favorites," she said while tapping away on her iPhone, pacing a path toward the kitchen.

After carefully closing the door behind him, Scott followed quickly. He felt both flattered and completely confused.

"I- wait, what?" he couldn't figure out how to get from her conversation back to his question.

But Scott read a familiar undertone of heavy anxiety with mixed with happy-busy-work like he had sensed from his visit weeks earlier. Mrs. Martin looked up at him over the kitchen counter, her eyes bright and focused, her paperwork a mixture of estate listings and party planner bids. She leaned toward him, her arms spread as she gripped the edge of the table.

"You're didn't come to say you're not coming this weekend, did you?"

"Of course not," Scott assured her, too intimidated to answer otherwise. "I just wanted to tell Lydia some stuff about a project we've been working on. I was wondering if she was here."

"You could have called, Scott." She didn't look like she disbelieved his explanation. "She isn't here. She's off studying right now with Allison."

"Oh," in nervousness Scott shifted the strap of his shoulder. Her 'Mom senses' must have been tingling, not just because she was always good at sniffing out his lies, but because she was Lydia's protector first before she was his ally. Although technically researching the Monster was a project he and Lydia were working on-- "well, Allison and I aren't exactly talking right now."

"Ahh," she gave a knowing sigh. At that Mrs. Martin returned to some former version of herself, gesturing for him to grab himself a snack or juice or anything he wanted from the fridge.

"Really, no, Mrs. Martin," Scott replied but after she kept looking at him sad-eyed, he grabbed a chocolate-chip cookie from the jar on the counter between them.

After a thoughtful pause, she thanked him for being there at dinner at the Argents'. Scott replied with an awkward nod, he hadn't finished chewing that particular bite of cookie to argue, so she tacked on that it was above and beyond his promise to keep looking out for Lydia.

"We've been looking out for each other," Scott said quietly, and while the answer was true, he wished it were truer. He wished they were getting better at it.

"That's the best we can hope for." She must have sensed something in his tone, which brought up a recollection. "She still has trouble sleeping. There is nothing either of us can do for that, now is there?"

Swallowing thickly, Scott shrugged, disliking that he had to admit it. It wasn't like he didn't know Lydia sometimes screamed at night, and it wasn't like he hadn't shared a nightmare with her. These were facts he was aware of but there were just a few while her Mother did share a roof with her.

"She says she sleeps better at Allison's." Mrs. Martin pulled open the cookie jar and took out two, insisting that Scott take one while she started to nibble at the other. "I want to believe her but I think she sleeps there so she won't worry me. I found her once, her knuckles bloody, her lamp knocked over, and a mirror was shattered in her sleep. Now, when she sleeps at home, she locks
the door from the inside. She says it's because she's afraid she might sleep walk. I think she's afraid if she does sleep walk, she might hurt more than herself. Do you want another one?"

Scott shook his head adamantly. He felt guilty for learning all of this and like he definitely did not deserve a cookie.

"Well," Mrs. Martin came to stand and wiped the counter down with a paper towel. She looked and sounded a little relieved to get that off of her chest. "She says she doesn't remember the nightmares. I can only hope that's true." Even in the face of these dark themes Mrs. Martin clutched to her optimism, "I feel like this party is a step in the right direction. It's the first signs of life she's showed in weeks. I can see her spirits rise every time I bring up planning it."

Looking down at the paperwork, it almost seemed as if Mrs. Martin thought this was the magical solution to all interpersonal problems. Scott wondered if that was the same expression he had when he came bounding through the front door today.

"I'll definitely be there this weekend," he promised. She looked up at him, her gratitude tired and sincere.

"I won't be," she said frankly. "I also figure the best gift I can give her is space. I'm out of town anyway, so you'll keep an eye out."

"Always." Scott didn't mind the obligation this time because it didn't feel like one.

She patted his hand, then immediately gestured for him to head toward the door.

"I'll let her know you came by," she said with a wave. "And tell her to call you about your project, but a little space might be a more considerate right now than hovering Scott."

He wasn't too sure about that. The information Scott wanted to talk about felt very vital indeed, but camping outside of Lydia's house wouldn't make a point. He couldn't be relied on if he didn't know when she would come home or even if she was coming home tonight. It was probably as hollow a gesture as throwing a party to claim back your normality. And yet, somehow, watching Mrs. Martin tie up fairy lights to speckle the dusk sky mirroring in the turquoise pool of their back yard did make him feel a lot better.

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**Track 05 - The Struggle by Grizlock**

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*Monday, Afternoon from BHHS to the McCalls' home - Beacon Hills, CA*

During his staying in Beacon Hills, Isaac learned he did not have a talent for getting what he wanted from people long ago. But after finagling to get assigned to the same station as Lydia during the Chemistry midterm, he thought he would at least be able to get one question across. It didn't seem *that* invasive to ask why Danny was planning a party at Lydia's home.

To which she responded by lighting the Bunsen burner at full flame and near his face. He had never been more aware of or grateful for the ability to grow hair back quickly at will.

"You know they take points off if you don't even wear your protective eye goggles," Lydia snapped and went back to focusing on the direction of their teacher.
Isaac felt around for his pair while she ignored him in favor of the exam. But if and when she wanted to focus on what mattered Lydia easily snapped at him to keep him focused; "what are you guys doing about the Monster-Alpha?"

"Nothing." Isaac sounded defensive, like a grade schooler sulking that he was blamed for his friend's misdeed. Lydia rolled her eyes because she obviously didn't believe him.

After that, Lydia shut Isaac down every time he tried to bring up another subject however innocuous, which didn't seem very fair. If he mentioned Stiles she lightly grunted. If he asked how Allison was, she just put out a hand demanding the next item on the ingredient list. If he asked how she was doing, she sucked her teeth and shook her head like she could shake off the words physically.

"Fine, just because you aren't talking to me doesn't mean I'm not going to be at your house this weekend. Danny is the one who invited us. I was just asking because I didn't want to intrude but if you're going to sulk-" 

"I do not sulk," Lydia said crisply. She switched off the flame and looked toward him with annoyance coloring her features, "and of course I expected you there this weekend." Isaac wasn't sure from the way she said it so matter-o-factly if that meant she was displeased by it or welcomed to it. "Everyone will be there."

"If you don't want to have me there-"

"Why wouldn't I want you there?" She said flatly.

"The whole pretend boyfriend thing." He whispered closer to her.

Lydia pursed her lips, her eyes softened a little and she turned back to their project, "remove it."

"What?"

"Take the tongs and remove the beaker. If he doesn't see you do any of the work, then we both fail."

While Lydia lowered the flame, Isaac hurried to the task and smiled nervously under the glare of their teacher.

"It's not like it's a family party. My Mom won't be there so you won't have to pretend," Lydia took off her goggles and placed it very near to him so that she could lean in and converse without being obvious. Without having the world know their personal business. "If you could just be normal with me for once, no more drama, no more surprises, then I'd be happy to have you there."

Isaac followed her set up and poured the content of the beaker along the stirring rod, through a funnel and into a narrow glass vial container to cool.

When the instructor called "Time!" Lydia's smirk turned from Isaac to the front of the room as if expecting some sort of accolade outright but the teacher expected more of them than that.

"If you've catalyzed the reaction correctly, you should now be looking at a crystal. Now for the part of that last experiment I'm sure you'll all enjoy - You can eat it."

Around the room there were some less than satisfactory results of discolored clumps, smelly pumps and still-liquid pools at the bottom of their beakers. It fell to Lydia's impatience to prove the experiment worked, when she took the crystal between her fingertips and bit off the end with a
snap. Lydia smugly swallowed down their successfully completed midterm assignment and offered
the rest to Isaac.

"You know if we're not dating and you're asking me out I'm going to have to say 'no'." He gave a
nervous laugh before accepting the experiment. "You're not exactly my type, I'm into blonde girls.
A lot more level headed than you, definitely a lot leggier too." With that she rolled her eyes then
turned away and went to clearing their workspace, giving him room to think of a real reply.

Isaac hadn't considered what it was like to be normal for a long while. Between the two of them
every conversation lately circled around the others, circled around Alphas and Hunters, circled
around Cora or Stiles, Scott and Allison, circled around death and violence. That stuff would
always be there. And since they weren't going to make progress stressing on it alone, right there in
the middle of their chemistry midterms it didn't seem too difficult to put a pin in it. Lydia was
askiing him, no, giving him permission to do that.

"Okay, I'll be there. No drama, I promise," he smiled in relief and she smiled back in gratitude.
Isaac felt significantly less grateful when she asked him to eat the crystals they were meant to have
created as part of the final steps in their midterm.

As it turned out, trying to keep what he wanted to himself wasn't something Isaac was good at
either. From the moment she entered the McCall home Melissa read him like an open book.

"Let me guess, Scott's not here because he's still on his way home on the bus," she said, sounding
half amused, half exasperated while dropping her bag onto the kitchen counter. "He was supposed
to handle dinner all this week."

Isaac figured telling her Scott was at Lydia's was a lie but it was also the truth. There was just as
much likelihood that he was there trying to pick up Physics notes as trade facts on the Monster-
Alpha.

"Well as long as you're here then you can handle dinner," she hadn't asked outright but he crumbled
under her maternal gaze.

"Sure... how does General Tso chicken sound?" he asked reaching for the take out menu.

Scott still hadn't turned up by the time their takeout Chinese food arrived.

"Well, Scott will just to have to be content with our leftovers," she said smugly, wiping her mouth
clean from grease with a napkin.

Looking across the table, Isaac fidgeted in his seat under the recognition there was no chance there
would be any leftovers. As if to acknowledge she pushed over the rest of her servings without
being asked.

"You're welcome to them," she smiled. As usual she read him without him having to say a word.
She looked pleased with herself if not a little tired still and contented by the meal. Isaac could
understand how Scott nurtured well under her gaze.

"You know what, aside from trying to break down my house before sunrise, it's been nice having
you here," she said.

After a brief 'thanks' not knowing what else to say Isaac shifted around what little was left of his
shrimp lo mein and slurped on them.

"Scott's been talking about you for a while and to think you're also Stiles' foster brother, that is one
heck of a coincidence," she said, recalling the past few months between all her boys. "It's almost like you're meant to be part of the family, which should come with a warning. There is no end of drama here."

"I'm used to that," he admitted. It wasn't just through Stiles that brought drama into his life, it was chasing after Scott that brought him back to life.

"Have you thought about the rest of your foster family?"

"The truth is, this is where I belong now," as far as he knew there was no going back but the real truth of the matter was Isaac never considered it. Until now, while Stiles was on a road trip to Red River, a road trip he never thought to ask Isaac to join, it wasn't a thing that came to mind. And here it was presented twice in one day. "Since I came here things have gone differently than I've expected, I'm a bit bummed that my siblings aren't all here but other than that I'm great."

Melissa locked eyes with him for a moment, evaluated his words at face value than smiled kindly before she started to clean away the empty cartons. Isaac followed into the kitchen and brought along a debris of used chopsticks, plastic knives and forks. He offered to take out the garbage to which she responded that he was very kind but it was something Scott would definitely do when he got home.

"You're always going to be welcome here Isaac, especially if you stop getting into fistfights with my son," she said pointedly. Suddenly Isaac knew what it was to be a small animal trapped in headlights and not at all like a predator. Considering her insightful nature and Scott's rather small pool of friends it wasn't too hard for Melissa to draw certain conclusions. "But the Sheriff and I were talking and we thought you might be more comfortable staying in Stiles' room while he's travelling. Especially since you'll actually have a bed there."

"Is it alright with you if I stay at the Sheriff's longer than that?" He asked sheepishly. Isaac felt like he knew the answer already, Scott, Allison and Lydia had already made room for him but asking the grownups was testing new waters.

"We'll always have room for you," her lips spread even further, a smile most kind and indecipherable. It exposed every insecurity and resolved to smooth it away. Isaac didn't stick around long after that, not that he rushed either. Just packed the few things he brought, some clothes, his school things and some extra snacks she prepared while waiting for him to come back downstairs. She assured him it wasn't that big a deal, the snacks would go bad in the next day or so he 'had better take them!' He couldn't sense a lie; her heartrate fluttered all over the place with matronly anxiety. But if he had to guess... he didn't want to guess. When she offered to drive Isaac insisted on walking, despite the 3 mile difference because he had some things to think through in the breezy evening that was coming up on them.

Track 06 - Please Don't Go by Barcelona

[Monday, Evening in The Hills at the Yukimura's Home - Beacon Hills, CA]

In an attempt to calm her nerves, Kira skipped dinner. But when nightmares continued to worsen every time she closed her eyes she figured her grumbling stomach contributed to that. At the same time, she couldn't bear the idea of time alone with her parents... although was it technically alone if there were two of them, and three was supposed to make a crowd? She only knew home life was
getting increasingly stilted and she wasn't sure the sanctity of her bedroom walls would hold up much longer. Especially not if sleep refused to help her escape. In that case the only reasonable option was to run away from home.

After wriggling into her most durable floral combat boots she layered probably too many sweaters on under her hoodie, then shoved a phone charger, hair brush into her backpack while still managing to wrap her favorite funky tights and quirky t-shirts in bundle firm enough to place a framed photo of Grandma Yuki in WWII in the core of it. She decided against slipping out through the backyard. Not because Kira was afraid of breaking the contents of her backpack, she'd packed well enough for that but because the memory of Lydia Martin looking like a phantom in the shadows of her foliage remained a little too vivid on a night this still.

It wasn't a problem walking softly by her parents' bedroom, it sounded like they were arguing again by talking in an a stilted and controlled calm. Not at all the lilting laughing way they usually got along. Even though things were like that since coming home from the hospital, Kira was not going to take any responsibility for that. But downstairs at the ornate mantle near the front door where there displayed a mounted broken Katana sword that was said to be in the family for over 900 years, where they left lit incense to respect family members past, to these things Kira bowed her head toward in apology before she scurried through the front door clicking the lock noiselessly into place.

A nameless oppressive weight lifted with every step she took but the night's stillness grated on her nerves but there was something Kira could do about that; she could stretch her legs. Improving on her technique, Kira started to run at an athlete's pace instead of the manic flailing of girls in a horror movie. And not just that but before he even disembarked she sensed him, she sensed Scott. Something like a flicker at the corner of your eye so she switched up her direction and jogged to follow, to discover it wasn't her imagination. She stayed on this side of the red light, jogging in place to not look too much like a crazy stalker but then Scott hopped off the bus grinning, waved for her to cross over and meet him despite the light (and no traffic).

"I was just heading home and I thought I saw you," Scott said knowing full well there was no way he could have seen her from the direction the bus drove by.

Kira couldn't answer. Despite her incredible stamina, she forgot to leave time for stuff like muscles and breathing and nerves to catch up with her. She stayed doubled over for about a minute before she came back up grinning, "...hi."

"You were out for a run," he suggested when Kira didn't answer directly to anything he asked.

"I was actually running away," she pushed some hair back from cheek but when she bowed away from his gaze her hair fell into her face again. "I feel like I don't have anywhere I can feel like I really belong."

Scott nodded and listened, he was surrounded with so many people who knew his secrets and still struggled to feel a sense of security. There was no advice he could think to offer but he could be there until she realized he wasn't a fraud.

"I'm happy I ran into you. Otherwise I might have just kept going straight up onto the highway-"

"Where were you headed?"

"I don't know," Kira pulled both straps of her backpack high onto her shoulders, "I didn't really get
that far. The best advice I have ever gotten was to leave this place."

"Who said that?"

Kira considered many things but most of all she kept in mind she was not a gossip, secondarily that she was still scared of ghostly Lydia.

"Doesn't matter."

"If it doesn't matter, then it might not be the best advice," he answered, his lips very slowly stretched into a mischievous smile. Kira's death grip on the straps of her back pack eased off a little as she looked up at him and started to finally smile.

"Then the second best advice I've ever gotten was 'to trust someone';" she held her breath and nodded toward him to indicate that she had chosen him, "so maybe I was just running to meet up with you."

Overwhelmed by her confession Scott stared silently and mouth gapped.

"If that's okay?" Kira asked when the stillness became too much again.

"That's definitely okay," with a full on smile Scott tilted his head to move for her to walk alongside him.

They kept going with little direction while the night went on longer and the air became cooler. When Scott shuddered at a draft Kira offered him one of probably many flannels she had tucked away. Laughing he waved it off in thanks but it brought to mind again the question of what it was she was going to do with herself.

"Home feels like the worst place for me but it's not like I have a lot of other options," she shrugged, "I could camp out in the Preserve."

Scott winced at the prospect. "That is not a good idea." When she looked to him for an explanation the images of burnt bodies and Monsters came to mind. "There are wild animals out there. Plus, the Sheriff's department is still inspecting a fire out there I think."

Disappointment read clear as Kira nodded to his justification.

"Kira, how about I walk you home," when Scott offered she looked disturbed only for a moment but a little bit of hopefulness bloomed behind her dark eyes. "We don't have to keep talking about your parents. I can tell you about mine. Or I can tell you about how last September I got bitten by a wolf in Preserve and woke up with superpowers."

She laughed not just at how preposterous it sounded but in genuine relief. "Okay. But I think we should avoid the Preserve, then. Just to be safe."

"Just to be safe," he nodded. When Scott smiled over at her there was an ease that came off of her that untied a knot holding steady in his conscience for a while. The more they spoke the easier it felt, to have someone in earnest like him to speak with. "I guess, after all the murders they've been reporting in Beacon Hills and all the Werewolves turning up here, I can't see why you wouldn't have a problem settling in."

Scott was carefully again to leave out stories of Monster and Hunters. It still felt too early on in the friendship to scar her but Scott impressed upon her the attacks having an element of something more targeted toward them she should look out for. Kira didn't seem surprised by that, almost like
she expected it. They had been walking for nearly an hour, from the more neighborly bits through town and were head through to the scenic bits before Scott thought to ask exactly how far away Kira lived.

She winced when answering, "Bayside Road."

"That's 4.5 miles! You ran 4 and a half miles to my neighborhood, on a whim?" Scott covered his mouth in shock and dismay, mostly in upset of how much more grounded he would be by the time he got home. After another moment he started to grin, "If you didn't run into me, you probably would have kept running straight through to the next town."

Kira groaned lightly in embarrassment, "I don't know what's getting into me all the time. I think I might be paranoid, I feel like I can hear everything, everywhere. And I have so much more energy than I can ever burn."

"That's normal," Scott stopped her with an arm on her shoulder. He knew from experience the shell shock that came after his change but he was grasping for the right words, only all the wrong ones kept spewing out of his face.

"How can that be normal," her voice dropped incrementally. "You saw those pictures. I look like a demon from hell."

"I saw something different," he lowered his voice to match hers, "kind of like an armor. It kinda looked like it was protecting you."

Kira wanted to ask more questions because in that moment Scott had given her more answers about what happened during that freak storm than Jackson and Lydia combined. But she was too overwhelmed to speak, nodded a few times, more bobbing her head in bewildered eagerness and continued on their path. She waved her hand briskly for Scott to catch up.

They walked on in silence for another few minutes before the main roads slowly turned onto Bayside and things turned rural.

"It looks nice," Scott commented through a gulp.

"You don't have to walk the rest of the way," Kira waved him off, "it's only another 5 minutes."

Immediately Kira wished she could swallow the words right back up. When Scott insisted on seeing her the rest of the way her grin could have lit up the sky. She took a deep breath and continued to lead the way. Maybe it was uneasiness or instinct but something in her said cutting things off without divulging everything would only lead to dangerous consequences down the road.

But how much was too much to reveal when just getting to know each other?

Then along the road an opportunity presented itself.

"Come on," Kira insisted, grabbing hold of Scott's hand. She placed him directly on the meridian, then after careful inspection further right and put her hands up in a careful box view to align him in her eye line and assure his safety.

"Is this good?" Scott gave a nervous laugh trying to keep exactly in place.

"Yes, you're perfect." After saying so she turned away, the words were awkwardly misspoken but she wasn't about to take them back. It was fine.
Across the road stood or rather tilted a broken street lamp knocked sideways, clipped by a car that went haywire in the street the night before. The service turned it off until a repair crew out here in the woodland properties. But lighting up a lamp wasn't as strenuous as lighting up a city. After all she had done it once before. Desk lamps counted, right?

Kira pictured the Beacon Hills Memorial Hospital in her mind's eyes the night of the storm. She thought of the stillness and how alike it was at the present moment on the roadside slope. She remembered there was a moment then where she felt inexplicably powerful and yes, Lydia held her hand to keep her grounded but she held onto the power and never wanted to let that go. Fighting the urge to light up the whole town again and instead Kira thought of how she wanted to hold onto something as small as the weight of a hand pressed into hers, pressed warm and ghostly. Along with that same powerful strength, a prickling arose in the air just like on the bridge with Jackson but this time she controlled it, held it tighter and tighter then let it run through core and seep along to her fingertips.

At the sound of fizzling she opened her eyes to see the lamp lit brightly and frayed wires at the very top sparking and buzzing to life. The lamppost lit brighter than expected and Scott stepped back, his arm thrown over his eyes to shade from the surprise of it. He'd always been delighted by fireworks and didn't seem to be any less so which Kira sensed and controlled and let off little sparks higher in her excitement. Jackson and Lydia might have helped her find her path but she was the one who eagerly ran the length of it.

"Brav-O!" a clapping response came from further along the road. Just at the bend exposed by the light, stood a blonde with coal-lined eyes and fanged grin. She walked toward them, spiked boots making a path of purpose toward the meridian and her essence rising with intention of attack. "You know I really thought she might hurt herself for you. Do you want to see if I would?"

Despite the distance with the speed of her running she caught pretty good air with her attack. Scott jumped between her and Kira. When he lifted both hands to throw her off she wrapped her legs around his waist and pivoted around to his back, latching her arms around his throat and started to choke him. Her cackle thundered through the still air, and drowned out the sound of Scott's gagging. He jerked forward, flipping her over and threw her to the ground.

Once on his hands and knees, Scott punched the ground, distending his claws and let out a roar in aggravation. He felt a great responsibility for Kira's vulnerability and inexperience in this scenario. He should have given her some clue about the Werewolf packs and their warring tearing through Beacon Hills that she was likely to get targeted by (again) but she was so close to home, to her safe place and that felt so unfair.

In turn the Shewolf roared at him in kind and came running at him, her speed intimidated him. Scott didn't have her experience in hand-to-hand and when she swiped at his face like some switch-hitter it was all he could do to keep dodging. Every foot she gained blowing him backward only served to anger him further and when he did get a hit in she doubled over. Scott kept trying to throw her back, or kick her further and further away. He wasn't exactly sure to what effect he was expecting. To get them enough distance to run away? To drive her back into the woods she came from? To let her smack him around until her tired her into submission?

Then a creak gave way to sparks and both their bodies hit the floor. It wasn't Kira's intention to blow up the lamp but the sight of Scott getting choked frightened her. When the raw wires hit the ground the electricity ran through the pavement setting their transformative state back to zero. Something that, reading from both of their responses, hadn't happened to either Werewolf before.
Kira raced to Scott's side afterward, to clearly recalling Jackson's prone body on the bridge the night of the storm.

"I'm okay," Scott assured her multiple times, although he smelled a little smoky. Kira helped him to his feet but immediately after doing so Scott insisted on looking to help the other one.

Not exactly gone yet, but further along the road just within the shadow came the guttural sounds of a Harley Davidson come to life. When the headlights flashed on, they could see the burn marks angled along the shape of her cheekbone, framed lightning bright by her halo of wavy blonde as she smirked. She peeled off into the greenery instead of the road and disappeared from sight long before she went unheard, leaving the two of them disturbed and alone to walk Kira back home in the unquiet night.

Track 07 - Shewolf by Shakira

{Tuesday, Early-Morning at the Argents' home - Beacon Hills, CA}

Allison despondently stayed in bed, ignoring her radio-alarm clock and wooshing sounds of opening and closing of the Meeting Room door that cut through her thin sleep.

"Allison!" her Dad called while exiting the Meeting Room. He did not sound pleased at all, "you have a visitor at the door for you." Despite the soundproofing of the Meeting Room it had cameras and alerts for all of the grounds entry points. Including the unobserved front door. While every member of Chris' team had keys and Kate's had open access via the back door, Allison's restraint made her realize too late the only person who it could be.

Without hesitation, Lydia moved through the open crack as Chris said hello and made for the stairs. She grinned through her greetings of "Hello Mr. Argent" and gave a sort of wave with her hands dangling with shopping bags decorated with bright stars that read Macy's.

Allison barely had her feet on the floor before her bedroom door swung open.

"Out of bed sleepyhead," Lydia sang. "You couldn't carve time out of your busy schedule so I carved out some time in mine and you had better appreciate this."

The state between waking and sleeping was nothing compared between the states of the functioning sleep deprived. Allison felt like Lydia appearing in her bedroom doorway was something imagined which considering her downer mood lately, she very much appreciated.

"How many outfits do you plan on wearing to this party?" Allison asked helping unpack the shopping bags along the foot of her bed.

"These aren't just for me silly," Lydia explained as she gave a critical eye to two garments she held on either side of Allison, one fluttery Angelic and white, the other a floral romper. "You are not allowed to stay home and mope this weekend. You are coming to this party if I have to drag you there myself, but!" she punctuated severely while shoving Allison toward the bathroom with the floral piece, "not wearing any of the awful clothes you own."

"You don't think maybe it's not the best time for a party," Allison stepped back, she considered the dress and considered the option of playing along but worries weighed her feet into place.
"Why not? Midterms are over. I'm between boyfriends and you're single. It's perfect," Lydia had her back to Allison as she continued to dig through her new items deciding which dresses would look better on her. But the incremental tightness in her voice said she struggled to keep command Allison felt sorry for pointing out the flaws in her plan.

"You get that he wasn't just a boyfriend," Allison came up beside Lydia, to place the dress back down onto the pile and stayed beside her.

"Yeah sure," Lydia snapped in that same controlled voice but stopped fiddling with her plum Body Con dress.

"Thanks for being here for me. And not leaving me alone, I know you know what this feels like," Allison took Lydia's hand into her own, lightly squeezing it to get through that front Lydia put on for her.

"Of course, I watched the two of you for months, breathlessly staring at the clock, pining away for class to end just so that you could find each other in the halls. Or when you would practically disappear with him for days in your own little secret world." Lydia sighed in internal recognition, with all this new information of Werewolves and Hunters the past few months aligned into a different light. "It really was just your own little world wasn't it?"

"See, you know what it's like." Allison let out a deep breath she hadn't realized she had been holding. To which Lydia shook her head in disagreement.

"No," she smiled sadly, "I've had boyfriends before but none like that." She wanted to add that she hadn't been so lucky but from the look of it, from the sight of Allison's restlessness and sound of Scott's aimless desperation, she couldn't imagine signing on for such a task. After everything with Jackson, it still wounded her to know he suffered but in a far off way that didn't pull her strings the way it did between her broken up friends. What a fitting description. There was only the one thing in her life that defined the act separation and there was nothing traumatic enough in existence she could imagine would relate to that.

"What do you mean?" Allison pressed further and held slightly tighter, "what about Jackson?"

"Let me go," Lydia said low without meaning any harshness. She only didn't want her wounds picked at. Only Allison felt the rawness of it. "You were hurting me," Lydia lied, in one respect and rubbed her hand absentmindedly. "Just, come to the party with me," she asked and smiled a little tightly.

"Fine, I'll go with you to the party," Allison conceded wringing her hands between them. "But I'm not there to find a date. I'm not ready for anything like that."

Lydia's lips spread into a wide genuine grin, she turned swiftly back to her arsenal of dresses, her hair fluttering like a path of to follow along.

"Of course not, it's a group thing. Everyone's coming, so you had better be there... for me."

And just like that everything aligned to feel like being normal teenage girls once more. Until there came a knock on the door and Allison's Mother called her away.

Victoria didn't hesitate to begin her debriefing the moment the bedroom door closed. When Allison argued that the act was really rude, Lydia assured the both of them she could easily entertain herself and went along handling the trinkets and accessories on Allison's bedside table.
With sleepless and stern eyes, her Mother was quick to ask, "Are you making plans to head out with her?

"Not now," Allison pointed out, her tone incredulous pointing out the hour of the day, "this weekend. Just a party, mom."

Victoria considered things for a moment, staring down the hall one way, back to the Meeting Room then back to her daughter who stood, cross armed like a centurion in front of her bedroom door.

"I get it," she let out a tired easy breath. She put a hand on her daughter's shoulder and tried to convey with a stare how serious this whole spying business really was, "But we need you to remember what is happening here."

"She isn't a Werewolf," Allison claimed outright, "are you saying you want me to stop being friends with her?"

"Actually, we want the opposite." Victoria's face clouded over and became very serious, "we think she's something. Around the time the Jane Doe with the animal scratched turned up in Fairvale, Natalie Martin reported her missing. If she was attacked she's showing no signs of Lycanthropy. There is proof of other things aside from Werewolves running around town, like the Kanima you've been trying to track. I know this might sound vague, but we need you to keep an eye on her." When she let go of Allison's shoulder it didn't feel like a comfort or imparting some great task. It felt like a release into the stratosphere with little air. Allison couldn't imagine defying her Mother but she had wanted desperately to keep Lydia and Scott from her family's targeted view, not only were they too dear but if she were honest they were too valuable to her own investigation.

"You want me to investigate her specifically?" without showing signs of knowing these facts, Allison's voice stayed low and expertly flat but her breathing turned narrow and a careful thing toward the ever worsening the alien threat of her Mother. "I do have other responsibilities-

"We want you," Victoria commanded carefully, "to look out for your friend to make sure everything's okay with her."

Through her bedroom door came the sudden claiming force of Lydia's siren call as she turned up the radio-alarm clock to full volume and put up dance music as backdrop her dressing montage. Shakira's dance song, 'Shewolf' went reverberating through the door, carried along with Lydia's dulcet tones while Allison burst at the seams with laughter.

"Seems okay to me," she finally responded to Victoria's stony expression when she caught her breath. Happily, Allison put the door between them and went off to join the chorus of ill-suited perfect soundtrack to a Hunter looking down the barrel of a long difficult, fruitful teenage relationship.

When she returned and Lydia asked what was wrong, Allison responded with "a lot."

Somewhere among the outfits and loud songs, Allison told Lydia about her nightmares, because if there was one person in the world who knew something about nightmares- Lydia Martin was the right girl to find the right song for dancing away stress about it. And every time Allison wavered about the party because of more realistic concerns, Lydia reminded "this is a VERY good idea," throwing another outfit for her to try on instead.

"Why aren't we talking about the other things?" Allison asked, stripping off the last party dress and pulling on a sweater to wear for school instead.
"Because there are always other things," Lydia heft her purse over a shoulder. "Because you can talk to Stiles about it in the library for hours or you can text Isaac and your parents can snatch up in hallways and stab at your brain while making moon-eyes at Scott breaking your heart over how to fix everything-- since, I'll get the recap anyway so I might as well want more from you. I want more from life than to be a Banshee, I want things to just be you and me."

"You're right," Allison admitted slowly. There were times when she had to coach Scott into balancing what it meant to be a teen and a wolf. That he didn't have to choose between the one and the other. Leave it to brainiac Lydia to settle her down and help her refocus. To help her breath. And dance a little, before they had to face everyone at school all over again and take on Physics-Algebra I.

Track 08 - Life in the Vivid Dream by Grimes

[Tuesday, at the McCall's - Beacon Hills, CA]

Underfoot the ground moved away from him, like a stream moving along rocks and his feet felt mostly nothing but the hint of stones and grass at times. Everything had a vague familiarity on his skin as if he'd been called back to the land. Through his keen sense of smell and the narrowed vision he recognized it at something inviting.

He knew his home because the door fell open with the ease of a thousand, thousand times swinging it wide. And he knew his Mother's smile even when he pulled her face wide, and destroyed her jaw separating it from her face. Screams weren't exactly unwelcome to his lupine ears because they reminded him of the whines of a pack and let him know kin was kin and they should forgive you for anything. Even homicide. Not that homicide was a word wolves understand.

And boots that clambered up the porch steps, the armed men with rough and tumble threats served as fodder to test his claws on. Singular awareness came with one man, it came when pulling apart the heart of a Father figure and it brought back a fresh feeling of grief and he knew the Sheriff was torn apart by his hand. By his claws and he hated that he liked it.

In an attempt to hide, because the still human guilt crawls up his raw and howling throat, Scott aims for his bedroom as quick as his four clumsy limbs carry him. Inside a flood of new and old sensations come toward him, rising like the ocean. Unlike before, there is a mix here that is part him and part another, part right-brain and part left. A greater sense of "Someone's been sleeping in my bed" and the moment he thinks it he's the only one it could be jumps on him from under the covers.

There is an obvious winner in this fight, fingers and fists against paws and claws. Yells and cries against fangs and growls. And it doesn't matter what the weaker-self cleverly says, he's pinned to the floor with slashes on the other's spine and jugular, and the red of his hood is changed to stripes stained like fine wine for all the blood spilled.

Screams from the doorway stop him. They are too savage and sudden to be ignored, the distinct familiar fragrant and poignant sense of her fills his nostrils enough to choke his brain. At first she quickly mutters reasons of why not, and when we were young, and she abandons them to harsher screams of death that blow him back a step until he launches forward and slashes at the bitch's throat leaving her clutching at her collarbone, while crumbling and hemorrhaging to the ground.
Leaping over her body launches the next growling beast of man. Something trying to be something more than the pieces of his part but Scott tears through the weakling like melted butter, cuts through his kind hesitations and noble intentions and breaks his limbs tossing his corpse to the corner.

Finally, from the window behind comes the silent death of metal and weapons soundless and without hesitation, both poisonous and pretentious. They show impact before they show her face of staring eyes of shadow and lightly freckled alabaster skin that severs into pieces like shimmering tinsel. And while his claws fist upward into her ribcage he feels her silver knife slide across his throat. As she pulled his head back by the grip in his hair and stared into his eyes as she dies but there is no recognition. He stares back, watching and bleeds out onto her, and thought 'death is intimate, always familiar and always the same'.

Track 09 - My Body Is A Cage by Peter Gabriel

{Tuesday, Early-Morning from the McCall home to the Stilinskis' - Beacon Hills, CA}

Scott lay very still. He still shook. After first waking from his nightmare he wanted to scream but felt paralyzed. Even after he felt control of his limbs he remained still until he felt he owned control of every limb. He didn't want to sit up in his bed to find the corpses of his friends all over his floor. But as time ticked by, his phones' alarm rang eventually until it shut off and he took it as a sign he should move. Even when Scott didn't see the corpses of a torn up Stiles, cut up Lydia, a crushed Isaac or a stabbed Allison, he didn't exactly feel 100% better.

This must have been what Allison warned about when she said the Monster-Alpha wouldn't take kindly to him trying to break their bond. It was trying to exert control, It was threatening Scott's loved ones if he kept it up. Or maybe It was just trying to convince Scott how good it would feel to kill and that It could make him do it. At the very least the Monster-Alpha had the decency to let Scott wake up in his own bed, this time.

Nevertheless, Scott went out through his window within seconds and kept running barefoot across the neighborhood, under the overpass and into the Stiles' home to see if he was you know, not dead. And not sensing him upon arrival put him into a dead panic. Isaac rushed to meet him at the edge of the property, after literally sensing him a mile away.

"Scott, you know he's not here," he reminded, holding Scott firmly by both shoulders and keeping him steadfast. "He's on a road trip. The only ones in the house are me and the Sheriff. And we're fine... but I don't think the Sheriff will be if he gets a look of you like this."

It seemed to both surprise and comfort Scott to realize it. Isaac did not appease Scott by saying "it's just a dream" because he knew how nightmares of dead friends felt. He especially knew what it felt like to have your subconscious make your fears more authentic than the routine of daily life.

"I've been dreaming of dying," Isaac said plainly, to which Scott just blinked at him. His pupils widened mildly, his lips sealed in intent interest, much calmer in absolute contrast to his frazzled state of undress. "Allison said Lydia's been having night terrors every night. Maybe there's just something in the air, maybe it's just midterm stress. Come on, maybe it really is just stress because it's not like the imagery is subtle or anything. But you should come inside. Put some shoes on maybe. Talk about it, don't talk about it but definitely get ready for school."
It would have been to suspicious to do much more than grab a few things to wear from Stiles, like steal his favorite hoodie back, grab a pair jeans and some Nikes. Isaac assured Scott if they left early enough he could catch a shower and breakfast at the school. But they chose to avoid Main Street and took the side streets (i.e. the long way to school).

Along the way Scott explained he didn't dream about frivolous things, he didn't dream about being naked in public or being late or flying or teeth falling out... although he has woken up naked and been late to school because chasing dreams left him in the middle of the Preserve. When Scott had nightmares, they were of brutal murders he envisioned committing, instead the Monster-Alpha had done it and enjoyed. And when he dreamed about it the Monster-Alpha definitely let Scott know it was enjoyable. Those times under that 'bonded' influence, Scott felt justified and felt a delicious savoring the murders. But Scott himself never recognized the people but they would turn up in the news within the next 24 hours or so.

"So in last night's dream, you didn't really recognize your family or your friends... like, the Monster didn't know us personally," Isaac theorized looking ahead to the crooked street. Then he shrugged easily, "I guess all I have to do is not come running if I hear a fight break out in your room and I'll be fine."

Scott grinned and rolled his eyes, "thanks, that'll solve it just tell everyone if you see me lose it or the Monster-Alpha tearing up my front porch just head to your nearest exit."

"Exactly."

"Great plan."

"What if Lydia's dreams have premonition, too? Don't her dreams have like dozens of secret meanings?" Isaac said airily as though his suggestion wasn't weighing guiltily on Scott's conscious. "I bet she could probably solve this in a minute. I don't know about stopping them if she can't even stop hers."

"Maybe we can help each other," Scott answered somberly.

After glancing back and noticing his friend's sour expression Isaac gave a nod in agreement and shut up for the rest of the walk.

By the time they reached BHHS Scott had to split off from Isaac and made a last ditch effort for the locker room showers. In the end it felt like there wasn't enough water to clean away the sense of blood and gore from his claws. No; fingernails.

Once again he found himself running behind schedule and abandoned any hope for breakfast in the cafeteria. In the rush Scott still looked barely pieced together, with the collar of his gym t-shirt rimmed in droplets of water from his hair and his jeans that looked a little too short he stumbled up the steps toward Mr. Atwood's math class. Along the way, Lydia's voice carried from some far off hall to his more than perfect hearing and she laughed lightly while she reminisced about the last party when Greenberg got drunk on "Last Call Punch" and ended up sleeping in the neighbor's parked boat, wearing the mascot's costume (a massive Cardinal). Scott smiled, relieved to hear her
sounding happy for the first time in a long while, so he kept his distance in the corridor around the bend until the warning bell, until she hung up and people scrambled to take their seats.

Dropping across the aisle from Lydia, Scott stared a little too long through the strands of her long hair and over the swoop collar of her dress. She had to stomp hard to get his attention and glare a warning for him to knock it off. After it was evident her un-sliced throat was still firmly fixed between her face and shoulders Scott settled back into his seat.

These mixed comforts accumulated in his nerve endings moving just under his skin and settled in his muscles; Stiles driving closer to closure, Isaac part of the Stilinski home and Lydia the laughing 'Queen Bee'. It gave Scott peace of mind and body.

A light 'a-hem' from Lydia called Scott's attention to the fact that he hadn't begun the Algebra midterm after minutes had gone by. Swearing under his breath he rushed to catch up and Danny snickered at the interaction from a row behind them. It seemed almost like Lydia in turn had the keen Werewolf senses throughout the test; predicting Scott had not studied. Indicating with the subtlest little sighs and delicate clearing of her throat if Scott's answers were way off or almost there so it wasn't exactly cheating, because she didn't give him the answers... except it was totally cheating and Scott knew because of Lydia he would be able to at least pull a B.

Afterward, Scott staggered his exit enough to walk out of the classroom beside her and said hello in a tone he realized afterward was officious with anxiety.


Suddenly he felt clueless about where to begin and overwhelmed at the idea of crushing her good mood, her general goodness.

"How've you been?" he cocked his head to side, keen with concern.

"Scott," her temper began to peek through, "get on with it."

"I just thought there's been a lot going on," he obviously felt staying directly under Lydia's gaze was too much pressure so he started to move on and she followed. "I wanted to see how you are doing."

"Yeah, I'm fine Scott." She shrugged hugging her purse tighter to her side to cover up the stiffness she felt, and "I'm always fine. What about you?"

"I'm okay," he smiled briefly, hearing her white-lie was a bittersweet comfort in itself. It felt normal and he wanted to hang onto a little normal right now so he answered what he wanted to be true.

Lydia looked at him and after a pause shook her head in disappointment. She felt a combination of sad, mad and tired but she hid her expression behind her open locker door which divided them.

"How could you be okay, Scott? This thing with the Monster being your Alpha, it's got to be getting to your head," she knocked the door shut after taking her notepad out. Scott felt strange not being able to recognize her expression, but by the time he read it for compassion she sealed it off. After a moment she grabbed him by the wrist and pulled him to come with her, "Well, it's been in my head for a while. And I think it's about time we talk about it."

"You want to have lunch together?" to Scott's shock Lydia had dragged him outside to the cool kids table.
"Yep, now." She pulled him down beside her before he collected anymore stares. After snapping at an underling to grab them lunch trays, she laid out her notebook between them. "You've got lots to study up on. I'm not promising enlightenment, but at the very least a crib sheet in Werewolf 101."

Track 11 - Reunite by Isbells

[Tuesday, Noon in the Courtyard - BHHS, CA]

Because they shared a bench nearest the entryway, the milling foot traffic made it difficult for them to be overheard, but generally easy to spot. The set up allowed for Scott to finish both of their sandwiches while glancing through her notes and while Lydia finished both of their apple juice bottles to satisfy her parched throat after summarizing her deduction aloud. When their conversation didn't prove interesting enough for tablemates to spy on or too much for them to keep up with they were left with an empty table.

And when Scott started to speak of his dreams Lydia listened patiently, more patiently than he expected of her for whatever reason. It gave him leave to go further into details than he originally remembered, none of which seemed to give her the squicks.

"I know about nightmares and this thing is just trying to play on your fears," she said finally. She seemed incredibly certain.

But he didn't feel as certain, Scott felt like he had an arm re-broken just to set it right. "Every time I've had a dream like this, it's happened, Lydia. There's got to be something I can do to preve-"

"Not this time," she aimed a damning look at his left hand where it tapped an increasingly noisy anxious rhythm on the table between them. Lydia's brows knit in concentration when she said, "whenever we shared dreams they weren't premonitions. They were just projections. The dead bodies turned up within minutes. But it's the next morning and we're not dead. The victims that psycho Monster made us witness, you know, they felt personal. They felt intimate. There was a lot of anger and hate. This isn't the same."

"You sound convinced," he said sounding relieved. Scott regretted not coming to Lydia first with this, knowledge was one of the few things she shared without an inch of superiority or irony. And everyone knew she had the best notes.

"I am," she insisted, then a sip at her straw gave an ugly sharp sound announcing the end of her drink. With a bothered sigh she went on sagely, "I happen to have become a bit of an expert when it comes to reading into nightmares."

"How can I be sure this isn't a threat?" his voice grew lower, with soft intensity. His eyes danced around as if calculating an attack or calculating the number of casualties he couldn't save. "Just because the people who matter to me most didn't turn up dead already- how can I be so sure they won't be tomorrow?"

"Last night, you said you didn't recognize anyone," when Lydia drank from the straw again she crumpled the juice box in its screeching empty offence. More because she wanted to crush the head of this Monster for hurting someone else who didn't deserve it. Honestly, physically clawing out Scott's heart would have been kinder than letting him tear at himself. "If your Alpha was at the pilot seat of your sleeping state, that means It doesn't really recognize the people you love. It did on
a superficial level, but that's only because *It* recognizes that you recognized them, and that's enough to unnerve you."

"It recognized you," Scott added mildly, turning to look directly at her.

"Well, it is *me*. Everyone knows me," she said unconvincingly, but she pushed her theory further. "The point *It*'s trying to prove is that your friends are your weakness but *It* isn't strong enough to kill us or *It* already would have. *It*'s too weak to make a move."

"How do you figure?" he scoffed lightly.

"No offense, but why else would it want you so desperately?" she sounded mildly amused and mostly stressed. "You're the Beta and *It* wants to collect you like a game piece. *It*'s been eliminating others and their packs won't tolerate *It* for long. Without *It* being able to rely on a pack for protection, *It* will die quickly so the only option is to make a pack. Think about it, is an Alpha even an Alpha without a pack?"

"But without a pack isn't a Beta just a lone wolf? An Omega, the weakest form-?" Scott said consciously avoiding the word Werewolf. "I think that's the point all along. If I don't have anyone else, then I have no choice but to rely on my Alpha."

"You're not alone, Scott," Lydia promised. "And if you're looking for a solution for now, I have got one for you." Her eyes went a bit bright and wild in eagerness to reveal. "You should increase the frequency of your efforts to trigger your change."

In surprise, Scott's mouth dropped opened to hear her say it. In wait of his reply, her brows went up comically making her eyes look much bigger, which only made the air trapped in his lungs burst through abruptly in a laugh. She stifled a giggle to watch him try to regain control. "You want me to wha--after Allison said?"

"It's because of what she said. She's worrying too much for you when she should trust more," Lydia insisted. Ignoring any onlookers, she reached over to where his hands were balled up like white-knuckled knots and set her fingers to tie-in. Since standing in the hallway at the Argents' and listening to Allison break his heart, a profound sense of remorse stuck with Lydia for the inability to warn Scott or comfort him since.

"What you're doing is working. It's just not working enough. I'm trying to work on something better but for now, if nothing is done to weaken that Monster's bond with you- that Alpha is going to sink its claws deeper in."

"And then what?" Scott had to ask, because he feared the worst but needed to hear it said aloud.

A slip of sadness made Lydia hesitate, "It won't have to grow strong enough to hurt the people you love. Just strong enough to make you do it."

He nodded distractedly, he didn't have to envision the thing. "These dreams will be a regular thing from now on. Until I break the link?"

"Probably. Might get worse too," she exhaled slowly, considerately. "From what I've been told, once you figure out you're dreaming, notice everything. You'll pick it up subconsciously if there's something important."

Withdrawing his hands from her Scott nodded. Putting a hand on her shoulder, Scott held her steadfast because for the first time during their lunch period Lydia looked like the one who couldn't comprehend a complex equation.
"I could feel it making me like it," he admitted.

"I know." Kind of, sort of. She had been looking into it but she'd shelved the inquiry when after warning Scott and the others (and a House fell on her) because she needed a new angle. Like the ones Scott presented.

When in the Meeting room, when they spoke about sharing dreams Scott assumed they shared perspectives. Lydia hadn't read a scrap of evidence to suggest as much and so went in with a clean sheet and steady hand looking to take notes. The boys though, with their ingenuity would always be her core resource. As a team they worked best but alone... If Stiles were to try to fix this, he'd quickly succumb to anger and have tried to fight, or relied on his smart mouth for a quick fix and lose before setting foot on the field. And merciful Scott, Scott who seemed to feel a wound before the blow, this battle would be a long, drawn out, miserable and torturous end. One wouldn't have the will power to stop the carnage, the other wouldn't have the strength to start it. Just the 2 were ruined parallels. There needed to be a middle ground.

"What's that?"

"Euclidean parallel postulate." Lydia looked down, puzzled that she had started to 2 draw lines that began as parallels, then a vertical line that cut through the two. There were several small notations she made all interior angles, noting equations with the wrong letters.

"Is that going to help?" Scott looked down thoughtfully at the unremarkable markings, undisturbed at the intrusion.

"Yes. Yes, it is," she accepted only after noticing what else she drew in the margin of and tugged it free. Those notes were her earliest and least viable notes on Virology. It felt suddenly relevant. "We can't afford think about this as a singular platform problem anymore. Start with this mania influence. Think of it like a virus-"

"But before you told me this wasn't a virus," Scott interrupted tentatively.

"Like I said THINK of this like a virus," she continued undeterred. "Viruses by themselves are not alive. They can't grow on their own, they need to enter a human or animal cell and take it over to help them multiply. They need a hospitable environment."

"So I just need to be inhospitable," Scott suggested. The bell rang announcing they should move on even though he wanted to stay long and poke her brain.

"I think that's something you can handle," she smirked, teasing Scott despite his kindness at carrying her purse so she could clutch her notebook to her chest as she stood from the table. "And if you need tips, why don't you get some from Stiles."

"He's dealing with his family thing plus my cellphone is broken but once he gets back, I'm sure he's going to love helping," he chuckled and stopped short when she froze mid-step in front of him. "His road trip back home? -I mean his other home- But you knew about the road trip?"

"Oh, yeah. Yeah, I knew about that." She replied, pulled her bag from his hand and strode toward English.

"Okay, good," from the moment Scott agreed, he didn't believe it and followed in step. "Stiles and Isaac did agree to help with training me to keep control, since Allison isn't really there-"

"Okay," she called back over her shoulder, with detached interest "sounds good."
He fell back into the crowd as she continued, rather than pursue her. But even over the space of the hallway he could sense something suppressed, a pang emanating. In Ms. Blake's class, not smothering to sit beside her or abandoning her to the back row but he sat adjacent to support her, awaiting a nod of acknowledgment or nothing at all.

Track 12 - War In Heaven by The Raveonettes

[Tuesday, Evening from BHHS to the Argents Home - Beacon Hills, CA]

In a gesture of support, Scott sat near Lydia during their 'Comprehensive Reading' midterm. And afterward, when Danny asked to speak with her, she conceded but made no eye contact. Over Danny's shoulder, she waved off Scott, a gesture said contact him later and he thankfully took at face value.

For the first time since the beginning of exam week, she wasn't sure of her grade. An A- maybe. Lydia's mind couldn't stay on task and she had to triple read passages just to stay on the page, her gaze slid to her purse where her notepad was stashed with very different notes, or her mind slid off to texts on her phone that stopped coming Sunday night-- she felt a misdirected disappointment clouding her mind, testing where she aimed her feet. Voices felt further away throughout the day, but while running on autopilot she didn't have time to miss them. A sort of fury tightened her chest and made her skin feel warm all over, making her hands shake, which Lydia hadn't realized until she gripped her steering wheel. Even when she tried to reason clearly, her heart beat faster and Lydia felt humiliated for not reaching out sooner to either of them, her improbable parallels.

Nearly a half hour later, after navigating the streets via GPS rather increasing/delayed stress reactions, Lydia got to her destination and needed a great deal of focus just to climb out of the car. Every once and a while, almost like practice to make sure her fingers still worked, she would text Scott encouraging things, things she wished someone would have told her but never did. Whenever he replied, it was to ask if she was okay. She answered 'of course', but he would just ask again because he was Scott.

"Hey Mr. Argent." With a hand on her hip, Lydia flashed Allison's Dad a saucy little smirk. "Looking real good. That shirt color really makes your eyes pop." At his wavering greeting, she rushed forward and went upstairs with practiced propulsion, but had to clutch the railing to keep steady.

Allison looked startled to see Lydia rush through the bedroom door, despite the fact that she called ahead, because of her heated disposition. Lydia's face and neck held an unfamiliar flush from taking in too much air, her eyes darted around restlessly and hands trembled while she carefully closed and locked the door. Had Allison been around 6 years ago she would have read it straight away for what it was. Instead, she jumped to her feet and assumed the worst.

"What's going on?" she threw aside her tablet and tried to guide Lydia further into the room. But Lydia shook her head violently. Her hair made it impossible to see her face, and impossible for Allison to read her expression.

After dropping with a graceless thud onto the bed, Lydia tugged clumsily, flailing at her peacoat. Grateful for something to do, Allison grab at the sleeves and unbuckled the clasp of the interlocked belt pressing tight around Lydia's waist. With breathes wheezier Lydia leaned forward, relieved but still looking pained. She grabbed tight onto Allison's wrist, demanding she not leave her side at the
foot of the bed.

Between wheezes Lydia explained "iit's- it's an ...an-anxiety ...atttack..."

"But Lydia, you don't get anxious," through nervousness, in disbelief Allison gaged. "How do you
know this isn't an allergic reaction to something? Norm's our medic, he's just in the Lodge-"

Lydia's gripped tightened fierce enough to make Allison yelp. She shook her head again, slower
than before. The effort seemed to both exhaust and dizzy her.

"I used to get them... a lot...after the car accident-," Lydia screwed her eyes shut. She rubbed at her
face with her left hand as her wheezing breaths turned into huffs.

"If you had them when you were a kid, then this should be no problem," Allison rubbed Lydia's
arm which only made her jump. Obviously, touching without consent was a no-no. Never having
had any experience with nervous break downs, Allison was at a loss. Hunters weren't of that
disposition. Those who had nerves that were rattled rarely lived long enough to complain, or any
lasting damage medicated away. She had no training for this sort of thing. So, if Lydia needed to
squeeze her arm numb, that was fine, Allison could deal with the pain and had a whole second arm
for backup.

"I mean, you're going to be okay." Allison soothed, "just try and calm down."

Annoyed to be on the receiving end of such sagely simple and utterly useless advice, Lydia
responded with rolling her eyes, or an attempt to, which came across more as squeezing them shut
followed by another violent shift away when Allison tried to lean in nearer.

"Okay, just," Allison wrung her hands and rolled through advice applied to frightened animals
"think of something happy, calming thoughts. Think of your family. Think of your friends."

At that Lydia let out a shuddering groan before she slipped from the bed onto the floor. Following
to land beside her, Allison waited silently. After trying several breathing techniques over the span
of 45 minutes, Lydia came down to a quiet sniffing, then she refused to lift her head from behind
her knees. And Allison waited, without talking and without touching.

With a great big sniff, Lydia dropped her head back against the bed and turned to face Allison, who
watched, her sweet affable smile slow to come up from under her worry.

"He's gone, Allison. He just left again," Lydia lips twisted into a pout, her voice raw.

Allison opened up her arm to hold her friend and they sat in a loose embrace for longer, even after
Allison's arm started to tingle with numbness. Right, of course. 'He'. The only logical correlation to
Lydia's first anxiety attack since the trauma of surviving the car accident. The only 'He' Allison had
seen affect Lydia so much with doing so little.

After enough of a pause, Allison assured her "he'll be back." She didn't need Stiles to confirm this
statement because of how she'd seen the way he'd ground his teeth when talking about Scott
developing without him or Lydia not responding to his texts. Stiles couldn't bear to be without
them for long either. She figured this upset was why he left without telling anyone, because
mentioning it would cause chaos and because he'd be hurrying back. Of course, if she misjudged
him then she'd be forced to track him down - and she didn't make it subtle what her retaliation
would be if someone hurt her friends. "Stiles will be back soo-"

The sound of his name triggered a fire in Lydia's spine and she launched up from the floor, with a
wobble to her legs. She wiped at her cheeks and combed her hair back behind her ears, "whatever."
She said the word like a challenge, daring Allison to say otherwise. "I'm going to get changed, then we should study."

While she was still changing in the other room, Lydia's phone chimed with a text. "Would you check that for me!" Lydia gave permission with such high false-cheer through the bathroom door, and Allison jumped to get it, hoping Stiles had checked-in to put an end to this. After she dug the phone out from Lydia's bag she ran it to the door except, instead of taking it Lydia asked if it came from anyone important. It came from Scott. It was the latest in the series of curious unanswered texts;

- Just figured out why your familiar in my dreams. It's cuz "I" found you familiar.
- that's a BIG thing right? I'm right, aren't I? let me know.
- Anyway thanx for letting me chill at the big kid table. Lemme know if I'm right.

Allison read it twice and wondered if there was some childhood riddle going on between them. Seeing his name gave her a sense of relief. Twice as much to see they weren't just getting along, they were really connecting.

"It's not important," Allison replied as she placed Lydia's iPhone by the bedside to charge. "Let's take our books, head to the kitchen, grab some Häagen-Dazs and get into the riveting world of Global History and Government."

Track 13 - White Lies by Son Lux

{Tuesday, Midnight in Chris' Study - The Argents, CA}

The seldom used study in the main house, just underneath the staircase, was reserved for Chris Argent. Because of that, Allison felt territorial even if she (or Scott or Lydia) were sneaking in there. Even if Livy probably had permission to be there, she felt the need to peek in.

On one of the dark leather seats facing the fireplace, reclined Livy looking flawless in a satin white pant suit, her heeled feet tucked beneath her and settled on the end table beside her was a tumbler of Chris's best whiskey. Despite her dozing state, Livy was keenly attuned to the fact that she wasn't alone. The vague wraithlike shape of Fry accompanied her. Tattered looking, he drifted throughout the room. Allison didn't think it was possible he could manage, but somehow had gotten more rumpled then when she had seen him last. He mumbled while wandering the room, his fingers tracing the length of her Dad's bookcases with feverish need. And Livy responded with a rare patience Allison didn't recognize on her molded face. Their conversation seemed so casual, almost intimate and Allison felt like the invader.

After catching Allison catching them, Livy gestured with a flick of the wrist for her to join them.

"What is he- is he looking for something specific?" Allison had to ask because of the inexplicable way Fry kept connecting subject matters with last digits of the ISBN number, to use that to direct him to the next shelf upward and then to follow the few books across, and so on.

"I don't believe he is," Livy sipped leisurely from the glass, unfazed by harsh taste. "I believe he's entertaining the idea he may well have been a code cracker in a past life. Although there's none better to schematize the traps of overwrought Motels mid-night ...it took him till mid-morning."
"Oh," Allison had to give it a couple of seconds before she considered the list of Fry's multitude of talents. In his years of ingenious field experience, creating diagnostics, retrofitting systems, reworking maps and making traps on the go all fell under his umbrella of talents. It seemed strange that Fry didn't know code-cracking. Everyone accredited him so much cleverness, she often took for granted there were things he couldn't do. But testing his talents in her Dad's study? Allison watched him look for patterns but said nothing, and her sense of territorialism hadn't dissipated.

Having Livy around the main house when it wasn't a crisis didn't help settle Allison's edginess. From the look of it, Livy wasn't overjoyed at being summoned by Kate in the middle of the night to look after Fry but she wasn't surprised either. It all must have been a habit formed from her Lieutenant duties, something born of countless nights trudging after the subordinates on the road and calling them to task. Fry was a uniquely valued asset, precious cargo and a virtual 'Punxsutawney Phil' of tacticians. And it was reasonable that he had a baby-sitter, even if it felt unreasonable for it to be in her Dad's study, or for it to be Livy, but that was the reality of the situation.

"The man has a knack for a great many things but promptness isn't one of them," Livy looked thoughtful and bored, one might even dare to say at ease. From the low level of whiskey in the decanter it was more likely that Livy might be a bit drunk.

Just as Allison went to excuse herself for a quieter, emptier place to think Fry caught her with a question; "are you having trouble sleeping, too?"

After a pause, she nodded. Allison considered going into details but didn't think it mattered. They didn't need the details of her restless night at the expense of Lydia's restful one. Her bed upstairs was overrun with textbooks and her best friend was (hopefully) exhausted past the point of nightmares. It didn't leave Allison much room for anything other than a busy mind.

"War is a time of unrest." Fry stopped his exploring to turn and face her. Although he wore a dress shirt and slacks, they were unmade, as though he had lived in them for weeks. His suspenders dangled like extra limbs, trailing with every motion. He was the sort of guy who, when obsessed with an assignment barely remembered to speed nap, ate via smoothies and after showering dove right back into yesterday's clothes. From the look of him, she had to wonder; did his new obsession have anything to do with Kate's project in the Lodge?

"I understand. Why sit around when you can poke through the contemplative works of warriors past. This is the kind of craft of restraint and control in dialogue you don't get sitting in a think tank." Fry droned on as if talking to her were coaching himself, and their audience of one was only as relevant as the carpet beneath his feet.

"Yeah, well... if literary pornography keeps you contained and useful," Livy lifted her glass and barely grinned before taking a deep sip in cheers.

"Is that enough alcohol to see you comfortable till you pass out?" He swung around, his expression screwed up with irritability and with a hard covered crisp red and gold book pressed tight into his grip.

"Time will only tell, dear. Time will only tell," Livy played coy while she poured herself another one. As Fry shambled toward them, Livy sat forward and handed him a cocktail glass of whiskey.

There was a hesitation on his part before Fry drank it down in one go while Livy continued to sip. It was almost like a peace offering that commiserated being castoffs of Kate's for the night. Afterward, Fry gave Livy an eye roll deadpanned enough to rival one of Lydia's, then grabbed
Allison by both shoulders to face only him. When Fry stood in front of Allison, eyes dilated, brow sweaty, breath hot and potent, she realized he must have been drinking with Livy for a while.

Insistently, he placed the book into her hands, "Sun Tzu. You should read this, Allison. You should read it as often as you can. It's very good casual reading."

"Got it." Allison turned it over in her hands and nodded to appease him. She was more than familiar with the book. She'd already read it, several times over. It was a gift from her Grandfather when she'd turned 5, and by the end of that first month, it read like poetry. "You think the 'Art of War' is causal reading?"

"Darling, I hardly think he knows his name at the moment," Livy sniped.

"I can see it in your face, you've read it before," he looked a little disappointed, but not discouraged. "I don't know if you can understand, since war is being declared everywhere, but for me it's a struggle sometimes not to find art in it."

"I get it," she said, trying to put herself in his shoes. When on a case, there were moments like in the Meeting Room. Clues came together, and Allison got a rush out of it like when she was beside her friends and they were able to make out evidence resolving Derek's death and Cora's disappearance. But then there was finding Isaac's body and nothing felt satisfying about that. Maybe because of Fry's position, because of his intellect and gift of foresight he was able to detach and take more from that line of work than she ever could.

Rubbing at his bristly unshaven jaw, Fry started to consider something before he started again at a mutter. "To do this job, to do it well, you've got to open yourself up to a whole bunch of insane feelings or experiences or whatever and make sense of them and logically think them. Which is impossible. And what the job of good chronicling is to me is to take an experience and expand it or explode it so it no longer feels like an impossible thing."

Fry paused for emphasis, and when he looked from Allison to Livy and back again she seemed intent to listen, keenly aware of his message.

"Sun Tzu says, 'the supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.'" Fry quoted. From the way his dark eyes she knew he wanted to get something across more than just a sappy sentiment. "You know what else he said, 'keep your friends close, and your enemies closer'?"

As much as people within the sects of Hunters coveted Fry's work, they feared him whenever he got feverish, which is why people like Livy were sent to baby-sit him. As his breath grew hot, so did his passion, and Allison's spine straightened on instinct, preparing for a strike.

The conflicting messages baffled Allison and made her spurt out in a giggle, "That's from The Godfather II."

"Oh, right." Pleased with himself, he released her and shambled back to the decanter for another glass of whiskey. Looking back, with narrowed eyes he studied her face and wanting to figure her out as much as she was curious about him.

Livy's rarely heard raspy laughter shot through the room like a boomerang till she caught it and swallowed it, smothering it away with her glass of whiskey.

"Honestly, Fry, have you ever given advice so enigmatic even you don't know what you're talking about?" Livy came to stand in one smooth motion and stood lofty, steady whereas Fry looked bumbling and basic beside her.
"Oh shut it," Fry mildly snarled. "They can't all be gems. Why are you trying to make me look stupid?"

"Riveting as this discourse is," Livy grabbed her clutch purse from the end table and pulled her antique cigarette case from within. She had a slim cigarette lit between her lips before Allison opened her mouth to protest, which left her choking on the trails of nicotine. "Our original intent was to get some air, much as it pains me to deprive Madame of our company we should leave her to remunerations while we take a turn in the gardens."

As Fry struggled to stay still as Livy straightened the lines of his shirt, tugged up his suspenders and pushed back his hair sufficiently until she felt he was worthy to stand beside her- Livy relayed her own obscure message. "Well, unacknowledged, and in the confines of the gardens of Versailles, a veteran soldier once advised Louis XIV, 'the king that brings soldiers to face down soldiers rarely stays king for long.'"

"What's your cryptic warning there then?" Fry countered while he took Livy's cigarette and freely smoked, as she fussed over him. He smoked deeply and listened intently, devising her warning meaning. It seemed obvious to everyone whatever break he had from Kate's command was nearing its end; if they were going to make the most of it they should move on before she would be forced to escort him back.

"We don't often get assignments as cheery as sitting off, spying on an old chum and having whiskey by the fire. I only make the point that misaimed advice after midnight to our half-asleep host is only poetry wasted on shrubbery," and for once, Livy's bluntness (albeit directed toward someone else) felt worthwhile. Allison considered how coolly Livy managed the task of spying on her friend and in turn how briskly Fry dealt with being spied on. And they still worked for the same team.

But then Livy was right, it was too late at night to take this with any legitimacy.

With a wide grin, Fry blew smoke out through both nostrils in a huffing display of annoyance, Livy wiped her long dark hair over one shoulder in a gesture of dismissal. As Livy turned away to lit her second cigarette Allison figured she may as well go for gold. She wanted to know more about what Kate was up to and Livy was the closest she would get to the source. If she couldn't ask Livy what was happening in the Lodge she could try to understand why Kate wanted Fry moved away from it.

"Livy, why would Kate have you spy on Fry?"

Livy considered this question for an unreasonably long time which Allison knew right away was deliberately intended to torment her.

"Are you still spying on your friends, Allison?" she asked candidly, with a coy voice and dark studying eyes.

This time Fry laughed a drunken guffaw from across the end table where he drank another glass of her Dad's expensive whiskey, slower this time. The break in tension helped Allison calm her breath and distracted from the heat that rose in her cheeks.

"Your parents anticipate you taking up after them one day. What a prospect you will be?" she sounded disingenuous, but Livy's voice rarely corresponded with her expression, making her virtually unreadable. Her stillness as she looked down on Allison, the consideration with which she searched over Allison's face before a sly smile read lecherous.
After a mindful nod, Fry reminded Allison to leave herself 'open to insanity' and with a hand on Livy's arm urged her toward the door. In turn Livy casually took Fry's glass and finished it before she slipped out after him. The pervasive smell of whiskey and cigarettes left behind made Allison feel restless. She dropped to the couch recently vacated by Livy, as if she were reclaiming it, and she dropped the book onto the end table.

Whenever more Hunters were around there was an ever present feeling of 'one day this will all be yours', as if there were these high and unrealistic expectations of her. But it wasn't unrealistic, it was impending and it was intensifying. Her eyes danced around the room unsteadily, then locked on the clock on the wall. She remembered the reason why she came into the room to begin with and got to her feet. She might as well look around again, try to make some sense out of nonsense. It seemed like a good way to waste some time before her exams in the morning.

Track 14 - Everlasting Arms by Vampire Weekend

[Wednesday, Dawn at the Stilinski Home - Beacon Hills, CA]

Because it played out in no way like it happened in reality Isaac knew dying in his nightmare was nothing like actually dying. For 1; it was way worse. 2; it had way more people involved. 3; it oddly enough had a lot of different locations.

In the middle of the night and after each nightmare, he felt guiltless to text Stiles until he called back for a couple of reasons. 1; Stiles wasn't going to get over Isaac's near-death/death experience. This gave him an opportunity to ease his guilt. 2; also Stiles took off to Red River without so much as a heads up, so it was a friendly reminder that he wasn't going be allowed to get away with that so easily. 3; it was a foster-brotherly thing, since of these locations flashing through his brain only Stiles would remember.

"Did I wake you?"

"No prob," Stiles answered groggily, sounding very much like it was a problem. "Thre's time diffrrnce."

"Like an hour," Isaac chuckled and came to sit up, he read the face of his phone. "Which makes it 5:30 there and 4:30 here."

"Exactly," Stiles sounded arguably more awake by every garbled syllable. "Just means I'm closer to awake than you. Wassup?"

"Can't sleep."

"Sounds contagious. What? Didja want a story?" Stiles waited for a reply but could only assume Isaac shook his head. "Did you wanna tell me something about it?"

"Some things," Isaac wiped at his face. He was surprised to find that his hand came away sweaty. Ignoring that his eyes traced the line from his palm down his arm where an invisible white coil of hard skin remained, the lump of a scar evidence from his attack made him feel cold all over. He wasn't used to the idea of scarring; it happened to other people, not to him. The sound of Stiles stifling a yawn from other end of the line brought him to the present.

"Any time. I've got all the patience. Just pfft like I own it, I own patience! Patience is my-"
"Are you close to the Homestead?"

"Depends on your definition of close."

"Never mind." Isaac chuckled, feeling a little lighter at heart already, albeit annoyed. "Do you remember when we would go for run at Graveyard Canyon? Those long flats of brown with shrubs of evergreen stabbing the sky-"

"Sure, loads of times. Cora would cheat and try to pick a fight, Boyd would have to separate her and Erica to keep them from-"

"Do you remember when it rained freezing heavy rain and I fell off into a divot?"

"..."

"Listen, you've gotta remember. We were overrun by fireflies. I got scraped up by rocks. We had chased each other or not. Everything started echoing and we got lost in the dark-"

"Isaac, we've never gotten lost in the canyons."

He let out a breath and sagged back onto the pillows of the bed. "I didn't think so. And the divot?"

"Don't remember any divots or a freezing rainy night? Not in the canyons anyway."

Isaac closed his eyes and waited for the punch line, "where do you remember it, Stiles?"

From Stiles' side of the line came some rhythmic tapping, as though he struggled to hammer down the right way to say those wrong words. "It sounds a lot like our pleasant little massacre in the mountains, en route to Beacon Hills."

"So, that was real?"

"You tell me," Stiles sounded very awake suddenly, "tell me about the rest of your dream."

Isaac explained about his scar, how he felt it there even if no one else did, and it fed into a paranoid feeling that he might have come back as human and not Werewolf at all.

"Doesn't sound like you want that?" Stiles said casually.

"Would you?" Isaac snapped, and Stiles didn't answer. "It's not that. In the dream I felt like coming back as human meant I couldn't help anyone, I couldn't protect any of you guys."

"You don't protect any of us now," Stiles continued in the same nonchalant vain, "you go running aimlessly against faceless enemies. And got dead."

"Fine," Isaac sulked, taking a moment and a desperate attempt to try not to laugh. "Do you want to hear the rest?"

"The way you say the word 'want', it's like I have a choice," he could make out Stiles' smirk through the phone, "but if it makes you feel better, 'go on. I insist.'"

"There's a bunch of echoing. Like in a dark empty space or somehow underwater." As Isaac described it he could feel his chest tighten in panic but had to continue. "I felt like I had to keep running and I woke up barely able to breathe."

"Phew, sounds like it sucks," Stiles sympathized. "But it's getting better. At least now you can
remember more of it. Instead of waking up wetting the sheets."

"I've never wet the sheets, asshole. Jeez, why do I ever call you for anything?"

"Cool, I just wanted to check up on my sheets," Stiles sighed exaggeratedly. "People who normally
dream of drowning wake up in a puddle of their own piddle."

"Pretty sure the drowning part is connected to Lydia. Something must have happened with her
before meeting me at the Argents'," Isaac yawned, sleep was gnawing under the surface and Stiles' steady voice helped calm him even through agitation. "She smelled of death and chlorine when she
turned up."

"I'm sure she had a pretty relevant excuse," Stiles mumbled guiltily. Isaac made no move to ease up
and let Stiles know they all already had a detailed recap over at Allison's house, on how Lydia
found him strung up a tree at the attack site. After Stiles enjoyed calling Isaac out on being the
careless one, it seemed fit to let him stew in his own juices.

"Well, I hope it excused away the bluish lips and huge bruise she had near her chest." Isaac walked
over to the bedroom door suddenly to listen and hear if the Sheriff had woken up. When there was
nothing going on in the house other than a timed coffee maker and the troubled snores of an
overworked and underpaid civil-servant, Isaac locked the door between them. "Unless she's taken
up being a teamster, there's something there. That's not the point anyway."

"What is the point?" Stiles snapped.

"Check in with me;" Isaac instructed. He took a seat at the windowsill and measured the sliver of waxing moon through the humid night. "I died. Erica and Boyd were killed by the side of the road. The people who did that kidnapped Derek, didn't kill him, but he is dead. Cora's kidnapped but not dead. You're in Red River. Scott is your friend and mine, he isn't an Omega but he doesn't keep an Alpha. He's in love with Allison, and she's a Hunter. But she is a good person. And Scott's Alpha was- is- a psychopathic Monster. Lydia is a Banshee and her ex is a lizard. And I'm alive."

"You're are right on all those things bro," Stiles sounded off, yup-ing along as Isaac spoke. "But
you forgot 2 things."

"What's that?"

"We're still a pack. And I'm coming back," Stiles said with a rare kindness in his voice.

Isaac laughed outright to hear it for its foreignness despite however genuine, "you ass. What are
you even doing out there?"

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*Wednesday, Sunrise at the Terrace Towers Lodge - Red River, NM*

Stiles almost dropped his cellphone to the floor for all his foot tapping. He sat with his back to the
wall, with his knees drawn up with his phone propped on his knees and it was on speaker while he had his face buried in his hands.

The room he and Parrish shared didn't afford them privacy, but the mountainside town went tumbleweed dead come 10pm. Stiles had no concerns from being overheard once he stepped outside of the room. Only out in the barren, barely-above-freezing air he didn't mind it very much, it reminded him to stay awake and that he wasn't dreaming. He was home, sort of -and Isaac was in Beacon Hills at his Dad's house which was a little bit of a nightmare.
"I'm just wrapping things up," Stiles insisted.

"What does that even mean?"

"It means there's things they need to know here that can't be sent over text-"

"They can't receive texts."

"Yes, I'm aware of that. Idiot," Stiles snorted. Grinning he leaned his head back against the wall, "I just mean there's things they're not going to know unless we tell them face-to-face-ish."

"Like what? If the Hales have got their 8-ball science working, they have probably known Cora has been alive all this time."

Stiles fumed at the idea that if they had, so far they had done nothing about it. Or maybe if they did send in a rescue team for her, then they didn't think that telling their bitten-Werewolves, telling the last of their extended Hale pack a word about it. Even so, he couldn't chance it, and more than that Stiles needed to come home and say 'goodbye' to this place instead of having another childhood home abruptly ripped away. Last time he didn't, it haunted him and every friendship, every relationship and tainted every moment he shared with his family.

"If I've got a chance to see even one of them face-to-face one last time, I've got to take it. My father needs that closure. So do I," Stiles tried to reach through to him, "you'd do the same if you were me."

"You didn't give me the chance," Isaac rebutted.

Stiles cursed himself inwardly. That one hurt.

"But hey, I'm sure you've got that covered with some wittier repartee than I could come up with."

"Isaac, it was last minute- plus, it would have been too obvious if the both of us took off suddenly," Stiles struggled to stay afloat. "And I'm doing this for you, too."

"That's bullshit," Isaac laughed and let it go. He wasn't bitter, not really. They understood if both of them went out it would have been too hard to return to Beacon Hills. He wasn't lying when he said Isaac was still his pack, which is why having him back at Beacon Hills with his Dad helped so much. It was why he called Melissa and suggested as much. The more he felt like something anchored him in Beacon Hills, something more than anger and revenge, the easier it would be to let Red River go.

"I am, though." Stiles stuck to his guns, "I'm gonna pick up our school grades, our real grades. Maybe some decent clothes. No more living out of duffel bags for you, my friend."

"Whatever you need to tell yourself," Isaac scoffed, "just get back here before your Dad realizes I have no idea how to cook."

"The take out menus are on top of the fridge," Stiles grinned, "plus, he likes ordering in."

"What will you do if you see Rose, Stiles?"

"Bah," Stiles scoffed loudly, grabbing up the cell and taking it off of speaker. He needed to stretch his feet. In the distance, the shape of the hilly range he had run up and down countless times felt locked off by an invisible barrier. The Hale Homestead stood on reserved land, locked off from outsiders. In the morning, contact be made and word would come down from on high. Despite his
innate cynicism, he hoped. "I won't."

"Probably not," Isaac sighed, sounding defeated, "imagine that, though. One of the almighty coming down off the mountain top."

"Pfft," Stiles tried not to, he didn't want to break his own heart. "As if. Look, you're gonna be okay. Call me if you need anything." He hung up directly, without waiting for a reply. Isaac would get a hold of him easily if he had a problem with it. He stayed staring at the mountain range until the sun came up behind him, grabbed up the distant shrubbery and turned it from thorn black into evergreen.

Hours later, when Parrish discovered him sitting on the piece of wooden banister the Motel Lodge favorably referred to as a porch, Stiles mock threw his hands up in the air "don't shoot there, officer. I just went out for a smoke."

Parrish just rolled his eyes and didn't bother to question beyond the overtones of sarcasm, why he sat out there or for how long. Instead the officer in question offered breakfast, "Then we'll just find a comfortable place to wait to hear where and when your foster family will contact us."

"Goody," Stiles deadpanned and slowly made to follow.

Track 15 - All That I Need by Blind Melon

{Wednesday, Morning on Main Street - Red River, NM}

"I can see why you have a thing about mountains," Parrish observed, commenting wryly about the earlier Tuesday night when they entered the town through a particularly obscure path with low visibility and no lighting. If it wasn't for Stiles' keen eyesight guiding them, they may not have gotten through it without going headlong into a tree.

"Well, you wanted to inspect the wild life. There's nothing wilder than a midnight drag race around Hopewell Lake," Stiles smirked, laying in on Parrish's fascination to recapture the sights of a phantom Coyote from the night of the storm. Fair enough, it sounded interesting, but Stiles enjoyed manipulating the situation to his advantage.


Their route had been predetermined long ago, a geographical parallel with the route Stiles and his pack had entered Beacon Hills. It was a design that traced ley lines he'd been taught would keep him safe and undetected on drives to and from the Hale Homestead. It wasn't something he could explain outright to Parrish or his Dad, so being an obnoxious tourist was an easy enough act to pull off. If Stiles messed up staying along their path, then it didn't matter how many messengers were sent up to the res' not one representative of the family would show face. They could be camped out for weeks before (by chance) meeting a Hale on a delivery run, which only happened about once a season. Now, if they stayed on the path properly, then there was a possibility at least one person on the Homestead knew Stiles arrived before he had gotten out of the pick-up truck.

It wasn't clear which of the Hales' sayings to put the most credit in, they had a lot of obscure ones; 'Follow the path and stay always still.' 'Don't trust a fox because they'll fool everyone'. 'Trust your instinct, but watch your pack'. And so on... odd nuances tacked onto everyday conversations it was
hard to put credibility behind any of it. But on the way to Beacon Hills, they kept on the Southern route as instructed and for the most part their trip went calmly. They kept off the radar of psycho Monsters and murderers straight up until Cora ran off course near the town's entrance. And they ran off after her, and then everything went to shit and villains came out of the woodwork.

Staying on the return path browbeaten into Stiles a lifetime ago, they headed on a North bound route exiting Beacon Hills via Mountain top into National Forest after National Forest until they ended up gliding into Red River, Main Street half past midnight.

After finally driving down the stillness of the path Stiles' breaths loosened from his chest, anxiety lifted from his mind and he was on his game again. The town was a strip of stores, lodges and restaurants set up for the Skiing season. There was still a decent amount of townie activity, arcades, diners and a theater that Stiles made sure to mention. He definitely mentioned the bike shop that still sold music in the back room right next to where they sold skating supplies.

"It's a thing of beauty!" Stiles emphasized, mildly aware that he looked at everything through nostalgia goggles. It had only been about a month since he'd been back in Red River. Even so, he had spent more of his time at the Homestead than in town, which was probably why he found the place more charming than he remembered. Or more probably because he still found it hard to wrap his head around goodbye. But the breakfast burritos definitely helped.

As promised, Parrish offered to walk Stiles 5 minutes from the Lodge, right by stylish chain restaurants to a hole-in-the-wall with a cartoon farmer overhead, that had a hamburger in one hand and a shotgun in the other. They took their meal outside, seated on wood benches facing the mountains west to watch the sun's rays continue tracing paths onto the wires of ski lifts.

They devoured breakfast burritos and watched locals turning up their sunny-snowy disposition to snow bunnies and hot cocoa junkies. The tourist season was in full swing, which kept the locals pushing their luxury packages for the lifts or the guided hikes to where there lay fresh powder.

Partway up the tallest mountain but at a low altitude (so they still got snow on warm-sunny days and some version of all-four seasons), the Hale homestead lay tucked away unseen and unaffected.

Stiles wondered if somewhere up there anyone had bothered to stumble from bed and figure out he'd arrived yet. It wasn't the worst feeling in the world, feeling cut off, because when he lived in Red River Stiles never got to enjoy the tourist experience. And he never had the privilege of the Beacon Hills Sheriff's department agreeing to foot the bill. So, on their way toward breakfast, he bought 3 new plaid flannels (in varied colors, one with a lining, another with a hood and his favorite by far which was reversible) by the time they made it to where they were going to eat breakfast and already he had his eyes on more (at a sale of 2 for 1, how could he not) for the walk back to the rooms.

Deputy Parrish insisted on being called Jordan since he was off-duty. And since they had spent more than enough time on the road, and after a couple of near-death experiences along the way, it did roughly land under the definition of off-duty. After all, he'd tolerated Stiles' excessive pit stops and rerouting directions. And in the same vein, Stiles endured every invasive impulse Parrish had, poking at his knowledgeable history on the legends of these woods or one they just passed on the turnpike. It became easier to think of him as "Jordan; the brother-in-arms helping secure his Dad's best interest" but in reality all Jordan could ever quantify as was "Deputy Parrish; that officious nosey guy who could get really hurt if he knew too much."
With the familiarity surrounding him, it was easy for Stiles to let his guard down, but Parrish, as an officer of the law wasn't so keen to follow. With a bite rolling around in his mouth, Stiles sensed a shift in "the Force" when the hairs on the back of his neck rose.

"Miss, I hope you have a license for carrying a weapon of that caliber?" Parrish came slowly to stand while removing his Glock from his ankle holster.

"Stiles?" her honeyed voiced called over from the patio entrance, where she had been assessing the scene and aiming her Sig Sauer P2269mm at them "what is going on? Are you okay?"

The bizarreness of worlds colliding took a long moment to hit Stiles and he waited to finish swallowing the last of his breakfast burrito before clambering to his feet.

"Hey, hey, guys hello! Okay, nice work doing your jobs protecting and serving! Really beautiful. Now how about we put down the service weapons and consider the bystanders-," Stiles stepped forward and waved a hand between their stalemate in an attempt to obscure the restaurant's store front window. "Braeden, this is Parrish; he's a Deputy. Parrish, this is Braeden... and a friend of the family." After they hesitantly lowered their weapon Stiles looked closer Braeden, eyes her with a baffled expression, "Who also happens to be a U.S. Marshal working here in conjunction with B.I.A."

"We might want to take this conversation on the road," Braeden suggested, while holstering her gun. "I hate to admit it but Stiles is right."

Thankfully, the only people who noticed were their earlier morning duel were 3 wide-eyed and wondering children sitting in a patio booth waiting for their parents to return from the counter with their breakfast. How likely was it that anyone would believe their story anyway?

Because it would have been pretty conspicuous walking down Main Street with Glock in hand, Parrish was forced to holster it at his ankle. After a hop to catch up, Parrish marched alongside Braeden's easy strides.

"It's a pleasure to meet you," he recited out of habit and smiled dutifully in kind, "but I thought I would be meeting with someone from Stiles' foster family."

"Well, I thought I was here to meet Stiles alone," her dark eyes and darker tone meant she only half-minded the challenge.

"Well, it is a free world where we're all allowed to think loads of things," Stiles babbled and gestured to the space around them, trying to fill up the awkwardness they'd created which had destroyed his morning breakfast. "You know there are people who think lacrosse is pretty much field hockey, which I understand and I mean as long as there is violence on the field I'm pretty okay with it- except they're nothing alike because lacrosse is on grass... of course, so is field hockey, except the sticks have nets. And can you slap check like in hockey! Um... But it's only the, uh, the gloves and the sticks."

"Let me guess Stiles, you're taking up lacrosse?" Braeden cut in finally, to which (gasping to catch his breath) Stiles nodded. "That's great, sounds violent. I like it."

Around the street corner and a little further down, they stopped beside her parked Harley Davidson. Parrish waited for someone to explain what was ideally the next move, Braeden seemed at ease with their discomfort and Stiles just looked confused.

"This is highly irregular," Parrish side-eyed Braeden. She looked more amused by him than
threatened. "The Sheriff said to expect someone from Stiles' foster family."

"The Sheriff?" Braeden crossed her arms and looked to Stiles for an explanation.

"Heh, yeah my Dad's the Sheriff of Beacon Hills," he rubbed at the back of his neck in nervousness.

"You are just full of surprises," she lightly scoffed.

"That's me in a nutshell," Stiles grinned, looking between the two.

Parrish took a moment to attribute the confusion to his lack of caffeine, having only had 2 cups of coffee. Stiles was more than happy offer to dive into the nearest café and get another 2 cups. They ignored the suggestion entirely.

"I'm sorry, I was expecting someone named Ruby," Parrish rechecked the message on his phone from the Sheriff. It was quite clear. In contrast to Braeden's haughtiness, he looked remorseful for the bad first impression. Stiles popped up beside him, trying to peer over Parrish's shoulder to see the message, but got blocked at each attempt. When Parrish didn't get an answer he added, "Ruby Humbert?"

Braeden looked toward him the picture of confusion, then turning her head slightly she gave Stiles a glare demanding an explanation. Scratching his head, Stiles could only string together one answer; Hales changed their names on official records to keep them one step in front of Hunters. Besides, if Braeden knew her by anything, it would have been her maiden name.

'Does he mean Rose?' Braeden mouthed the words toward Stiles, he responded by clearing his throat curtly but actually nodding. Quickly she turned back to Parrish and confirmed, "Yeah, Ruby isn't going to be able to make it, so she sent this."

Braeden pulled a dossier from the saddle bag on her bike. Quick to curiosity, Parrish moved to catch it and while he briefly leafed through it, from over his shoulder Stiles could see all the perfectly falsified documents. Adoption papers, medical records, school records both for Isaac and himself. He felt a little queasy to think that all his life with the Hales could be summed up to a couple of Legal Sized expanding sized envelopes filled with false documents and a few real pictures doctored up to make up a history that was a reflection of something that was only half the story. To think yesterday, Stiles felt just as queasy that he might get anything at all, now he felt cheated that he would never get back enough.

"You don't mind if I head back to call in with the Sheriff and check with this?" Parrish asked out of formality but already had his cell in his hand.

"Hey, it's what you're here for," Braeden shrugged. As Parrish stepped away she shifted her attention solely to Stiles, turning around to sit on her bike and face Stiles fully.

"So she chose you to be her ambassador?" Stiles voice was as neutral as he could keep it, he stuffed his hands into his jeans to hide his clenched fists. He suddenly wanted very much to hit something.

The cool aloofness that Braeden exuded split in half, when she sighed her hair fell into her face and the sun made her dark complexion look divided between gold and bronze, like there were winning and losing factures she felt in the words she said next. "It's not like she doesn't want to be-"

"You're just paid to say that shit," Stiles snapped.
"Sure," she smirked and grabbed him hard by the shoulder, shaking him to stand at attention, "just like I'm paid to tell you that just because you can't see her doesn't mean you can't see him." With that she grinned, pulled out his right hand, pried it open and placed a set of keys in it.

Stiles' eyes went wide just as a grin split across his face. He jumped in place once, then bolted from his spot with so much force that he tripped. Although Parrish called out for him to wait up, Stiles couldn't hear him, he couldn't even acknowledge the oncoming car swerving around him.

"I'm not supposed to let him out of my sight," he gave a longsuffering sigh, holding the folder under his left arm while he ambled alongside her.

Crossing her arms, Braeden laughed and when she did it revealed the shaped of more weapons she had holstered at her hips. When she noticed his staring they shared a challenging smile before she offered to walk him toward where Stiles went.

"It's a bit suspicious that his guardian won't come down to meet us."

She shrugged and handed him a helmet, "she can't leave the res. She runs things up there and the seasons just changed over, setting up the school, organizing the new repairs, setting up tourist interactions, all those things. They can't spare her."

"Sounds important. Why can't we go up and see her?" Parrish kept his tone mild-mannered in hopes his youthful countenance afforded him some leeway into her trust. From the arch in her brow and the rev of her bike, he could tell it didn't. They rode west onto the narrow lanes of what was generously called Main Street toward the buzz of town.

"It's reservation land. Outside law enforcement isn't welcome. In fact," she called back over her shoulder with the authority that left no room for argument, "the Bureau of Indian Affairs forbids it. It would cause more than a little political upheaval." With that she turned down an alley, drove over debris and pulled up to the metal doors of a garage. The place looked in deep contrast to the shininess of the Main Street, hidden away at the very base of the Mountain. This was a place that the townies could be familiar with.

"You've obviously been up there," Parrish pointed out the flaw in her reasoning, "and you're a Federal Agent."

"Not anymore," she grinned and yanked open a rusted up aluminum door to the sounds of sparks and drills. "I'm a more of a freelancer."

"Like the private sector?" Parrish figured he might as well fish for it, he'd been running into a lot of rent-a-soldiers lately.

"I think 'mercenary' might be a better title," she said with a smirk and moved back to make room for Parrish to walk by. "But for now, his family hired me to be their mercenary."

Parrish opened his mouth to speak but, after clocking exactly how much of her seemed to either be hiding weapons or highly attuned to a method of provocation, it was probably safest to just move along.

"That's what the lady said."

"My Jeep," he looked back toward the mechanic in heightened disbelief.

"That's what it looks like to me," the man laughed uncomfortably.

"But he's mine, like my actual Jeep I'm looking at," Stiles placed a hand on his chest, fingers splayed over his heart. The other hand made a floundering gesture toward the classic 1976 Jeep CJ5, (with its hood all spiffied up without any evidence of being torn up because of Erica's artful driving).

"If 'he's' not, he's been doing a damn good impersonation," the mechanic shook his head in good humor and walked off. "I could always tow him back up the mountain to the Mrs. See if she's got another one hanging around. I mean with the price she was willing to pay--"

Stiles raced around the Jeep and caught the man's arm, but after realizing the aggressiveness of the gesture he apologized excessively and whipped his hand off on the man's arm. "You picked up the Jeep?"

"Yeah, of course. We don't do long-term parking here, kid," the guy stared at him confusedly. "After we fixed him up, when we threatened to sell it unless you paid for the repairs and picked it up, your Mom paid double-"

"She's not my Mom," Stiles interrupted abruptly.

"Sorry. The pretty lady, with the long dark hair and really red lips--"

"Yes, I get it. My aunt or cousin, whatever, my Rose's hot," Stiles rolled his eyes hard enough his whole head rotated, he'd been hearing that his whole life. Didn't help then, wasn't helping now... well, maybe a little since it did get extraordinary favors done sometimes. "What did she say?"

"She didn't say much, just paid double to have us tow it up to her. Sent a message yesterday and paid us just as much to bring it back down. Now if you want us to contact her--"

"Nah," Stiles breathed out a grin, he clapped a hand on the guys' shoulder forgetting his earlier discomfort and wiped his hand once more on the man's sleeve. He muttered an apology and stepped away and bounced toward the Jeep, his Jeep. "I'll just take this handsome devil off your hands."

Well, to be honest, it was Rose's Jeep, but before that it was Talia's. Who knows if it was someone else before that? Each of them had been taught to drive in this Jeep, Derek included, but Stiles was supposed to inherit it. Everyone called it Stiles', but that was never official, he never received the title or anything like that.

"You okay?"

"Yeah. Why?"

"It's just you've been sitting there frozen for 5 minutes--"

"Ah," that seemed like a reasonable reason for any rational person to feel concerned. "I'm great," Stiles replied with his pitch a bit too high. So he waved the mechanic off and turned on the Jeep, drove all of 10 feet forward onto the street, flipped on the radio and stayed very still in his seat. He held onto more documents, the title and registration, everything he'd need to transfer the Jeep over to him when he moved to Beacon Hills. He felt irrationally happy because even though the papers
were fake, the gesture was real and something genuine had returned to him. But to Stiles it also felt like something genuine of the Hales’ had also passed along, something like carrying a token of their favor with him.

"Goddamn Coldplay! You ruin everything!" he jabbed the buttons on his radio for playing music far too emotional for his mood. After a nerve racking laughing fit Stiles hadn't realized Braeden and Parrish arrived until a knock came at the window. He yelped loudly, smacking his head into the roof, then opened the window to grin at them in an overly happy greeting.

"Are you okay?" Braeden asked, looking equally uneasy and curious.

"Yeah, just smacked my head real hard. What's up?" Stiles answered while sniffling and wiping at his face.

"You sure, your face is pretty red?" Parrish added, stepping up to stand beside Braeden.

Stiles looked between them both, eyes narrowed in an expression of betrayal, "you two are getting along better. Well, that's just great. You guys want to meet up back at the Lodge Motel to pack up and head out. Great." Stiles had the Jeep in motion before his sentence finished.

Parrish had to jump back to keep from getting clipped by the side view mirror.

"I'm going to be chasing him down the whole way back, aren't I?" Parrish looked to her, his expression that of dismay. Braeden said nothing, only grinned and handed him a motorcycle helmet before heading back toward her bike.

In the excitement of the moment Stiles didn't consider whether or not he wanted to leave Braeden alone with Parrish to visit municipal buildings on his behalf. A largish part of Stiles only wanted to put distance between them. He wanted to stretch his 'driving legs'. He wanted to get back to Beacon Hills, which felt more like home than holing up in a Motel Lodge, however stylish and classy, in the mountain's shadow. Whatever he thought 'a drive to clear his mind would be' Stiles hadn't considered it would only give him perspective on how large a mountain range Red River had. And question why had he never noticed it before.

Several hours and a tank of gas later, Stiles parked in the space designated under their Motel room. With music blasting and engine revving, he fiercely rocked out playing drums on the dashboard with his eyes closed as if there were no one else in the world. And like a shot, he was finished, out of the Jeep headed past them and into the Motel Room to pack his things with hardly any eye contact.

"We should give the kid another minute," when Braeden spoke her voice was gentler than before, and pulled Parrish from the room. "From what Ruby told me, when he left here last time, he didn't seriously consider he might want to stay in Beacon Hills."

"And coming back here?" he said in a hushed voice, while he ambled sidelong down the steps as she pushed him forward.

"I still don't think he considered it," and when she spoke again, her voice was gentler. "I think it hurts him to know his foster family thought of it first."

"You think he feels rejected?" Parrish added, his voice low as if afraid to hurt someone's feelings. They stayed outside, a few steps above the bottom and leaned on the bannister to look over the glancing views of artfully lined parking slots up along the crossways and balconies that
disconnected and reconnected rooms.

With a sigh Braeden shrugged. "You tell me. Weren't you a teenager about 5 minutes ago? Aren't they always feeling rejected somehow?"

After a second Parrish laughed lightly, "I had a feeling you were going to say I looked too young... I'm actually 24."

"I'm actually not carding you," she smirked. "I'm just trying to look out for the kid. We've grown fond of the smart-ass and this isn't going to be an easy transition."

"I'll look out for him. I will," Parrish assured her when she rose a brow in disbelief. "Sheriff Stilinski and I have worked together for some time, we've gotten pretty close ever since I arrived in Beacon Hills... I couldn't say why but I can pretty much guarantee you, I don't have any plans to leave them."

Braeden gave him the once over, not just because she wanted to measure his words or the conviction behind them but because Parrish seemed surprised by the actuality of it.

"Sure," she said, turning her attention back to the room. Stiles silhouette appeared sporadically against the shades. "I know he'll be fine. From what I hear he's got plenty of people looking out for him over there, but that doesn't mean everything is going to be fine out there."

It didn't seem likely Braeden would expand on details; she didn't seem like the sharing type so Parrish didn't press. If he had to take her lead he couldn't think of a better time to start than immediately. After another moment of staring off with her and fretting over a traditionally unaffected, teenage boy, Parrish excused himself. Braeden cut him off before he could finish and with a knowing smirk said she'd be waiting by her bike. However long it took. She would wait to see Stiles off with her own eyes not out of some obligation. Nodding, Parrish gave her a brief smile before moving on without argument, after all it was the sort of thing he would do.

{Wednesday, Midday at the Terrace Towers Lodge - Red River, NM}

Everything Stiles had in Red River was already packed in shopping bags but with his supervisors being way too chummy outside he felt like he still needed a minute. He smelled their chemosignals over the distance and it smelled conspiratorial. For them it was easy to figure out, just hand over a few document and his business in Red River was over and life as a Hale was at its conclusion. How could documents be monumental or nothing at all?

The title and registration in the glove compartment of his Jeep emotionally ruined him but the dossier crossed half the country for seemed laughable. While pacing the room Stiles tried to figure out how to put the façade back together; there was a BH!Stiles and there was a Hale!Stiles - he didn't know which version of him would be the one leaving through that ridiculously unassuming motel room door.

While he rubbed his hands together trying to pull apart the riddle his phone buzzed to life in his pocket. It seemed startling, foreign and bizarre when the name of Lydia Martin lightened the screen. That annoying phone anchored him to the present, with her chiming away window-framed by the expansive mountainous view the motel showed of his past.

It felt... to be honest a little too on the nose, but still brilliant and exciting.

"Guys! You see this?" he called out running onto the landing to show Braeden and Parrish his marvel. They nodded, puzzled and not getting his revelation. Then the phone stopped ringing. He
shook the phone a little bit, a little too trapped in his epiphany to remember you can't rattle a cellphone into working. In Stiles disappointment he didn't have time to realize Lydia hadn't left a passive-aggressive message or even an angry text. Instead he kept riding the wave of his sleep-deprived, emotionally driven, nostalgic motivated excitement. "I'll be right out, I've got to make a call!"

While the other line rang, Stiles waited impatiently muttering and grabbing the Motel Lodge's super comfortable robe, shoving it into his shopping bags along with the towels and bottle of shampoos.

"Hey," he grunted. The door slammed behind closed behind him as he shuffled along the path toward the parking lot, "I'm headed home." The grin he wore could be heard beaming through his voice, "yeah, that's right you heard me, I'm already on my way back to you and when I get back we're gonna do it up right. And why aren't you picking up your damn phone, Scott. What are you even up to?"

Track 16 - Something Else by Monomyth

[Wednesday, Early-Morning on to The Stilinski Home - Beacon Hills, CA]

Passing by the Sheriff's cruiser and hopping up the Stilinskis' front steps toward the smell of coffee felt a little off, knowing he wasn't immediately headed toward Stiles. When Scott went to knock on the wood of the door and it swung open before he knocked, that felt a bit more familiar.

Isaac's light eyes and crooked smile met him with a relieved expression on his face.

"Hey, Scott came to join us for breakfast again." Isaac virtually yanked him into the house. The kitchen felt the same, but altered as well; where the investigation board once stood, lacrosse gear leaned up against the kitchen counter. Breakfast laid out at the ready, with the fresh coffee he smelled, scrambled eggs on a platter between them on the table with no end of toast.

"Thanks, I was starved," he gobbled down the serving, his second breakfast that morning. "My mom asked me to check up on the bachelor pad, make sure you hadn't burned the house down." From the sight of the misspent toaster oven he wasn't how sure off the mark his Mom was.

"If you're worried about Stiles, Scott," the Sheriff smiled, getting up to walk his empty plate to the sink, "they just got there sometime late last night. They should head back soon, so stop worrying so much."

Isaac glanced up while he stabbed at the food on his plate with little dedication for a guy with no end of an appetite. It went without saying that Isaac spoke to Stiles more recently than his Dad and he felt guilty about it. But not guilty enough to tell him.

"Cool, thanks. I was worried," Scott grinned widely and finished his eggs. Immediately after, he dragged Isaac off to an 'early practice' which Coach Finstock wouldn't dare conduct on a test-day, but the Sheriff wouldn't know that, would he?

"What's going on with Stiles?" the fake grin was still wired tight on Scott's face despite being more than listening distance away from the Stilinski's.

While walking, Isaac knocked around the lacrosse ball with precision, catching and throwing it into
"I wasn't trying to talk to Stiles, I wanted to talk to you," Scott protested and Isaac didn't believe him for a second. He gave a good side-glowered delivered with a smirk. "Alright, I was trying to talk to you about talking to Stiles for me."

"Of course," Isaac laughed. After throwing the ball high into the air he caught it in his hand without looking. "You want to know if he made it to New Mexico alright, yeah he did. He took forever because, I don't know, he's Stiles, who knows what goes on in his head. He thought the scenic route would be safer I guess."

"You definitely talked to him then?" Scott stressed over every newly worded bit of information Isaac tossed at him.

"Yeah, sometime before the sun came out," he shrugged.

"And after?"

"No."

"If you could let him know I needed to ask him some questions-" Scott started but stopped short.

"Is it something I can help with?" Isaac offered. He did have genuine concern but it took a little longer to bubble up from under his morning sluggishness.

"No. No, no, no." Scott jumped to attention, "there are some pictures I texted him Sunday. I guess I wanted to see- I wanted to know what he thought about it, but my phone broke Monday night when this- thing happened at the side of the road."

"Are you okay Scott?" Isaac put a hand to Scott's chest and stopped his wild stride, keeping them at a standstill.

"Yeah, of course." The intent look on Scott's face said something else. It considered silently the unquestioning level of trust Isaac had in him. That everyone had in him, especially Kira last night, when that surprise attack in the middle of the road could have killed them. The last thing he wanted to do was expose anyone to something like that without knowing more, especially Isaac. "I'm cool, I've got to go check on something before school. But if you hear from him-"

"Sorry, Scott. But maybe we can reach him afterschool," Isaac cut in. He could sense in Scott a disoriented urgency and figured he might bolt. "Once they're out there, if they make it to the Homestead, there's no cell reception. It's for protection."

"For whose protection?" Scott asked, Isaacs' words seemed increasingly unfathomable.

"For them, all of them." Discomforted, Isaac turned and walked on ahead. At a standstill Scott let the words sink in. Isaac called back, trying again. "The Hales. Stiles included."

"So it's like a dead zone?" Scott asked when caught up at the bus stop.

"Kind of. More like a well-designated black hole," Isaac said, proud but awkward simultaneously. "I don't know how she made it happen, but things work inside and things work outside of it but things just don't always work well going across it. She calls it her 'faraday upstage'."

"Who called it that?"
Isaac paused, he licked his lips and slowly considered what to say, "no one. That's not what's important. Stiles is exactly where that prick decided to be, while Mr. Westover is going to run the rest of us over hot coals in Global. So can we just get to school already? Or was there something you really needed to ask? Anything I can help with?"

When he turned back he found an empty space where Scott once stood.

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Track 17 - Start Again by Gabrielle Aplin

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{Wednesday, Noon at the Terrace Towers Lodge - Red River, NM}

Almost as if to test his resolve, Parrish asked, "You know if the mountain won't come to Mohammad- I don't mind waiting around town if you wanted to go up to visit for a bit."

"Nah," Stiles easily sidestepped.

"Don't you want to head up there?"

"Not really," Stiles shrugged, and answered truthfully, "If I went up there, it would be too hard to come back down, you know." Let Parrish take that as literally as he wanted to, which he seemed to, and after a pause he moved onto the next probing subject.

"If you don't have enough room for everything in your Jeep," Parrish offered, "you can always stash something in the pick-up."

"Look," Stiles sass ed back, "I may've picked up more than your average amount of flannel shirts, but the day my Jeep can't hold them is the day I'll finally figure out how to take down the top."

Parrish shook his head with a laugh, "I just mean your back seat is pretty full. If you need the space, you can use my truck."

After a demanding glare and a gesture to 'just look' from Parrish, Stiles swung around to inspect the evidence. How had he missed it the first time? Well, to be fair each moment with his beauteous blue Jeep had been a confusing shock but this was definitely unexpected.

"It looks like 'Ruby' had some surprises for you," Braeden said low. She didn't have to step closer to know that Stiles could hear her from the other side of the hood, without Parrish overhearing.

Stiles half laughed, and lied feebly to Parrish "I forgot. I asked them to pack up my stuff for me."

"Your foster family," Parrish came nearer to him. Stiles nodded. "I thought you hadn't really been in contact with them."

"Really is a really relative word," Stiles face turned up in thought.

"You don't want to look through them?"

"Nope," Stiles yanked the driver's side door open, aimlessly flung his shopping bags onto the heap in his back seat and slammed the door closed. "I'm sure they got it all."

"You sure?"
"Yeah. What about you?" Stiles looked at him inquiringly. Parrish hesitated. "Did you get everything? Did you sign us out? You had a lot of coffee instead of breakfast. I mean a lot, and it's pretty far until the next bathroom. You sure you don't need to go?" Smirking, Stiles crossed his arms and leaned back against his Jeep, "if you don't go now, young man, I'm not pulling this Jeep over."

Looking only mildly amused and heavily influenced by suggestion Parrish left toward the main office, giving Braeden and Stiles a chance to finally talk alone. They waved at Parrish in unison from the view of the Main Office windows. That moment Parrish disappeared from view, they looked to each other with less than pleased expressions.

"Well, kid we've got a lot to cover and I say about 3 minutes to manage," she walked around the hood of his Jeep, her all-business manner warned him not to forget what the risk of being overheard meant.

If Parrish made a connection between his foster-family, the Humberts, and the Hales, it'd start a new level of investigation into Stiles' missing years they couldn't afford. It was exposure for him, Isaac, Derek, Cora, Ruby... damn, even his Moms. The weight of it made him sigh, running his hands through his hair he kept on. "He had a lot of coffee. I'd give us at least 5."

When she slid beside him, Stiles stood up and stepped around to settle on the right of her, his expression held an awkward pass between pleasant and holding in gas.

"What's up, Stiles?" she said low, restraining a laugh.

"Just wanted to ask before I left 'cause I didn't want you not to know... not that I wanted to be the one to tell you or anything, but it's not exactly polite conversation either-"

"Stiles," she warned through a tight smile, "get to the point."

"Do you know about Derek?" his strained expression dropped, entirely blank-faced, his mouth slightly parted with an unspoken apology.

Braeden looked to the floor, her lips pressed together while countless emotions flickered across her face and she said nothing. Yeah, she knew. Her lover was dead.

"I didn't... there's no way... I just...it was like this..." he blubbered in a quick low succession of explaining nothing.

"Stiles," she smiled, putting a hand on his arm. "From the reports I've heard, there was nothing anyone could have done. You're lucky to be alive, but you are alive. That's how Derek would have wanted it."

"But, if you had gone with him instead of just some kids." From the moment she Stiles assumed that's what Braeden must have been thinking. What he assumed she'd been waiting to tell him privately all this time.

"Listen to me, this was a pack thing, I wouldn't have been able to stop you if I wanted to. From what I hear, I wouldn't have done a better job." She waited a moment, her eyes searching his to make certain he accepted the truth. "Seems like you've got some hell of a support system out there. Forging a whole new pack."

"Exactly," Braeden grinned, her face eased a little.

Stiles had had enough vagueness, although knowing that Braeden wanted to stick around after her delivery long enough to check in on him was nice. But weird. He climbed up into his Jeep to physically distance himself from the awkwardness of his vulnerability, pulled forward the seat and started to shift the boxes, large, very large and small that Ruby had been nice enough to secure in a haphazard rush.

"How the hell do you know all this stuff?" he asked over his shoulder.

"Because Ruby knows all this, of course." Braeden's grin lengthened and reached forward to help catch the packages that threatened to fall to the ground. "You know the way back, or do I need to-"

"Jeez, yeah I know the way back." Stiles glared at her, after giving the last box a crushing shove into place he hopped down. "What are you going to ask 'how I'm doing, if I'm eating three square meals? Getting enough sleep?'"

"No."

"Good, 'cause I'm fine. Aside from the jumpiness and the crushing fear that something's about to happen." He frowned, she looked sympathetic but said nothing, offered no fake words of comfort and gave him room to continue. "I am fine, I'm staying on route but it's been hard with Deputy Boy-Scout at the wheel."

"I bet," Braeden's tone became teasingly bossy "It's not going to get any easier headed back. If you came through the North route you've got to take the South-

"I know, I know! You're sounding as bad as her now!" not that he minded, not that he'd admit it.

"Well, I should," she smirked. "Ruby ordered me to. So that means I have to, she'd be able to sense if I lie, remember." Braeden always knew how to manipulate the whole 'I'm in on the underworld of secrets' thing to her advantage. She managed to do it equally for guilt as well as financial gain. She tugged the hood of his puffer jacket up over his ears, "Stay on the path, red riding hood. I hear wolves come in many forms."

"Oh, ha-ha," he batted away her hands, and straightened the lines of his jacket excessively. "Come on, this is brand new. Besides you're not telling me anything I don't know." He paused thoughtfully then smirked, "she probably gives you paths to drive sometimes, too."

"Sometimes," Braeden cocked a brow, her tone displayed her evident mistrust in Stiles shift in commentary.

"Only sometimes. But not all the times, those other times you just rough it."

"I'm a tough lady, Stiles."

"Wouldn't it be easier if Ruby could just, I don't know," he gestured with a flick of his wrist a circular motion as if to encompass the world, "set you up with safe runs all the time."

Braeden didn't say anything. She just watched Stiles, and waited.

"That is if she could, couldn't she?" he licked his lips in eager interest coming closer to his actual intent. "Come on Braeden, you can explain all this empty talk the Hales are always up to. It's not like I'm going to tell them you told me. It's not like I'd even be able to."
"It must really do your head in not to have all the answers," when she responded Stiles nodded violently. After a moment Braeden let out a soft sharp laugh. "Fine, but you have to understand these are just the facts. That doesn't mean I understand how things work."

"That doesn't bother you?" Stiles gnawed his lip both in agitation and in anticipation.

"I stopped questioning what makes the paranormal work a long time ago," she waved for him to come closer, her voice went lower both in gentleness and in privacy. She brought it to barely above a whisper but something his ears would definitely pick up even if they might regret doing so, "I just appreciate it when I can, now come here you ungrateful punk."

While growing up the phrase "Nemeton" had been thrown around by many others but it was so infrequently Stiles thought it might have been someone's name. Turned out it was a tree. A very big, important fucking tree. Its branches were massive enough, the canopy seemed like a crown over a forest. Evidently its root stems ran deep into layers of soil, spoke keenly throughout the woods, reached further than measurable and denser than walking on millions of spider webs in one step. In fact, the "Nemetons" were the Mother Trees of a network that virtually covered every particle of Earth.

The incredible thing about this big goddamn tree is that it happened to grow atop ley lines, grew through the understory and connected other Mother Trees. Before Talia died she used the underground bio pathways to sense out at least three across the states. Ley-lines evidently were incredibly fertile ground for weird ass trees. On the rare places where two or more ley lines crossed, then guess what? BOOM! "Nemetons" appeared. That's right plural.

One "Nemeton" had been in Beacon Hills, but it wasn't standing anymore (although it was still viable). Even injured or dying "Nemetons" sent out signals, messages of wisdom and defense signals moving back and forth to increase the resilience against future stresses of their territories. That was the best explanation Braeden could offer. Meanwhile-

If a person strongly linked to nature, like, say a Werewolf (especially during specific lunar cycles) and were clever enough or taught to be, then it's possible to suggest that person could reach into the interlocking highway and sense all "Nemetons."

One could further proposition, if a particularly strong Werewolf travelled along exact ley lines they could mark their territories by creating a closed-circuit. Just like Mother Trees preferred their kin and strangled out invaders.

With a Werewolf's heightened ability of sense and recall, they could create a personal message by recalling memories, the worse the experience the stronger to use as a repellent. Something as awful as carrying the burnt and barely alive bodies of your children from your incinerated ancestral home in Beacon Hills to a Holt in Red River. At least Talia's kids survived but their healing cost her Alphahood. Ruby's son wasn't as lucky.

"Ruby walked the North path through the mountains. Talia walked a parallel path South through the valleys until they somehow both ended up in this place," Braeden drew a line in the air between her and Stiles.

"Jesus, that's some ridiculous 'Trail of Tears' bullshit," Stiles grumbled under his breath in disbelief. There had been melancholy cast around him growing up, that Stiles always thought was something he projected. Now he realized it was something that protected him.
Braeden continued to explain the messages were projected at frequencies to recognize their kin and
to deter strangers, without so much as baring fangs or claws. But keeping up the closed-circuit to
protect their territory meant a Werewolf of incredible strength had to physically sustain the
"Nemeton" at all times. It meant that person could never leave the Homestead. First it was Talia,
now it was Ruby.

Suddenly it became clearer how the Homestead, with little contact to the outside world, would
know that a Hale nearby needed help. It made sense that a Hale would head out for missions,
because it wasn't like any of the bitten-Werewolves were going to light up on the closed-circuit
board if they needed backup, was it?

But from the way Braeden explained it, as long as Stiles didn't wander from the specified ley lines
aligning their territorial-borders, Ruby could sense him. And as long as he stayed on 'The Safe
Path', she could keep projecting signals to prevent most threats.

"She says you're on your own when it comes to Hunters or hitchhikers with hooks for hands,"
Braeden jested, "but hey, I hear you have a security team for that."

To which Stiles simply glared, then glanced over to the Main Office and caught sight of Parrish
next in line to room key. "Is there any other life redefining spiel you wanna lay on me? Because
we've got a boat load of no time."

"You get that she would have come down to see you off... that it killed her to stay put when
everything went off the rails at Beacon Hills. She would've gone to you guys if it didn't mean
dropping the defense it took a lot of pain to build..." Her voice went a little hoarse so she paused to
recompose, to become a little firmer before reminding, "They've learned it's only worth a gamble to
cross over the border to reclaim the living, not the dead. So, right now you gotta go back Beacon
Hills and make it worthwhile. You guys gotta take care of each other, okay?"

Inhaling deeply, Stiles closed his eyes and dropped his head back against his Jeep. He wished
Braeden had brought a map. Or something spread out like his Father's murder board to draw out
the explanation she gave him. He wanted to memorize where all the ley lines were, but kind of
figured there was something impossible in that ambition.

A realization struck him; whenever anyone left the property for a joyride they got saddled with a
Hale kid. Guess it was Talia's way of always keeping tabs on her pack, even the bitten-Werewolves
she couldn't sense through her closed circuit. Something about the technique, seemed similar to the
night they uncovered the Hale House property. To the experience of Stiles and Scott standing
inches away from Lydia, from where they could both see her but vaguely sense her and definitely
could not bring their hands up reach for her.

The Nemeton's closed-circuit created along the ley-line was Talia's version but instead of
developed Mountain Ash was to use pheromones to keep strangers stumbling around the woods
forever, or to guide her family home safely. They were constantly reminded growing up; come
back all together or none at all. Figured it wasn't just a formative rule, it was a warning.

A bittersweet comfort connected Stiles to the knowledge that safe paths he drove back and forth
from one home to the other were carved out by Talia herself.

God, he missed Talia. Stiles missed her being the one to help him figure stuff like this out. Not that
he often got up the balls to ask. A stray bitter thought crossed his mind-- Stiles figured Talia
probably would have stayed healthier, longer if it hadn't been for everything she gave up for them.
But that was Talia, she gave up anything for the people she loved and she would not accept his
bitterness and moping. She would want him to keep on his path.
The world seemed suddenly very small and defined. Stiles remembered his upbringing feeling very unburdened, despite all the transformations and secrets. He never felt they were in immediate danger, not even whenever Derek abruptly packed up and disappeared for days. It was more than evident they ran a 'Hale Witness Protection Program' whenever they turned up with another jackass cousin who avoided the bitten-Werewolves, (not to mention they didn't appreciate their amazing views, their choice cabins and chili eating competitions or the town's perpetual festivals). It never occurred to Stiles the cost it took to live in a snow globe paradise.

"Alright, alright, alright," Stiles rubbed at his face, his voice sounded weak in his ears. "I've got it. I need to read up on my pseudoscience. This stuff makes no sense."

Braeden closed her eyes and sighed, "This stuff makes sense, and it doesn't. I told you this is just what I've gathered and probably all I'll get since I'm not investigating you guys anymore."

"Anymore?!" Stiles head snapped up at that.

Braeden gave him a sly little smile, "Derek never did tell you how we met, did he? That's a story for another day."

"I wanted to ask you... I mean I wanted to know -"

"Stiles, you should ask yourself first, is this something you really want to know?"

"How much do you think Ruby knew about what was going to happen in Beacon Hills?" he sounded bitter despite from the way he squirmed, his chin ducking in and jutting out in readjustment like he could keep a hold of his cool.

Braeden shook her head, and the hardness she saved for professional business melted away. "I wouldn't say that, Stiles," she spoke on behalf of their absent friend, with sincerity seeping throughout. "You know for all the insight Ruby can drum up, it's not like she's psychic."

"She's something," he said with a nod. "Does she know Cora's alive?"

"Whoa!" Braeden exhaled quietly, "Now I haven't heard anything about that. When I get back from the East Coast I'll have to let her know."

He did a double-take, his disappointment was obvious while he stabbed a finger toward the Mountain top in demand, "where are you going that's so important that you can't just go up there?"

She took a step back, put off from his assertion "you know it's not that easy to just head up there. Besides, yeah what I've got to do in New York is that important."

Stiles knew she wasn't a liar. Cagey with the truth for sure, but an outright liar, no. Stiles rubbed his forehead to stave off his stress headache and shook his head in aggravation. Despite feeling useless he asked in a mutter "Is it really important enou-"

"Yeah, that important" Braeden's voice hardened. He looked up to see her expression smiling but all business in the way that put him off. "I've gotta head out, Stiles. The sooner the better." It came out less like an apology but more like a brush off. She turned toward her bike, swung a leg over it, kicked out the kick stand in one smooth motion and dismissed him as readily as shoving him away would have. But he didn't need to be reminded that Braeden was a force of nature, a tornado touching down where she pleased and ready to take off just the same. Because Derek loved her, the Hales trusted her with their secrets, and Stiles could never consider her pack but by extension he
still considered her family.

When Braeden's bike came to life it rattled through him, destabilizing him, sealing this goodbye but Stiles still wasn't prepared for it.

"I wish you the best and if you ever need me, you know how to get ahold of me," she shouted from beneath her helmet and above the noise.

"Wait!" Stiles shouted as loud as his voice could carry. "I've got no idea how to get ahold of you!"

With that she kicked up dirt and grew quickly smaller along the main street into the diminishing horizon.

By the time Parrish joined him in ready company Stiles had already made himself comfortable in the driver's seat of his Jeep. He bounced around, testing the suspension of it like a child jumping on their new mattress.

"Eager to go?" he grinned over at him, getting ready to climb into the pick-up beside the Jeep.

"Hey, Jordan?" Stiles settled suddenly, "how did my Dad sound?" Deputy Boy-Scout was pretty easy to predict.

Parrish froze, startled and took a moment to recalibrate. "He's... he seemed relieved. You should call him."

In reply Stiles bobbed his head along with his music and rolled up his window. He wanted to wait until they were well on their way before talking to his Dad. He wanted to confidently reassure his Dad Red River was behind him. And to be honest, he just wanted to drive.

Originally, Stiles tagged along to Beacon Hills in a veiled attempt to spy on his family while rescuing a member of his pack. If at that time he had been honest with himself he felt a comfortable detachment, despite the dangers of the undertaking when he left the Homestead with his pack members. It all felt sort of normal.

But in that moment, he had gambled so much away. Did he have any regrets about leaving? Their deaths, that's for certain- but anything more? He never gave himself time to think about it.

Leaving to Beacon Hills a second time, this time alone but with the singular conviction of saving his family - it might not feel normal but it felt very right. No regrets. Stiles had no doubt his Mom would be proud. Both of them.

Track 18 - Portions for Foxes by Rilo Kiley

[Wednesday, Morning in The Hills at the Yukimura's Home - Beacon Hills, CA]

As a formality, all teachers came in extra early on exam days. Including Mr. Yukimura, which left Kira taking the bus to school. Just the idea of asking her Mom for a lift had Kira grabbing her backpack and racing out the front door before her Mom could get out of bed.
When the early bus never came, and then neither did the regular bus, Kira decided to walk into town. It would be easier to get one of the frequenter busses on Main Street or, if there was a problem with all of the buses, she could just get a cab. Either way, her feet were itching to put some distance between her and her home.

As Kira wandered down Echo Lane and she realized the damage done to the streetlamp from the night before prevented anything as wide as a bus from getting by. Further along the lane it grew to become a true street, then grew to become a main road and her anxiety grew around her in shallow tones, even with the authoritative yellow tape the authorities used to cord off the attack site. Aside from a broken lamp and a fried conduit, there seemed to be no evidence of pleasantry.

Then the sound of a motorcycle sounded like thunder cutting through the sound barrier and it sped right at her. Her hairs stood on end but she felt unafraid, ready to face it head on. After the lime green Kawasaki stopped short in front of her, it knocked the breath out of her to see Scott pull his helmet off.

"Hi, I was just driving over to- do you need a ride?" Scott gave an apprehensive smile while he waited for her to unfreeze. He mostly anticipated some sort of accusation that he was obsessed or even stalking her.

"Oh, yeah," Kira looked up and down the paved road and then her grin grew to match its length. She practically hopped over beside him, her hands clasped tight in excitement. "But I thought you told me your Mom took your bike away for the week."

"It's... a really short week this week," he explained weakly and she laughed at his lame excuse. "So, you want me to drive you to school?"

"No."

"You want me to drive you back up to your house?" he hesitated.

"No way." As she circled the front of his bike her eyes got bigger and brighter in nervous insistence, "Can't we just get out of here?"

"Skip class." Scott grinned, easy to persuade. On second thought, "Sure, but isn't your Dad a teacher... won't he notice if we try to sneak in late?"

"Then we're going to have to be gone the whole day," she nodded, then raced around to climb on the bike behind him.

"Sure, where do you want to go?" while grinning, he handed her his helmet.

Thinking through the details she rotated the helmet in her hands and picked at edges with her thumbnail. "I have one idea, but I'm a little bit scared."

"I've got you--" Scott placed a reassuring hand over hers on the helmet's surface, "whatever it is. Try not to worry about it."

They drove up toward the town's Northbridge overpass, up to and along the dividing rail where a walkway peeled apart creating a line of stones toward the riverbed and there Scott pulled over to parked his bike. In the bright light of day, these handful of days later, the bridge looked like something from a different universe. Since the storm dragged debris up from the river and scattered it everywhere, it meant the repairs weren't that many, just messy.

"You're still not okay with this, are you?" Scott checked in with Kira while she tip-toed along the
edge. She glanced up at him and nodded.

"I'm good," she said quietly, and the wind stole her words mostly.

"Well, if we get caught," Scott assured her as he stepped away from his bike and started to follow behind her, "I'll just say it was my fault."

"You don't need to take the blame," Kira insisted, "I wanted to come here. I wanted to show this to you."

{Wednesday, Midday at the Industry Bridge 'crash site', - Beacon Hills, CA}

Sometimes when people retold a story, they transported themselves back to events. Not the way Kira told Scott her story about the experiences from the night of the storm. It came together like a stained-glass window; her memories were colorful glimpse of here and there from the library to the bridge to river to the hospital to the bridge until it made a bright clear picture. When Kira explained details of the strange feelings when the Porsche's dashboard seemed to always slide under her hands, as if static electricity kept her from holding onto anything. And then that made her remember Jackson's hold on her wrist pulling her from the library away from falling bookcases. All her descriptions were pretty vivid, although when she mentioned Jackson had a 'different' quality about him she didn't describe anything reptilian but she was sure to mention he was more frightened of her than the opposite.

"And he should have been," while Kira spoke her mouth cringed, like she could hide from her words. "I did horrible things."

At first Kira thought the storm might have given her magical powers. While she waited with Jackson on the bridge for help to arrive, she wondered what would have happened if Jackson grabbed a different student. She was supposed to meet Allison Argent to study... what if the storm made Allison change instead? She thought that way right up until her parents turned up and didn't act surprised at all, they acted like they already knew what was up. And they whispered secretly to strangers at the scene of the 'accident.' And they spoke with even more strangers at the hospital who helped them smuggle out. At which point, Kira realized her parents had always known something was wrong with her but hid it from her, and that broke her heart.

"What if they felt keeping it secret protected you-" Kira's eyes flicked up at him, a little hurt behind her eyes and Scott was quick to follow up with his reasoning. Secrets had been thrown around a lot recently but he also understood the reason for their creations, and sometimes how they evolved all on their own. "If I walked into school the day after I got bit, if I told Coach the real reason why I suddenly made first line this year, it probably would have gotten me locked up instead of let me stay with my Mom, finish high school with my friends, meet you. I didn't mean to start it as a secret but sharing that with you... it's our secret now, right? And I am trusting you to keep it."

Kira sighed in disappointment, an internal argument had been lost. "I guess." She shot upright and stared at him directly, coming forward she insisted, "I mean, of course! I'd never tell anyone. Just like I won't tell them about Jackson either. He deserves to be safe and protected... from monsters like me."

"You are not a Monster," Scott wanted to explain he knew a lot about Monsters and Kira definitely didn't rank. He didn't mean to laugh at her, it came out before he could stop it but she still seemed taken aback by it. "I just mean, Monsters do monstrous things, and you didn't want to do anything but help the guy who kidnapped you. That's... that's incredibly heroic in my book."

She stared at him for an awkwardly long time, then suddenly looked away and started giggling.
"Yeah... okay thanks."

After another few seconds she turned away, stepped to the edge and let the river lap at her High-Tops. She tucked her arms in and crouched down low, and asked him to come closer. Kira went on to explain the strangest exchanged with her kidnapper had to be the quickness with which Jackson yanked her from the car before the explosion. With that she pointed out the burn marks that remained against the shale of crisp cold river waters that should have washed it away. A sharp outline of Jackson's Porsche looked like the inverted chalk outline of a dead body at a murder scene, cartoony and a deep contrast to the real world features of earthiness around it.

The x-ray scan-like detailed description of Jackson's face lit up her hands, the sounds he made barely heard in the thunder, while collapsing in her arms would stick with Scott as permanently as it was embedded in her mind's eye. Ever since, whenever Kira thought about it she reminds herself Jackson asked for it, he asked her... but Kira also remembered that while she was in shock on the bridge kneeling beside Jackson's dying body, her only thought was "I just met the most popular guy in school."

"You were in shock."

"I know that," she said indifferently. "It's still a pretty crappy thought."

"He's fine now." Scott didn't come too close because he didn't want to put her off but he didn't like letting her stew in guilt either.

"I know that, too" Kira looked to him with a slight grin, but her voice sounded very tired. "But it doesn't make me less scared that I could do it again. What if a deer in the road spooks me? Or a lacrosse player charging at me catches me off guard?"

"You handled that girl on the road last night pretty well?" Scott reminded. "You saved my ass."

While tucking a loose strand from her braid back behind her ear she thought hard about it, "but I hurt you, too."

"Yeah, for like 5 seconds." This time he felt confident enough to drop down beside her, projecting as much confidence as he could muster. "And you didn't knock out electricity in the town. So, that's progress."

"Thanks," she sighed, careful optimism breathed through her. "Lydia was right about trusting you."

Scott nearly rolled back onto his ass, and he had to put back both hands to keep from falling which left him looking a little bit like a coffee table before he could clamber back up. Kira laughed and helped pull him forward by the shoulder.

They came to stand and while they slowly walked the length of the river, back to the bridge, Kira told him about Lydia showing up at the Hospital. Suddenly Scott remembered it, Lydia's angry words as she quit the Diner on the night of the storm.

After calling them 'monsters' and 'animals' for what she considered to be selling their friends and family out to Kate, Lydia stormed out of the Diner to care for Jackson instead. Jackson who they had never considered worth a second thought after the library incident, and never considered worth saving once identified as the Kanima, but only thought of as a threat. Scott didn't relay to Kira his part of that night, while at the Diner with Lydia (or, by that measure, any of the others). In turn, Kira never mentioned Lydia coming to her home during winter break. It felt like to involving a third party became someone else's words to tell and because of that a new secret.
"She didn't tell me to come to you, exactly. She told me find someone 'who will believe your truth'..." Kira stopped mid-step and remembered the rest of Lydia's words. 'and don't leave their side.' It felt way too important and way too quick to say something like that even if she felt it straight down to her wet socks.

"I feel a 'but,'" Scott pressed, then he flustered and rolled his eyes at his own foul-up. "I mean like you want to say the words 'but'. Like you need to find someone to trust 'but he's got to be failing 2 classes, a little socially awkward, and if you look closely his jaw line is a little uneven.'"

Both hands had to cover Kira's mouth as she laughed uncontrollably. Finally, when she could catch her breath she answered, "No, there's no but. I'm just really glad we ran into each other Scott." Another secret.

Track 19 - I Can't Find You by SolarSolar

[Wednesday, throughout the School Day at BHHS - Beacon Hills, CA]

On the drive in to school Lydia forgave quietness due to sleeplessness the night before but the excuse was thin and she let Allison know as much. In nervousness Allison's fingers went to her mouth, not in a gesture to bite her nails but to tug at her lower lip. It might have been nerves trying to keep her from saying the wrong things this time. Or from saying anything at all.

Sometimes Allison felt like she was shirking her duties (whether it was to her family or to her friends) due to her hard feelings. Once clearheaded that sense of duty came back tenfold and she felt responsible for the world. When walking down the halls, she searched through the crowd and hesitated by their lockers. Out of habit her eyes went toward his seat before heading to hers. But in the row behind Scott's empty seat she met Isaac's worried gaze. He replied with a hapless shrug, no answer at all in response for Scott's whereabouts.

"I thought he'd show up late, but he missed Econ. That's Coach's class," Isaac said, he looked more pitiable than more frightened which felt like a cold comfort. "He'll crucify him for sure..." but from his draining expression he must have read her pessimism and let up, "...Or he's probably just trying to send smoke signals to Stiles for all we know. It's fine Allison, he's Scott." She nodded noncommittally and finally let Isaac pass through the classroom doors.

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Lately her greater worries had grown from 'what would her parents think' to 'what makes up the Monster'... correction, 'Scott's murderous Monster-Alpha's agenda'. When she told Scott to go to Stiles for questions to do with his Alpha she hadn't known Stiles had gone. And if Scott had taken the departure even half as bad as Lydia had, then he was in a vulnerable state. Despite Lydia's resolute disposition that "everything's fine," Allison felt obliged to check in with Scott.

At their last class of the day, Allison hesitated at the classroom door for the bell warning her of the last chance for Scott, for his outline to appear in the entrance at the end of the hall racing to get into midterms, (sweating and complaining about bringing up his grades). When that didn't happen and Mr. Westover shouted at her to take her seat before he locked her out, she mumbled a reply and rushed to her seat with eyes downcast.

Afterschool, she tugged a little harder on her lower lip while waiting for her phone to power on so that she could repeatedly call, only for him to not pick up. Her mind still processed hard facts about Global Government while she tried to figure out what her message would be and why it was she
never put a tracker in Scott's phone when they were dating?

Track 20 - Let It Out by Heather Sommer

[Wednesday, Afternoon driving along - Santa Fe National Forest, NM]

"Hey Scott," Stiles answered uncomfortably. While driving, he managed to wedge the talk button with butt of his palm.

"Hey, I'm sor- How did you know it was me?" Scott stammered, "This isn't my phone."

"I figured you'd be the only idiot I know trying to reach me midday instead of taking a test," Stiles assumed logically. "It was either a telemarketer or you. Whose phone is this anyway? And why aren't you taking your midterms, young man?"

"There was a girl on a motorcycle, there was a rough scrap, she kinda cost me my phone which I'll get in to later but aside from that I really needed to get ahold of you," he explained in a low tone.

"You have reached me. Congratulations, I am reachable," Stiles assured Scott, while changing lanes he placed one hand over the other smoothly, with his cellphone on speakerphone placed precariously on his lap.

"Why do you sound like you're in a wind tunnel?" asked Scott.

"Don't judge," Stiles criticized Scott's criticism. "You don't know where I've been."

"Have you been in a wind tunnel?" Scott sounded both worried and eager.

After a moment Stiles added in a disappointing tone, "Well, no. But I've got my own wheels! We don't have to worry about talking with an audience anymore."

"How did you manage that?"

"That is a much longer story, now how 'bout you stop avoiding why you've been trying to get me on the phone all day?"

"Right, that."

"Right, 'that'." Stiles honked instantly at a driver who had the nerve to be coasting far too near to his precious Jeep.

"It's about the photos I texted you," Scott sounded worried.

"What- Ohh," Stiles slowed the Jeep. He wanted to take a minute to reconsider some things. He didn't have a lot of resources anymore when it came to asking the big questions about the people with signs of an extra-special nature. And he didn't have access to the Argents' bestiary like he spied Lydia had. Which meant he had to think back long and hard to half-ignored lessons taught to him years ago.

When he shifted down gears, he grabbed his phone and tossed it up onto the dashboard. He cut off Scott when he started to ask what was that noise and what happened, he countered with demanding Scott to tell him what the hell happened.
"Start from the beginning; How'd she become a shapeshifter? We don't know if she's anything like us bro... We need to know what her origin story is."

{Wednesday, Noon alongside the Industry Bridge - Beacon Hills, CA}

"That's it. That's all there is," Scott sighed, dropping his chin onto his palm. He leaned further and further over the mounds of his knees, while he sitting on a slate of stone and getting further and further entrenched into his retelling.

"So, you thought to then call me secretly... from her phone... so that she would then have my number?"

"Yes?" Scott started meekly then reconsidered, "I mean, yes. I already asked and if it'd help, she doesn't mind that you know it all."

"You mean, all that she says there is," Stiles was keen to remind.

Scott felt injured by Stiles' fresh cynicism, despite needing to be grounded by it.

"Why would she hide something from me?"

"I don't know. Maybe she doesn't know she's hiding something from you. Maybe she's really a sociopath out to trick us all with her foxy-ways," even in his lightheartedness there was a little ridicule.

"She's not a sociopath, Stiles," Scott laughed, "she's... she's nice."

"Uh-huh." Stiles made the non-committal expression sound like a pretty committal statement. "When's the last time you talked to Allison, Scott?"

"What?" Scott balked, he held out the phone to stare at it in shock then held it back at his ear again, "What? This has got nothing to do with that."

"Actually, yeah it does. You shouldn't be meeting with this girl alone. You should talk to a Hunter about this," Stiles sounded less teasing and regretfully level-headed. "Your Kira friend wasn't bitten. Something flipped her metamorphosis switch into the 'ON' position and it's progressing pret-ty quickly."

"So, you do know about it," Scott strove for hope.

"Not really." Stiles dashed it away. "It sounds hereditary; at a guess I'd say fox-spirit but I wasn't taught the Asian descendants."

"But why not?" Scott complained, just short of whining. "You knew about Banshees."

"Yeah," Stiles laughed outright, "because it was obvious she could sense death, dumbass. And we all connected those dots."

"Not me."

"Let's not bring that up..." Stiles made a grunting sound, agitated by something to do with driving. Then it was obvious from the quieting on his side of the phone he had pulled over. "Actually, let's. Dude, when we were kids we played that 'Fable II' until we had blisters on our blisters. What the hell did you think the Banshees were out to do, sing us to sleep?"
"I don't think that's an accurate depiction of what Lydia does," Scott corrected mildly.

Stiles paused, "touché. Anyway, Allison did most of the legwork getting Lydia the information on identifying as a Banshee." He paused and sighed lengthily feeling Scott's reluctance in kind.

"My phone is broken you know," Scott reached for an excuse to keep his word and keep Allison (a human) out of Kira's private life. At least that's what he told himself.

"That's a weak one," Stiles retaliated, "You know, I'm right about this."

"You're definitely sure we can't connect the dots together," Scott pleaded low while Kira came into view, waving from along the river bend.

"Sorry Scotty, if the spark that lit Kira's fire had anything to do with her hereditary background then nothing I learned will help. I wasn't taught anything about Japanese culture - and if it had anything to do with the storm, it is elemental, it could be unstable. Go to Allison." Stiles apologized sounding sincere for once. In the same vein of something urging him along, Scott could hear a car honking as well as muffled conversation Stiles had with another driver.

"Looks like I gotta go, but keep me in the loop," his voice sounded hurried and whizzing sound of rushed driving filled the background. "Promise me you'll get your big-boy pants and talk to her. To be honest, she's going to have to put on her big-boy pants and meet you halfway."

"Yeah okay." Scott said with a nod smiling awkwardly to Kira as she neared, looking apologetically at him for returning before his call was done. "I promise," he added dismissively while trying to both stand up and wave Kira over all without dropping the phone.

"Excellent, you've got 24 hours to do it." Stiles' tone was just as dismissive as how he cut off the call, leaving Scott no room to argue, but just enough room to squirm.

Track 21 - Monster Lead Me Home by Sara Hartman

(Wednesday, Afternoon alongside the Mad River - Beacon Hills, CA)

After returning her phone Scott let himself be led further inland, over shale and shallow water, to where the creeks combined and returned to where it became a real river and earned its name "Mad River". Along the way, while being led, Scott easily and babblingly filled up the space between them with stories of growing up in Beacon Hill and sneaking off into these woods, all the imagined adventures him and his best-friends would have.

"You, and your friend Stiles..."

"Right, and Lydia."

"Our Lydia?"

Scott could sense her disbelief, it was chilling and a little harsh but he understood it. "She used to be kind of obsessed with the outdoors; swimming, camping, hiking. I guess all the Martins were, they'd take us on camping trips through Fairvale, to Union Town and back."

"It must have been nice growing up like that. You must have gotten pretty good at it?"
"Me? No. Those two? Yeah, they were pretty competitive, like scary competitive but not all bad."

"You guys seem so different from your stories. Why'd you stop coming out here?"

"Stiles suddenly moved away," after a pause Scott answered. From the dullness in his voice it was obvious that wasn't what he wanted to say but then he wasn't sure what he wanted to say. The recently recovered son of the Sherif wasn't exactly a town secret, or even Stiles' secret but bringing it up felt like opening a whole new and different can of worms.

Kira's eyes went wide, and her face crumpled with a groan. "I'm such an idiot. Your friend... he's that Stiles-"

"He's that 'Stiles';" Scott nodded and averted his eyes while she tried to pull herself together. Except she didn't try to pull herself together. She went on a rampaging, mumbling tirade of every news article, school gossip, post she vaguely come across on-line (she emphasized it was in passing, which is why she hadn't recognized face compared to the first grade photo the local news circulated or connected the name because that sort of nonsense just doesn't interest her, not that Stiles was junk).

"It's totally fine, Kira. It's just a thing that happened and we're getting through it."

They turned to wander down the river again, the sound of it preventing any awkward words from coming across until Kira tried again, biting her lip and with hands in tight little fists. "So was that him on the phone? - I'm not asking because of those wild theories about him being raised by gypsies or like, druids took him to faery land. I was just wondering, since you did call him, were you asking him about me?"

Scott stopped short again and Kira froze. This time she could sense she had struck a nerve but she was in the right. Scott let out a deep breath and with his eyes closed gave a nod.

Grinning with relief from ear-to-ear she asked "and did he have an answer?"

Scott shook his head, "he listened and he remembered some stuff. He thinks this is hereditary. Maybe elemental."

"I sense a 'but' coming," she slowly smirked. Despite her disappointment, she really wanted Scott, presently her closest friend and confidant to ease up a little. He returned the grin.

"But he suggested that I maybe..." for some reason when he watched her eager expression he clearly recollected Allison breaking up with him. But not for the clear cut reasons of a jilted ex, Scott could be simple sometimes but never shallow. And what he saw in Kira was someone in need. Someone who couldn't protect themselves from themselves. Allison's dedication to her Hunter vow was strong enough to keep them apart, but then it was also important enough to bring Kira and Allison together. He just had to remember to take himself out of the equation. "-we talk to this other friend, a much more qualified friend who could probably help you. But she's not who you're expecting."

"If you trust her," Kira agreed, "then I do, too."

"Thanks. But you should meet her first," he blinked several times struggling for the best words to use to explain it. Straight forward worked best, "she's an expert because she's trained as a Hunter. Like the Hunters I told you about the other night. The ones who have been hunting our kind for centuries, not that she has. I'm mean she's not even out of High School."

"Okay, Scott. OK," she put a hand on his shoulder so that he would stop. "I got it. Can I think
about it?"

"Sure."

"Uhm, and do you think she might know why that girl was stalking me the other night?"

"That, I can definitely ask!" it seemed a sure bet to assume Allison would know more about. But it made more sense to confide everything in Allison, he couldn't relay half-truth and results. "Her family is pretty good at what they do. They were probably with your parents on the bridge that night, showing up and cleaning crime scenes is a specialty of theirs. He's going to hate missing that I said this, but... Stiles is right. My friend is your best-chance to learn about what's going on unless you go to your parents. I can ask... can I just ask her about these incidents? Can I ask just if she's interested in talking?"

Closing her eyes, Kira shook her head "just let me think for a second. Oh!" after another step forward she pointed across from them. "We're here. This is where Jackson lost control of the car and it skidded into water."

Their eyes followed the length of broken brush, in through the water until it met their trail to the Industrial Bridge, now Crash Site.

"Where the hell were you going, Jackson?" Scott muttered under his breath.

Around the time of the accident construction on the highway had ceased for the night, leaving traffic unobstructed. The lanes of the bridge should have been wide open but Jackson drove through a rarely used service road. With that in mind it wasn't surprising the car toppled the way it had, there wasn't a shoulder to brace it from the Mad River. Common sense would have made any driver slow down but Jackson kept up his high-speed to the point the car jackknifed nearly drowning both passengers.

"That's if he wanted to take you out of town," he hooked his thumbs into the pocket jeans, his fingers itching to do more than speculate.

"It didn't seem like he wanted to ransom me for money or anything," as she went along Kira kicked a stone lightly, her thoughts unsettled. "My Dad left a much more lucrative job at NYU to teach kids at a High School in Northern California. We're not exactly trading up... no offense."

"None taken. Wow, New York. It's like everyone is coming here for some freak show..." Scott laughed lightly, "no offense."

With her arms crossed she smiled with no mirth, as she envisioned the car smashing and skidding along the rock face. In as long as he'd known her Scott had never seen her so solemn.

"He never tried to save himself," she said softly, her eyes trained along the pathway. "He never hit the brakes, I crashed us. He had no idea what he was doing. After he freed my hands he helped me climb out. And he didn't pull away when I melted back his skin."

"We're going to figure this out." Scott moved to place a comforting hand on her shoulder but her shift in stance, the upturn of her chin said not to.

"Your friend, do you think she'd ever want to try to figure him out?" she worried. The concern for her victim and captor was a warring portrait and he could sense the fight in her lit and saw her eyes begin to glow a little.

"She did actually," Scott said with a bit of pride.
Kira let out breath in relief, "good. Will she help him, too?"

"She will. She wants to help everyone," he said with as much admiration as envy. Respecting Allison's dedication as Hunter was one thing, but fully understanding it was something new all the time.

"Just like you. You always want to help everyone," Kira cleared her throat, he sensed the light within her burning a little but it was a sort of warmth that welcomed. "We should head back. I'm going to try to talk to my Dad. But you can try to talk to your friend, too. I think I'd like that."

"Cool," Scott hopped to follow behind her as she tiptoed and practically skipped along their path back to the bridge.

"We gotta hurry though. I'll lose my nerve if my Mom's around, so I've got to get to him before he leaves the school."

Thoughts plagued him as he ambled back along the path to the bridge, because he felt like the progress he'd made over all had been wonderful. Contacting Stiles, getting Kira to open up and learning her 'origin story', learning more about the crash and feeling ready to maturely confront Allison. After everything he couldn't shake a crushing feeling of failure. That was until breezing by a 'Warning - School Zone' sign and it became clear he had missed a day's worth of school and every test that it included.

Track 22 - Weak Knees by Alex Napping (SCISAAC)

{Wednesday, Late-Afternoon at BHHS - Beacon Hills, CA}

By the time Scott pulled up in front of the school, the lacrosse team were out back, taking the field. After arriving, Kira decided to head straight away to her Dad. If she couldn't work herself up to a confrontation yet, she could just spend time with him and they could ride home together... that is, if she could play it off that she had been in class all day.

"With the way he's been avoiding me lately, I'm pretty sure he's going to be happy we're in the same room and talking." At the thought, she lightly rolled her eyes as she handed back the helmet. "But if you're still going to make practice, is it okay if I...?"

From his grin, she knew not to finish the question. It was a silly question to begin with. Practice was an open space, and Coach liked to see if the team could work with distractions. Plus, thanks to Lydia's organization with pep-squad, the Cyclones had a cheering section even during practice but Scott liked to see a familiar face.

"Totally. You totally have my permission," Scott bit back a laugh but it didn't stop him smiling. "If you need a break from your Dad, come watch the practice. I can always drive you home after."

Between them hung a pleasant unease as they went toward their manifest destiny; Kira to her Dad and Scott toward Coach Finstock.

Scott rushed around to student parking and after a speedy change in the locker rooms, went to the field in an attempt to blend in unnoticed with his teammates. Well, after a little ducking under some of the stands and creeping under benches, but yeah, pretty unnoticed. But as he walked past Isaac, his friend's eyes were staring steadily down at his shoes as though they were the most fascinating
thing in the universe. So fascinating, Isaac lost the ability to hear his name called, or feel his arm getting hit by a lacrosse stick as Scott went by.

"If I knew we were going to see you here, McCall, I would have had your Econ test carved into the bench," he started at a neutral tone but continued until he dripped ice onto Scott's shoulder.

"T-that was today?" Scott wanted to think of an excuse, but could only feel a chill down his spine.

"Seriously, Scott." Lowering his voice, Coach redirected him to the side-line. "I'd sooner cut off my remaining testicle than cut you from the team, don't make it come down to that. Now, go wait in my office, and we'll talk about when to schedule a make-up exam, before you end up on academic probation."

"Took you long enough to get back," grumbled Isaac after Scott doubled back to where he stooped on the edge of the bench. From the expression on his face he wasn't far off from pummeling Scott or hugging him. Instead Isaac got up and kept him company on his walk of shame back to the locker rooms. "Where did you disappear to all day?"

"I... you want to know... see, there was this..." then Scott preoccupied himself by unstrapping his arm guards, "can I use your cellphone?"

"What?"

Alongside each other, they walked easily and their voices took whispering tones so they wouldn't be overheard, even in the empty school hallways. "It was important. There was something I needed to see out alone."

"Needed to or wanted to?"

Chewing his lower lip, Scott considered Isaac's question and pulled his helmet off. "I didn't think about it," he admitted.

"You know, it's a choice." Isaac's eyes narrowed, then he opened his locker to grab his phone from his backpack, amused by the way Scott squirmed under his gaze. "You can keep running, stumbling because you've got your dick tucked between your legs, or you can actually count on me for help."

When he tossed the cellphone, Scott fumbled to grab it, not just out of clumsiness but because he had been called out. Isaac had been helping him out for weeks, they had been confiding in one another for a while now, and Scott should have assumed Isaac would notice his standoffishness. Leaning on a nearby locker, almost looming, but with a little grin, Isaac waited for Scott to get his act together. He trusted Scott to have a very good explanation for his disappearing acts, something that followed up his 'nightmare' confessions that hopefully didn't involve Monster-Alphas, but who knew these days.

"Can I please just make this phone call to Stiles first?" Scott continued in a low, humiliated voice while clutching the cell with both hands. Isaac struggled not to laugh at the display of his disheveled friend looking like a pauper. "I swear, then I'll figure it out."

After another second of comically dubious glaring Isaac moved off of the lockers and strolled toward the double doors back to the field.

"Fine. Scott, but I'll be waiting in the sidelines... like usual," and he let doors shut hard behind him.
"Dad, what's the likelihood that someone could, like, wander into our backyard?" Kira asked this without looking up, her phone masked her nervousness. Her Father stopped sipping from the small cup that came with his bento box only momentarily before pretending she hadn't rattled him from his late lunch.

"Not possible," he said with a convincing grin. "Why? Do you think you saw someone?"

Kira played with the weather app on her phone and took her time to reply. She promised herself she wouldn't Google the details of her transformation anymore. Not only did they not turn up anything other than anime, but it was as neurotic as searching your symptoms on WebMD. It only served to unnerve her. But playing with the weather app was an even medium. Assuring herself that the weather outside matched what everyone anticipated made her feel a little better, even if she refreshed it every few seconds.

The silence continued for a long while before her Father called her name for the second time in a no-nonsense tone and Kira realized she must have hit a nerve. "Of course not," she smiled a little and glanced back at her phone. "That would be impossible."

"But you would tell me if you saw something." He sort of asked.

"I guess. I just had a nightmare like that, but it was a long time ago." She glanced up and shrugged.

He watched her watching her phone intently. "That is just a nightmare," he assured her, and she nodded. "But you know if anything like, anything that seems impossible happens around the house... around anywhere, you can tell us."

"Yeah Dad," with a glance up, her smile brightened mildly, "you should be careful driving up to The Hills. They said there might be rain."

Confused, he smiled back and returned to his probing his bento box and she returned to her phone, fingers gliding across the screen. Mr. Yukimura, Ken struggled for concentration and once he managed, she broke in with more leading questions and no eye-contact, so he closed the container between them on the desk.

"I was just wondering why you bought a house up in The Hills. Was it because you didn't want to run into neighbors or did you think the weather would be better up there?"

"Kira? Is there something bothering you?"

"Because... if you were, that didn't work out. You know now they're doing work down the road from us on Echo Lane," she wondered aloud, "there's weird damage to a street lamp, and it could have been weather or one of our neighbors got into an accident. And we don't really have a lot of those."

"The last thing her weather app read 'Wind Speed was 7 mph (NNE)', she was pretty confident she could run faster than that. Putting the phone to sleep, Kira placed it on the table top and looked her Father in the eyes. "I was just wondering why you bought a house far away from where you work in the middle of town. Was it to avoid potentially violent neighbors or weird..."
"weather conditions?"

After a moment Ken closed his eyes, he seemed somewhere between chilling and solemn when he finally said her name and she was hurrying to interrupt in response in an apology.

"I know, you're busy. I'm sorry I'm always interrupting. I'll go watch team practice until you're ready to go home," she slung her backpack over her shoulder, shoved her phone into her back pocket and clipped the corner of his desk on the way to the door while the words spewed out.

"You're never-" he eased back. He hadn't meant the grip on her arm to be aggressive but he also hadn't even noticed getting out of his seat. After shaking his head and soothing her arm where he just touched and continued, "-never interrupting. It's just if I don't know what you're asking, how can I know what to answer, Kira?"

She nodded. That made sense. But she wasn't sure how to ask if he knew if there were Werewolves living in one of the houses down the road or Banshees in the backyard. Or how was it exactly that she could make electricity just crackle through the air at will. That definitely sounded like something out of an anime and she didn't want to seem foolish to her Dad. On the other hand, she could sense he was definitely hiding something from her. Deception had a particularly acrid smell, something she'd never noticed before, but started to pick up on nearly everywhere.

"I guess I don't know what I'm asking either," she admitted. "But when I figure it out, can I come back to you? And can you promise to answer honestly?"

Authoritatively he held a finger up at her until he poked her nose, "You got it."

Track 24 - Outside by Calvin Harris

[Wednesday, Afternoon/Early-Evening in the Bleachers by the Lacrosse Field - BHHS, CA]

Of the many, many times her heart skipped to see Scott walk into view, Allison couldn't recall such a measure of elation. It was like the world turned from dim to full Technicolor when he took to the lacrosse field with his tentative smile, while struggling with his helmet.

Even though the team hadn't made a play yet, Allison cheered him on in earnest and was surprised to find she wasn't the only one. A late comer took up arms, with embarrassing fervor. Embarrassing for Scott that is.

After the original rush died down, Kira climbed up to take the seat beside Allison on the empty-ish row of benches and watched the practice dwindle down to angles and lines.

"You're here."

The statement sounded of surprise, so Allison gave the answer that fit the scene. "Sure, I'm here with pep-squad," she gestured further along the row from large and rowdy Danielle to scrawny hyper little Mason.

"Oh, cool. I'm sorry about our study date," Kira started in.

It took a moment for Allison to remember the girl and their study date blown apart by a collapsed library, an electrical storm that took out the city and a burned down ancestral home. Right, that.
"That's okay," Allison smiled kindly, her laugh after expressed the preposterous of the whole scenario. "I get it. It was a crazy night."

Kira eased a little, but not entirely. She appreciated the forgiveness, but a part of her wanted to be held accountable. "It's been a crazy couple of days. But I've been trying to-" caught up in a secondary thought, Kira looked over into the field and let out a breath, something a little closer to relief than before. "I'm just trying to find a way to fit in with it."

While replaying that afternoon, Allison couldn't stop uncomfortably flattening the fabric of her sweater against the layers of her dress as she tried to imagine what it must have been like from an outsider's perspective. She had never wondered if Kira had gotten out of the library safely. And to think, Kira would never have been in the library at all if she hadn't agreed to study with Allison, if they hadn't bonded over their sense of isolation. Even under her jacket, the nestling of her sweater couldn't comfort her enough.

Allison gave a little nod and cleared her throat, "you're pretty cool. I think you'll find your place easily."

Kira tilted her head and grinned, "Well, if someone like you says so."

A scene on the field caught their interest as Coach's voice rose, Scott's name on his lips. "What's going on with him?" Kira worried.

Allison took to her feet, unsure of the scene playing out around her so she played it coy. "Him? I'm not sure. Why?"

Kira's ears strained to make out the words Coach said over the growing distance as he escorted Scott from the field, her intense expression said enough for Allison to be concerned. "We have history together," Kira said evasively, while standing up beside her. "I thought he was a pretty good player."

"He's very good," Allison paused, turning back to the field. Her shoulders went rigid. "Why are they taking him off the field?" It wasn't the only question that came to mind when Coach Flinstock shoved Scott toward the locker room at the same moment she caught sight of Bennet pulling into Student Parking.

"D'you always watch them practice?" he leaned over the banister once Allison reached him at the lowest bench.

She settled beside him, kneeling down till they were at equal viewing level, squinting against the horizon. She dropped her head to rest on his shoulder and sighed. The duty to 'Protect Those Who Cannot Protect Themselves' carried a weighty and broad definition.

"That's me. Always watching," she said playfully, while her mind recalculated where people were. Kira sat cheering ten feet away and not under a bookcase in a collapsed library. Jackson seemed to be keeping control running alongside his teammates and didn't look like a homicidal lizardman. Isaac was running back onto the field from the locker room and he wasn't crushed under a tree in the woods. Scott was (unfortunately for him, sent to the Coach's office) fortunately not within sight and not under a house on fire. Lydia was more than likely obsessively studying her genetics side-project and not mindlessly wandering... that she knew of. As for Stiles, she really needed to check in on him.

"Well, it's time to clock out," Bennet whispered kindly, snapping her back from her worries. "What
else are you going to learn by staring at these kids today?"

Allison sat up and side-eyed him critically. "Are you tapping out for me?"

He mimicked her expression. "Are you saying there is something else here to see?" Then he added a little smirk, "or are you just scoping out the talent?"

She refused to lose credibility to him, but considered the effect on the landscape. Glancing from him to the field and back again, she added "what if the Monster is an Alpha? What if that is why there have been a rising incident with teens but only murders of adult werewolves?"

"Interesting theory," lifting away from the banister, Bennett breathed out with a whistled and looked at her wide-eyed. "Is it a working theory or do you have proof?"

Allison didn't want to lie to Bennet. Instead, she stood and walked down the rest of the bench steps. The last two steps she hopped down with a hard thump and by the time he came around the railing to meet her a smile was in place that meant she wasn't going to talk about it.

"Alright, alright," he raised his hands to admit surrender, car keys dangling off the fingers of his left hand. A reminder they should be on their way. "Tell me what you want when you're ready, but I just mean if you're thinking of using the Werewolves here as bait-- you should also consider the fact that if that white dude over there, the one you confirmed, is the Kanima then chances are he was bitten by the same Monster."

Allison froze, wrath ripped through her when she considered not just the likelihood of this, the unfairness that the same Monstrous murderer stole another teenager's life on a whim because she missed the obviousness of it.

"Hey, hey, hey," Bennet tugged her aside and rubbed her arm in comfort, "or I could be wrong. It could any one of the other Alphas in town that turned him by accident--"

"No." She shook her head, eyes down cast and calculating. "Any of the Big 3 in town would have an emissary contain him."

"The Big 3 already have trouble keeping track of their own, seems like Ennis lost another two just overnight," he grumbled, annoyed by more political then tactical problems.

"I'm talking protocol, not mysteries. Packs would rather kill a Kanima to save face than have something they consider corrupted hanging around. This couldn't even have been made by this new Alpha hanging around the school. The timeline doesn't match. This Monster--" her eyes snapped up, her stare penetrated and he felt the need to step back. But Bennet knew that stare and it excited him, he smiled as she said, "--it has to be put down. We have to get rid of it before it destroys everything good in this town."

Rotating the keys in the air, like a flag of salute, Bennet led the way to their chariot. "Well then, Boss. Tell me where to start."

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Track 25 - What Are You Afraid Of by West Indian Girl

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[Wednesday, during the Early-Bird Specials at Frank & Lupe's El Sombrero - Socorro, NM]
"Well, it's been a hot minute," Stiles said through chewing his Mini-Chimichanga. "And I know you're brave but I somehow doubt you're brave enough to talk to Allison yet."

"You sound...way too chill for someone rushing home." Scott sounded very unchill.

"Just havin' lunch with the law."

"Do I need to worry about you two? H-has the Deputy changed your mind?" although it started as a joke there was a sincere sense of insecurity rolling around in his statement. Scott would have felt a lot better having these conversations face-to-face. Or just having Stiles within the same state.

"Aww, you're jealous?" Stiles tried to hurriedly swallow and clear his throat which caused him to choke. Parrish handed him a cup but the hot coffee only seared his throat. Stiles waved off help and took his coughing fit for a walk from the table.

"Sorry, man," Scott pleaded through the phone. "I didn't mean to make you-"

Stiles chuckled lightly and kept walking from the open deck, through the restaurant to the front door, he winked at the hostess while he took a seat by the benches looking out to the road. "It's fine. The food was so great it was coming back for a second taste."

"That's gross," Scott snorted. At least he sounded a little more lighthearted but not by much.

"What the hell is going on, man? Why're you interrupting my perfect authentic Mexican meal?"

"I wanted to ask you something about my, you know, change," he hemmed and hawed.

Stiles looked around, the hostess had disappeared to care for another and Stiles couldn't help but wonder how long it would take for the Deputy to start looking for him.

"Scott," he aimed his voice for kind but it came across a little critical, "if you could skip ahead to the point, and not sound like a Puberty PSA, that'd be cool."

The other end of the line went static-y, either from Scott huffing in annoyance or from the universe trying to intercede before Stiles put his foot in his mouth. Either way, it was a moment before Scott continued.

"I just mean, I was thinking... after taking Kira to the bridge where the storm started..." Scott continued to draw slow lines.

"Where she caused a power outage throughout Beacon Hills and nearly killed Jackson, sure. That."

Stiles surmised, "What about it?"

"You suggested investigating her 'origin story', and we did, but it didn't answer any of the questions we wanted it to-"

"-it just made more. That's how an investigation usually goes," Stiles shook his head. He closed his eyes and envisioned sitting slouched beside Scott on the locker room bench, heads weighed deep in thought. Scott's maybe a little heavier for the difficulty of it.

"I want to go back to mine," Scott said suddenly, and in a sharpish voice. "I think I want to go back to the jogging path where I was attacked."

The breath felt knocked out of him, Stiles rolled his eyes straight up to the heavens and dropped his head back, letting his head lean against the windowsill behind the bench. The vibrations from the
Mexican music strumming through the bar inside buzzed through his head and drummed out Scott's words a little, but didn't make them any less real.

"Are you there? Are you with me?"

"Yeah," Stiles wiped at his face and sat up, "I'm with you. I'm with you. I just... have you even been there since you were attacked?"

"Well, no."

"What do you even think you're going to find? Something even the Argents haven't found combing the woods? You know, we're not like her?" The words came flooding faster than his thoughts came to give them form, "that girl conducted 1.21 gigawatts of electricity easily, knocked out all the power in the town and walked away scot-free. She's not like you. A shadowy Monster didn't jump out at her from the dark, tear her a new one and leave her scarred and alone to figure things out. She didn't exactly draw the short straw-"

"Stiles! I get that," Scott cut through. He passed his hands through his hair, he felt untamed and unkempt just remembering the place. "But we've figured out a lot about Kira just by retracing her steps."

Stiles cut in with a sigh, "Why does everything have to be so goddamn mysterious in Beacon Hills? Can't someone just phone-in the monster of the week?"

Scott's tone was determined and no nonsense, he sounded like he had a plan. "I used to jog that path every day. People still do while I take the long way home because I'm scared of something I don't even really remember. If there's something there, I want to find it, even if it's just new questions."

Stiles nodded. He didn't agree, exactly, but he conceded. Scott sounded determined and developed the timbre in his voice that dissolved Stiles' stubbornness. And anyway, he didn't want Scott running off into an adventure in the woods without him.

"Haven't you ever wanted to go back to where it happened?" Scott asked, innocently enough.

Stiles eyes snapped open. "What?"

"You know, to where you were turned-"

"No. Never," Stiles quickly got to his feet and paced in tight circles.

The hostess came out of the restaurant again. Her dark eyes shone brightly and her smile lit up at the sight of him. She opened her mouth to ask if he wanted anything, and Stiles wanted a lot of things, but like with Scott, a lot of them were unanswerable. He strained to smile, waving off the hostess and from the confused and slighted expression on her face, Stiles hadn't done a good job at keeping his emotions in check.

"Scott, maybe you need a refresher course..." Stiles practically hissed into the mouthpiece, "...but when Derek changed me, it happened pretty much at the car wreck that killed my Mom."

The terrible uneasiness that followed made Scott really nauseous and grateful he missed lunch. "Yeah. I know. But maybe if you went there you'd find something out you didn't know before."

"Like what?" he snapped angrily.
"I don't know. Something." Scott continued. The place haunted him, maybe not every day, but he struggled with it and Stiles had photographic evidence on his phone, official reports of exactly how affected Scott had been. "I've even tried going back there."

"What are you talking about, Scott?" Stiles rubbed at his neck, trying to rein in his temper to better listen. "What does this have to do with anything?"

"Maybe nothing, but I notice it gets weird whenever we talk about Lydia's attack..." Scott sounded mindful.

"That's just because we don't know anything about it!" Stiles snapped again, "How are we supposed to help her if we have no idea what's going on with- oh."

"Exactly," Scott sighed. "You were right, we need to investigate 'origin stories', starting with ours."

"Fine, you win this round..." Stiles looked around. The hostess wouldn't make eye contact, so he hopped over to her stand and silently plead for her attention. After mime-asking for a pencil and paper, he left a note telling Parrish he went to gas up the Jeep. Along the way, he kept talking. "So now that you've decided to start poking around in the dark, where're we headed first?"

"How about when I got bitten?" Scott continued.

"Well," Stiles attempted to be bold but caught a frog in his throat, "what do you remember of that night in the Preserve?"

"It wasn't even night. I was jogging the path right after school. It wasn't even scary at first... then animals scattered around like crazy."

"Like they do from an apex predator," Stiles said wistfully.

"Who's telling this story?" Scott reminded.

Half-way between the gas station and the restaurant, Stiles pulled into the shoulder of the road. To keep his cover convincing, he could speed from one to the other without too much fuss. Settled with the view of the mountain range swallowing up the busy town like the kraken, it made Scott's story all the more unnerving.

"It's your story," he inhaled deeply, turned the Jeep off with the flick of his wrist and strapped in for a doozy. "Go for it."

And Scott did. In as much detail as his shock-rattled, weedly, overwhelmed and overworked sophomoric self could remember things.

On that day, Scott went with teammates on a run, but his asthma left him trailing. A brightness in the haze disoriented him, from when the wolf took chase along the ledge until he was left bleeding over the side of it. He felt feverish afterward, out of it but not so injured he couldn't try to walk home. When he climbed over what he thought was the same ledge, he ended up crossing a bridge where Allison discovered him.

"When you say she 'got you home safely'..." Stiles asked, finally interrupting after the story Scott had to tell.

"I mean she snuck me by my Mom." Scott chuckled, both at Stiles' immediate deviant implications
and at the fond memories. Sometimes coming in after curfew is the scariest threat. "Even though it could have gotten her in hot water with her parents. Thinking about it now, like a LOT of hot water with her parents."

"What? Harboring an unaffiliated transformation and nurturing a Werewolf boyfriend in secret from her Hunter family for months is, like, a remarkable thing? I hear about it so often these days, I didn't realize."

"I just mean, I get stuck thinking about how things are now-" Scott stopped mid-sentence. He stared down at the tiled floor between his feet. He could clearly recall the innumerable times Allison shot back to the locker rooms after a game to congratulate him, to kiss him and to hold him, but especially to help calm him. It had been easy to see her in the stands earlier, but he didn't feel the need to go to her.

"Isn't that why we're taking this walk down memory lane?" Stiles brought him back from 1,400 miles away.

"Right," Scott took a moment, he looked to the ceiling. "Where was I? Right, then there was Lydia."

Once Scott learned of Lydia's attack, since that first feverish night he'd been bitten, certain details started to make sense. Allison couldn't keep watch over him the whole time because of those family obligations but she made sure to provide in her absence. She entrusted Scott to Lydia, the only non-Hunter person she knew in Beacon Hills at the time. For Allison, it was still early days in town and there was no way to connect their past, let alone any hard feelings between them.

The familiar, however long shadow Lydia cast throughout his bedroom and the scope of her agitation dissuaded his staying conscious but while dipping in and out of it Scott never questioned her presence at the foot of his bed. Lydia didn't seem happy to replace Allison but she did not seem mad either, just unusually anxious. Maybe it was the life-altering material pumping through his veins or possibly it was her history of topmarks in first aid with the Beacon Hills Brigade, but it never bothered him when Lydia's face interchanged with Allison's beside him while cleaning his wound or checking his heartrate and temperature. The next school day they only crossed each other's paths along the halls, and aside from the occasional hawkeyed glare Lydia went back to treating him like wallpaper.

"So, Allison called you right after Lydia had been attacked?" Stiles asked.

The line went cold until then Scott answered dully, "no. She told me a couple of days later. Back then, she thought we hated each other. We did at the time."

Stiles sat upright, not in surprise but in discomfort. His feet dropped down from the dashboard and the guacamole dip turned in his stomach.

"Did you?"

"What?" Scott had wondered that a lot, but hearing Stiles ask felt like freefalling with an anchor wrapped around his ankle. "No." And easy as that drop was, he finally had his answer, "I never hated her. I hated our circumstances. I hated not knowing how to fix us."

"I hate that, too." Stiles admitted after freefalling a little too.

"The moment she said Lydia's name, I swear to god I was on my bike headed toward her house," Scott testified as Stiles chuckled.
"I believe you. I can see you, zipping like a speed racer to the scene."

"She was fine," Scott shook his head in remembered agitation.

"Was she?"

"No... She was healing. She had these light scratches like bushes. She was doped up and coming down from effects of the moon," said Scott, trying his best to remember the uncomfortable details but aside from her impression of anger and taking her pain, nothing came to mind. "For me I got a couple of sick days from school, a fever, two caring nurses and a wolf's bite on my stomach that magically healed. But she looked really different. She had this look in her eye, the look certain patients get at the ER... victims of major crimes. I... I found out about the 'reported missing' part days later."

From what Scott's noticed over the years, Lydia has very mysterious eyes; they were large, not green exactly, but kind of hazel. At times they seemed dark, especially when she was mad and were particularly bright when she seemed happy, which he observed more and more in recent days. But that day in her kitchen, they had a grey haze invade them. It seemed like something reached in and took away the ability for light to reflect in her eyes. It made him sick. Since then, he's wanted to talk to her, listen to her, stay with her, just generally work with her as much as possible to keep that greyness away.

Scott standing with Lydia; staring into bright eyes in the Mc Calls' dark backyard or staring into her light eyes in the center of Stiles' dark bedroom could have been alternative universes, but all roads led back to Stiles. It was worth the confusion.

"Do you think she's going to be okay?" Dangling along the line, Stiles sounded unsure.

"She has us," Scott answered confidently, "of course she is." A breath, like a little burst of static brushed through the phone line. Stiles' genuine sighs were few, far between and relatively quiet.

"I've got a date to get back to and he has a gun," Stiles insisted, his tone a mask of flippancy while he turned his Jeep on. "We should discuss this more when the both of us talk to Lydia. And Scott?"

"Uh, yeah?" he had half hung up when Stiles' voice called him back.

"Don't go to that place without me."

"Oh. No, of course not."

"And if you're going to ignore me, then just don't go alone-"

Scott laughed, "I said I'm not going without you."

"I'm just saying." Stiles sounded unconvinced. "Allison would be your best bet. She'll be a good second set of eyes since she was there that night. Plus, you need to talk to her."

Half-groaning, half-chuckling Scott insisted, "I said I won't go there without you."

"Right, I know. I heard you, but if you don't go with Allison, maybe talk to Isaac and see if he'll have your back-"

You. I promise, okay?"

"mmmokay," Stiles took time before he accepted it, or took time one-handedly opening his Jeep's gas to pump in gas. Or both. "Fine. But you're making a lot of promises today. Are you sure you can own up to them all?"

"That's funny," Scott grinned. "I only remember promising the one thing."

"Dude," Stiles said in the most severe and warning tone he could muster from such a nontthreatening noun, "you've got some obligations."

"Like what? I'm not sure what you're talking about? The line has gone all fuzzy and this isn't even my phone-"

"Dumbass," Stiles let out a long breath. They waited, each for the other to say something witty and baiting but nothing came. Finally, Stiles followed up with the only winning thing he knew would stay them both. "You're going to be okay, Scott."


Track 26 - Heart Beat by The New Electric Sound


{Wednesday, Afterschool in the halls by the Gyms/Locker Rooms - BHHS, CA}

"What's going on with you?" Isaac asked outright. When the gapped mouthed wide-eyed startled expression Kira provided was the exact opposite of the desired effect, he gave it a second go. "I mean are you okay?"

"What, me? Sure," she smiled steadily. "I told my Dad I had to see the uhm Coach. How are you doing?"

Isaac furrowed his brows and considered the variables with which to answer that question. He knew the sassier 'better now that you're here' response would probably frighten her. The mean and more literal 'since I'm not scared of my shadow, I'm doing better than...' would probably not get him any of the answers he wanted. So, maybe abandoning his first instincts would better suit the scenario.

"I'm curious is all," crossing his arms over his chest he thought over and over 'be none threatening,
Be none threatening.' "The Coach has been asking around about maybe putting a girl on the team. Are you the girl?"

After a pause she nodded, "I haven't completely decided yet."

"But I keep seeing you hanging around the locker rooms. And you've started to show up at practice a lot. Seems to me like you want to join the team?"

Kira stared instead of answering, then chose to nod. After some thought, when Isaac could no longer physically contain his curiosity he launched himself from one side of the hallway to lean on the wall beside her.

"Unless there's another reason you're creeping around." He cocked his head and grinned. "Come on Kira. Join the team."
"W-what do you mean?" she blinked over at him, her eyes full of fascination.

"Do you ever sense something you maybe shouldn't?" he lowered his voice.

Pressing her lips together, she shrugged.

With a brief nod, he took that as permission and scooted closer, certain there was something specific he recognized about her. Having re-experienced death enough times, Isaac felt little risk in calling Kira out since she had been there when he died the first time.

"You were running in the woods behind the school that day," while he said it he could see she understood.

"You were the friend Scott was helping," she said simply, he nodded.

"You know, suddenly Scott is going nuts keeping a secret from his friends, but here you are again," he shook his head softly chuckling. "I see you tip-toeing around, Kira. If you're trying to trick him-"

"I'm not! I'm not, I swear I'm not." Her hands anxiously flew back and forth as if she were trying to bat flies away.

"Maybe not. Maybe you don't know it," he eased back. "But the fox could be tricking you, too."

Like an animal terrified to be caught under a predator's gaze, Kira stayed very still while Isaac leaned tall against the wall next to her.

"I'm not threatening you. Just warning you it's not just fables and stories. Wolves and foxes tend not to get along," Isaac stepped back further, his lanky limbs somehow seemed ready to spring, "but I'm up for a challenge. Plus, I already told Coach, and I think you should join the game."

"Oh." She hesitated, confused and then broke into a grin. "Thanks."

After a pause Isaac added, 'By 'Game', you do get I also mean the bunch of us that are 'special'." He made air-quotes at that.

More at ease, she laughed a little lighter. Her not-so-secret secret had been aired, and she felt better for it, even if it hadn't been ideally with who or how she would have wanted it. Being a 'Team' player felt nice.

"Yeah, I got that," she took easier breaths.

"Because I've been told before I'm not great at subtlety..." eyes narrowed, he made a gesture through the air to measure his ability for where he was on the line of subtle-yes and subtle-no.

"Yeah, you're not doing that great anymore," she reached across, playfully punched his arm to get him to stop while he was ahead.

Track 27 - Beautiful Crime by Tamer

[Wednesday, Early-Evening between the Library and the Girl's Locker Room - BHHS, CA]

After his lengthy phone call, Scott had finally checked into the Office. Coach Helisek offered
whole-grain chips he'd rescued from the machine down the hall while they waited, but they mostly ignored each other for the rest of practice. And despite how long he managed to shuffle his Econ notes in front of him, his thoughts were rearranging others. The struggle of "Scott McCall; a better student, a better son, a better friend, a better everything," came apart in his fingertips the harder he tried to grab hold.

An hour later, Flinstock turned up in an irritable haze of forgetfulness and shouted at Scott in surprise for taking up space in his 'Private Place!' and then demanded he disappear. Then, in a bumbling rush to leave, Scott grabbed his things and exited the wrong door into the Girl's locker room.

After opening his mouth to tell someone in the empty echoic room, Scott turned to retreat and faced the Coaches closed windowed door with its little vertical shades latch lock. After consideration, he hesitated to knock. He'd had a lot of big thoughts lately, but not a lot of room to deal with them. The Girl's locker room seemed as good a place as any, so he pulled out the cell phone and dialed.

"Scott?"

"H-how did you know it was me?" he felt utterly bewildered both of his best-friends recognized him without caller-ID and before he even said a word and so Scott forgot how to say 'hello'.

"Isaac only texts. I figured you finally called me," Lydia sounded equally relieved and frustrated. She stopped partway up the stairwell to the school library.

"Sorry," Scott's voice wavered a little. Aside from evidently not calling earlier he wasn't sure what he was sorry for. It seemed she sensed that so she waited for him to continue. "I got attacked on the side of the road-

"Are you alright?" Lydia's tone changed, mildly little frustrated but tinged of concern.

"Yeah, I heal quickly but my phone doesn't exactly."

After a sharp breath came a light groan, and Scott could clearly envision that way Lydia squinted her eyes shut and shook her head like the next headache she had would be named after him. But that little smile still curled at her lips.

"Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," she lied.

"I know you're lying," he said smugly.

"Oh, how do you know?" she sounded keenly disbelieving.

"I can hear your heartbeat through the phone," he lied.

"You're lying," she smirked.

"How do you know?" he gapped.

"You have a tell," she laughed, easing finally. "Your voice gets brooding. Are you really okay? You missed school. You said were attacked."

"I did? No, I'm fine," he nodded, hanging his head lower and sat stooped onto a bench. From her
silence that followed it was obvious she didn't believe him.

"Is HE alright?" she snapped, sounding more like she wanted someone to 'not be' alright than to 'be' alright.

"What, who? Oh, Stiles." Scott chuckled after it took a second for his mouth to attach to Lydia's check-list of concern. "He's fine. He's on his way-"

"I don't care. So then why did you end up calling, Scott?"

"I don't know," he said low, waiting for the floor to open up and swallow him whole. Scott thought having the conversation over the phone would be easier than in person. He was wrong; it was a lateral sort of horrible. There was no way to bring up Lydia's original attack without coming across as a pariah. And what excuse would he have other than personal gain? Did he want to know what else bound their origins for his own sake? For Kira's? For Stiles'?

Lydia huffed lightly, "Scott, where is your head? Do you even remember the last text you left me?"

Scott struggled to but nothing came to mind, it seemed a million years ago.

"You texted about your nightmare," Lydia dropped to sit on a step, her purse pressed between her feet. The library was a quiet place but it didn't feel silent enough, somehow not intimate enough for her words anymore. "You thought the Monster-Alpha recognized me through you because somehow It knows me."

The Girls' locker room mirrored the Boys', but he wanted it to be foreign and some place where it seemed fair for her to always be one step ahead. Scott wanted to be a little bit to blame for talking about the subject he promised Stiles he'd hold off on. He wanted for Lydia to be able to yell at him for bringing it up just in case things got bad and feelings got hurt, but instead he was the one who felt disturbed by all of this.

"Are you still there?"

He nodded. Somehow she got that and continued.

"When Allison originally told you I'd been attacked you asked me where it happened... you asked because you knew it happened at the same location you were hurt," she sighed deeply, letting him breathe in her story and connect. "It only makes sense that It knows us both. It changed us both, It hurt us both the same way."

"Lydia," he said very quietly. It seemed tragically simple and straightforward. He felt equally guilty and grateful for it. These weren't uncommon feelings tied up with Lydia so it wasn't difficult to push through. "This was just a nightmare. I will never let It hurt you again. I'd rather die before letting that happen."

"I know that," she chuckled lightly, "I feel the same."

Stretching out his neck, Scott looked around almost like he expected to see her appear. Then he started to worry again. "Lydia, I recognized you right away, but It seemed really surprised by you. You're the only one who made It hesitate."

Lydia followed his train of thought, "why would It recognize me but be surprised by me if It's aware of me enough to give us the same dreams?"

"What if It's not? What if It's too weak to bother both of us? It's not even strong enough with It's
own hands to finish the murders, right? They're all finished with a weapon or an object that's just lying around... So, what if It's weakness is why It gave up on us after that bite? It did just leave me in the woods. What if It thought you never survived?" Scott threw out suggestions so quickly Lydia hardly had time to process. "Most of your dreams have always been really different from mine because they've been Banshee dreams..."

"Scott, Scott, Scott..." how to explain, each of his hypotheses genuinely redefined her existence? If only Scott could hear her heartbeat through the phone. "Slow down, can we talk more later? I can't have this conversation here, I have to head home," Lydia jumped to her feet, grabbed her belongings and headed out through the double doors toward student parking. After a bit of bumbling, he agreed. It felt like her cage came up again, but the locker room wouldn't be empty for long, he realized, and he found himself in the same predicament.

"I'm going to get a new phone soon," he promised. While she came back with 'uh-huh', it definitely felt cold and he sensed she might just send him to voicemail.

"Scott, you had better. I don't like this."

He paused a millisecond before ending the call, "don't like what?"

Reluctantly, she admitted, "I feel like I'm totally disconnected from you."

After a beat, relief flooded through Scott and he laughed. Before Lydia could snap at him to shut up or he could reply she hung up.

Which hardly mattered because he still knew where she lived. Plus, Mrs. Martin loooved him. Lydia wouldn't be allowed to hide in apathy anymore, for both of their sakes. Well, all of their sakes. This would be easier if he and Allison were on better terms. Man, this would be so much easier if Stiles were just back already.

Track 28 - Smokestacks by LAYLA

[Wednesday, Evening in the Martins' home - Beacon Hills, CA]

The evening chill settled, and for the first time in a long time Lydia intended to savor a night at home. Her Mom was stuck out in a late meeting with a client, visiting listings in The Hills. It gave Lydia free reign over the living room to spread out and get work done. She brought the coffeepot out onto the coffee table, (which made its namesake worthwhile), brought her charger near the couch so her iPod wouldn't run out of juice and fanned her notes in an exacting display. There were splayed partitions between schoolwork and extracurricular research. With her hair pulled back into an 'All-Business' ponytail, her oversized coffee cup and Prada beside her, she was at the ready.

1. Kanima; Jackson's predicament and his increased evolutionary state came after the exposure to mutation (albeit a bite or a scratch from [ideally] a Werewolf.) Afterward, he would suffer massive gaps in memory when his Master stole physical time by commanding his actions. When Lydia had been attacked and exposed to external stimulus (in this case, three fading gashes along her left hip, presumably by the Monster-Alpha), she had been left with a massive gap of time unaccounted for.

Her calculating mind reminded, conclusive probability claims weren't made with such small sample sets, but that didn't prevent the growing pit in her stomach whenever Lydia's mind wandered toward thoughts of what she could have been up to during her fugue state. There was no
documented evidence that a Banshee could be controlled by a Master, but it was a cold comfort. She didn't want to feel pleased to have one over on Jackson. There had originally been a gladness in knowing they shared an experience, but that was followed up by a sense of abandonment in leaving Jackson to a stranger pulling his strings.

Sure, the missing days over the winter break made her feel queasy every time she thought about them. However, the probability of her acts tallied up from those few missing days hardly compared to the well-documented trail of murdered Werewolves throughout Beacon Hills stretching into the Fall. That is, if the Kanima were accountable for those. It distressed her beyond belief, the sheer accumulative amount of days, probable acts and whether or not Jackson could remember any of it.

Controlling genetic mutation responses in order to find a way to make Jackson, 'Jackson' again seemed the ideal route to physically manage with being the Kanima. The key word being 'ideal', because medicines wouldn't do a thing psychologically to help Jackson deal with the responsibility of being the Kanima. Since a Kanima reflected an inner conflict, how could he deal with his issue? If he could ever confront his conflict, why would he need a Master to take control? What disturbed Jackson 'Perfect' Whittemore enough to keep him from evolving into the powerful being he was genetically entitled to be? Nope. Her hypothesis had run off course. There was no immediate solution, so that tangent went on the shelf.

Coffee refill, Prada cuddle and a little World Geography.

2. Scott's phone call; She couldn't bring herself to get back to him. It wasn't a conversation she wanted to have 'via Isaac'. It was incredibly insightful for Scott to come to the conclusion that they shared an 'origin' source. It did easily clear up why in the nightmare, the Wolfwere (the lesser used technical term for some trapped as more wolf than man) version of Scott knew Lydia, but not the Monster. And because Lydia worked hard to put distance between their stories, the avenue that their attack site had been the same was never explored. Despite how obvious it seemed.

If the Monster didn't know she survived, (and now It did,) then Lydia just lost an advantage. That sucked, but not by much because It had been left disturbed by the realization. Like most people did, It underestimated Lydia and just assumed she would be weak needy Beta or dead. The compiled list of victims, killed and attacked documented adult Werewolves solely, with the except for 3 people. Lydia pulled up that list on her phone and wrote down on a piece of paper the ones that stood out.

Three teens. These names were important. They were anomalies. But why?

1st. Quint (Werewolf-Omega) - burned alive. Was killed by Kate, by a Hunter, by accident but hidden on the exploding Hale house for unknown reason. [Not the Monster] Killer #1.

2nd. Kira (?) - kidnapped/center of an electrical storm (?). Was attacked by the Kanima and the Kanima Master (Identity?) for reason unknown, purpose unknown? [Probably not the Monster?] Killer #2.

3rd. Ginger (Werewolf-Beta) - (?) Killer #3.

Lydia frowned at her list. There were more question marks than she would have liked. It looked pretty damn gruesome, but it gave a new direction. She was frightened to share it with the group for fear of what they'd do with it. A budding theory came up based on raw data, but she understood
the boys' impulse to take research on alone and spare others.

Stop.

Lydia took a breath and rewarded her progress with a bit of "Global History and Government" for a mental break.

A sudden passion overcame her to study up on neurosciences and electrotherapy, but it definitely felt like a distraction and anyway, everything felt 'sudden' or 'important' these days and so Lydia put it on a shelf for now.

3. Kira; There was no ignoring the unnatural storm from the other night, although everyone seemed to be doing their best effort to. From their brief but informative conversation at Beacon Hills Memorial, Lydia gathered that the electrical currents took direct effects on Jackson's transformation.

The more complicated questions were 1) did Jackson mean to cure himself 2) kill himself 3) save Kira from his Master's intentions 4) all of the above.

As evident from the Lichtenberg marks found slowly healing on Jackson's body, the storm wasn't normal or accidental. As evident from the shocking moment in the hallway when Kira touched her hand and the world turned back on, that girl was at the center of a lot of power. Maybe it was time to take that mystery down from the shelf.

Track 29 - Ghouls by We Are Scientists

{Thursday, at Beacon Hills High School - Beacon Hills, CA}

"Great," Jackson grumbled, padding along on bare feet. "This is just lame. If you think I'm even a little bit stressed, or I've got a problem with a naked dream, then you haven't taken a look at this."

He held his head high and strut through the halls of Beacon Hills High School. There was no doubt 'All Eyes' were on him and there were titters from some, cat calls from others and as he went along. But the further he went, the longer the hall extended.

It didn't take long for Jackson's temper to get the better of him. He wasn't going to break into a run like a weakling, but he had no problem yelling at everybody else. Sure, enough they jumped, stopped laughing and inevitably cowered from him, clinging to their lockers. As if that weren't enough, when frustration drove him to yell they tried for door knobs but no doors opened. They seemed to be just as trapped. Well, screw them, they had clothes.

Jackson moved faster, turned corners, went down flights of stairs, up flights of stairs, toward the locker rooms... but with every attempt, it turned into more hallway and went on and on.

Inevitably, swearing and stumbling, he tripped, cracked his head on the floor and came away with a bloody brow. After a moment of awkward pause, there were a few chuckles, and it sent him over the edge. As he rose, he struck the floor with all his might and fury. He hit it again and again and again, and the tiles broke apart underneath.

Like the swirl circling a drain, the people nearest were being drawn toward the vacuum he created in the ground, the tunnel his clawed hands hollowed out. Some people cried, some bargained, some begged for their lives, but only one girl asked him; 'is it better now?'
He stopped with his arms bloodied up and elbow deep in debris. All over he could feel the air on his exposed scaly skin, the sensitivity was cutting and his muscles coiled tight. If his body were asked the question, the answer would be yesyesyes. But she didn't ask his body. If she had, then she would have been on her knees and ready to bleed for him. Instead, she stood with feet spread at shoulder's width, hands at rest at her side with palms out in submission.

Jackson looked her up and down with his reptilian eyes that could see a shine of red and gold surrounding her even in the dark, but he wanted to meet dark eyes watching and kind mouth tweaked into one of her shy smiles. He wanted to face Kira properly and answer her question, he wanted to make an artful quote about chaos, about destruction and creation, and he wanted to know all these things so he could explain why but he never had the chance. Because the body of a Kanima doesn't move like the body of a man and it fights for fights that aren't his, and the tail dragged a thick jagged gash across her throat before he could answer 'not yet.'

Kira collapsed in a boneless heap, a paralyzed doll into the grave he already dug. The shock of it left the Kanima at the reins, Jackson couldn't hold it back. He remained a captive audience to the carnivorous actions of the Kanima as it took its time, tore her apart and devoured her.

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Track 30 - The Monster by Atella

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(Thursday, Morning from the Spaulding District to BHHS - Beacon Hills, CA)

In the same general instinct, that common current to get out and get out of there and get on with it, Jackson slammed directly into the driver's side door of a familiar little red Hyundai. He would have yelled furiously if he hadn't dropped to the floor, light-headed and breathless instead.

Ms. Blake kneeled beside him, having hopped out of the car, looking startled and just as breathless. She helped him to his feet and into the passenger side. He didn't believe it was an accident, despite how many times she reminded that she was parked at the time.

"I'm disappointed," she tapped the ring finger of her right hand nervously against the steering wheel while they waited at a red light. "This bond is only going to get stronger, but your focus is drifting... you walked into my car for god's sake."

"Then tell me what the hell you need from me now," Jackson rubbed his bruised ego while rubbing his aching ribs. "So, I can get back to a normal life."

She tilted her face to look toward him, her dark her fell into her eyes making the intent gaze she aimed at him a little less intense. "How 'bout you tell me what you want Jackson? This works two ways and you know I can't do this without you."

"I don't want anything," Jackson deadpanned, and turned his head he aimed a fierce blue-eyed glare at her. "Hitting me with a car to get my attention is not exactly showing leadership skills."

Before he could say anything else a honk came from behind to remind them to move and for a moment she didn't. She held his glare, but didn't return it. Her worry outreached his resentment. The rest of the way from the Spaulding District to BHHS, inside of the car stayed quiet except for the tapping of her finger on the steering wheel. The moment she pulled up to the curb, Jackson's grabbed at the door's latch but found it locked. Swearing, he kicked at the car floor a number of times before he swung around to face her.
"What?"
"Listen to me. You have been so good up to now, getting rid of everyone and everything that's distracted you," Ms. Blake reached over and calmly held his face in her hands. Nearly instantly, he started to slow his breathing, at least into less angry huffs. "Once you get back on board, we'll get through this better, faster and safer. You believe me, don't you?"

"Of course I do!" He lowered his aggression, slowly but surely. "I'm gonna figure this out. I'll fix it."

The anger within still riled, but her knowing smile tempered it as she combed his hair back and set him right in his seat.

"I know you will." She nodded, then pressed the button to unlock the doors. And with that, it was a smooth transition to move from one cage into another.

Track 31 - Ready for You by Years and Years

{Thursday, Midday in ELA - BHHS, CA}

"To keep you honest, I'll be assigning your seats today. I'm going to call your names alphabetically, and then you should pair up nicely," Ms. Blake said kindly trying to ease the nerves of her prickly teens. She gestured fluidly with each announcement. "Argent and Daehler."

Allison looked over the heads of classmates, from Lydia over to Scott apologetically. If her Mom hadn't been hung up in the Lodge yet again, she wouldn't have been dropped off at school with barely enough time to make it to ELA. Haplessly, she shuffled across the room behind Matt and took the seat nearest the window. Propping her chin up on her hand, she watched like a hawk for the soonest opportunity to get to them.

"Lahey and Māhealani."

No luck at proximity to Isaac. He sat with Danny in her row too far diagonally, at the desk closest to the door.

"Martin and McCall."

Allison curled her fingers over her lip to hide the grin when Lydia and Scott filed into the desk behind her. While Ms. Blake was distractedly continued down the list of students, Allison tore off a tiny note. Beneath the desk, Allison passed it backhanded it to Lydia who, without looking moved it to Scott by tapping it annoyingly against his thigh. He read it immediately, then reread it when he remembered to hide it from view.

"Can we talk?"

A mixture of confusion and relief crossed his face. Scott gave a nod and quickly tucked the piece of paper into his jeans. Relieved, Allison faced forward. (Un)amused, Lydia rolled her eyes and turned to look through the window.

"And... Whittemore with Yukimura. That's it, now we can get started. Hope you've all got your #2 pencils sharp and ready and you're nice and comfortable because you're all going to stay right
where you are for the next hour and a half."

"Miss! Can I use the bathroom?" Kira's hand nearly smacked Jackson in the face when she rose it.

Ms. Blake had hardly closed the door to the classroom before Kira's hand shot into the air. Her English teacher seemed to consider it while walking along the aisle toward her but there was some sort of comedy in her step.

"Certainly," she placed a hand on Kira's shoulder softly, "if you want to take an F."

A moment of hope deflated into sinking humiliation with the tittering of nearby classmates and Kira felt like her back had frozen over with the vulnerability of having Jackson sitting beside her.

"This is for your own good. After your disappearing act that I heard about yesterday, I thought you'd be smarter than to even ask." Ms. Blake patted her shoulder lightly before walking off.

Kira faced forward, she kept her eyes down, worked hunched over her papers, and wish she'd worn her hair down today to add extra privacy protection.

"Coach says you're joining the team."

Since she'd been expecting his voice for so long, it felt like a relief to hear it, all the muscles in her shoulders finally let their tension go. She stopped writing, which hardly mattered since she had no idea what she'd been writing for the last few minutes anyway.

"Thinking about it... actually, I'm pretty sure I want to," she chewed on her lip when she spoke. Talking back also felt like a relief. She'd forgotten what that felt like, to talk to someone who knew the whole truth, even the darkest parts.

After a thoughtful period, Jackson finally asked by writing on the edge of his paper 'why?'

"Track team doesn't feel like enough running." Kira said, perked up.

When he was certain Ms. Blake had her focus on someone else, he edged nearer.

"You'll get hurt." He side-eyed her, his discerning blue eyes searching soft soulful brown ones. Sweat accumulated at his heavy-brow line and he failed at masking his concern.

Kira searched his face, she tried to remember there wasn't much a difference between fear and excitement. It's the same adrenaline that made for a good sportsman. And here they were, shoulder-to-shoulder, people who hurt and helped one another as easily as holding hands.

"We'll be fine," she said, wrung her hands on her lap beneath the desk. Not that he missed the nervous act. Or it was a sign to spare his nerves the sight of the object of his obliteration. "Haven't you ever learned there's no 'I' in 'team'?"

"Yeah, but there is a 'me.'" he said, trying for haughtiness. But after a moment of pretense he unclenched his jaw and backed off. Stiffly, he added, "that was a joke. Jeez. You must really, really hate me."

"Oh my god, no. Not at all," Kira quickly lowered her voice when Ms. Blake started to move their way again. And as she went by, Ms. Blake waited there longer than at any other table. Before she moved on, she gave them a nod and smile of encouragement, before reminding the class they had
another 30 minutes.

For a while afterward, the two continued in silence. Once again, when Jackson spoke it took her by surprise. And once again, it was more relieving than startling.

"Youshouldjoin."

Kira sat upright and glanced around, even though she knew where the voice came from, but her delight had her spiraling. Then, hurriedly, she dove to her work.

'(•‿•)'

She drew into the margin of her test paper, careful not to right 'thanks' or 'Ok' because she didn't need his permission or approval but it was nice to know he would be on board. Nice to know he agreed to, being Co-Captain her after all. It was as close as she would get to forgiveness from him... the teamwork thing would to be a whole different bag of tricks.

Now, came the realization that she'd just decided to join the lacrosse team. Which was a whole different level of stress. Not to mention there would have to have a conversation with her Dad, in addition to the fact that she had no idea what they were up to in the English test.

Track 32 - You Are a Runner and I Am My Father's Son by Wolf Parade

{Thursday, Noon in the Government/Global History Classroom - BHHS, CA}

The hallways felt unrealistically packed, because students were given an extended lunch period which served to turn the school into Bedlam. The madness to create impromptu cram-sessions only caused disorder.

From the way Kira rushed over and practically pounced onto Scott's desk after their English exam, it seemed like a life or death situation. Her grip on Scott's wrist was the only guiding influence that got him from Ms. Blake's English class downstairs to Mr. Yukimura's History classroom.

"It had to be now?" Even though he was mostly worried, Scott still complained.

"I need to do this. And I need you there." Although she was pretty determined, Kira still wavered.

When they stopped outside of the classroom, she froze and cast her eyes to the floor in defeat. She took deep, measured, athletic breaths in preparation for a confrontation. Still shaky, she looked pleadingly to Scott to do something, to say something to motivate her, "Well?"

Glancing around for a solution then back to face her, he did the only motivating thing he knew would work. After knocking very loudly on the classroom door, he jumped away and hid from view.

"Kira?" Mr. Yukimura startled and immediately came to his feet. "This is a surprise. Are you feeling alright?" The closer he got, the clearer he saw the distress on his daughter's face.

It took a great amount of power for her to step forward. The argument on her lips became mixed with respect and illogical panic. Behind her, she felt the unfathomable wall of Scott's presence, and the power of magic that came with his companionship. In front of her she was confronted by the
"Dad. I... You and Mom have been acting weird since the blackout... And I know you've been worried about me, so... I'm joining the lacrosse team and... I just feel like I'm ready for something like this. I can't hang around watching the two of you get ready for... I don't know, a divorce or something-" her demands had a simple authority but with directions that surprised even herself.

"Whoa-Whoa-Whoa," her Dad reached forward and pulled her into a crushing hug. But once he dragged her forward, he noticed the bobbing head of a teenage boy hovering behind her. "And I'm sure you're here for a valid reason?"

"Moral support," Scott and Kira answered in unison, although Kira's words were pressed into the fabric of her father's dress shirt. With a deep sigh and a philosophical expression of practiced patience, Mr. Yukimura brought them both into the classroom.

"No one is getting divorced, Kira." Mr. Yukimura said this with the same firm resolve he would when discussing World Government in a class before a lunch period in a room full of hungry kids. He didn't even pull punches just because Scott was there. "I'm sorry. I know things are tense. I'll try to talk to your Mom about it... but you have to give her a chance, too."

"Okay." She agreed to, resignedly, and leaned back against the edge of the teacher's desk. Kira hardly felt proud at that moment.

Mr. Yukimura caught Scott in his eyesight and the authority of his gaze reminded Scott that he stood in a sacred space, a realm outside of control and locked in Mr. Yukimura's domain.

He watched Scott as he spoke to Kira. "I'm not sure why you want to join the lacrosse team. I guess it can't hurt having a boy like this encouraging you."

"Wha--me?" Scott straightened up, his cringe came off as smiling.

"Now, Scott I'm not sure why you're persuading my daughter-"

"He didn't persuade me-" Kira argued.

"I didn't have to. Kira is really awesome-" Scott backed up.

"You don't have to tell me how awesome my daughter is-" Mr. Yukimura acknowledged.

"You think I'm awesome?" Her soft-spoken voice cut through their rising bickering.

They froze, both guys looked to each other and then back toward her, unsure to which person she directed the question.

"Mr. Yukimura," Scott tried to get past the awkwardness, "she's earned her place on our team, if she wants it."

"I'm sure you're trying to be diverse and inclusive, but Kira," her Dad bruised her feelings without meaning to. He stared warily at Scott while he spoke and inclined toward Kira. "You've tried things like this before. You've never been very outgoing."

"Not here." She said, her voice forced a calm. Her thoughts ran along the crowded halls. The whole time she'd been at BHHS, she hadn't connected with anyone. The images she kept in mind were of the lacrosse field; punching Isaac in the arm. Touching Jackson's hand outside the Coaches' office. Sitting and cheering by Lydia in the stands. Hanging out with Scott in the shed behind the
bleachers. Just sitting in the bleachers with pep-squad, watching a team of kids she felt she could really belong to. And running around the track. "In Beacon Hills, it's different. I feel different here."

"What about the Track Team?" Her Dad cautiously pointed out. He partly wanted to argue it was the first time he'd seen her motivated for something since the blackout, was when she joined the team – definitely the first time she'd been passionate since they'd moved to Beacon Hills. "You said you loved running..."

"I do love running, but I want this. I feel like I belong, Dad." Kira said. She felt wired to his sense of empathy and reached for his hand. She couldn't think of a way to communicate how the Team made up for the secrets her parent's kept from her.

"Your Mother is going to love this." He sighed, accepting her choice. Kira's face lit up with happiness, and he smiled in return. He kissed her forehead and then pulled her against him, wrapping an arm around her shoulder.

"What about you?" she wanted verbal confirmation, not just resignation.

"I love it." He gestured widely outward with a flourish of his free hand, as if he could foresee the future. "I'm going to be at all your games."

"Well, you don't have to do that," she laughed uncomfortably.

It was a double-edged sword, both relief and discomfort that Scott felt on her behalf. He felt it was a good enough closure to Kira's conflict, but it skirted asking her Dad about the source of her troubles. Since it wasn't his place to bring it up, he couldn't figure out how to weasel in the subject, but Mr. Yukimura must have picked up his tension and seemed happy to poke fun at it. Really happy to poke fun at Scott's discomfort, actually.

After a few minutes, Kira excused herself to grab lunch with the promise of quick a return after her Dad insisted Scott stay back and help him set up the seats.

"Don't you think she'll be great?" Mr. Yukimura took a position opposite, suddenly singing Kira's praises for being on the team.

"I think Kira's going to be great. Especially if she could focus 100%. Like, not stress about extra stuff..." it was a clumsy move, Scott wished he had been subtler. Stiles would have been. Stiles' natural-born charisma would have smoothed over all this awkwardness or very much not and he just would have cared less. But Mr. Yukimura definitely took note of Scott's protectiveness and stepped toward that pitfall.

"I'm sure she'll be mindful enough to optimize her physical and mental well-being," he explained, and pointed for Scott to move a desk over one way and back again.

"Of course, Mr. Yukimura." Scott aligned another student's desk and turned toward his History teacher. "Kira's asked me to come with her because she's been nervous about this, 'cause she didn't think you'd really talk to her. Well, I'm used to doing this same stuff for my best-friend, 'cause his Dad's just like you. He's the Sheriff... this important, respected guy. The thing they've got in common are their Dads. They love a lot, and are freaked out they'll lose them 'cause of these serious secrets."

It felt like stepping over the line, surprising himself, and Scott expected Mr. Yukimura to lash out at him. But the words were honest and came from someplace else other than the present. Scott had
been thinking of his Mom. Thinking about what she'll say when she found out about how he'd messed up midterms, how he'd snuck out with his bike and how he'd cut school. The millions of unusable excuses for why he broke his cellphone weren't as convincing as "because I'd been fighting off Werewolves and got fried by a super powered street lamp, because I can't seem to stop myself from trying to fix everything messed up in this messed up town!"

"When we moved back here, we were hoping for a better life for her," Mr. Yukimura smiled slightly and explained, "If you care about her I'd be grateful if you could reflect on what that means and maybe how you can help maintain that."

Okay. 1) Scott definitely needed to ask Allison to look into this. 2) The Yukimuras had lived in Beacon Hills before.

"Are you asking me to stay away from Kira?" Scott's tones maintained a candor that still played out that he'd stick beside her.

"No." He didn't look up while aligning test packets on his desk, "Only, she's happy right now. But she lost interest in Track. She might lose interest in this."

"I hope not."

Mr. Yukimura slowly shook his head, "Not accounting sports injuries, this environment wasn't exactly the plan. But I must admit, it is not surprising. I think you know what I mean, Scott."

Scott took his seat and took a moment, a long moment, to process this. It made sense that if the Yukimuras lived here before and while on the bridge and at the hospital had Hunters shuffled them out on the night of the blackout storm, then Mr. Yukimura understood everything going on at the school.

Mr. Yukimura gave a sly smile, walked over to the chalkboard and wrote under the title; 20th Century American History. ‘-sometimes history repeats itself.-’ He underlined the theme. "We have been studying this all semester."

Scott sat in the center of the room, with carelessly combed back hair, a worn unassuming denim jacket and combat boots and with hands folded in the middle of the desk before him, he displayed the depiction of normalcy. But his willingness was virtually intimidating, he exhibited emanating profound power. To that effect, for a lingering moment his eyes lit up, and it while it could have been a trick of the light, Ken Yukimura obviously knew better.

"Yeah, but only if we don't learn," Scott argued. "There are kids here willing to learn."

"It's going to be difficult," Mr. Yukimura said, smirking. Without knowing Scott's class type he could easily put up his guard but he knew the kid for over half a year for all his dopey student antics. Supernatural or not, their conversation made him think he'd just begun to learn Scott's real character, and created an understanding. This was such a hard path, he sympathized, and these kids would all have to choose to walk again. "You'll have to try again, fail again. Fail better."

Track 33 - Drive by Halsey

{Thursday, Afternoon on the 1st of the Library - BHHS, CA}
More than half of the extended period had flown by and Allison still scrolled through her contact list. In one hand the S's mocked her with its uncomfortable comfort while the other hand went to her anxious lips. It seemed like all she felt was worry recently, and it wasn't how a Hunter's mind was trained to function. Hunters were meant to process things clearly, clinically and unemotionally. To do that Allison needed all the facts, which brought her back to the S's. Ignoring the suspicion that the Argents wiretapped her cellphone she scrolled through the contacts list and dialed.

"Hey. Hi, Allison..."

At the sound of his voice, she realized how much she missed him, even the animated way he said her name. "Hey, Stiles... What've you been up to?"

"Nothing much. I just woke up. I've been studying hard. You know, 'been prepping for those placement exams. Catching up on curriculums--"

"Knock it off. I know you skipped town, Lydia told me." She snorted mildly because she especially missed his talent at being lighthearted while discomforted. A skillset she envied.

"Uhm, yeah, sure. How'd Lydia find out?" Even over the distance and ricocheting fiber-optics, she noted a distinct uneasiness in his voice.

"Oh. Lydia said Scott said Isaac told him," Allison explained, cautious not to get in trouble by recounting to many more details. "Stop trying distracting me. I wanted to ask you a question."

"Hold up," the line went distant as Stiles could be heard laughing, chatting and then excused himself from a third party. "So, what? What's happened? Who's dead?"

"No one's dead," she rolled her eyes and hoped he sensed that through the phone, "yet. I was just wondering where you disappeared to."

"Family business," he hummed along, then grunted with some hefting steps and sighed with ease. "Now let me ask you a question; be honest, did you miss me?"

She bit her lip to keep from outright laughing, "yes, actually." She waited, but he had no witty comeback for that, "I could use someone to confide in right now. But not exactly over the phone."

"Did you think of maybe going to Scott?" he approached part delicately, part mockingly.

"Did you think of maybe waiting 60 seconds before suggesting that?" she groaned. "It isn't just the break up. I don't... I don't think he would get this. Isaac seems to think Scott's halfway to grabbing his passport, tracking you down and dragging you back--"

"Does he realize New Mexico isn't actually in Mexico?" Stiles broke out laughing.

"Do you realize you're talking about Scott here? He'd find a way," she bowed her head toward her shoulder, trying to keep Stiles' guffaws from being overheard. Still, eyes turned her way. "He's all heart... I need a little less of that right now."

Laughing turned to choking which descended into wheezing and back into Stiles' disembodied voice.

"So, you called the most heartless person you know?" Stiles' voice came through raw.

Allison glanced heavenward as she shook her head. This could go back and forth for hours and even an extended lunch period would only go on so long, and despite all the melodrama she had
wanted to squeeze in some studying. Midterms covered weightily over everything. Maybe this was a mistake.

"Alright, lay it on me. I'm feeling open-minded and enlightened." Stiles sounded engrossed, puzzled and exhausted all at once.

"Are you on something?" she headed toward the nearest cleared out classroom to escape the noise.

"Actually yes. I'm at Joshua Tree."

After being jostled around with the rest of the crowd due to a lover's quarrel further down the hall, Allison stopped short, mind-boggled by the image of Stiles at a monastic desert-like National Forrest surrounded by stoic shrubbery in the process of becoming Zen.

"Hello? Are you there?"

"I-I'm not sure, I think I might be high." Allison got knocked back into motion by a passerby and brought to life. As she cut through foot traffic her mind slowly caught up to the rest of her. "Hey, you're almost home!"

"Almost," he sounded pleased with himself. "You had something to unburden yourself over?"

"Okay first, don't judge me."

"I don't judge. Except that Jackson prick... this isn't about Jackson is it? Allison, you're not saying anything. Why aren't you saying anything? Shit."

It wasn't as cut-n-dry as Allison envisioned because as much as Stiles kept promising not to interrupt, he kept interrupting to ask about particular events and then interrupt his interruptions to get more interesting details, then occasionally interrupted that with apologies for his interruptions.

Instead, Allison aimed for the most informal and abbreviated debriefing imaginable that would work for someone as detached from the subject as she felt; the recap of her earlier career at BHHS and where Jackson fit in to it.

Firstly; as an avid fan of the Cyclones (for good girlfriend points), Jackson's only noticeable behavior on the field had been to be an elite player. In fact, the only suspicious thing on the field was Scott's sudden prowess and Jackson hadn't taken that well. Sharing his Captain status and the popularity made him withdrawn, icy and aloof with only occasional outbursts. Even that had been kept to the field. As far as Jackson's relationship with Lydia, Allison's intel was obscured by Lydia's cold-shoulder. They had a bitter breakup before school started but she only learned about that recently, which in retrospect exhibited detachment on the part of someone previously outgoing, popular and personable. At the time Jackson's coldness added toward his popularity, much to Lydia's irritation. Allison sidestepped Lydia's cold-shoulder because she'd witnessed her do the same to Scott with little provocation, and anyway Lydia never actually hated anyone except her Dad, so it hardly set off any red lights. Plus, when Lydia turned up in Fairvale General Hospital, Jackson was the first in line to help. Maybe she should have questioned his means and motives at the time, but Lydia's safety was #1.

Secondarily; there had to be probable cause for looking into Jackson. She jumped forward to what brought her to creating a dossier; to when the Argents were suspicious of unaffiliated Werewolves around town- partly because she didn't want eyes to turn toward Scott's direction, but mostly because of Jackson's increasing remote and vanishing behavior. Allison only suspected him of being another rogue Beta, and so set up surveillance outside of his home. While surveilling, she
collected suspicious secretion in claw marks outside of his home and designated the outpost too
dangerous to return to alone. But, she had made super-powered paralytic darts out of his venom, "- which you totally used on Isaac. Ugh, god. You pierced him with Jackson goo! Can I be the one to
tell Isaac? Please god, Allison, I am your BFF4EVER. You gotta give me this!"

"Stiles, fine. But you've got to let me finish this-" after confirming Jackson as a Kanima, the focus
stopped being 'what is he up to?' and became 'why did this happen?' and 'who is the Master?'
because without self-control there was no point in confronting him. That would just result in
injuring everyone, like what happened at the library. "Thanks, Stiles!"

"How was I supposed to know the guy would go Godzilla on us-?"

After the blackout at the hospital, Jackson had been reported near to death one minute only to
recuperate almost instantaneously the next. Despite being in a building full of Hunters and modern
technical surveillance, the mayhem shorted everything out and they had no way of getting an
accurate record of everyone there that night.

"If someone came to hurt him or heal him, I'll never know. Basically it seemed like a waste of the
only time we could have used him as leverage-"

"Thanks, Stiles!" Stiles quoted smugly.

"-except I forgot one thing," her smugness undercut his. "I never went back to his house to take
down my surveillance equipment."

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When Stiles' jaw gaped in shock, French fries spewed from it. The bright glaring sun made his eyes
water and forced him to blink, reanimating his face. He rushed to his feet, wiping the ruined fries,
his box of fries and his additional box of curly fries to the ground. Infuriated, he gnashed his teeth
to watch his litter flutter across the brown-grey flats when he realized he hadn't brought a plastic
bag. The park would definitely fine for littering, or worse; make him eat it off the sandy ground.

"Stiles?"

"Yeah!" he croaked, scrambling around trying to catch all the debris. The valley floor of dust and
prickly, spiny plants kept him from falling over.

"Did you hear me?"

"Yes! I mean, yes." He calmed after the triumph of collecting the last of his mess to his chest. He
squeezed closed his eyes and replayed the last of her story in his mind, "Wait, so you're telling me
you have incriminating images of Jackson? Or the Kanima?"

"Sort of."

"Sort of Jackson, sort of Kanima."

"Yes." Allison voice kept getting wispier, while cupping the phone. She might as well have been
eating it.

"What are you going to do with it?" Stiles glanced around, he looked to see if he were overheard. They'd camped down to eat a good jog away and there was no way for the good Deputy to
overhear. The nearest thing were awkwardly shaped trees to witness their shady conversation and
his clownish feat.
"What do I do?"

Stiles’ gob opened wide, mouthing swear words into the air in soundless screams. After he cleared his throat, "I can't tell you what do."

"You are dying to tell me what to do," her laugh sounded light as bells, and he rolled his eyes annoyed that it pleased him to know she was okay with it.

"Alright, sure. What do you want me to say, never show your family? Because that's what this Hunter hating Werewolf is supposed to say?" Overhead plumes of white cloud, staining pale blue peppered the sky and broke through the stream of sun. It gave him a break from the light and a second to think. "He's killing people, Allison. To death. You can't just sit on this."

Confusion was evident in the timbre of her voice. "He's violent in the footage," her loyalties crisscrossed again and again. "They could kill him."

"And he could kill you," after a beat he had to say it, he needed the point to hit home. "That would kill me. And then I'd have to kill him. That's a lot of killing. Do you really want all that blood on your hands?"

"No. I mean," then she reconsidered, "No. He won't kill me. Not if his Master doesn't tell him to. I just have to make sure his Master doesn't tell him to. Listen, I was distracted before because I felt like my friends and family were pulling at me, then I missed this piece of evidence. I only got to transfer the files to my tablet last night. Stiles, you can see it clearly in the footage... He was trying to save someone. He may not always be in control, but he's not always out of control either."

"Allison," he felt unsure about telling her what not to, at least not without all the intel. "Do you even know what you're doing?"

"Yeah, we're trained for this. Sort of."

"Sort of? Trained? What, did they teach a seminar in martyrdom? What if you're wrong?"

"I don't care. I can help him."

"Oh, no, you don't get to say that." The tapping of his foot picked up speed with his rushing thoughts. He wondered if that blanket-blind heroism virus ran rampant in Beacon Hills. "Look when I ran into the woods after Isaac's attack, Lydia read me the riot act and whatever- of course she was right. Especially about 'not calling for backup'."

"You are my backup," her voice came across steady and light. When he didn't answer right away her voice got a little less steady, but just as light. "Stiles, be on my side about this... no one else will."

"Fine, fine. Fine." He let out a long slow breath and after shoving all of his junk under one arm he trudged his way speedily back toward his Jeep. "I got your back. Tonight, expect a call to check-in."

"Not if I don't call you first."

Track 34 - Cold Sweat by Band of Skulls
There was practically tradition to make a roadblock of the hallways with their drama, despite being retired as the most popular couple in school. Except Jackson refused to foot the blame when it was the fault of their lockers. They were still too close, and while he tried not to, it was an obsession he came back to, despite the fact that they were placed across the hall from each other and over 50 feet away. Because of this setup, whenever she approached, which was too often, he could sense her seeping in like a fog. No, more vague, like the memories of her Coco Chanel at Homecoming, the one he complained would cling to his Hugo Boss jacket but he never did get dry cleaned afterward. Images of Homecoming lingered in the present-tense, mingled in with distorted images of her staring at him bright-eyed and perfectly tinted mouth pressed into a worried line watching as blood rolled down his chin and while his claws were elbow deep inside the remains of someone dying.

Jackson never remembered Lydia walking through his sleep until he saw her by the light of day. Since the beginning of the year she'd appeared in his subconscious as a judging presence, hovering a step behind. And much like it was when they were together, it was just as easy to ignore. Almost.

Only when Lydia flounced down the stairs and crossed the hall to her locker, exactly as she had moved through his mind, did Jackson then realize he missed and wanted how she permeated -- which immediately fascinated, infuriated and made him afraid for her. And before he knew it his feet had followed her path.

"I need to know something," he said just as she swung around to face him. She seemed composed and unbothered to see him. Good.

Beside her, their classmate Sydney practically squeaked in surprise, Jackson hadn't registered the brunette. Lydia placed a steady hand on the girl's arm and silenced her with a side glance.

"Sure," her voice said quietly as though they were alone.

"I want to know that you're being safe."

"That is totally inappropriate!" Sydney scoffed, wide-eyed and practically laughing.

Lydia didn't see humor in his demand, instead she looked offended by the hypocrisy of it. Her hard, appraising gaze raked over his wounded look and twitchy glances. It seemed obvious to both of them, the only time they connected were around life and death situations, which didn't make for easygoing banter.

"I am. Are you?" she snapped.

"Jeeez-us," Sydney groaned. She flinched out of Lydia's grip and inched away from their conversation. He tsked rather than answered. Then gave Sydney a glare that should have sent her rushing off, but Lydia insisted she stay.

"You stay, he's going."

"I know what you've been up to," Jackson started again, under his breath which earned him a trademarked Martin glare. Although insistent, he manage to come off as concerned rather than menacing. "You'd better be keeping safe."

"I know what you've been up to," from the hitch in Lydia's breath Jackson knew she told the truth.
"And you're lying to yourself if you think what you're doing is safe. You'll get hurt, you'll hurt others and you'll end up unhappy."

"You don't know anything," he leaned forward to whisper into her ear, wishing she were right.

"I do, I do," she leaned back to stare directly at him. Face to face, her bright-eyes, her perfectly tinted lips pressed together into that unforgettably determined line.

Then Jackson realized any chance he had of winning the conversation, of gaining control on the situation went away the moment he stepped crossed the hall. He searched Lydia's face and saw openness and hope he only wanted to believe. Maybe Lydia now knew the stakes, the players but she didn't have the strength he'd obtained. Which made him want to save her. That was the sort of wrong feeling that made whatever unhinged creature wrack his insides because it didn't like feeling divided. All of that, which was exactly the sort thing that made him afraid for her to begin with, it broke his focus apart and made him want to hate her. The thing and him worked better when Jackson functioned as a vacant, thoughtless vessel but she left him feeling conflicted. And that felt dangerous.

"No," something that wasn't Jackson said with his lips.

Lydia gulped in recognition and folded her arms protectively, stubbornly.

"You don't know anything," Jackson insisted. He took a large step back. And then another. "Goddammit Lydia, would you just listen for once-"

"No," Lydia shook her head, stubbornness spurned her on. Sydney cheered her on from behind getting none of the context but helping nonetheless. "You're the one who broke up with me via text. You're the one who bailed on me after New Year's, pretty much abandoning me twice. You're the one who called me out of my Dad's on Christmas Eve and had me come to meet you the woods. Now you want to lecture me about being safe?"

Suddenly, she ran out of steam and looking around Lydia felt lost in the herd. Jackson reached out and unwrapped the nail-biting grip on her biceps. He gently straightened her arm, he tried to rub life back into her stiff limbs but kept himself from holding her hand because that felt like too much.

"Did you lure me out?" she asked. Her eyes widened and locked him as steadily as her voice nailed him with a blow. She grabbed his arm before he could pull away, her fingers clasped onto his fingertips. When he pulled away she held tighter, dragging him closer into her fog.

Jackson thought for a long moment. "I don't remember..." he bit the corner of his lip and meet her gaze. She waited for him to try, and try harder. He gulped and searched, delved further back into his memories than he'd braved before. But Jennifer had kept careful about telling him important matters. Feeling unbalanced, he admitted he couldn't be sure of the answer. "...I wish I could, Lydia. I wish I could give you what you need to hear."

"I know," she said, her grip eased. She attempted a smile that didn't reach her eyes. "I shouldn't have asked. I already know... you'd never hurt me." Despite the kind sentiment, he felt offended to hear it and she a little bit relished that reaction.

"Lydia, don't fall for that bullshit! Don't take that lying cheater back!" Sydney shouted through the crowd, knocking them back into the present.

Their hands pulled apart abruptly, hers went to wipe at her face and his went to his neck as he
sharply looked away.

"Sydney, your desperation is showing," snapped Lydia over her shoulder. "Now would you take the Trig notes already and move along, before your GPA drops even more." Her classmate gave a weak glare, but snatched through Lydia's open locker, looking desperately for the notebook.

By the time Lydia swung around to confront Jackson about what happened by the poolside, her allegations of his rescue and speculation of their shared origins, she was met with merciless jostling students. She groaned her discontent, then stood her ground to catch a breath and reviewed while the fleeting memory of their pressed fingertips were replaced by the trembling, clenched grip of frustration. But before she could turn her back on him entirely and return to her locker, she walked over to where he'd left his open and locked it shut.

Further along the hall, Jackson watched through the crack of a door of a nearly empty classroom. He worried that he might never do enough to push her off. Jackson worried because if not, then if there ever came a time, she would never try hard enough to run from him instead of stand there eyeing him critically. And he wondered if it was because of Lydia's scent that he could remember his nightmares clearer, think clearer in general, but it wasn't like him to live in blind faith or whatever. Besides he could wonder about it later when his insides were calmer, since it wasn't like her scent washed away any easier these days.

Track 35 - Beggin' for Thread by Banks

{Thursday, Afternoon through 1st floor halls to the courtyard - BHHS, CA}

"Hey," Allison tapped his shoulder. Jackson clenched his jaw to keep from gasping before he turned to face her. All he wanted was to have a private, thoughtful moment in a classroom. What were the chances of ducking into one where she was?

Escaping Lydia was difficult enough, but running into her protective and inquisitive best-friend was careless and troubling. He turned and faced her. That smug expression was plastered on her heart-shaped face.

"You look a little sick," she said kindly. He harrumphed instead of using words. "What are you doing right now?"

Despite the standoffish aura Jackson projected, Allison insistently dragged him into the crowded cafeteria. Disarmed by the array of people, his racing thoughts were smothered and the smell of food reminded him that eating could be a very good thing at times. Allison kept a lively grin as she haphazardly piled on a number of small dishes and dashed into the first open space she spotted. After placing an appetizing tray of fragrant whatsits under his nose wasn't enough to keep Jackson's eyes from anxiously wandering the room, she reached up cupped his cheek. Jackson startled out of his haze, then stilled while she ran her thumb along sharp line of his cheek. He stared at her hand when she pulled it away and then shoved the food tray against his ribcage.

"Better," she gave a quick nod. "Now we can start."

"Allison, what are you even doing?" Jackson's eyes narrowed.
"Well, we are in the lunchroom, or—" Allison gestured around, she insisted on his eating meanwhile she only drank from a water bottle and fiddled with the label.

When he realized she wouldn't continue until he took a bite of something, Jackson bit into an apple and chewed slowly.

"I figured you wanted something," he smirked easily between bites. Jackson had been much hungrier than he'd realized and the food disappeared quicker than expected.

"Actually, um, yeah." She raised an eyebrow but didn't crack a smile. "I wanted to talk. I realize that I've been neglecting you. We haven't really talked since you got out of the hospital and I'm sorry... I'm serious."

Jackson leaned forward, frowning. He couldn't figure out if she were lying or not, he wasn't as in tune with her nature. "Maybe you're serious, but I'm not so sure you're being sincere."

"You've been the Captain of the Swim Team, the Lacrosse Team and the Homecoming King for how long, now?" she asked. Allison set aside the bottle and leaned onto her elbows closing gap between them. "You've got a lot of pressure to keep up your image, I get that. So, it's got to really piss you off when that perception starts to slip."

"I guess."

"You're starting to slip," Allison slid the notebook between them, hidden from onlookers by the food tray.

From the last page of the notebook she pulled out surveillance photos of his home street at night, specifically on the night the Monster attacked. The specialized CCTV cameras Allison placed outside of the Whittemores' two weeks ago, when she discovered Kanima claw marks, were placed on streetlamps and were set to activate when exceptional octaves or motion detected were at abnormal speeds. Both on the same night, might as well have set off warning flares. The RAW files of the surveillance footage automatically saved to Allison's personal online backup where she could view it before presenting her findings to the family. Except she discovered it late in the game. And showed it to Jackson instead.

The first pictured showed It, the Monster as a lumbering blur breaking apart Ms. Blake's front door. The second was the clearer image of a running form, part reptile and part man. The markings were like shadowy, scaled body paint, but the fingers had turned to claws, his eyes glowed luminescent under the camera's lenses and there could be no explaining away the tail.

"So what," Jackson seemed less bristly, more tired. "You're not running and screaming? Are you going to blackmail me? How much is it? Cash? Drugs?"

Hunters developed jadedness due to violence broached on a nearly daily basis, and yet Allison marveled at his bleakness. "Of course not. I brought this to you first... someone else is going to see this, Jackson. Someone who is going to want to hurt you." Without telling him about her family she could warn him and her gift at half-truths meant she didn't have to finish the sentence.

"Damn. The first time I'm in the driver's seat and I'm caught on film." Jackson grabbed the photos and before crumbling them up he gave them a long lingering look. It was the sort of thing to change someone's world view to see themselves transformed- but the only resilience to stay firm in his mind. "I'm not a bad guy... I mean, yeah, I've made stupid mistakes. A lot, but - I'm not bad."

Finally, Jackson crushed the photos. He looked sort of relieved, his brows rose and eyes shone when he dragged them back to look to hers. An expression of care behind her eyes brightened them
up and that determined grin she still eagerly aimed at him.

It seemed to him that she got some personal gain out of getting involved and that could work to his benefit. After all, as much as he liked Allison, he didn't have the same conflicting impulse to protect her. It still merited a warning, "I just know whatever's happening has to get worse."

"For you?"

"For all of us," Jackson handed her back the balled up photos with a grimace. "For me."

Allison took it with a grain of salt, put the notebook and the bundled bits back into her bag before she responded. After she observed his face closely when he looked at the photos, she noticed how curious he was and disappointed. But never mad. She could work with that.

"I know you know I can help. I can find things out. And I can teach you things, like control. I'm not trying to force you, just help you. In exchange... I just want to get to know you."

Track 36 - Howling by Nathan Ball

*Thursday, Afternoon on the 2nd floor of the Library - BHHS, CA*

Everyone seemed to have an agenda during the extended period, instead Isaac looked for a port in the storm. Barring that, he took up a seat across from Lydia at her designated balcony table in the library. At the interruption, she pursed her lips. And when he offered her a cup of tea, she swapped it out for his cup of coffee.

They sat in silence, him looking at the dead weight of his phone and her looking down the barrel of her emptying cup. Together they worried.

"Do you ever worry that they're hiding something from us?" he asked finally, without looking up.

Thoughtfully, she turned her head and her hair fell back away from her face, "I just assume everyone is. It's the best way to keep ahead."

Smirking, he added, "Are you assuming I'm hiding secrets." She nodded, her fingers executively tapping along the paper cup. "Do you think you know what they are up to?"

"Don't think, I know." She took a thin sip, looking at him with a gaze over the lip of the coffee cup. "You just got information a pack member of yours is alive. Another pack member of yours snuck off, probably headed back where you two originally came from. Possibly to get information from the Hales on how to track another Hale, right. And that's not the sort of thing you would share with the group, is it."

"That's absolutely possible," a crease etched in his brows as he wondered where her fathomless depth of hypothesis came from. "But I guess you'd have to ask first to know if it's really possible."

"For you to pretend I'm crazy and you have no idea what I'm talking about?"

"You're half right, I've definitely got no idea what you're talking about," Isaac said with a crooked smile. He considered the little explanation Stiles gave on his way out of town. His foster brother thought a million miles a minute but hardly thought things through. "You've probably got Stiles
figured out even better than he does. You think we shouldn't take advantage of this opportunity?"

Lydia's face screwed up in distaste and she pushed away 'good will gesture' coffee. "Don't even bring up that idiot." Isaac started to point out she was the one who started it but she cut him off. "How about you tell me why you always think this is up to you guys to solve on your own?"

Grabbing the cup of coffee, Isaac slurped up the rest of it while he gave things some thought. She expertly rolled her eyes. It wasn't even to her liking anyway and it had been made too sweet with way too much milk.

"I'm not like you, Lydia. I don't think I can solve everything," Isaac said cockily, to which she dropped her pencil and slapped her notebook closed. "I'm just compulsively drawn to dangerous situations, whether it's getting jumped by Alphas in the woods or snapped at by cute but narcissistic girls."

Smugly, Isaac grabbed up her pencil while she sat frozen, gap mouthed with a silent glare that told him he won this round. He chewed on the end of the pencil while he eyed the books she laid out and wondered at the eclectic selection. Stiles probably would have figured out what Lydia was really up to at first glance, but this mountain of work was a mystery to him.

"It's not that everything has a solution Isaac," with a light groan she snatched back the pencil. "It's just- everything can become a problem if you're not careful. And you're not very careful."

"Neither are you, strutting around with covered bruises and scraped up arms." He added flippantly then wish he didn't. Her glare turned from playful to severe in the blink of an eye. "I was just thinking, you could be more careful 'cause you have all us, you-know-whats... around you." He shrunk back when he saw her flinch at his reaching cyclical gesture, with splayed long fingers, that came across as dominating instead of inclusive.

"I'm strong enough on my own."

"I know that," he backpedaled. "I just mean we should be taking care of each other."

As if hearing something far away, Lydia cocked her head toward the doorway. The stillness of the library implied nothing changed but her awareness tapped into something more substantial. Concerned, he twisted in his seat to follow where she looked but he saw nothing. When Isaac called Lydia's name, she heard him in the distance while it sounded like, closer by, someone kept howling out in pain. "Did you hear that?" her voice trembled just a little, when she asked.

"Hear what?" he worried. Isaac strained with all of his might and only picked up her speeding heart and the tedious chatter of students.

"It's like someone is... You didn't hear that?" she disconnected further, turning around to find the source.

"Lydia, I don't think anyone hears what you hear," Isaac admitted. Looking around the room Lydia noticed how unaffected everyone was, and disappointment filled her up. When she tried to shrug it off and pack up books Isaac stopped her. He brought her back down to earth with a timid voice. "Please don't go running off alone again."

"No, of course not." She nodded. They both felt a little lost and disoriented in a room too big and too full of strangers while they were too vulnerable for harm. How were they meant to check in on each other when their experience was so solitary? "Anyway, I'm supposed to study with Allison afterschool. Isaac, could you check up on Scott for me... and, you know."
"Yeah, sure." Isaac stood, he reached to escort her. He couldn't settle on whether to guide her along or keep to himself. Eventually his hands found their way into his sweater pockets. "I'll check in with Scott and, *you know.*"

Track 37 - I Can Talk by Two Door Cinema Club

*(Thursday, Afternoon/Early-Evening from BHHS to the Argents' - Beacon Hills, CA)*

Lydia had been unusually quiet the whole drive back from school but once the bedroom door closed behind them, it became apparent why. Isaac was the least likely to give sagely advice, but his words just above the resonance of disembodied outcries in the library carried her through a dark time. The time had come to reveal some more of her story for everyone's sake.

With Allison's family focused on the Lodge, it wasn't hard for them have a secret meet-up. Bennet, as Allison's partner, was not only happy to join in, but had a lot of input. Bennet sat straight backed at the foot of the bed, Allison cross legged in the center and Lydia by the desk with her feet propped up by the head of the bed using the computer chair as if it were her throne.

There was a relief to admit the title of 'Banshee' without a long drawn out explanation. Bennet seemed only to find Lydia all the more attractive for it, which Allison only found more uncomfortable and hit Bennet with Mr. Bear to punctuate the point.

Things lost it humor when Lydia admitted the voices she heard were becoming focused and strong enough they weren't just in dreams.

"I don't know how this is supposed to go," Lydia recounted, "but I'd prefer nightmares stick to nocturnal hours and not when I'm in the middle of the school library."

"You didn't, like, freak out. That's pretty bad ass," Bennet admired with a cocky half-smile.

"I don't *freak out,*" Lydia snapped, then tried at something near the truth. "Anyway, Isaac was there. He suggested I see you."

From Allison's expression, it was clear she found that amusing, but pushed past that onto the important bits. "Lydia, what did you hear?"

"Voices. There were women and a man, I couldn't make them out. He was just screaming."

"Did they sound familiar? Was there anything else? Any background noise that you could make out?" Bennet said like a chorus.

"Bennet, she's not under interrogation." Allison said low and sharpish. Lydia scoffed at her best friend's instinctive defense. "It's not like she was there physically, give her a minute to figure out what she can remember."

"Oh, I can remember one for sure." Lydia looked between the two and paused for emphasis, so her words would hit home. "Your Aunt, Kate."

"Okay, slow down." Bennet's hands rose, he waved them around like the words needed deflecting. "That's not just an accusation you can throw around. Don't get me wrong, I'm not Kate Argent's number one fan, but the daydreams of an exam stressed out teen aren't going to hold a lot of weight
Allison grabbed his waving hands, pulled them down and held them tight. Her eyes were a warning and her smile conveyed determination as she pulled him along, instructing him "Let's just hear her out first."

Shutting his dark eyes, Bennet gave a nod and Lydia took that as a clue to continue.

"The last nightmare seemed like this-- Kate torturing a man in an underground place. It was the same man from before, and Kate seemed to enjoyed it just like before. He had something to say this time. She kept asking about the Monster-Alpha. She thinks he knows something-- not just him, all Werewolves. Like a conspiracy? He kept choking, gagging on his words--"

"How does someone talk and choke at the same time?" Bennet whispered to Allison with a quick look. She shrugged and frowned in thought. Lydia had no input to their question, but definitely an interest, she dropped her feet from the bed and pulled the chair closer. Lowering her voice, she concentrated on the words.

"He said to her 'in the end there will be blood, there will be fire, the buried are the lucky ones and there's nothing you can do to save your loved ones.'"

"That sounds really promising." After a moment, Bennet rubbed his jaw, intrigue fueling him.

"He said that to Kate?" Allison scooted to the edge of the bed and Lydia met her.

"No," Lydia looked apologetic, she pressed her lips together before answering like she could smooth over the words. "He was warning your Mom."

Then Bennet laughed. He covered his mouth and apologized profusely. "Nerves. I'm just tense. And this is just... it's just perfect." With that he went on to explain exactly why he wasn't Kate's number one fan.

Without hesitation, he threw Rumy under the bus and shared Rumy's suspicion of Kate's team and their misgivings. Since they were gracious enough to give up his bedroom to host Allison's house guests, something Bennet happily reminded her, Rumy had suspicions of something shady going on in the Lodge. While not on board at first, Bennet changed his mind when Chris and Victoria changed their behaviors and began disappearing down to the Lodge in shifts. Not a minute would go by without one of the Argent team leaders rotating in and out of that rabbit hole, but they kept Allison in the dark.

"Chris isn't the sort of person to keep secrets from his team. Definitely not from Rumy," Bennet shrugged, finishing up while his hands were wrists deep in a dresser drawer designated for Kate. "But now Chris only makes time to hang out when it's official business. He makes such an obvious display, Rumy thinks he's leaving breadcrumbs. I just think it's messed up."

Since Kate turned up for her 'short stay', she and Allison were meant to be sharing a bedroom. With her practically living at the Lodge recently they weren't concerned about Aunt Kate barging in. She made excuses to make room for Allison's friends to stay over or because she had to stay up late with the boys, but either way they could take advantage of the access and investigate good ol' Aunt Kate. Mostly they found weapons and clothes, some unique but nothing stood out. Allison fussed with her cellphone and took photos to catalogue, for all the good that would do.

In the interim, Lydia ordered sushi to show gratitude for all their fine work tonight. Mostly to reward herself for getting things off her chest. Of course, she added Allison's favorite Rainbow
Roll with a side of Salmon Sashimi since after all, Lydia had called for the meet up/study session.

Allison glanced between her friends and tapped her chopsticks on the edge of her dish furiously. Food for thought brought her forward to finally share the video of Jackson-Kanima on her tablet. While the others ate in thoughtful silence Allison explained the circumstances that brought her to own such a clip. While Lydia watched the clips in slow motion, Bennet listened in slow motion to Allison's excuses for investigating without backup until he lightly hit her in the head with a pillow.

"So, what's the plan? Got any clues about the Kanima's Master yet?" he waved the topic back toward where they'd left off by the bleachers a day ago.

"I haven't figured that out yet," with that Allison grabbed the tablet back from Lydia and propped it between them on the bed, they re-watched the short videos together. Without the few 10 & 15 second hi-res clips in the misty dark to engross her, Lydia crossed her arms and leaned far back into the chair, her eyes tracing the ceiling, deep in calculations.

"When are you going to tell the folks?" Bennet stopped eating. He blocked Allison's hand from pressing play again. "You're going to tell the folks. That's a special guest appearance from the murderous Monster there."

"That's a shadow in the mist."

"Correct me if I'm wrong, but shadows aren't exactly known for being noisy. And that shadow," dryly Lydia contradicted her, while aiming a finger at the captured of the misshapen x2-Gorilla mass staggering out of the neighbor's front door. "That's the noise that set off your surveillance in the first place."

"I don't know. I'll tell them," she popped an entire Salmon Sashimi into her mouth, to keep busy while processing the thought. "Plus, when do you even think they'll come up from underground? Anyway, it doesn't matter. I'll tell Rumy first."

"Why?" Bennet started to eat again, his brow arched with intrigue.

Allison closed the distance, face scrunched up with scrutiny he matched hers with mockery and handed back the tablet. Not a day hadn't gone by she didn't feel lucky for his loyalty, despite when he tried to get her to talk by tugging at her hair.

"Let me just explain," she started reluctantly, her eyes darting warily between the two. By better explaining the timeline, she could show Rumy had kept her secrets so far. He could be trusted to keep them a little longer, as long as the purpose was meant to protect people and no one came to harm. As she expected, certain details greatly amused Bennet and tickled Lydia's vanity. Especially the fact that she happened to conveniently she run into Rumy with a Deputy at the time.

"Since the night I set up surveillance at Jackson's I ran into Rumy because he had been on patrol with the Deputies."

"With your car?"

"Yes, I ran into him... not literally." She rolled her eyes and flicked wasabi paste at his brick colored T-Shirt. When he wiped at, it left a greasy maroon streak and she continued her story with a smirk. "It was the night he made first contact with Deucalion's pack. That's also the first time Lydia passed out on me and I promised to keep an eye on her, too. I think since then he's been keeping an eye on me keeping an eye on them, so this won't be too far of a leap for him."

"What side do you think he'll be on?" Bennet asked, he pushed around through the takeout bag for
a napkin. He froze when she didn't reply and slowly turned to face her.

Allison swished sushi in sauce until it became soaked. It broke apart uneatable but she kept on poking at it. "What do you mean?" she replied numbly talking more to her food than to the man.

Lydia looked to Bennet worriedly, then called to Allison. When she didn't respond to Lydia calling out her name, he tried again.

"I mean," he said it like a warning and took the chopsticks from her hand. Blinking thoughtfully, a little less than surprised while he cleared the leftovers and passed them to Lydia, who plopped them onto the dresser table. Meal time over, time for the nitty-gritty. "It's obvious you want to investigate more before going in guns a-blazing. Meanwhile, the Lodge is running hot. If you take this to the higher-ups... this Jackson kid might just end up in the Lodge because they think it will draw the Master out."

Allison rocked back and crossed her arms, "or try to use him to draw out the Monster... either at his home or at the school." Their curiosity collided again. All paths led to the Lodge these days.

Lydia sucked in a breath. This brought it all back around to her speculation that Jackson's original exposure was the Monster-Alpha. Something she wanted to pick Allison's brain about, not to mention the video clips- they were pretty damning, although not proof, of his personal connection to the Monster-Alpha. She started to reach for her purse to produce some of her findings when everything shifted.

Bennet put two fingers, straight into the air as a sign to 'hold'. They stilled, eyes skirting the surfaces of the room, window and door while listening in the stillness for signs of intrusion.

"Kids, these days, and the hijinks they get up to," Rumy mused, creeping noiselessly into the room. Allison breathed in with a light squeak while Bennet, dropped his hand and groaned.

Their obvious disappointment wore plainly that Rumy moved beyond the door and along the hall before either sensed him. Smirking, their Sergeant tip-toed comically over to the leftover sushi and lounged against the bedside table. After popping a spicy tuna roll, swiped in wasabi, into his mouth, Rumy mumbled through a mouthful, "so what are we investigating tonight, kids?"

They glanced toward each other, and calculated the prospect of how much Rumy played dumb, how much he overheard weighed against how much they wanted to bring him in on. Allison looked from her tablet to Bennet from under her long lashes with a questioning. With a shrug she said 'why not?' and Bennet grinned a toothy wide grin, eager to go all-in.

Track 38 - Heart Shaped Box (Nirvana Cover) by Lana Del Rey

{Thursday, Dusk in the driveway - The Argents', CA}

They stopped at the driver's side door of her VW Beetle and Lydia fiddled with the keys, her restless hands were nothing compared to her restless mind. Rumy rubbed at his unshaven jawline, the rhythmic chafing sound collided with his thoughtful humming and made it seem like his consideration mattered significantly. Almost more than every observation they'd covered throughout the long night and out of everyone there, he was very reluctant to let her go.

"So, Banshee," Rumy processed while trying to sound casual.
"So, Hunter," Lydia smirked, making her best attempt to mirror his manner.

Rumy acknowledged her cheek with a wink before scanning around the sterile driveway, again. She wasn't a shy person but after having so much exposed in one sitting Lydia insisted on going home, even though Bennet and Rumy adamantly welcomed her to stay over. Hunter attention might just be too much attention and considering how much she had to ponder she'd rather go home, in her bed, alone, but with her dog.

"Well, isn't that just a different spoke to add to our color wheel," he dragged his eyes back from the skyline, and tugged a crumpled pack of cigarettes out of his jacket pocket. With just his lips, he tugged one out then tilted the pack to offer her. Lydia gave a start and a grunt of offense. "If you change your mind, let me know. I mean about staying over." Like a gentleman he held the car door open for her and waited until she took her seat before dreaming of lighting up. "Promise me if you need anything. Day or night, you'll call."

"You're one of them." With a glance of her steely green eyes, she emphasized toward the back of the property, somewhere unseen over the gardens. Somewhere in the shadow of her nightmares where people were poisoned and probably dead or dying.

"Don't tell me that. That's just hurtful," Rumy sneered slightly and jerked away dramatically. His unkempt hair fell in his eyes and made it look like she'd physically struck him and Lydia failed to keep a straight face. He smiled when she giggled. Despite not having extensive knowledge on how father figures worked, she was pretty sure Allison's godfather, Rumy, didn't fit the mold. "But if something comes up- if you need backup and can't get a hold of Allison, we can help. It's the reason I'm here."

"To be the hero?"

"No, to be of help... I learned early on, I've got pretty much no purpose otherwise," he gave a toothy but cheerless grin and pushed closed the door for her. He lit his cigarette, and when he did, his hands hid his expression as he stepped away. Lydia could never tell how serious he was, but she felt like she could sense his earnestness. He even made the gesture of standing in the night chill, smoking in the dark just to see her safely to the car. "Get home safe young lady. Make sure to text Allison when you do, she worries."

Lydia waited for her car to warm up and watched him waving through her windshield. She still wasn't sure what to make of him. Thankfully, that wasn't a task on her to-do sheet for the night. The more she identified as Banshee, the more baggage it came with that had nothing to do with visions of death. Werewolves, Monsters, Kanimas and Hunters-- she had a growing concern over developing paranoid personality in addition to schizophrenia. Couldn't she just be a Banshee and go to Prom?

Track 39 - Disarm You (feat. Ilsey) by Kaskade

[Thursday, Nighttime at the Lodge - The Argents, CA]

There was no such thing as 'well enough' in Allison's book. Fortunately, she and Bennet had that in common which made their partnership work. From the moment Rumy offered to walk Lydia to her car, without hesitation they bolted for the exit through the kitchen door.
After Lydia retold her nightmare, Allison noticed a few inconsistencies. Just as Bennet picked up on a few blips of concern which he translated to Allison with the cock of a brow.

"She's hiding something," he said while they strode across the backyard in gallops.

"I can tell. But not about the nightmare... you weren't there. The details were too exact," Allison spoke in pants and got quieter as they came up to the side of the Lodge. They dropped to a crouch and tucked in anything that could get caught on an edge, button up any loose fitting clothes, Allison tied up her hair, Bennet tied his boots over pant cuffs and they both turned their cellphones to silent.

"I don't think she's lying about that. I think she's trying to keep you safe, like you've been lying to her for months to keep her safe." He snorted with amusement when her eyes narrowed with dark scrutiny. "And I think if you're thinking what I'm thinking, this Kane guy might still be alive down there. Or he could be dead. Or we could find out for sure if Kate is Doc Frankenstein or not. Either way--"

"One of us can climb through the sliding window by the exhaust vent," she gestured flippantly toward the far left, to a small painted over window obscured by some bushes, the details remembered mostly as she described them. "And the other one plays nice and distracts whoever is in the main room. We just have to decide which one of us is which. Do you have a quarter?" They looked displeased about the second option and need a nonbiased deciding measure. But by the time Bennet finished finding a coin in one of the many pockets in his cargo skinny jeans, Allison had already squeezed her waist over the windowsill.

Grinning, he knocked loudly on the Lodge door and greeted Chris breezily while in the back of his mind he was cursing out Allison soundly. He made the excuse that he felt bored and wanted to hang out, since Rumy was distracted with god-fatherly duties keeping Allison company while she saw Lydia off. Boring teenager girl stuff, bleh.

That seemed to win over a room of manly men playing poker over Reese's pieces. Victoria wasn't among them, but Axel and Fry were present, Roman snored on a couch toward the back having just finished a long shift of patrol somewhere. Roman lay uncomfortably close to where Allison would have crawled in through, but if the roaring and complaining men didn't rile him awake, Allison's cat burglar crawling behind the furniture along the hallway wasn't going to change a thing.

While Kate and Victoria appeared to have stepped out to have a tête-à-tête was expected, the more notable missing head was Norm; Kate's medic expert and torturer. It didn't feel like his missing presence was a coincidence even if Lydia didn't specify hearing or seeing him.

"Goddamnit," Bennet dropped onto the armchair nearest the front door, which gave him an open view from the back hall to the entrance, keeping everyone in his eye line. "I've got a competitive sweet tooth tonight, boys. Deal me in!"

Track 40 - Target Practice by Young Unknowns
best she could down the length of the passage way. The slope of the hall was deceptively gradual. Considering how well she knew the grounds, it she felt like she travelled the length of her backyard to the main house. By her guesstimation, another panic room had been built beneath her Mother's gardens. After all, where else could they keep screaming Werewolves from being heard?

Allison recognized the shape of Axel's work, similar to the design of theirs in the main house. Axel liked to make things look as casual as possible, so she dropped to the ground when she recognized a view hole on what had to be a secret door. Blowing stray hairs out of her eyes, she sat up, straightened her back against the wall, drew up her knees, and curled into the smallest space she could possibly take. While the hall was dark, if someone looked out, they might miss her but if someone opened the door they were likely to trip over her.

Never underestimate the hubris of a Hunter among his own trappings. Before she called it quits and labeled this effort just a research mission, the door swung open and Norm came speeding out. The man had an urgent waddle to him and he sped along down the hall, right around her and left the chamber door unlocked.

After sending off a quick text to Bennet asking him to keep an eye out for Norm, to which he replied quickly;

- He's hitting the head.
- I'll give you a heads up when he's headed out
- but you better get your head in the game already
- before he heads you off.

Clutching her phone to her chest, Allison rolled her eyes and mentally she simultaneously blessed him and cursed him. At least Bennet made her smile, which brought her anxiety back down to an even 4 so she could get her 'head in the game' so to speak. She scooted closer to the open door, past her comfort zone and past the fear of what she expected to hear and gave it a good inspection.

The quality of sound coming from inside the room had a clearer and steadier note than she would have thought. She expected subterranean echoes; instead she got Hi-Fi definition which meant Axel set it up with thick reinforced walls made with Kevlar fiber paneling, designed for blast proof, bullet proof extended stay. Allison grew up admiring his work ethic but now she wished she could think of a better weakness to his system than Norm's weak bladder.

Dropping to a crouch, she aligned her phone against the skirting board. Sliding it forward, she hoped her camera would see clearly around the corner, and any eyes looking toward the door wouldn't be able to tell her phone's casing from the shadow of the door's frame.

After a quick burst of photos, she brought the camera back and the images showed something she hadn't considered from an empty weapons slot when they ransacked Kate's luggage. There was a large spiked punishment collar; the sort that, once attached to a chain, would be used to restrain very large animals. But Hunters converted theirs to have the inlaid spikes tipped with silver. Since Lydia's nightmare, they'd stepped up their torture techniques. Wolfsbane alone would have easily prevented transformative reactions. The technique with the chain gave the Werewolf a false sense of strength and control, it let them change a bit before it painfully snuffed out their hope. It broke their mind as well as their body. From the look of it-- the blood stained clothes, the pooling blood beneath where the man hung suspended on a rack, cinched up with additional chains --it looked like he made much more than a singular attempt to get out of captivity.

The wall behind him was splattered with gore, meanwhile the rest of the room looked pale and sparse in design. The trap-harness and metal frame hung with the squared out piece drain beneath it told Allison this place had been designed for capture to begin with.
Just like Lydia described, there were two women's voices that could be made one from inside, the first clearly being Kate's.

"Why don't we help each other out? Come on," she said in an almost laughing tone, "You tell us why they're really here and we'll fix the problem. Permanently. No one has to come back in 15 years. 50 years. Beacon Hills stays Werewolf free, it stays Monster free, and we don't ever have to see each other again. We all live happily ever after."

If the room weren't so clear of contaminants, Allison wouldn't have been able to pick up his guttural mutters, this tortured man, this 'Kane' whom Lydia screamed for.

"I'm already dead... you're next."

"Is that a threat?"

The severity of that was etched in her mind, both because it reminded Allison to always keep her eyes trained on the target but to get out and back to bed on time. Her Mother talked down to the dying man as if he would jump off the wall at any moment and take down her entire Team, while at the same time he could barely breathe in.

"s'fact. you're murdering us... leavin a trailup the coastline... and covered up my kids killin..."

A significant pause hung in the air. A shuffling of steps went unseen to Allison as Victoria turned toward Kate, her expression stiff but demanding. Allison strained to listen, her nerves grew tighter and instinctively her free hand clenched into a fist, eager for them to get on.

On another level, Kate pursed her lips, her chin high and arms crossed she started to pace. Already, Quint's death weighed hard on her, the only thing she felt responsible for and they'd spent days reviewing it in all its brutal details. If Kane told the truth, whatever they could use to add pressure to their questioning, even if Hunters hadn't intended to murder Quint it didn't matter. If there were additional murders turning up in town, Kate was determined to get to the bottom of it because she wasn't willing to carry the weight of those. And if since these murders managed to slip under the Hunters' radar, they needed to widen their playing board immediately. The Werewolves couldn't be a step ahead of them.

"Kane, you've got a little too much imagination." Kate stomped toward him suddenly and pulled at one of the chains, yanking him upright. He swiveled erratically until it the equipment came to a groaning standstill, he snarled all the while.

With a burst of indignation, Kane thrust himself forward to sway from Kate toward Victoria, his grumbles turned to growls. At the collar, the piercing spikes going into his skin sizzled and left no room for blood to pour out.

"I see clear. I never sleep but I dream... pain shows me how this is going to end."

"Oh," Victoria's piercing eyes narrowed as she steeled herself for malice, "how're you going to end it, then?"

A shrillness came into his voice, a hysterical strength that came with the end. "In the end there will be blood, there will be fire, the buried are the lucky ones and there's nothing you can do to save your loved ones." His twisted face looked unrecognizable from the Werewolf days before, not just due to the gaunt and ashen features or the blood caked matted hair against his face and neck. But because of the coward and faithless man he became in the end.

There was a time Kane knew his Alpha, Ennis would sense his loyal Betas out limitlessly, no
matter how low the Hunters would have dragged him. But tonight his endurance wasn't devoted. Kane became a coward twice over; when he abandoned his poisoned son Quint for Ennis. Then abandoned his power hungry Alpha for the ghost of his son. He continued to fail and in his dark dying moments Kane couldn't even be brave. He could only be mad. He should have had the right words to say, but even in the end it felt like gibberish and bloody waste came pouring out. A once tall man stood with arms tangled, a hunched and battered down man, his blue eyes bright with revelations that urged him forward and into oblivion.

"Kate, Kate!" Victoria's voice rose with urgency, her heels clacked hard against the tiled surface in a reserved hurry. "You're killing him. He's seizing. If he gets cervical damage in that thing, he won't heal fast enough--"

"Vickie," grunting, Kate responded to Victoria's snappish demand. Thrusting her hands forward through the framework, entangled in the blood slicked chains, she couldn't get a grip. Throwing a glance over her shoulder she demanded, "I can't get him out of it. He weighs too much. Victoria, help me." "fuck. Fuck." Kate took a heavy step backward, her stomp sounding heavy but damp. Then heavier and faster, as she rushed forward and caught fast the chain. With a yank and the clatter of chains, there came an unearthly gargling sound, followed by a wet thud and the rhythmic jingling as the rest of the cord followed to the ground. The chain made weird disjointed sounds while hitting the wood/metal frame, the tiled floor, the paneled drain and Kane's dead body.

With hands to the side of her head and her eyes clenched shut, Allison tried to prevent how terrified she felt. But her imagination made the image much worse, made distinctly vivid by Lydia's voice mirroring Kane's when he said his desperate last words. She nearly mistook her phone's vibration mode, pressed up against the side of her face, for a shudder of nerves.

- Move It.

Bennet warned. Allison couldn't have been happier to oblige. On instinct, she remembered the direction of rights and lefts to get back to the surface. But the further she got from the torture room, the clearer her mind became.

Once she slid through the tunnel doorway, she kept blocked from sight behind the couch. Thank god for her small size and the blind spot that kept her path to the window concealed. But even if she were kept from being seen, she wasn't kept from being heard, and so she kept as still as humanly possible. She listened intently for an opening while Bennet tried to coerce Norm to stay upstairs to deal their next round of cards, so that he could get relief. Their bickering finally woke Roman from the couch she hid behind. Thankfully, Norm nagged Roman to come over to their side of the room and deal. In the interim, Allison made a break for it.

Allison hadn't calculated the significant difference between scaling in through a windowsill at a run and going out through a windowsill from a standstill. Getting through the painted-over sliding windowsill from a standstill without a stepping stool appeared to be factually impossible. There she stood with Norm nearing her line of sight and the only feasible option to speed her ascent seemed to be noisily climbing a squeaky vent duct not intended to carry her weight. The grimmer 'slow and steady' option got her vote, so Allison clutched the sill and dragged her weight up, all crablike and with scraping nails, into the outside world. Struggling with the narrow opening, she held her breath when her head and shoulders barely made it through.

Suddenly two hands firmly grabbed by the wrists and warned her to 'go limp' and yanked her through with a brutal speed.
While inside of the Lodge, just as Norm rounded the bend outside of the Lodge, Rumy delicately placed the sliding window shut with one hand as he flung his goddaughter over his shoulder with the other. Allison clung to his back the way she had a million times when she was a little kid. She missed the heartfelt comfort of it. Unlike when she was a kid he didn't take her up to her bed to put her down for bedtime, he didn't even take her into the main house, and he didn't let her down gently. He roughly dropped her onto the stone bench outside of the Lodge. Rumy pulled her down hair out of its tie, dusted stray paint chips from the end of her hair and from where her jeans scraped on the windowsill. He kneeled in front of her, his expression severe and held a hand up in front of her face.

"How many fingers do you see?"

At first he held 2 but when she opened her mouth to answer, he switched to 4, then 3, then 2 again to 5. When she stopped holding her breath and wheezed an annoyed laugh, Rumy sighed in relief and sat on the bench beside her. Immediately a cigarette sprang into his lips and when he cupped his hands to light it, the angle of light showed deep lines of worry across his face.

Suddenly the door opened, Chris stepped out agitated and on high alert. After surveying the lawn his eyes came down to settle on them. Rumy gave his usual gruff and cheery 'Yo' and while Allison sat on the other side of him with a white knuckle grip on the edge of the bench. She couldn't help but wonder if she hadn't had her godfather to bail her out would she have even made it half-way across the lawn unobserved? Would she have even made it out of the Lodge?

"Just getting some air, Chris," Rumy explained. After a smirk and narrow eyed glance, he slowly closed the door, giving them a playfully warning look but leaving them to some privacy.

Rumy quickly dropped the façade and looked tired, he looked angry, he looked haggard and unexpectedly older. When he blew smoke out of the side of his mouth and away from her, his hair blew up a little. It showed his grey eyes and they seemed dark with disappointment and his laugh lines were deep with worry.

Allison's mind was a blank. She wanted to worry more about the dead man downstairs. She wanted to worry more about the lethal women downstairs. But that seemed secondary suddenly. Maybe she was still a little numb for shock in the inconstant weather, but suddenly that washed away and she wanted to know if the man next to her felt okay. Throughout the night she dumped a lot of info on him, maybe spying on her people was more than he could take and that's why he felt like there was nothing left to say between them. Maybe he had a lot of questions to line up because he intended to interrogate her and it ached her chest to think about what that would be like. It felt better just to not think about it, to think of nothing at all and to ignore the buzzing she felt. This time she hoped it was nerves and not a phone going off in her pocket that would probably just make more trouble.

When he finished his long and quiet stare, her Godfather flicked ashes into Vickie's perennials. "What the fuck're you up to kiddo?" he said sadly, "I'm lying to my best friend for... my best girl and for what? For you to get yourself questioned by Team B? Talk to me."

Rumy still sounded like her Godfather. He belonged to her but he belonged to them. She couldn't help but gamble on his loyalty because... but that expectation reminded her of her own disloyalty. A part of her would always feel twisted up about it but not as much as not taking action, not as toxic as it would feel to keep more secrets.

Facing him fully, Allison had the truth on her tongue but her lower lip began to tremble, made worse by her hitching breath. He turned into a blur, his profile dissolved on the end of her teary lashes into midnight dark. He didn't pull her into a hug and she didn't reach for him, instead he
waited for her to find herself and come back to him. Because he kept his jaw clenched severely, Rumy's cigarette burned down to a nub between his fingers while she took the time she needed to abolish her tears murmuring insistently, "this isn't me. This isn't me. This isn't me."

Track 41 - Take My Place by Lily Allen

{Friday, Dawn at the Cliff Hills - Beacon Hills, CA}

"There's a connection between the Alphas that convened here 15 years ago and what's attracting the Alphas and Monster here now--" he gauged.

"--but we're not focusing on that." Allison reminded.

"There is a trail line of murders down the coast line the packs know of--" Rumy squinted in consideration.

"--and we're clueless about," she sighed, intertwined her fingers and stretched her hands out in front of her to uncoil all the tension.

"You know, if we're supposed to be 'protecting those who cannot protect themselves'--" he added, furrowing his brow, looking 'rebellious with a cause'.

"--whose protecting them from us?" she answered.

They'd driven toward a cliff overlooking the city far off of the Argent property to keep from being overhead. By the time sunrise seeped into the skyline, beneath them the waking homes that looked like chandeliers swinging under the water. With fondness Allison mentioned this was a 'date night' location when she got to the part of the story where a Werewolf boyfriend became relevant.

With her back straight, arms stiffly folded across her chest and legs slung off the back of his KingQuad ATV, she kept still despite the breeze. The only evidence that marked the night chill was the lift and flow of her dark hair. Despite the posturing, a chill set in bone deep and she felt sick for it. After decidedly missing school, Allison ignored all the calls and text on her phone. That felt like too much clutter. As she told her story vivid images invaded her, every fear and anxiety came back to her as waking nightmares and she didn't feel like sleeping anytime soon.

She told him more than she told Bennet. She didn't beg him not to tell Dad. He didn't laugh at her as often as she thought he would. He did swear quite a bit when he ran low on cigarettes. He felt that was incredibly uncivilized on his part.

When she ran out of words, he hopped up beside her. Silently, they looked sidelong, both pushing back their hair from the stringy mess the wind made of it and smiled slowly.

"Does that about recap it, Boss?" Rumy slung an arm over Allison's slight shoulders, tugging her body to collapse and relax against his.

Allison let out an exhausted huff, part-sigh and part-laugh as she curled her fingers into his jacket as if clinging on once more for dear life. "Careful, Uncle Rumy. I might get used to you calling me Boss."
"oh. yeah?" he said with a little amusement to his voice, dismissing her protest. Rumy didn't look down as with one hand he tugged out his last cigarette. He didn't light it. He stretched out his neck and looked up at the sky, the nearly clear sky where pale plumes streaked against the marigold. "Be patient. It seems like the weather's been getting bad. Give it a little bit of time-

Leaning up, she looked back and forth from the sky to his lazy pose, magically his last cigarette was lit and his facial expression light and easy. Maybe Allison learned her easy smiles from Rumy's wily ways, because after having just unburdened herself of some of her worst experiences to date she was grinning and smacking lightly at his side. They were in teasing play at such heavy subjects of their Hunter loyalties and their burning betrayals.

What next, tickling matches?

Track 42 - Feel Real by Deptford Goth

{Friday, Morning in the Martin home - Beacon Hills, CA}

Morning slipped across the township sneakily fast and exams anxiety eked in along with it but not over Lydia Martin. For the first time in her entire high school career, despite all the nightmares and late night adventures, she slept in.

With a cup of coffee gradually cooling in her hands, her Mom sat at the foot of her bed to witness the spectacle. When finally, (and groggily) Lydia woke up, she didn't yelp, whine or groan at the time. Squinting, she stretched in the natural sunlight that carried around her room, she only gestured for her Mom to hand over whatever was left in the cup.

"You could have woken me up?" she answered in a voice husky with sleep and circulating caffeine. Her Mom reached over and patted down the bedhead that haloed her Lydia's face. "And deal with the fallout? No thank you. I assumed you turned off your alarm for a reason. Maybe you're finally admitting you should take it a little easier."

At that Lydia's eyes darted around, trying to find wherever that troublesome cellphone disappeared to again. She found it smothered it under a pillow. In her sleep she preferred to drown it rather than respond to its chimes.

"Isn't there another exam today," her Mom asked, after she noticed the clothes Lydia laid out on the armchair by the window. On exam days Lydia displayed a bit more pre-preparedness. Clothes would be laid out and displayed in good lighting, all of the day's meals were pre-ordered and most importantly before going out on a walk, all of Prada's collars were set to match the leads.

"Yeah." Lydia didn't display any of her usual commanding characteristics. She stayed under her covers a little longer, distractedly going through missed texts with one hand while she sipped her coffee with the other. "Final day. Then it's the weekend, and it's Danny's blow out party..." There were loads of notifications from people RSVP-ing and forgetting to go through Danny, not her. Then among them she unearthed a text from Allison-

"It's your party, too," Natalie insisted, bringing over Lydia's clothes. And while she rescued the coffee she replaced it with the dress Lydia preordained for the day. "It's okay to be excited about it. Maybe get involved a little."
Abruptly Lydia tossed her phone onto the bed. "No. No more getting involved." The text from Allison had sealed it. She scooted off the bed, grabbed her clothes and headed straight for a shower, happy to wash away anything left of dreams.

"Let me drive you to school."

Heard clearly through the door Lydia could make out her Mom's wish to spend as much of the morning with her daughter as she could. But taking her time to answer, she stared into the mirror and composed herself and picked the nicest voice possible.

"Aw, thanks Mom but I promised to drive Allison to school," she lied.

Overnight Allison hadn't replied to any of Lydia's many asking texts she sent after getting through her front door. Instead Allison replied so late at night it was considered early morning, only to blow Lydia off. All the unearthly and uneasy questions Lydia had and Allison's response was that she wanted to be alone.

Less than twelve hours ago, Lydia walked into a Hunter's lair, exposed herself as a Banshee to be poked because she trusted her best-friend to have her back. Usually, even if Allison were being worked over, she'd leave Lydia with a promise of "let's talk later" or "it'll be okay" and Lydia wasn't prepared for the whiplash she felt.

After a moment her Mom apologized for holding her up, like she could sense things were off. Once alone Lydia told herself she'd feel bad later; for now, a very hot shower would benefit everything.

In the post-outburst of honesty at the Argents' Lydia hoped she'd feel different, like she would feel unburdened. Instead she only felt embittered that things felt the same. She hated oversleeping just because her waking mind wouldn't let her stop trying to 'solve' everything. She really hated every time she saw a friend in the halls it meant another loaded conversation, which lead to more headaches, which lead to more nightmares. Figuratively or literally.

Especially, Lydia hated how angry these revelations made her feel when she felt she'd deserved to feel like part of something bigger, like something more... but all they did was earn her a bitter worthless taste of feeling left behind, again.

After the shower, she zipped into a dress that clasped at the cleavage, dropped around her knees and hung off spaghetti straps. She examined herself critically and wondered if fast healing came with Banshee immunity. The pale lines once her arms and legs the woods once gave her, along with the bruise on her clavicle were nearly memories. In the mirror stood a teenage girl who was very good at surviving, whether it was inclement weather, Monsters in the woods, oppressive friends or the last day of midterms. It felt better when the hardest answer to decide was to match whether or not to match the gray knit front tie cardigan with her ensemble.

Leaving early to (not) pick up Allison for school, Lydia drove the long way around town to have breakfast at a gourmet café with her phone on silent. There her answers were an oatmeal brown sugar scone and hazelnut cappuccino. Whenever her mind wandered throughout the day she brought it back to the party on Saturday or focused on geometry and everything she excelled at it so when she pushed through the school's double doors her strut wouldn't waver. Let it mean coming in a little late and leaving early just to pass people by.

Track 43 - From Rest by Cold Weather Company
To keep his team's minds sharp after a week of testing nearly crushed them, Coach arranged a scrimmage Friday afterschool. Finstock said it was to get the kids' morale up, getting their minds focused to where it really ought to be; prioritizing the Championship.

Unlike an all-out lacrosse game, a scrimmage pitted them against local schools for practice to keep their competitive edge, and without a record of consequence it often got messy. For the Cyclones it became much messier with a late joining player who hadn't learned the plays.

It seemed like overnight Coach Helisek yanked his prize Track star over into the Lacrosse team. But he had contended for Yukimura heavy-handedly, he even paid out of pocket for her uniform before she agreed to join the team. No one could argue her running skills were unquestioning but her knowledge of field plays was zip and she was clumsy as hell.

There wasn't any time for either of the Coaches to give her special attention. Besides, the job of taking disadvantaged teammates underwing usually fell to Co-Captain McCall. He was better suited to it, excepted for whatever freakish reason it was Co-Captain Whittemore who stepped in for the saves.

The team had grown tired of hearing Yukimura's "oh. Sorry!" routine come out in sing-song, and even Liam (the former weakest link) found it hard to sympathize. And he wasn't the only one apparently.

In his usual 'high' spirit Murphy tried to take out his post-exam aggression on the present weakest link, a position Kira presently occupied. While Liam's eagerness to please bubbled up to the surface and tripped him up enough to trip up Jared repeatedly. Ramirez' dislike of the entire set up and his general 'I don't want to be here' attitude showed in his lag. Isaac seemed keen to exact each play to the point that he played every position on his own.

Meanwhile Co-Captain McCall? Despite Scott's gestures of friendship and their growing inseparability, Kira was shocked when he didn't turn up. Hell, Mr. Yukimura expected Scott to stand beside her the moment she hit the field, but he never exited the boy's locker room.

Before he had a chance to, like a nightmare, Mr. Westover appeared from the shadow proclaimed a decision. "I've discussed it with Coach and your Mom. You've got a choice; you step one foot on that field, you fail Global and Econ. Or you don't move your ass until you figure out how to pass."

A stuttering sound bubbled out of Scott's mouth and Coach Finstock's companion voice cut off his perfectly logical reasoning.

"McCall, these midterms are profoundly difficult I'm not even sure I could pass," with his hands firmly placed on Scott's shoulders, Coach Finstock guided him to a small, uncomfortable seat on the outer side of the teacher's desk. "Buddy, after a quick phone call, even your Mom is on board with you living here until you've magicked how to pass, since you figured out how to magically disappear on Wednesday."

Like psychics, they cut off using his Mom as an excuse to 'leave early' before he had a chance to finish the thought, definitely before he had any chance of getting his grounding lifted by the party Saturday night.

"Absolutely, sir. Sirs." He amended when he caught sight of Mr. Westover's death glare over from
over Coach's head. Two things had a bit of leeway in the school; money and athletics. Scott had seen staff fall over themselves to make sure people with money, like Jackson, had half-days and the best meals. In the second category were athletes, like Scott, who got an immediate second-go at midterms so they wouldn't miss a game, like a weird redefinition of 'special treatment' just for his sake.

There was tension through his shoulders and that slithered down his spine, after the first time he broke a pencil. He quickly realized there was no getting through this with his nerves in check. Somewhere nearby enough to sense friends were pummeling one another or being pummeled--instead in the Coach's office, while Finstock leafed through paperwork Scott drew crud geometric shapes on margins, he never felt so defeated.

Track 44 - These Paths by Yeah Yeah Yeahs

(Friday, Afternoon in the Boy's Locker Rooms - BHHS, CA)

"The only reason you feel like a loser is because we forgot who our opponent is." Danny's even toned chastisement resounded through the locker room. It cut through their nonsense and excuses with an undercurrent of disappointment. Straight afterward he abandoned the uniform for street clothes and left without further comment, leaving teammates to think about their part in events.

Moments after the team filed in from the field Scott staggered out of the office. He looked to his friends for answers but found tired eyes and shamed faces. Quick as he could dart through the field of limbs, Scott made it to Isaac's side to hear his version of events.

"Things just got out of hand. You gotta understand, half my childhood the most hostile thing I had to confront was Stiles' quips. Playing nice with the natives is kind of a new thing for me," Isaac shook his head and shoved his gear into his locker with enough force to leave the whole row rattling. After the stares dissipated, he turned back to Scott and summarized; during the scrimmage, every time Isaac measured the field and caught sight of Jackson, it kept clicking somewhere in the back of his mind the instinct 'Opponent'. And not just in the sports reference either but in something primal. And time after time, another disastrous situation rose up.

As he stood beside Isaac, Scott bristled with each word while they stared over at Jackson... Jackson who stood loftily beside Kira. From Scott's viewpoint the translation of Isaac's words started to change and Jackson wasn't harmless but he wasn't a threat either, his Master was.

Kira ducked through the Coaches Office to get into the Girl's locker room, as she went she glanced up and noticed them. When she smiled he hesitated to return it when he noticed light scrapes along her jawline, scrapes that didn't heal as fast as his did. After she looked away self-consciously Scott realized his discomfort came from the recognition that he had about as much control over himself as Jackson did.

"The same could be said for me," when Scott whispered low, Isaac peered at him in disbelief. Wisely Isaac shifted where he leaned to blocked the line of sight and faced Scott straight on.

"You're nothing like him," Isaac insisted, which only upset Scott further.

"For now," Scott closed his eyes and shook his head. Everything in him felt closed off. Over the distance and beyond a row of lockers Jackson stood still, half-dressed and feeling just as raw. They
sensed each other out and knew it was going to get worse before getting any better. But Jackson knew how to not let it get to him.

Track 45 - Whirlwind of Rubbish by Toydrum

[Friday, Night at the Sheriff's Department. - Beacon Hills, CA]

Lounging on a sturdy wood workbench, looking partly asleep but mostly bored, Rumy studied the station while he waited for the Sheriff to turn up. Over the frame of his filtered shades, he ran through the name of Deputies and did a comparison analysis of what changed since their ride-alongs. What he noticed most was a spike in their anxieties.

The general buzz around the office dwindled to a trickle over a week since the Werewolf packs kept their activity either to 1) a minimum or b) themselves. But that didn't mean around the town clues stopped popping up suggesting things were a being a little off. The feeling that something not good was going on just out of sight or just down the road, metaphorically or literally, which every civil servant found uneasy. Rumy could see it in everyone; from the way Deputy Clarke denied calls from her sister Hayden, and when she finally did take the call she snapped she'd be home late, again. There's the way Deputy Graeme's uneaten meals piled up on her desk, instead of meeting her boyfriend at the hospital during breaks-- instead she spent that time transcribing endless processed complaints into the system. Deputy Haigh kept dutifully tasked maintaining the weapons cage, keeping everything functional and presentable, over and over again. While covering for the Sheriff, Deputy Cordova ricocheted between work stations, happy to remind everyone no one would be paid for overtime, while piling on the next menial task.

It would have been more entertaining if Rumy liked them less and if he knew more about what really caused the cities unrest.

When he did finally turn up for his night shift, and despite their vying for his attention, Sheriff Stilinski started out with a sympathetic command of, "you guys can't live here." Without looking he grabbed the first pile of papers handed to him, continued through the bullpen to his office. "Clarke, go home before I fire you. Graeme go eat something, Haigh get out of there and take over for Graeme. Cordova see to our guest grab a cup of coffee and read these." After a chorus of 'yes, Chief' everyone jumped to their assignment without argument.

Even though Deputy Cordova kept affable because it was part of the job, that still wasn't what Rumy needed. He got onto his feet and even though he didn't cross the barrier, he leaned over it throwing Cordova a forlorn expression until the man cracked under pressure.

"Says he needs you, boss." Cordova said to the Chief with a knock and apologetic shrug.

Regardless of being the one to go after Stilinski, Rumy felt like he had been called to the principal's office, and closing the door came across as a slam without meaning to.

"Take a seat," and when he looked up he asked, "The shades?"

"They help with some headaches." Embracing the part of a rebel Rumy smirked, heavy brows wriggling high above their frames, slouched back into the seat across from Stilinski and crossed his arms. He figured it was a little rude, but he had gotten used to the safety of scrutinizing people from behind them and didn't want to take them off. But he did, "Aside from Deputy Parrish, how's your
"turnover been in this office?"

The Sheriff dropped his papers and taking a singular interest he leaned back in his seat, too. "It's been for interdepartmental eyes only. Why the interest?"

"I just find it interesting."

It had been a while since Rumy'd worn the glasses, but the Sheriff's department wasn't the only one whose paranoia needed stepping up.

The office wasn't very large for a Sheriff, and it felt even smaller for all the clutter. Corkboards covered half the walls with clippings of everything from missing persons to reports of animal activities. A few forensic books on the shelves looked intensely well-loved and the cabinets that lined the rest of the walls seemed near to full with caseloads. Rumy imagined this is what the Multi-Touch table might look like if everything were printed out and spread around.

"You can't smoke here."

Sighing, Rumy took the cigarette from his lips, twiddled it in the fingers of his right hand and tucked it behind an ear. Cigarettes always seemed to appear almost magically in his hand, to focus his breathing, to center his busy mind whenever his mind got busy because a case started to flow. On his feet again Rumy's eyes darted around the room, pausing on the board above the Sheriff's desk before coming down to nail him with steady grey eyes.

"I get that," he said reasonably "I get you, but you see I can't smoke outside because there are all these signs around that say I'll be fined if I do- there are no signs about fines in here."

"You're one of Argent's men," the Sheriff stood, mostly to block his view of the board but also to face him eye-to-eye.

"I'd like to think I'm one of my own men," With both hands on the desk, he leaned forward, voice lowered. He grinned again, "but yeah, Argent Arms pays me. 's why I'm here on assignment. Kinda."

"You're kinda payrolled by Argent Arms? Or your kinda here?"

"Kinda. Sheriff, you got anything stronger than coffee in this place?"

Stilinski cocked his brow, leaned against his desk and brought his Jim Bean out from his desk drawer. The Sheriff let the other man drink while he listened. And he listened to him talk about some paranoid supposition, about the unsubstantiated claims of deaths, innumerable deaths that the Department might not know of because they were looking in the wrong direction. Rumy explained hypothetical relevance; what he felt mattered, everything to do with recent incidents and some that had nothing to do with Beacon Hills except suspected causation. Aside from a suspected correlation of interlinking deaths Rumy had no clue of what they all were, where they all were or when they might have been happening. Oh, and despite the Argents' C.I.A. reach, no one else should know anything about this investigation because Rumy would very much like to keep this for 'interdepartmental eyes only'. After all, if they hadn't heard of these deaths yet, there had to be a reason why.

"I'm not in charge of the state," Stilinski took a shot to settle his nerves after hearing the mad man's ramblings.

"Just the town," said Rumy, "but I got a man who's saying these unreported deaths are happening."
"And this source is reliable?"

"He died to give me this info," Rumy didn't add on that Kane was killed by Kate to get this info.

"He didn't say anything specific? Anything about strange animals? Really big animals?" Stilinski figured risk it since this improbable piece of info deserved a response just as unlikely.

"An animal like what? Like a wolf? A monster? Lizard?" Rumy answered, his cigarette artfully dangling off of his lips then remembered to remove it again.

"I... I don't know anything about lizards," Sheriff poured another shot "but wolf maybe. Maybe a coyote."

"That's very interesting Sheriff. Very interesting Sheriff."

"It's more than interesting. It's got to do with why something bigger than just dead bodies," his lips spread and teeth shown but it wasn't anything like a smile. It looked pained.

"How 'bout I keep an eye out for your coyote and you look into my murders on the coast."

The Sheriff lifted his glass for salutation, as a sign of respect and agreement, Rumy tapped his unlit cigarette against it in the same regard.

"Now, if it's so important, why don't you show me where you saw this coyote," Rumy popped it into his lips and lit it, smirking in relief.

"Fine, but we're not taking the Sheriff's cruiser. Too conspicuous. Bring your car around to the handicap spot. If anyone gives you a problem, tell them I said I'll meet you there in a minute once I close out with Cordova," when the Sheriff stood the room wavered a little, but the warmth he felt was relief at having useful ally finally and was ready to hit the road just not to drive.

"Can't." he shook his head, in mournful exaggeration when Sheriff Stilinski's eyes narrowed in a disgruntled glare. "Someone's in that spot."

They marched across the bullpen together and toward the front ignoring the Deputies awkward looks and wry efforts for their attention.

"What the hell?" Sheriff tsked there would be someone who thought themselves that entitled to just idle there.

"I can just meet you by the rear exit," he offered instead, gesturing down the hall in the opposite direction but Sheriff Stilinski was vehement.

"What's this prick doing? And in front of the station?" He kept on and his voice kept rising "Why hasn't anyone dragged his ass into lockup? Get the vehicle impounded?"

"Dude, have a heart. It's just a bummy old blue Jeep," Rumy contended, "I doubt the owner could afford to get it out of hock."

"I think you're going to want to talk this owner yourself." Uncomfortably Deputy Clarke added, she found it hard to keep her face straight. "We tried reaching you at home but you never picked up, we weren't sure where you were. Anyway, he was pretty out of it but we made sure to feed him first. Parrish said you'd prefer him escorted straight to bed. But your son's in cell one in case you want to question him."
CREDITS:

Argents - Team1; Victoria, Chris & Allison.
• Rumy - [Sgt] Recon; Special Forces & espionage. Chris' right-hand & Allison's godfather.
• Axel - [1st Lieut] expert tracker, marksman & Allison's 2nd cousin.
• Bennett - [Field OFC] Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old & Allison's friend.
• Leveque - [Field OFC] Recon; Terrain-Orientation & Mechanics.
• Ulrich - [Field OFC] Recon; Civil-Orientation.

Argents - Team2; Kate.
• Livy - [1st Lieut] Recon; Force-Orientation, R.I.F. & close-combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's closest friend.
• Tylhurst - [Lieut] Recon; Civil-Orientation, Cyberwarefare, has CIA background. Referred to as 'try-hard.'
• Norm - [Sgt] specialty in Medical Intelligence & as a Longbowman; an archer/longbow. JR's brother & Roman's Uncle.
• Roman - [Field OFC] Marksman/Sharpshooter, 19yrs. old & a weapons expert skilled in precision shooting. JR's son & Norm's Nephew.
• Fry - [Field OFC] specialty as a Tactician.

Argents - Team3; Gerard.

Hale (Present Day) Pack; Derek Alpha
• Isaac - [Omega] bitten-Werewolf taking refuge in BH.
• Stiles - [Omega] bitten-Werewolf recently returned to BH to reconcile his family(s).
• (missing) Cora - [Beta] possibly held hostage. *Chapter 16
• (missing) Boyd - [Beta] as of the massacre at the Mad River bend.
• (missing) Erica - [Beta] as of the massacre at the Mad River bend.

Hale (Heyday) Pack; Talia Alpha
• Peter - [Beta] Talia's brother, Uncle to Derek, Laura & Cora.
• Rose/Ruby - [Beta] Talia & Peter's middle sister, Aunt to Laura, Derek & Cora. Survivor of the Hale fire and guardian of the Homestead.
• Laura (age 17) - [Beta] was last seen struggling to pull survivors from the Hale House fire.
• Derek (age 15) - [Beta] pulled from the flames by sister Laura & ushered to safety by their emissary.-- next seen, dead in Beacon Hills Preserve *Chapter 16

Other Specials
• Braeden - [Mercenary] Former U.S. Marshal, freelanced after she became too personally invested in supernatural cases. *chapter22
• Lydia - [Banshee] 'A Banshee screams preceding a supernatural death not as a premonition but to highlight the likelihood of supernatural events that result in deaths.' *chapter 8
• Jackson - [Kanima] characterized by claws that secrete venom that temporarily paralyzes victims, a double row of sharp fangs, & a tail. Unless a Kanima resolves what in its past caused its mutation, it will eventually cocooned stage & emerge as a winged creature. Unlike a werewolf, a Kanima seeks out a master instead of a pack. It
will carry out whatever vengeance its master bids. *chapter 12
• Jennifer Blake - [Kanima's Master] *chapter 20
• Kira - [Kitsune] "There hasn't been a documented case of a fledgling Kitsune (manifesting attributes) this powerful, to carry a thunderstorm in her back pocket on a whim. Not in a hundred thousand years." *chapter 18

Twins' Pack; Aiden & Ethan Carver Alphas
• Marta - [Beta] Feisty old lady, motor head. #2
• Bridy - [Beta] Older than she looks, because she's easily underestimated she makes good spy.
• Gus - [Beta] natural-born, loyal highly skilled fighter with a tendency toward the psychotic.
• (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, partnered to Naylor.
• (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
• (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
• (deceased) Coot - [Omega] Deb's partner & killed by the Monster.

Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha
• (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed #2 & thief/tradesman & held captive in Fairvale.
• Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali & closely bonded to Huntington.
• (captive) Huntington - [Beta] Friends w/Gus and partner to Lark, kidnapped by Deucalion *Chapter 21
• (captive) Santos - [Beta] Stern mentor, kidnapped by Deucalion *Chapter 21
• Levi - [Beta] neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
• (deceased) Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed & romantically associated to Aiden.

Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha
• (captive) Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' #2, genderfluid, Werelynx -- kidnapped by Deucalion *Chapter 21.
• (deceased) Dr. Kane - [Omega] both a Doctor & their torturer. *Chapter 21
• (deceased) Quint - [Omega] eager to please teen & Dr. Kane's son. *Chapter 20

Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha
• Søren - [Beta] #2, Danish man, a skilled negotiator until his temper is piqued.
• Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
• Nik - [Beta] thief in residence, Mac's daughter.
• Meyer - [Beta]
• Reíka - [Beta]
• (deceased) Mac - [Beta] thief, the Monster's 1st victim.
were (you) partying

Chapter Summary

When Danny, via Lydia, throw the blow-off/blow-out party of the season practically everyone attends. Very nearly literally everyone. Presents are had, some people dance and some people fight, relationship(s) are tested and promises get broken. I'd say more, but then it wouldn't be a Teen Wolf party if there wasn't drama, would it?

- Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/23-were-you-partying
- Also Available - https://www.youtube.com/user/bhanesidhe/playlists

Chapter Notes

Previously on were (you);

Midterm week,

Monday—
o A nightmare with themes of familial disappointment has Stiles road tripping back to the Hales' homestead in Red River with his Dad' permission (but without anyone's foreknowledge)
o Back at BHHS; Scott comes out to Kira Werewolf for the first time and it makes her feel at ease to share a secret identity. Including photographic evidence.
o After revealing Monster-Alpha status there were mixed results;
  · Allison shut down on Scott and told him stop transforming to keep safe.
  · Lydia tells him to do it more often, to gain independence from the Monster-Alpha.
  · Isaac mostly talked about a party that weekend.
o After school, while walking Kira safely home, she and Scott get spontaneously attacked roadside by an anonymous Shewolf.

Tuesday —
o During cramming session, after poking at each other's dark past Stiles and Allison make a tenuous peace.

Wednesday —
o On the lacrosse field, Scott tries to further wrap his mind a psychotic murderer Monster also being his Alpha by transforming back and forth of his own free will. It's a mix over which of his friends support this decision. In the privacy of a maintenance shed, Kira and Scott come clean about their more supernatural abilities.

Thursday —
o A terrible fight between Lydia and Stiles, brings her to notice antidotes growing on the Argents' lawn to poisonous/torturous methods on Werewolves suspected within the Lodge.

Friday —
o A prophetic nightmare revealed the deadly outcome of Ennis' missing Beta, Quint, and Kate's involvement in his murder.

See the end of the chapter for more notes
[Saturday, Early-Morning at the Stilinskis']

The lightness of sun came in a cool, dull yellow through the clouds along the slants of the Stilinskis' roof and through the patches of the leaves in the trees. While the window faced the right directions for the rays of sun to beam through, there was no brightening the home to postcard appeal but Isaac tried.

After Stiles texted to say he crossed the town line into Beacon Hills, Isaac restlessly paced, tidied the house, messed the place up when he tried to cook, cleaned it up again and then paced around everywhere again. There was plenty of time for that and more before Stiles pulled up to the house in his familiar blue Jeep, accompanied by the Sheriff.

"You weren't even here a single minute before you got arrested this time," Isaac chuckled, while Stiles stumbled ahead of him up the stairwell to the bedroom.

Collapsed into the fluffiness of his perfect pillow, Stiles replied, "Detained." He turned to face Isaac, his eyes looked puffy with unrest and his hair was rumpled to the shape of a bird's nest. But he had a cheery expression despite his obvious exhaustion. "Anyway, it's not on my record. I think it's just my Dad's way of saying he misses me," Stiles smirked.

"Did you get any sleep on the road?"

"I just got 4 flawless hours down at the station. What about you? How's your undead brain?" Still clinging to the pillow to his head, keeping it locked in the crook of his arm, Stiles leaned up onto his elbow.

Isaac kneeled, leaned over onto the bed and propped his chin into his folded arms. "Some nightmares, but it's not like I can't tell the difference. I still wake up alive and Erica and Boyd are dead, and there's nothing to do about it. But this scar's almost gone." He glanced down to the faded glint of a line on his forearm, the only physical incident left from his near death experience.

"Hey, that's great," Stiles mock-cheered, "you'll be able to keep it all suppressed and brooding like a real Hale!"

"As opposed to your overblown grand gestures," snorted Isaac, "like throwing notebooks into fireplaces and driving cross-country for dossiers that could be messengered."

Then Stiles dropped his face into his pillow and groaned for a loud, long and miserable moment. Isaac blinked and watched, muted out of the act of mocking. Suddenly Stiles sat up, his back against the headboard, with a serious yet animated expression on his face and the pillow clutched to his chest.

"Alright, I should tell you about everything that went down at the Homestead before Scott turns up in," he flicked over his wrist and looked at his imaginary watch. "Oh, about one minute."

"It's about time," Isaac bounced up to sit on the foot of the bed, and added fondly. "It was either that or keep trying to emotionally blackmail it out of you."
Stiles smiled, "just hold onto that thought."

Track 02 - Crown the Pines by S. Carey

It had become an easier and easier thing to sneak down the hall and creep along the stairs as memory served him, but it seemed a crazy thing to hear Scott downstairs tucked away from him and totally worth the sneaking. It seemed crazier finally realizing, while footfall gave little sound under Stiles' shaky weight and his presence seeped throughout the house, somehow he never noticed Scott hadn't run up to see him.

"How long have you been here?" Stiles asked. Not that it wasn't cool to watch Scott and his Dad discuss which toaster settings would brown and not burn, but a little envious anticipation bubbled up inside of him at the sight of the two. A sense of something stretched and snapped between them, the endorphin-ed startling rush to have seen the welcoming sight of his best-friend at home.

Stiles wondered, if he hadn't happened to wander downstairs for a Coke how long would it have gone on that Scott would have cheated on him with his Dad? It definitely stood that figured out how to intuitively settle his presence under the Stilinskis roof because Stiles and Isaac hadn't sensed his arrival at all, ...however long ago that was.

"Oh, not long," Scott's mouth twitched from embarrassment into a grin. Wiping his hands of crust, he trudged over for a bear hug. That felt fitting. "Welcome home, buddy."

"Yeah, man. It's good to be back." He clapped his hand on Scott's back and held on a bit longer than long. When they let go, Scott's grin went from slight to beaming, Stiles' mirrored his. "Come on, I got you a present on the way." Stiles instructed and lead the way toward his room.

From the looks on their faces, the strained sense of cheer between the inseparable two when they walked in the room Isaac took as a sign to give them a minute's privacy. After all the last 'one minute' to catch up with Stiles had been a head-fuck of a couple of hours and Isaac figured he should start bringing Stiles' luggage up from the Jeep.

"Here!" Stiles tossed a red and spinning mass from the depths of his backpack toward Scott's face.

Wide-eyed with surprise and with expert instincts Scott caught the phone before it hit home. "What's this?"

"Courtesy of the Beacon Hills Sheriff's Department," Stiles said, proudly he then explained, "I convinced Parrish a second phone would help encourage me to be in contact with my family. Which is technically true." He winked at Scott cheekily, "so just don't break it this time."

"Thanks man," Scott tipped the bright Red Samsung up in salute, then shoved it into his back pocket. "I'll treasure it." A lull set in, the wattage of Scott's smile dropped back and he figured with Stiles still clearing gear from his bed he wouldn't notice, that Stiles wouldn't have to worry.

"Come on man just say it." Stiles slowly twisted back around and dropped his near-empty, beat-up backpack between them on the bed.

"Say what?" Scott brooded. He failed at lying.

"You're trying to figure why I left the way I did?" Stiles looked unusually pensive and still, like his
words were time bombs, "did you really think I would stay out there?"

Scott looked down at the backpack and glowered, blaming it for starting this whole emotional mess and he nodded.

"You gotta-- You gotta be kidding me!" Stiles rushed to the foot of his bed. "I can't lie and say I see it from your perspective, but I can say this... why not think of going back to the place that's kept me safe for a third of my life. I mean this place is filled with Monsters and murderers, literally the stuff of nightmares. And I'm not like you, I'm not a hero but if I've already found the best people in my life here why shouldn't I try everything to just stay with them? I went back to wrap things up so I could come here to stay."

"Yeah?" Scott was grinning, he knew the reply but wanted to hear it again.

"Yeah." Stiles held onto Scott's shoulder and shook him a little. "Tell me what I've got to do to make this up to you."

"Think about going back to the Cliffs with me." Scott's stare pinned Stiles firmly in its grip. Like a panicked animal, Stiles froze. He looked Scott's face over for a weakness in the trap and saw nothing, only openness. After a gulp Scott pursued. "It's where it all began. I'm still going to head out to the jogging trail, you can come if you want to, but--"

"Sure," Stiles sniffed, he backed away and wiped at his nose. "I'll think about it." After a moment of hand-wringing thoughtfulness he'd grabbed up his backpack again and reached in. He pulled out a battered packet of medical files and court documents, with the name "Hale" printed across it in print so faded it turned brown. He dropped them to the bed and pulled out a few books that looked like something between journals or daily planners and plopped them on top. "Speaking of the beginning of things, we've got some reading up to do. You wanted to know something about being part of a pack."

Feeling confused and uncomfortable, Scott looked from Stiles to the papers and after touching the edges of them he looked back to Stiles.

"There's nothing sacred in there," Stiles flipped a few of them open. "Just bureaucratic stuff. Like how and why Werewolves' temperatures run different than others. Or how light reflects on our eyes in flashes. This is mine and Isaac's real medical record in case we need it someday. Plus, some stuff about what is was like living here 15 years ago. Just stuff about the Hale House when it was still a house. And some things about the woods, a Nemeton tree and how the loads of people used it as a mutual meeting place. From packs to love birds."

"Nemeton?"

"Yeah, this weird tree that grew on ley lines that connected this place to my old place--"

"Euclidean parallel postulate."

"Uh, sure," Stiles stared at Scott in confusion, "that sounds like something Lydia would say."

"Yeah, it was. She said those shapes would help," Scott looked through the papers and wondered if there was a map amongst the disorder.

"They did." Stiles smirked. He considered not only his journey home but also compared it to the documents he'd browsed. "Has she just been studying this whole time?" Scott nodded but didn't elaborate so he moved on. "Look, what's interesting is even though the tree attracts all these different types, there's never been one violent incident recorded at that place."
"Maybe they just didn't record it."

"Maybe. Maybe something else happens there. Hunters and Werewolves. Witches and Banshees. Emissaries would arrange a meet and everything went like clockwork up until about, you know when--" from the crooked etch in Scott's brow he specified, "you know, fifteen years ago."

"What about that Nemeton?" Scott wondered aloud. "Is it still there?"

Stiles hadn't bothered to think about the thing. After Braeden explained the detail of the pain it caused his matriarchs, subconsciously he put it out of mind. "It's not standing anymore. But somehow 'viable', whatever that means," he quoted, rubbing the back of his neck like he could trigger the clearest recollection.

"Do you think we couldn't find it?"

"We found the Hale House. With Lydia's help."

"Maybe she already knows about it."

"Maybe we shouldn't find it," Isaac interrupted.

"Christ," Stiles cringed and swung back in surprise. He spun back, biting on his lower lip before speaking, "Do you just hover in doorways? Is that your thing?"

"It hasn't failed me yet," Isaac smirked, and stepped through the door, closing it behind him with one foot because he carried a small but heavy box. "If I didn't hang out in the doorway, how'd I know you guys were planning to dig through a bunch of papers you already decided were useless to look into a otherworldly tree you've been told isn't around anymore. Aside from the fact that that sounds equally useless and nuts, is there an actual reason to do this?"

Scott and Stiles looked to one another and considered where it was they were trying to dig in their past, maybe Isaac was right and they were jumping the gun.

"It's just a hunch," Scott's voice lost some conviction but he turned back to Isaac, his eyes firm and alight with interest. "We've been trying to look into our beginnings, to get ahead of these monsters. They know more about us at every turn. They know more about everything. If we can put together the real story, we don't have to sit back and watch people die."

Isaac looked to the both of them. He had rarely seen Stiles quiet but even his foster-brother looked to Scott as his mouthpiece.

"Alright," Isaac dropped to the foot of the bed. He jabbed at a few papers with distant interest, "I'll ask Lydia about the Nemeton." They looked disturbed, Stiles offended and Scott surprised. "You both have roots in this town and I don't. You don't have time to waste with your soul-searching. Plus, I wanna know if she does know about the Nemeton... I've got an invested interest."

After a moment, "yeah" Scott agreed and looked to Stiles who nodded although his face looked pensive with distaste. In an attempt to distract himself from the overwhelming amount of information piling up on him, Stiles reminded them they should be unpacking his things. While Isaac sometimes distracted himself with the papers on the bed, Stiles fussed over which boxes not to touch which effectively left Scott to do all the work. Not that he minded very much, there was a sense of pride knowing he still knew how and where Stiles preferred everything in his bedroom.
Effectively twelve hours after his arrival in Beacon Hills, Stiles had come up with a new version of "the Plan." It came to him like a bolt of lightning after several restful hours sleep in a holding cell, followed up by more in his bed after his Dad took him to their actual home. Throughout Scott and Isaac spending hours regrouping under the guise of unpacking, Stiles explained the details of how their contact with the Hales was over, pretty much forever and whatever he came back with was it. Alluding to a more tragic historical word-vomitical-like past that he'd save for a very happy Christmas share.

Isaac mentioned his encounter with Kira right off the bat. He wanted to ease Scott's guilty mind and he wanted to talk a little bit more about his nightmares. Scott agreed that he first encountered Kira the day of Isaac's attack, Stiles took it from there because his confidence with Kira prevented Scott from saying anything. Stiles did unsettle them both by mentioning Allison straight away; he felt she should know about Kira, just like he felt they should know that Allison wanted to bring Jackson into her confidence about the Kanima. Neither one of them liked that but Allison felt it was her purgative for Jackson's benefit. He didn't tell them about the video or that Allison had probably already approached Jackson, probably because he hadn't heard back from her but Lordy, once she got back to him, the words they would share! Then there was the matter of Scott's Alpha-

Throughout catching up, they made a mess and broke a bunch of Stiles' childhood stuff while he tried to settle in new stuff. In his caution Isaac spilled the contents of box ironically marked "Fragile! I'm Not Messing Around!", the contents of which were metal restraints. Out spilled a floor length chain that rattled loud enough to wake the dead.

"Guys!" Stiles shouted in a panicked voice high above a whisper, "I said to keep it down."

The knock Stiles feared came to his bedroom door, while everyone in the room froze like living statues while edging glances toward the door. The Sheriff stood there, in his freshly pressed and imposing uniform, looking affable if not confused.

"I would have asked if you needed help but it looks you've got things- Part of me wants to ask. The other part says knowing will be more disturbing than anything I could ever imagine. So - I'm gonna walk away."

Stiles hopped over the bed and raced to his doorway, calling out after his Dad, "Hey so it's cool that I hang out with my friends while you're out."

"This is you asking?"

"Yes?" after an awkward gap he added, "I love you?"

"Is this going to involve chains?"

Stiles insisted, with a nod of conviction, "probably not" the guys in the room followed in chorus.

The only reasonable response was groan and walk off, leaving the house a little rattled as he headed out.

"Was that a yes? I'm taking that as a yes." Eager to rejoin his friends Stiles hopped back to the task of unpacking. He didn't want to stress over where his Dad could be headed to all dressed up to the
9's on his day off. But Isaac felt differently about it, and pointed it out from the window.

"You'd never guess who's your Dad's date," Isaac cooed. Scott went over quickly but Stiles took his time. After the last conversation he had with his Dad before hitting the road and Parrish's poking insights he was afraid for the worst.

"Abominable snow man," Stiles threw out there for a laugh, while he suppressed his fears and squeezed between them to take a peak. Hanging out by driver's side door of a familiar dark Hatchback, stood an extra achingly familiar guy with the shaggy hair, odd shades and deceptively mild lopsided grin.

"You've met him before. His name's Rumy," Isaac blew disheartened breath out, "He's a Hunter."

As if he heard the mention of his name, the man looked up to meet their gaze. All three jumped at a wince and then remembered it wasn't an offense to be waved cheerily at, so they returned the gesture.

"Did you think he looked at us weird? Like he was looking... I don't know, at us weirdly?" Scott asked stepping slowly back toward the mess in the center of the room.

"This is my Dad's day off and he's spending it with that guy- What do you think he's doing with my Dad? Do you think they're recruiting him? Do you think they're brainwashing him?" Stiles rambled off to himself as he hefted up the incredibly heavy floor length in one go. When he tossed it onto the bed, it creaked ominously from the blow and Isaac had to stop him.

"Would you give it a break? Your paranoia is catching." With his eyes, he redirected Stiles to look at Scott, and the growing nervousness on their friend's face.

"Jeez, you're right. That's not important right now, what's important is this," Stiles smiled easily. It was the most at ease he had felt since this ordeal began, since leaving Red River the first time and since he wasn't sure how to convey that, there was nothing left than to demonstrate. "This is all my crap. We're going to sort through it, because if there is something to help us-

Seemingly on cue the rest of the contents fell from Scott's arms as he picked back up the "Fragile!" box, a pair of restraints with worn down scruffy cuffs landed with a thud on top of the chains. "I mean something better than handcuffing Scott every time he goes to sleep," Stiles clarified, his brows went up in surprise.

"What if we don't find anything here?" Scott asked, not because he felt hopeless but because the plan seemed a lot like the other tricks Stiles used to pull just to get Scott to clean his room.

Stiles winked at him, plopped down onto the bed and started sorting through stuffed dolls, "I didn't say we'll find a magical item or anything. Just talk. And look. And keep talking. We'll think of something. We have until 7 anyway."

"Why?" Isaac asked, his face was soured, partly because he'd chanced upon a bag stuffed with dirty socks and because of Stiles' dubious tone.

"Because we've got a party to go to tonight," Stiles grinned toothily, holding up a Bathrobe from the Motel Lodge like treasured gains. Scott and Isaac looked to each other uncomfortably, then back to Stiles with concern.

"Why do you have that look?" Stiles sighed and dramatically dumped turned out a laundry bag full of freshly washed ironic T-Shirts.
"What look?" Scott blinked and smiled meekly like a dry innocence covered everything. Isaac moved away with a snort and kept busy looking through some books.

"The look that says that the last thing we should be doing right now is going to a party."

"It's not that," Scott's voice sounded unconvincing. "It just seems weird - like that might be the last place you'd want to show your face." Isaac nodded profusely, both he and Scott clearly recalled the resentment Lydia displayed at the mere mention of Stiles' name.

"Ridiculous, besides you're projecting. You just don't want to see Allison," Stiles smirked, as he sniffed at his new recovered favorite slimming button up that smelled good enough. He yanked off the one he wore and replaced it.

Scott opened his mouth to argue, but found nothing to say exactly. "I just think he has an ulterior motive-" with his face a mixture of pleading and pained, Scott looked to Isaac. He had to know, the innocence of his face had some skill in the art of passing the buck. He turned to Isaac for a rescue but saw that he nodded in agreement with Stiles.

"Stiles always has an ulterior motive," Isaac reminded, "But you'll be fine. We'll just go for a minute."

"Exactly, just enough time to tell your old girlfriend about your new girlfriend-"

"I swear to god Stiles!" Isaac took offense as Scott's face colored. The art of bro-ship notwithstanding, the only way to get Scott to come along to Lydia's party was the hard sell. By reminding him of his promise to Kira and (by lesser extent) Stiles that he'd talk to Allison about her abilities for her sake needled at Scott's more valiant nature.

"Fine. Five minutes. Ten tops. No more than an hour." Scott haggled to himself over his imagined curfew while grooming his mop-top in the reflection of Stiles' bedroom mirror.

Grinning toward one another, Isaac reminded Stiles "this doesn't resolve the bigger problems."

"Wassat?" Stiles felt and looked stunned, displeased to have someone throw a kink into his perfect plans.

"Well, the two of you have two clingy parents who are never gonna let you go to a party..." Isaac gestured between the two, hands like trays weighing their downcast fates.

"Yeah," Stiles rubbed at his jaw in thought, "and you've got none. Which makes you the perfect pawn." At that, both Scott and Isaac really didn't like the tone, sight or sense of him.

"Since Lydia and I broke up, things have been tense. I thought since she's close with Stiles..." Isaac had no problem playing at being uncomfortable. No problem at all, because trying to imagine a world where he would need Stiles as a wingman was like trying to imagine a world where he ran away to France to live with Hunters. "...it would just be for like an hour. I could introduce him to some of the guys on the Lacrosse team."

"It'll be a great way to bond and catch up with the big lug!" Stiles flung his arm over Isaac's shoulders, trying a little too hard to sell it. The struggle to stay in frame while they Facetimed the Sheriff, a man who looked distinctly unpleased to be interrupted was a task and a half. Made more difficult by Isaac's instinctive shudder to jump away from Stiles and slap him straight onto the floor. And knowing that, Stiles grinned up at him.
His Dad laughed bitterly, "and you thought the two of you would get in my good graces with this sibling act." It sounded haunting through the cell phone's screen.

The thought hadn't exactly struck Stiles until that moment, and he gave it a little whine. "Please, Dad."

"Please, uhm, Dad," Isaac conceded when Stiles tugged at his neck with enough pinch it felt like he might close off his breathing.

The pause on the other side of the line was terrifying and Stiles withdrew his arm, for the sake of better cringing when finally, "I want you back by ten."

"It barely starts by ten-" instinct had Stiles bargaining before his brain registered a thought.

"Ten thirty."

"One."

"Ten Forty-five."

"Twelve Forty-Five."

"Eleven," he said with such sharpness it meant finality, "and I swear to god Stiles you had better not-"

"There is no way I'm getting picked up tonight," Stiles interrupted his Dad's concerned. "100% not arrested. Whatever we get up to I promise not to get caught- kidding! Kidding!"

The click on the other end of the line left little room to believe that his Dad enjoyed his display of humor. Isaac threw off Stiles' hold and gave him a glare, something of a fear and violence.

"Oh, what now?"

"You just jinxed us to hell," Isaac said with a dramatic timbre to his voice, when Stiles moved to pat his arm in comfort Isaac flinched from his touch. It happened again. And again, and again as they skid chased around Stiles' bedroom until one or both of them tripped over and broke some of Stiles' luggage.

Track 04 - No Wow (MSTRKRFT Remix) by the Kills

{Saturday, Evening at the McCalls'}

5 minutes later they felt less certain of themselves, while Melissa McCall ate her dinner in a rushed, calculating silence but Isaac figures his nervousness, sweaty palms and unsure smile are working in his favor.

She licked her lips before she spoke and looked a little villainous, "did he say you could borrow his bike?"

"No" they answered in unison.

Isaac felt a little tired of being the middle man but at the same time, a little vain about being the
necessary one. He let it work to his advantage, "I mean, I could take the bus to Lydia's party."

When he says it, Scott gave a squeak that could be mistaken for relief. Scott stopped eating a while ago but his brows went animated in confusion and his eyes skittered unsteadily on his Mom, then back to Isaac.

"But the buses stop at ten," Isaac took another bite of his steak, then spoke while chewing. "I'd get stuck out there and even though I think Lydia would like the idea of me hitchhiking back home, I just figured, since Scott was grounded anyway--" then he gulped it down with water and let the lie simmer.

Melissa considered the proposal, and considered how granting Isaac use Scott's bike would affect him, more so losing it for party reasons while grounded seemed like the good additional punishment she had been searching for. Which was why she misinterpreted Scott's rushing from the table, from the scrapping of the chair to the slamming of his bedroom door.

Rather than use the outburst to burrow under the sheets and angst to moody music, he left his computer on a continuous playlist of tutorials to leave it sounding like he'd be studying all night. Instead, with little hesitation, Scott jumped into clothes for a party and hopped out his bedroom window. Isaac dawdled down the road beside Scott's bike, lingering with keys in hand and a smug expression. He dropped it when he noticed Scott's expert leaping from awning to roof to ledge and tree before he dropped down beside him, party-ready.

"Don't think of it as lying to her again," Isaac gave him nod and calm smile, "think of it as I'm getting better at being a regular rebellious kid. Pulling off schemes, sneaking behind parents' backs, stealing vehicles, destruction of school property and constantly getting arrested. They'll base a YA novel off of me soon."

Scott rolled his eyes and snorted, unable to keep brooding after a comment like that. It wasn't as simple as all that, lying to his Mom would be the easiest part of the evening. Up next came dumping Isaac at Lydia's to soften her up so that he could confront Allison. Of course, that would be because he had to somehow obtain Kira.

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Track 05 - You're Not the One (Little Daylight Remix) by Sky Ferreira

{Saturday, Evening at the Yukimuras'}

"I told you we should have gotten her home schooled! She's too smart for this! It wasn't bad enough that she has to go to school with them but she wants to do things-- things afterschool with them!" Noshiko yelled at a whisper.

"Most parents would be delighted their kids would take an interest in extracurricular activities. They might even encourage the social activities," Ken said smartly while lifting a sashimi in the air with a flourish.

"I can hear the both of you," Kira said from across the table, glaring at her parents. It wasn't that she felt angry at them more that she felt embarrassed. Normally they would wait until they were behind closed doors for their tiny nitpicking rows that would hardly veil the thing they were really arguing about.

"Of course you can," her mother whipped around, her expression momentarily troubled. "You have
perfect hearing. You have perfect everything. It's wasted in that place." Then she whirled back on her Father, "which is why I'm saying it's wasted in a mediocre place like that--"

"A mediocre place that I would teach at," Ken said through a mouthful and gulped down loudly.

"That's not what I meant. You know that's not what I meant," Noshiko's face softened with sincerity. "Why not go to Devenford Prep.? At least there are people there we already know can facilitate," she struggled for the right word but finding none she threw her hands in the air and groaned. "You know what I mean!"

"I know Devenford's team hasn't won the championship for the last 3 years," Kira softly piped up. "The Cyclones have."

Noshiko looked to her daughter with mixed emotions. She gnawed her lower lip while she listened to Kira's argument and in the interim her husband reached along the table to put a hand over hers.

"I don't understand why this is so controversial. Why does me making friends and joining a team make you want to put me in a different school when last week you were lecturing me about getting out of the house more?" Kira placed her chopsticks on the table with more force than she meant to and as she went on her words ground out with more force than she meant to as well. "I didn't join the team to piss you guys off, but I didn't do it to make you proud either. I just joined the team because... I like hanging out with my friends and running around, standing up with them and just doing something I'm good at for once. I'm not going to get that same feeling at Devenford, I don't want to get that feeling there! I didn't want to cause another argument between you two--"

"Argument?" Noshiko perked up in offense, she looked to her husband to explain. His teasing look of 'you gotta be kidding me' sent her around to look toward their daughter with compassion, while she held her husband's hand a bit harder. "Those are not arguments. They are just...moments... where he doesn't like to concede particulars but they're not fights. You would never cause us to fight, Kira."

"Really?" It was Kira's turn to nail her Mom with a look of skepticism.

"Really." Her Mother insisted and gestured for Kira to reach over and hold her free left hand. "You are the one thing we concede on. But that doesn't keep me..." there it was again that unearthly pause that vocalized more than she could all evening. "I worry."

"You worry here more than you did in New York, Mom." Kira squeezed her Mom's hand and thought it might be a good time to press for more info. "Why is that?"

"Did almost dying in a storm not worry you?" She had a point but it seemed less than sincere.

"No one was dying. She was never going to die. Don't scare her," her Father insisted in the whispered arguing way they would when they thought she was out of earshot.

"No?" Noshiko looked to her husband and gave him a warning look. Looking back to Kira's pleading face she thought better of it. "No, you were never going to die but that doesn't mean you shouldn't be afraid."

A warning 'Eh' sound of interruption came from Ken and Noshiko amended, "cautious at least. If you go running in the direction of every temptation you will end up overloading yourself."

"But just a few friends?" Kira pleaded meekly.

"Just a few," her Father said in a manner that made it sound like what she asked was in a different
Overwhelmed between the two, Noshiko withdrew her hands. She ran them across her lap, and coming to stand she shook her head, "just a few." It seemed like a hollow victory with how much it troubled her Mother.

When Kira opened her mouth to say something, anything to get things back to where they were finally talking but her Father shook his head. His expression a little smiling and a little sad. He mouthed for her to leave it while standing to clear the table.

"So, then..." after a few minutes Kira panicked and said as fake-casual as she could while tugging on her coat. "You're okay with me socializing. Having friends? Meeting the team after school? Does that include our customary game after parties? -- Because I would really-really like to go. Please?"

"Is there a motorcycle waiting at the end of the driveway?" her Father asked snappishly. "Is it who I think it--"

"Go," Noshiko pushed her husband back with a firm hand, "be good. Keep your phone on at all times. Call if you're in trouble and need a ride. And don't miss curfew or this will be the last time."

Kira yup-ed, yes-ed and nodded as her grin lengthened while she managed to walk backward out of the front door.

"Did you sneak out?" Scott's eyes darted around anxiously as Kira sped down the driveway toward him.

"No!" laughing she slung her leg over the bike, and hugged her arms around his waist with readiness. "But if you don't get us out of here quickly my Mom might not be able to hold my Dad back a minute longer."

Scott hardly waited for the sentence to finish before he kicked out the kickstand and turned them downhill.

"I've never been to one of these parties before!" she said loudishly into the wind for him to hear. He flinched and she apologized when she realized he could, of course hear her anyway.

"Neither have I," he shrugged to admit. "I guess that make us both virgins." He felt too loud though not shouting and felt grateful they weren't facing each other and she couldn't see him blush.

"I guess so," when she laughed he could feel it rattle up against his spine even through his jacket. "We can keep each other company."

"That's the plan!" when they coasted lower in town, along the louder and mildly busting Main Street Scott informed her a little bit more of his intention. "Everyone goes to Lydia's parties. Everyone. I didn't have time to talk to my Hunter friend but if there is a place to meet privately, it's going to be in a place publicly."

"That's very James Bond."

"Really? I'm that dated?" He pouted a little. "I thought it was a little cooler than that."

"Sorry, Scott, unless you're planning on taking out some secret agents during the party, you're no
"Jason Bourne," she said smugly to which he conceded with a slightly shrug.

"Stiles will be there."

"Really?!" she then apologized for her excessive squeezing and her chirping loudness in his ear again.

"Yeah, I'm sure he's going to be pretty excited to see you too," Scott said a less enthusiastically. Kira took it to mean she maybe crushed the air out of him instead of he maybe feared Stiles would judge the hell out of him for not running this scenario through with him. The silence along the rest of the way could have been mistaken for fear or anticipation but was actually the realization neither could imagine getting through such a night without the other. It was interesting and pleasant to feel trust like that.

The house already felt more hectic and energetic than Kira expected. She anticipated the Lacrosse Team, she also figured the cool kids in general would gravitate but there were cool kids who didn't even attend Beacon Hills High there. Kira was pretty sure there were college kids there not to mention the house felt split into what seemed like different parties in different rooms and that was the sort of 'cool kid' party she only ever saw on TV shows. The sound and smells she felt wash over her were more intense than even at the scrimmage the other day, in fact it felt like "there are others here, aren't there?"

Her clothes were definitely not cool enough, not just for this party but not enough for making good first impressions. When she squeezed Scott's hand for reassurance his hand stayed limp, like he felt distracted and overwhelmed as well.

"Yeah," he said scanning the room, seeming far away instead of right beside her. When he gained some focus again, that crooked smile steadied her and he lead her further in, steadily inching down the hallway. "It's okay. It's going to be cool," he reassured low.

Still she breathed in tighter, anxious wisps anticipating someone to call her out as a fraud. But as long as she had Scott at her side, she reminded herself, the plan was 'not to leave his side.'

Then suddenly Scott withdrew his fingers from hers like they burned and he couldn't help but keep them to himself. She looked up to ask why but his face said things that maybe could never be put into words and she followed his gaze to see him staring through the glass doors leading to the pool. Over the distance, outside Allison bounced playfully to dance music along with Stiles, but like a magnet once Scott stood still so did she. Even though he was frozen in step, Kira knew Scott was no longer beside her.

Track 06 - Waiting Game (Loston Remix) by BANKS

{Saturday, Night at the Martins' Lydia's Party}

Evening set in quicker than he anticipated and Stiles worried that he wasn't on time for the festivities. He coasted through the Martins' neighborhood with a quickness and watched the shapes of the buildings turn from 'Lego' stack to 'coliseum' sparse. He had gotten used to neighborhoods being neighborly he had forgotten that houses could be snobs until he neared theirs. It wasn't a bad
feeling, just an alien feeling. When he turned onto the lane that became a straight shot to her house he remembered Mrs. Martin asking where he'd been and he apologized admitting he 'should have come to see you sooner'.

When they were little, (even though Lydia sorta remembered the names of the people in each of the houses), they would make up historically fanciful names for each castle that made their icy existence tolerable, and they would only ever refer to Flatface by her proper name, Princess McLizardButt. Zipping by the primadonna's house, it seemed she still wore tacky animal print like it never went out of season and her face was, as ever, that of a cold-flatfaced snob. But castle after castle, the neighborhood still seemed like a place of impractical fancy, with out of culture plants blooming on perfect lawns and trees arching back and forth over the lane like a welcome awning. When he used to fall asleep in his Dad's back seat on the way home, he thought he dreamt up half this stuff, and if it weren't for the people and expenses he could see himself living there forever. Then there was of course reality, at least he could have made a holiday destination of the Martin's house.

That same fixation for the fantastical gripped Stiles while when he turned into her driveway and took in the sight of her perfect house, the friendly pillars, and piled steps festooned in fairy lights. Although he noticed warm colors eking through the steely chill, he didn't notice the emptiness of the driveway. Stiles only hurried to hobble up her front steps and ring the doorbell before falling over.

When Lydia swung the door open Stiles' shouted "Happy Birthday!" before she finished saying "Hello". She stood there looking stunning in black patent 4" platform pumps, wrapped up in a stunning two-toned, V-neck fitted black dress, with her hair primped and parted to perfection and a serving tray balanced with glasses on punch arranged on them.

On the other side of the door Stiles looking animated as expected, with a box wrapped fairly well but peeling because it was too wide for the doorframe, although he tried to navigate it through anyway. Her combined wide-eyed look of surprise and jaded tone was as welcome a greeting as he would get and he knew it.

"Stiles, it's not my birthday."

Stiles grunted his acknowledgment as he tried several angles, of below, sideways, askew, wiggling-wiggling the box through seemed to do a little something. Disinclined to help him, Lydia sauntered away and warned him he was blocking the entrance for real guests. In a burst of entry, Stiles landed on the box and winced at the sound of a crunch from within. He'd have to live with it, he supposed, or technically Lydia would so he raced after her to let her know.

"You didn't leave it in the hallway, did you," Lydia snapped at Stiles over her shoulder as he entered the kitchen. She didn't even look over from the cabinets where she took down more glassware than was obviously necessary.

Stiles didn't answer right away, which annoyed her immensely but he got caught up with staring. He just found it very amusing, not just because the place looked spectacular, decked out for a countless entourage but because for the first time in his lifetime Stiles could see over the tops of things. He could reach the microwave and cook his own hot cocoa without asking Mrs. Martin to do it for him. He could reach up just like Lydia did and pull down plates and cups without asking for help and he could even find out where the Snickerdoodles were hidden.

"Uh," he tried to remember he knew this place and should know a better answer to her question. "I didn't know where to put it."
Sure enough, she swiveled around and glared, made fiercer with her smoky eyeliner and their color seemed sharp as razors.

"Fine." She said finally. Her eyes flicked from him to the clock on the microwave, then out to the pool. She called out to Danny to let him know, although guests would be arriving soon she'd be a minute, so keep an ear out for the door. A nondescript grunting sound came back while Danny and his friends fussed with DJ equipment as Lydia freed up a minute to deal with Stiles. She sounded less than inviting as she said "Let's go to my room."

{Saturday, Night at Lydia's Party; Bedroom}

All the vitriol Lydia had pent up from the past few days she spent, resolved to focus on her hostess smile. But that wouldn't work if Stiles stood in the way, challenging her mindset by literally luring her away. Lydia watched, despairingly as the box started to rattle and Stiles continued to strain, while still beaming with pride as the massive present that needed to be squeezed, now through her bedroom doorframe.

"Stiles, this is a blow off party- this isn't even my party. It's Danny's." She leaned against the hallway wall watching him, a little bored but a little fascinated. "Not my birthday party. What were you thinking?"

"Yeah. I know your birthday was months ago." He lay his head flat on the box's surface while he shoved, his feet kept skidding beneath him. "This is a belated present. Presents." At that the doorframe finally gave a little, or the box did and he popped, careful not to flop onto the box this time.

"Don't. Break. Anything." Lydia hurried in after him and locked him away from sight. Disheveled and breathless, Stiles was the last thing Lydia wanted her party-goers to see creepily lingering in her hallway upon entering the party.

Like an art dealer in a studio, Stiles fussed over the placement and angle of the box at the foot of her bed. Once done, his attention went starry-eyed to staring at just about everything.

"Hey, you've redecorated," Stiles marveled, that things felt the same even though she had in fact moved everything around since the last time he'd been there. Not to mention repainted and gotten all new furniture as well as a closet extension. But Lydia felt like all she could do was watch him watching and wonder if he felt like being back in Beacon Hills a second time. Did he feel summoned home or was this terminus?

"Could you go already?" she blurted out and shoved him toward the door.

Stiles let her move him along then spun back around mid-step, "Wait, aren't you going to open it?" Still a little winded and looking tousled from the effort, he looked a little pitiable and reminded her of himself, only not this one.

"Oh. Right." Suddenly awkward, Lydia thought about arguing with him, then thought against it. Her primary concern was to attend the door, and it was obvious he was trying to soften her up to manipulate her... but it would also make her a bad hostess not to open up a present. Not to mention the sooner she did it the sooner she could get back to her party guests.

Plus, the battered box was virtually broken open anyway so she might as well. And Lydia did especially like surprise presents. And once she finished convincing herself, she tugged apart the lid, her hand steady but feeling a little bit afraid as if something might jump out.
"It's... surprising."

After she eyed the contents, she decided she could waste another minute or two. The guys had been setting up for a while in the back of the house, if someone came to the front door she could let them handle it for now. Stiles had never seen her wordless before, as a result she'd never seen him as panicky. Each time she tried to speak her lips pressed together into something Stiles thought could be a smile and he waited for what felt like forever until she cleared her throat.

"Are those American Girl Dolls? And baby-pink wheelies? Next to a pair of last year's black ALDO booties?" turning back to the box, Lydia kept pulling out items and with each one her confusion grew. Her whirling mind tried to calculate a hidden message behind each of them. Stiles quick hands came to help guide hers, like a helpful conveyer belt of secondhand nostalgia.

"Well, yeah." He said, with a nervous hitch to his voice. "Everything went a little out of order to fit in the box but it's all labeled. These are for year nine so they aren't going to fit now- There is a Razor scooter down there for year thirteen and that'd probably still work if you wanted. I guess, I mean it's not like you have to be a certain age. Plus, it's compact like you are... and I made sure it was fully charged just in case."

When a brow arched in a sort of warning Stiles smiled back like a sort of dare that they would clash along seamlessly. Lydia ignored him and went back to the box, her hand edging the calculated mystery he set out for her.

"This jewelry box is beautiful," she cooed.

"The whole box is handmade." He grinned, and impatiently added, "It's full."

"Of woman's jewelry?" she said skeptical of his taste, to which he challenged her with an arch of his brow.

"Yes!" he refused to argue more until she opened the box. She sat in front of him, put the box in her lap and undid the clasp with great care. Her stilling silence resettled and before she could really assess anything he explained, "I wasn't sure what to get you. I got a lot of suggestions that year. So I just got a bunch of stuff."

"I recognize them all from Macy's back catalog." She said critically but kindly. She stopped over a stone different than the rest, not flashy or large-ish. "I love vintage."

"Cool." He grinned at her. He had his hands clasped at his back and rolled on his heels.

After a beat Lydia said wistfully, "they're my birthstones?"

"Topaz and Aquamarine. Does it fit?"

"Perfect." Lydia took off the rest of her rings, leaving only this one. She ran her thumb on the underside and felt the soft simple, goodness of it, the cyclical strength and admired the way it set perfectly the simple inlet stones.

To think, last year her Dad mailed her an expensive coat a size too big. When she finally got a hold of him on the phone he said she'd grow into it. She's been 5'3 for two years.

"Awesome- so they're okay?" Stiles normally unflappable pretense frayed at the seams. There was a lot to admire in vulnerability, and Lydia felt unsure over who was manipulating whom. And over jewelry?
"...You're going to make one lucky girl a great boyfriend one day." She lifted her left hand, and turned it back and forth to see the ring.

"Good to know."

"Stiles, sit down already. You look exhausted. What is all this about?" she asked touching his arm, so he came down beside her.

"I wanted to move out here officially and got my stuff from storage. So, I figured bring you all your presents." He said half-truthfully. "I thought you'd be a big gesture lady. After what you said... I wanted you to know I always thought about what was happening to the people I left behind."

'After what you said...'

Emotional words hurled back and forth a week ago, things Stiles remembered well but Lydia had tried to forget. But from the hitch in her heartrate it seemed easy enough to feel transported back into the front seat of her VW Bug weak and wounded beside each other.

She exhaled loudly and nodded. "All of this- for me?" Lydia glanced away toward the box, overwhelmed by the gesture and what it implied.

"Uh, it's nothing, you know just stuff for things I missed. Birthdays, Christmas. Whatever the other girls didn't steal or break."

"Stiles. This is amazing." Lydia reached back and fiddled with some of the contents, mostly stuffed animals she was pretty sure were going to make the rotation between being Prada's bedmates and hers. "Did you also get gifts for Scott every year?"

"What? Nah," Stiles shook his head reasonably, and then explained "'cause Scott and I used to steal each other's presents so it didn't make sense."

"I don't know what to say." She sat back and kohl-lined, bright eyes stared at him considerately.

"It's cool." He smirked, that pretense of confidence returned, "You don't have to say anything. Describe anything, any sort of emotion. Positive or elated, impressed or-"

"Pissed off. You lied to me." She didn't sound angry, so much as hurt. With a rising flush to her face, her brows came together tightly and her mouth trembled but she started in on him. "I was worried sick about you. And you just walked off- you didn't just walk off you left." A tremor twisted throughout at the word 'left', like the blow of his act collided hard enough Lydia felt the hurt of it still. And Stiles was responsible for that even if he didn't even remember doing it. "That was cruel," Lydia accused him.

"Hey, I apolo--" Stiles started, bewildered.

"Subtly blaming me for what you did wrong isn't an apology!"

"I was coming back." He defended what little ground he could grasp.

"You know that's not the point," she sighed, absent-mindedly and ran her thumb along the ring's band.

Inwardly, Lydia dared Stiles to know what it felt like, to have someone steal your breath with them as they went away and left you behind. To have people say it'll be over in a minute, like the fear was insignificant, like life-changing things weren't worth the anxiety. Maybe it was vicious to hope
his supernatural senses picked up on it, so when Stiles' eyes seemed to darken, he looked chastised and his breath came off a little hitched Lydia immediately felt guilty and miserable for her racing thoughts.

After a twitching hesitation Stiles put a hand on her shoulder and squeezed. "The point was to leave so that I can come back for good, so I could come back to you... all of you. I needed to just make it a grand gesture so that everyone could get that, which is why I left."

"That doesn't make sense." Lydia looked at him skeptically.

"It does if you think about it. Okay, try to think about it from my end."

"I might have understood if you talked to me," and finally Lydia began to sound pissed off. Her frustration slipped into each syllable, "But you didn't just leave Stiles. On top of that you ignored me. We promised not to do that."

"I- I What? Right." Quick witted but wasteful, Stiles fumbled for words.

When he recognized her sad and struggling temper, he relived it all in a moment. Their first real fight in the quiet dawn outside of his Dad's house his first night home, when he confessed his reunion-avoiding fear of rejection, of being ignored. Since then, she'd kept her side of the bargain and whether it was pretend boyfriend-ing or blubbering late-night voicemails or tree un-lynching, she responded but when she begged him just to get back in the car, he rejected her- followed up by leaving the city. Her anger now felt worse and worthwhile.

"And you've been lying since the beginning," Lydia protested. The fabric of her dress hem rubbed up against the denim fabric of his thigh and made zip sounds like an interrupting fly. But she persisted, and kept edging nearer. "You made it seem like you never wanted to come back to Beacon Hills. When I found you in the woods, and we were wondering why you just camped out - you said 'it wouldn't have been fair to stick around' like you were a passing through tourist and we were townies. You don't buy presents every year for people you don't plan on going home to."

Overwhelmed, Stiles rubbed the back of his neck and sighed. "The Hale Homestead is my home. Sort of. Sometimes." It was clear from his malleable expression, he had planned on a grand flowery speech and possibly flailing gestures, but the clear and simple truth was all that came to mind.

"...Sometimes. Just 'cause I didn't want to think of coming back doesn't mean I didn't think of you, of all of you. Haven't you ever felt like people, people uhm..."

The bedroom door popped open with the presence of a disoriented classmate Matt with a strained expression and an empty solo cup in his hand.

"This is not a bathroom!" Lydia shot to her feet, shoved him out with enough force to send him sailing and slammed it closed behind him. Mentally she changed gears, pressing the flatness of her hand to the bedroom door to remind her that the party was underway and she was on the wrong side of the door. She grasped for solidness, away from anxious whirling thoughts with Stiles and his too muchness. Lydia turned to him. "Alright, I've got to go."

"Right. Because it's your party." Stiles understood, but felt disjointed. His eyes skimmed the room again, lingering on every surface. Except her.

"Right." Lydia readied herself, oblivious to his squeamishness. She ran her fingers through her hair and straightened the silhouetted lines of her fitted dress. Once transformed she called to him in her
most charming, hostess tone "you should come downstairs. Have a good time, don't forget to try the punch." Then after a pause, added warmer "or you could relax for a minute, stare at the decor if you want. And thank you, I'm happy to see you."

They shared a look, a subtle smile which Stiles thought kinder than deserved at the moment.

"Thanks," releasing the bedspread, he lifted a hand to wave bye and said the smartest thing that came to mind as she withdrew "it's good to -I meant you're welcome."

Track 07 - Passive Aggressive (Brothers in Rhythm Remix) by Placebo

{Saturday, Night at Lydia's Party; Kitchen}

"You promised." Lydia snapped.

"I know I promised 'no drama'," Isaac saddled up beside her while she prodded at things on shelves taller than herself. He insisted, "but this is just a small question."

"A question that is intrinsic to your attendance?" Lydia said sharpish, implying that his answer would determine the worth of his presence at her side.

"What?" Isaac stumbled to a stop. Then reconsidered his verbal approach, "No. Not exactly."

"Not exactly, meaning you came here exactly to ask me the question or you came here entirely for the party and the question popped into your head?" she flipped around his reasoning as easily as she tossed the 12pack of paper towels into his dangling arms.

"Neither. Scott and Stiles asked-" if Isaac had put any forethought he should have known bringing up those trouble makers would make matters worse for him. How Lydia managed to walk him through her house, down a few halls, in through a closet-size door and lock him out through the garage, he had no clue. While it was of course her property, he had also been to several of her parties and never noticed any of those hallways before. Isaac raced around the house, through the front door once more and into her kitchen.

"I bet you didn't even need all of these," he hefted an armful of paper towels onto the kitchen counter.

Looking benignly, Lydia turned to face him, while between them on the kitchen island lay dozens of dishes, including half drunken punch glasses, finger bowls used as ashtrays and hundreds of half spilled, beer violated solo cups littering the space.

From beside her a large black girl, with long dangling earrings and a loud laugh dropped her tone to icy at the sight of him. Looking him from bottom to top she pursed her lips and made a fairly accurate judgment call.

"I think you just found yourself another volunteer for dish duty," Danielle gave Isaac a hard look before rolling her eyes and walking past. "You've definitely got enough napkins for it. I'll go find Heather and see if she found any more empty cups upstairs."

In the epicenter of the party, people only poked their heads in for another cup, plate, napkin or for directions to the bathroom, and/or 'have you seen where [insert name] is?' Aside from all of that
they were left in relative peace while Isaac cleared off dishes and Lydia cleared out the last load from her dishwasher. When Isaac thought enough time had passed, which was probably a beat earlier than he should have tried for, he asked again if he could ask Lydia a question.

"Isaac," she smacked closed the machine with more force than necessary, "what makes you think I have all the answers?"

"Because you're you," Isaac offered lamely, with an affable shrug.

Pursing her lips, Lydia combed her long stylized straightened hair back over her shoulder and tried not to find him too flattering. "Ask your question."

Smirking, he grew nearer and collected himself to his highest height and tossed the mulching paper towel into the garbage without looking.

"It's about a tree, that's all."

"That's it?" she didn't look convinced.

"That's it," he neared further, when someone bumbled in to look for napkins that he had made previously and mountainously available. "Just a tree. Maybe a couple of trees who talk teach each other and connect so technically one. It's complicated, so it might take some explaining."

"Do you have an IQ higher than 170?"

"No."

"Did you really think I'd need for you to explain to me superorganisms and their manipulation of Mycorrhizal networks?"

"Uh," Isaac stepped back when she stepped up, "No?"

"Was your question for me to explain it to you?"

"No, that'd be useless," he sputtered.

"Yes. It would," she rolled her eyes and looked around the room for something else, anything else to call her away. "So if that's it?"

"No, I wanted to ask you- I guess, if you'd seen one?"

"One what?"

"One tree, or trees like that."

Lydia sighed, annoyed and fatigued, "no. Now can I get back to partying with my friends." She gestured vaguely toward the pool area where their eyes caught onto strangers where, while they could probably name Stiles capturing Allison up in his spastic gestures among the herd, neither of them could really count them among the tag of 'friends'. Lydia huffed, took a step back and then another heading poolside.

"Fine." Isaac breathed out, almost in relief. He gestured to the air like he waved off the burden of having to speak for Scott and Stiles. "They asked me to ask you ask you about the Nemeton. I did it, it's done. I've kept up my end of the promise, no drama."

Similar to when they sat at the library Lydia worried him when she froze and looked distant,
almost like she could see through him from the moment he mentioned the word 'Nemeton.'

"Lydia?"

"Yes?"

"Are you okay?"

"Yes," her eyes snapped back up to meet his once his fingers touched her bare arm. "Right. Yeah, I'm fine. Of course. What did you say?"

"About what?"

"You asked me about-"

"-the Nemeton."

"It wasn't a tree." Lydia's mouthed parted in breathy thought and her words became stilted, "it was a stump. It was massive. I didn't think it was real. It was in the Hale House."

"It's in the Hale House?" excited Isaac gripped her arm, his voice turned into a harsh whisper. She stared down at his fingers, they felt like ash against her skin.

"No, no. Uhm, I saw it while I was in the fire at the House, but that tree, it had burned," she moved away and out of his reach. He was kind enough to get a glass of water. She pushed it away and grabbed a red solo cup full of beer. After downing it, she held onto the side of the counter and looked around the room like she looked at a different landscape entirely. "It kept chasing me everywhere. I couldn't see- after being chased, I ended up there. I felt safe there. I don't know if it was a memory or a dream because of the smoke from the fire, it made me see... things."

When Lydia took a long pause, stuck in her memory Isaac plucked the crushed cup out of her hand and placed a hand over hers.

"That smoke made me see things, too." Isaac said and she looked to him in slow recognition, like he had just appeared in the fog. "I saw them. Erica and Boyd. And Cora. They weren't exactly how things turned out by Northbridge. I don't know if they wanted me to end up like them or keep looking for them but they seemed pretty unhappy with me."

Little over a month ago, at an infamous Lydia Martin Lacrosse Game after party, on a victory high Isaac asked to share a dance with her and she said 'no' spectacularly. What's been shared since between them twisted the definition of the word.

"Have you had nightmares about them?" she asked already knowing the answer. He shrugged like it took all his effort to do so and she knew it meant 'yeah'.

"You don't have to believe everything you see in dreams. It's just electrical impulse activity in the brain." Lydia straightened herself, looked him straight in the eye and he smiled at the act. And when that didn't work she added, "Take it from an expert, just because they know the truth about some things doesn't mean they don't also lie."

"They're not exactly the most straightforward dreams," he said like with a twinge of distaste, "I re-remember things in different orders. But it ends pretty much the same, they're always watching me and I'm always dying."

"Watching you or watching over you?"
Isaac shrugged again, his shoulders had gotten heavier.

"So, it was not a heroic impulse that sent you running to the woods but survivors' guilt." Lydia wasn't asking a question because this was the sort of thing she sensed clearly before others and Isaac took longer to catch onto. "With everyone dying in this town anyway, you could have just waited around for your turn."

"Hah, hah," Isaac finally broke a smile, "what about you? Did your dreams about dying give you any insight?"

Lydia let out a breath cut down to a scowl, "I don't know- but if you wanted to know more about the Nemeton you could have just asked. Not that a dream is a reliable source of information, but you're not going to find it on a map. It looked almost burnt to its roots, it's cut down and hiding."

"I thought you said it was massive."

"It is."

"If it's anything like I picture it to be, it's almost the size of a small house," Isaac looked reflective, like his mind went straight back to the Hale Homestead and he could envision where another tree stood with its likeness. Or some sort of likeness. "But it was burned down?"

Lydia struggled to repress the details of laying prostrated on the ridged flats of the trees gnarled surfaces. She distracted herself with dusting off invisible dirt from her new blue party dress, with considering the next outfit change or music alteration. But the moment Isaac brought up her nightmares in the Hale House, her heartrate sped up and mind raced a bit with the quickness of how everything flooded back. The smattering of rain, the smell of blood mixed with dirt, and feel of tree rings under the grip of her nails.

"No. Not exactly, but it was burnt." She focused on the texture of those dark ridges, "It felt like- seemed like lightning cracked it apart. And kept cracking at it until it broke apart."

"And you don't think there's anything strange about the Nemeton being burned down just like the Hale House?" Isaac thought through.

"I think that old things burn down," Lydia shoved him away none too gently. "And I think you're just fishing for conspiracies. You said 'one question'. You asked your 'one question,' now let me get back to my guests. And you better keep your promise."

"Of course, 'No Drama'." Isaac crossed his heart, and yet he attempted to lure her into his conspiracy again. "But you've got to admit it, dreaming about the Nemeton after getting caught in a fire at the Hale House has got to be more than just a coincidence."

"Like suffering repeated episodes of PTSD down the road from the original incident," Lydia shrugged dismissively.

"Ok, I'll give you that one," he grabbed up a towel and went back to drying dishes quietly. For all of 15 seconds. "But what if-"

"Isaac, I've studied and learned exactly what pitch it is that can make a Werewolf's bowels loosen. All I have to do is go over to Danny and ask him to change a track and you will be-"

Isaac's jaw dropped, his palms sweat and pulse immediately quickened. "Y-you do not."

"Do you want to test me?" her expression was still, her eyes barely blinking and looking harsh
rimmed with coal liner. "Just let me have one night off already."

Putting himself in her shoes, (not literal of course as that would both be pricey and painful) Isaac tried to show some compassion for someone pulling off a masterpiece of an evening while dealing with an inquisition in the kitchen. Whatever else he had to ask, it could wait a night.

"Alright," he led her away from the kitchen-y chores and back to the party. To be honest he was shocked she let herself be led away but he was pleased at the turn of events. "One party. As promised. No drama."

As if on cue they looked up to see Allison stop dancing with Stiles because Scott entered the house with Kira. Lydia virtually bristled.

"What's he doing here?" She wasn't angry but there was an edge like glass to her voice, "he never comes to my parties."

"The whole lacrosse team was invited," he cut in automatically before he thought out his words. And figured he might as well follow through. "And technically, this is Danny's party."

Lydia's breath was drawn in tight mechanical measures, like she was revving up for anger or struggling to keep it down.

"I got this," immediately Isaac jumped to it. "No drama. Don't worry, I got this." He continued to assure her as he aimed toward the drama and Lydia stormed off in the opposite direction.

Track 08 - Wonderfully Stupid Mash by Garbage vs Dannii Minogue

{Saturday, Evening/Night at the Argents'}

"I don't think you like me very much," Bennet said with a great sigh and plummeted onto the couch beside Allison. Shaken, she stared at him in shock and struggled to collect herself.

"You never struck me as the type who needed external validation," she said as quick as she thought it, then sitting upright and settling comfortable beside him she gave it better thought. "Of course I like you. Of course I do, why would you even say that?"

"So you are saying you think I'm attractive?" he cocked a brow, a bright-eyed concept rattling around within. Allison didn't let it unsettle her this time, she shook her head, knocking loose her fullest attention. Bennet looked freshly shaven, smelled of Calvin Klein's Obsession and wore an outfit artfully put together to look like he hadn't spent hours trying to look casually striking.

"Bennet, whatever you're up to I'm not in a playing mood. Can't you see I'm trying to study?" she waved at her display of books. "So just find someone else to stroke your GQ ego."

"Allison, I've walked by in three different outfits in the past hour and you haven't once asked me to go to this party with you."

Allison took a deep breath a prepared for a debate.

"I'd like very much to point out that you're studying for tests that you're likely to have failed anyway for punking out on." He plucked the textbook she held upside down from her hands. "I'm
also stir crazy and stressed. You can pretend to study for last week's midterms some other night but tonight ask me out."

At that Allison started to giggle, Bennet certainly did look handsome and she was doing a crap job preoccupying herself. The stress of keeping busy and not stressing was driving her up the walls and she wasn't the only one, but going to Lydia's party, just the idea of it-

"Bennet," she half-whined, "I can't go. What am I going to say? How can I look my friends in the face after knowing what Kate and my Mom are up to- what they've been up to under my nose?"

Rubbing comfort into her arm he lightly insisted, "even though they're Werewolves and they've got a pretty good idea about the Argent history, they're still your friends. I mean Lydia knew what they were doing before you did. If you want to stay home to sulk and convince yourself you've gotta carry the weight of the world alone, you'll crack...You want to take off and call it quits? I've got your back. But you want to stretch your legs for a bit, I'm a helluva dance partner," he winked at her and lowered his voice a little further. "Plus, if the 'rents will be expecting you to spy on your friends, wouldn't it be more suspicious if you stayed home?"

"Alright," she cut off his rambling. Something about Bennet's verbal equation added up in Allison's brain and compensated for her stress. He analyzed the situation in a way she couldn't do but should have all along. A spark started up in Allison and she felt herself sitting upright, heading upstairs. "You're right. I need to go. Not for them. For Lydia. I mean, she did buy me a dress."

That isn't to say Allison didn't cling to Bennet's arms as they walked up Lydia's driveway. She didn't feel guilty, not really. She felt overwhelmed, like a soldier weighed down with too many weapons and Bennet was right; heading to her friends once and a while could resolve some of this tension.

"Swanky," Bennet whistled in admiration. Allison nodded. Dropping from one environment into another, the overbearing stillness of the Argents' to the buzzing hospitality of the Martins' was a striking difference. "Why does Lydia even come by our house?"

"For me." Standing upright, Allison answered smugly and pulled open the front door.

A rush of noise assaulted them, the brightness of party lights in contrast to the dimming of dusk. The foyer was filled with the double music of the inside humming of high talking and low dancing while in the far back outside by the pool there was a thumping bass. All around lay bowls with snacks and snacks and more snacks to choose from while solo cups were littered sparsely. The hallway had benches filled with partners making out and girlfriends gossiping on the other end. In the main room, a fireplace was filled with flowers instead of fire and it flowed until it spilled onto the carpet. The furniture was moved far apart so people could dance but few stood and they mostly swayed drunkenly while people on the couches admired. A table held so much food and snacks there was hardly a table. A little push and panic came from party-goers complaints and the organizer trying his best to move a beer keg through a crowd.

"Hey Allison!" called out a friend, "a little help!"

"Oh, sure Danny!" she quickly shut the door and help angle the heavy metal keg back onto the hand truck.

"Thanks," he groaned and pulled at the handles until it stood upright. "The delivery guy wouldn't bring it all the way in once he saw the crowd." They looked at each other, an expression of woeful recognition. They couldn't fault the delivery guy in his hesitation.
With some swift protest Allison fell back onto instinct and shoved back the rowdier obstacles and when Danny asked "Handsome, want to lend a hand?" Bennet was quick to comply and help pull and push the keg to kitchen. Allison was too amused by Bennet's beaming vanity to mind being left behind, that was until she realized without the task of swatting people back or holding onto Bennet's arms she had no idea where to put her hands.

Track 09 - Ease My Mind (Jai Wolf Remix) by Skrillex

{Saturday, Night at Lydia's Party; Foyer - Main Room}

"Jeez-Allison is that you?" the near panicked tone made Allison's smile hesitate but his clambering down the stairs made her laugh.

"Stiles! You're back!" she practically hopped in place and again, not knowing what to do with her hands, she kept them clasped in front of her. Allison almost hugged Stiles but then remembered they didn't do that.

Searching her over like a prized animal, top to bottom, turning to see over her shoulder, from back to front, excitement exaggerated every mannerism about him. Stiles practically pounced Allison until his hands came up twitchingly in obvious restraint from grasping her, acknowledging they weren't there, they weren't yet friends enough to grab and hold and hug and stuff, "screw it!"

Stiles threw his arms around her tight enough he knocked her forehead hard against his chin. Allison laughed, eased into it after a second, and then brought her hands up to rest on his shoulder blades. She could feel the way his breaths started to ease under her hands and it felt great, while he got comfort even from the tickling her lotus scented hair, even tied up, gave his nose.

"You're not dead." He eased back still holding her by the shoulders.

Having had just about enough of it, Allison pushed off his hold while still grinning madly, "yes. Obviously. Why would you think-" then it occurred to her, while she had been way-sided by Argent business she had left Stiles on the limb about "-that Kanima stuff."

Stiles face dropped in decibel from confused to concerned. "Yeah, that Kanima stuff. You know if I didn't hear from you soon, I was this close to chloroforming the bastard and throwing him in the lake." He practically mimed with enthusiasm to exercise his distress.

"And what would that solve?" Allison crossed her arms and smirked, he balked in thought and his flubbing all but charmed her. "And were you working on that chloroform up with Lydia in her bedroom?"

Stiles eyebrows raised significantly, "is this any way for BFF's4EVER to catch up?" He grabbed her by the elbow and navigated them away from the foot traffic, easily sidestepping her question. Eventually they found their way into the edges of the party's epicenter, the ebbing music a low cover for their words but Stiles' attempt for normalcy was all but spastic.

Allison's eyes went wide and her nerves were reduced significantly by the shaking laughter that caught her up. With a modest swiftness, she grabbed Stiles firmly and brought his arms down to match her rhythm. While Stiles may have meant for the outdoor thumping music to have given them cover to speak, he put less thought about how much attention his spastic dancing would bring. The music might reverberate like landing jets but that didn't mean he should dance like he
needed to wave in aircraft carriers. After about a minute of nodding and shifting her weight from foot to foot with goading instruction Stiles kept pace and grinned down at her, pleased with himself at what he thought was a brilliant cover for their conversation. She had an appreciation for a man who danced, however hectic it said a lot about his nature and she liked that for Stiles it meant a safe place where they could tune out the noise.

"You said you'd check-in call after seeing the Lizard king," he said a little loudly toward her ear, to be heard through the music. "I left you about a zillion messages. If I weren't sleep-deprived and veering off the road and deathly afraid of taking on a house full of Hunters I would have come banging on your door."

The clear recollection of switching off her phone and why flashed in Allison's mind. And the idea of Stiles feeling desperate enough to consider charging to find her while she's finding her family doing you-know-what.

"I'm sorry," she shuddered, leaned up and whisper shouted, "Things got complicated at home. But-" she felt alight with better news "things went well with Jackson. Really well, better than expected. He saw the photos- we talked for a while. He said that was the first time he was in the driver's seat and he wants to do whatever it takes to get back control and I believe him. He's on board."

Stiles made a mental note of it. It could be eagerness just like Allison said or it could be another deception and the Kanima might be an underlying influence even in this. He hated that this line of thought would lead to him doubting Scott's power of self-control, too.

"Are you kidding me? In the driver's seat?" Stiles leaned back in surprised, "On board? What's that supposed to mean? He's going to pilot everything as easily as 1-2-3 just because he saw a bunch of photos."

"I don't know." Her brow clenched in pained reflection, something wasn't sitting right. "It's always better when they know. Maybe if he wasn't friendless and mixed up he'd be able to better navigate a world with Kanimas in it. He's willing to do whatever it takes to regain some ground," Allison seemed less skeptical and more objective about it. "I have to help. You promised to suppor-"

"Yeah," Stiles nodded. The song changed, sound stopped and started up again as if it knew to listen to his body-language as well as his words. His head jutted to the side like he thought the answer might be at the door. When he looked back, an easier smile returned. "Yeah, yeah. I got your back. Kanima is the least in control and the most adaptive shapeshifter I've ever learned about. And Jackson is the most messed up creep I've ever known so yeah, he's going to need help to get it together."

"There's my BFF4EVER I've grown to know!" Allison praised softly and punched him lightly in the shoulder, and kept her hand there. He closed his eyes. In a rare sense of modesty Stiles took the compliment with a shake of his head.

"There's something else," she regretted interrupting their peaceable lull. "Bennet and I, we have a working theory about the...Lizard King's roots. Not his Master but someone else. An Alpha had to have made him, right? Normally an Alpha would take responsibility for their, you know, 'abomination'."

Stiles groaned in dismay and hung his head, mumbling "unless it's a fucking flake, like a Monster-Alpha. Ammiright?"

"That's the theory anyway," she ducked her head to the side to see his expression, to see if there was any light of recognition, of credibility. Sure, Bennet was her partner and smart but Stiles was
bright as a spark and had the advantage of a Werewolf pack behind him. He wouldn't be working off a hunch, he'd be working off a lineage of experience.

"Smart," he looked up and nodded several times. He smiled but didn't seem pleased at all, just sort of satisfied. "That's smart. You know we've been looking into Origins plus it fits. He's been acting out for how long?"

"Lydia said he's been acting strange since they broke up at the end of the school year."

"So, late June?" Stiles verbally calculated, "Scott in the fall and Lydia this winter. That matches. It means the Monster-Alpha is vicious but only strong enough to try for a Beta once a season."

Allison thought back to an earlier conversation, something whispered in the trust of Scott's arms when things were once falling into place. "We did figure it was trying to build an army from kids in the town, since adolescents are more malleable. So, does that mean it'll stop killing until June?"

"Probably not," he snorted indelicately. "It just means it can't turn anyone else for now- which I think is good, now if we could just-"

"Stop the murders." It seemed like the colors of the lights in the roomed dimmed to Allison, like the tone of everything found her moodier and she wished she'd stayed home.

"Exactly. Which we can't do without knowing a motive, which we can't do if we can't differentiate one murderer from another." He paused, noting Allison's stillness and the growing worry across her heart-shaped face. He held her by the shoulders and shook her gently until she rattled slightly to what could vaguely be measured to the music. "But you did a great job Allison. This'll help. I don't know how but it will."

Blinking owlishly up at him, Allison steadied onto her feet and brought his hands down into hers. "Yeah, thanks. We're making a good team so far, don't you think?"

"Sure, but cut me some slack. Try dinner and a movie before you screw me next time," he chuckled. They exchanged glances and when Allison moved back to walk further into the party Stiles pulled her back once more by the elbow. "Allison, there's something else. It's about Scott but it's going to involve you soon enough. I thought you should know-"

If Allison expression of fear and dismay hadn't been enough to push him off, which it clearly hadn't, then the universe summoning Scott into existence at the front door, cutting off their conversation was clearly enough. Scott looked clueless but kind while holding the hand of Kira Yukimura to lead her over the threshold.

Track 10 - Love and Wonder (Club Edit) by DJ Earworm

{Saturday, Night at Lydia's Party; Main Room}

"Hey, guys when did you get here?" Isaac rushed to the side of Allison and Stiles. He interrupted their stillness and spoke a little too loud. They looked at him startled and perturbed.

Stiles simply shook his head in disappointment at Isaac's failed attempt at distraction while Allison stuttered a "Hi, uhm, excuse me a sec," then made a bee-line for Scott.
"What the hell is going on?" Isaac gripped Stiles' arm hard, his eyes wide and buggy with a sick excitement. "Did you not give Allison a heads-up on Scott's date?"

"She's not his date," Stiles scowled, "anyway... you ever notice how different Kira looks when she's not on fire?" Isaac dropped his hold on Stiles arm, out of abject astonishment, looking at him as though they were speaking different languages. Undeterred Stiles continued, "Well, I wanted to give Scott the benefit of the doubt that he wouldn't just bring a date to Lydia's and not give Allison a heads up." Stiles looked to Isaac, slowly and with a growing look of panic. Simultaneously the two leapt forward to take chase after Allison and perform damage control.

"Scott, where've you been?" Allison said brightly at the sight of him, in complete contrast to when she saw him last in the library. If she were a different Allison it might have been followed up with 'I miss you' but this Allison said it caringly, and not lovingly.

"Allison," Scott said differently. He voiced a relief that meant 'I missed you' and looked quickly away. Distance from her meant more than physical, it also meant stick to the work, and the reason he came after all and he looked to Kira. "This is Kira. I've been with her the past few days. Kira, this is Allison, the one I told you about."

Barely getting over the grandiose foyer of the Martin's home, never mind the snack tables, Kira tried to wrap her mind around the social situation and squeezed harder on Scott's hand for help. But when it snapped into place she ripped her hand from his, her eyes lit up, mouth dropped in surprise and hands flew to her mouth.

"Allison, my friend Kira could use your help." Scott tried to calm Kira with an encouraging smile before he looked back to Allison and nodded, conveying silently a need. Her face stilled with thoughtful anticipation, hanging on his next words. "...you know, in your field of expertise."

Allison didn't catch on as quickly as Kira, she blinked slowly and put together everything she knew about Scott, his kind pleading face and everything she knew about his too-noble nature. In addition to his missing days. Allison gave Scott everything he wanted in a look, security and hope in a smile. Then with a grin slow like honey and bright with delight spread across her face. "Really, Kira?"

"Allison? You're a person who, you know, does the-" Kira's excitement rose with the speed of her words.

"You two know each other?" Bewildered, Scott stepped back and stared between the two.

They looked surprised to realize Scott still stood there.

"Do you want to get out of here?" Allison looked back to Kira. Without hesitation Kira reached out to grab Allison's hand and was lead swiftly along the hall, through the throng of party goers, down into a dark and mysterious basement behind a locked door.

In the bumbling effort of stooges Scott went to follow, with Isaac and Stiles in quick but too late pursuit.

"What just happened?" Isaac asked, jostling the knob on the basement knob liked it was a panic button. It was perfectly possible with his superior strength that he could break it, but he seemed preoccupied with gossipy intensity.

"I don't know, I just introduced them and they took off," Scott said like a kid who just realized he
misplaced his favorite toy.

Stiles stepped forward and put his body in the way. "Guys, before you break something, like your dignity maybe, how about you just give it a couple of minutes. Yeah? Just trust Allison. I mean isn't she trained for this sort of stuff... like actually trained for this and not just a thing she says to win an argument."

Both guys looked at Stiles in surprise. From their perspective it was unlike him to stand up for Allison, at least without an agenda. They weren't entirely convinced, so while they wouldn't pull apart the door that didn't mean they wouldn't stand centurion beside it, waiting for the moment it creaked open and they could pounce.

"You're both being ridiculous."

"You saw Kira's face. She looked totally unprepared for anything that could happen," Isaac argued.

"That could be good, couldn't it?" Scott looked between the two, his face a brewing pile of nerves.

"Of course, Scott. It's what you wanted isn't?" Stiles reminded, plopping down on a bench nearby.

"Wasn't that the whole reason for coming?"

"Well, yeah?" Scott seemed unconvinced. He turned away from Stiles, unwilling to listen to reason. Isaac went back to leaning against the doorframe, arms crossed and looking absently toward the party, pretending to be too cool to worry. "We'll just see how it goes, I guess."

Groaning Stiles got up, "'Well, yeah?' I'm going to go party, you know at the party, where there's partying while you do the worrying. Let me know how it goes. I might bring you back some snacks so you don't starve... unless they've got sliders then you're on your own." As he continued to call back wandering along the hall Stiles worried, mostly that the longer they hovered door side the closer they would get to mounting the door. It scared him how contagious anxiety like that could be. Large crowds and close proximity messed with his senses and he'd much rather spend it (not) dancing with strangers.

Track 11 - Flux (Metal on Metal Remake) by Bloc Party

{Saturday, Night at Lydia's Party; Basement}

"Am I making you nervous?" Allison asked incredulously. She sounded a little more intense then intended as she shoved objects around the basement, unearthing things to use as furniture.

"Well, yeah." Kira came over and helped move a Kayak. Counting out to three they tipped it further over and steadied it. Pleased with her redecoration basics Allison pulled herself up on the edge, dropped her purse on one side and with eyes that looked a little shy of Disney-animated, implied Kira should sit beside her. But Kira hesitated to join her while caught within the confines of 'damned if you do, damned if you don't' traditions, she gulped audibly and said whatever came first to mind.

"I didn't know we were sneaking behind your back- plus you're, so," Kira gestured at her in an abstract way that meant to display Allison. "You."

With a light eye-roll to the heavens in recognition to the word 'sneaking'. "You'll notice 'sneaking'
is practically religious observance around here. If you're doing it right, then you're a good friend and daughter..." Allison corrected strictly, but then softened her tone. "But I think the rest of that was a compliment."

Kira nodded, landing to settle beside Allison she smiled, confidence returning to the surface of her skin.

"From you, I'll take it. But you're pretty bad-ass from what I've noticed," Allison tilted her head in thought and radiated calm. The moment reminded of why Kira asked to be study-partners to begin with. She seemed careful and serene-like when she calculated, hardly as hardboiled as he made Hunters seem. "You're athletic enough to jump from star of the Track team into the Lacrosse team in about a week. You've got two full grown Werewolf bodyguards upstairs rushing after you. I'm going to guess, since you were supposed to meet me in that library when Jackson tore it up but turned up perfectly fine the next day you were the one who put enough voltage in him to knock the city into the dark ages."

"That's ahh," Kira felt a bubbling up of laughter in her, something born of nerves and relief, she hugged around her middle to keep control. "I guess I can see why you could think that."

Through her calculating thoughts Allison's became kinder and calmer, because it wasn't a phenomenon in front of her, it was the new girl. It was Kira... it helped to remember that. She hopped down, offered her hand to Kira and held it out, wiggling her fingers until Kira accepted.

"That's just observation but it doesn't matter what other people think, it matters what you think," Allison pulled Kira back with her to sit on the Kayak. "Tell me everything, and if there's anything I can do, I swear, I'll help."

Looking around the room readying herself, Kira nervously smiled and began tugging straight the line of skirt against her thighs.

"I have a lot to tell you but it doesn't really make any sense," she said quietly, but it felt like the most pronounced thing she'd ever uttered.

Allison's smile lengthened predatorily, eager for it, "let me be the judge of that."

Track 12 - Power and Control (Allen Simans Remix) by Marina and the Diamonds

{Saturday, Late-Night at Lydia's Party; Basement}

It was close to an hour later and they were still speaking. Kira was less surprised that Allison knew so much and more surprised it felt like they'd known one another for a lifetime. If she struggled with a thought or a memory, Allison's hand touched her shoulder and it came easier to her. Their sides aligned warmly and they made each other laugh if nervousness rose, which mostly happened when they talked about how weird both their parents were about coming back to Beacon Hills.

Allison listened easily, her jaw set and gaze intent hanging on every word, like the universe revolved around Kira. Especially when it got to the worse bits, even the bits of the nightmare they shared, "did he tell you? That's when Isaac died?"

Kira nodded.
"Did he tell you I was in the woods with him?"

Kira shook her head. Allison's brow creased in thought. "Well... I'm not surprised you sensed the both of them at least. It was pretty traumatic."

Somehow just that recognition made Kira feel like she could go on and forever. Kira told Allison about the car crash, not just about the crash the way she told Scott but about the way it felt to touch the crash in the air. She told her about the words her Mom said when she came over the ledge and about the Hunter who met them. Allison nodded, she blinked in surprise when a fact hit home or particular interest and she didn't mind answering Kira then or telling her she would explain later.

"It's not uncommon, not if you're the type of shapeshifter--"

"My type?"

After a pause she diverted, "why didn't you go to your parents for answers? Why did you go to Scott?"

And after a pause, Kira considered, "they don't think I can handle this. But me and Scott, we're alike. Anyway, I don't think I can trust them."

That was a feeling Allison definitely related to. "I can explain, but it's complicated," she sped up to not sound like she was being dismissive. "Your shapeshifter nature, it's not like Scott's. Yours is historically Japanese, not European. He was turned by a bite, and you're naturally born this way. It's hereditary. Have you ever heard of a Kitsune?"

"In old folk tales. My Dad used to read to me about the trickster fox--"

"I think your parents read it to you for a reason," Allison broke in kindly but the wince on her face said she empathized with any child who lived beneath a parent's lies. "Maybe they did it because one day they wanted to explain the rest, for those specifics I'll have to do a test to make sure." A brief smile, so sweet and sure Kira took immediate comfort in it, "but I will make sure."

And then Kira told Allison about seeing Lydia in the hospital and she sat a little straighter in recognition of the name.

As Kira started to apologize, as if she could somehow apologize through Allison to Lydia for the breach of secrecy -- Allison cut her off, "honestly its fine. Lydia keeps us all on our toes, she's good at that sort of thing."

And when Kira told her about the photos in the shed--

And when Kira told her about going back to the crash site--

And when Kira told her about the fight on the road to her home--

Allison was cautious and thoughtful, and finally she said "Scott's right."

"What do you mean?" Kira wondered, since as much as she could recall Scott hadn't said more to her aside from 'Allison, This is Kira.'

Allison hopped off the edge, secured her hair tightly and turned to stand directly in front Kira. "You're definitely someone I'd prefer to cut class with, instead of taking midterms. Now, get up." With a smug smile on her face and her hands on her hips, Allison incited her. "It's my turn to check
you out."

Tittering nervously, Kira hopped down, with an extra bounce and followed Allison's gesture toward the center of the room. She looked around the room, analyzing the silver gold cast of the party light eking through the low windows and throwing patches at them. It made their every move feel more energetic, more bouncy.

"I promised I'd get some answers." Allison grabbed her purse and rummaged through it. "Remember, specifics I wanted to be sure about."

Gripping and un-gripping her fingers at her side, Kira felt reluctant to agree, especially when Allison discarded her purse after she withdrew a baton.

"I've got no doubt you're a Kitsune, but there are 12 types." Allison flicked out the baton and it extended to the length of a foot and a half. "Celestial, Void, Wind, Spirit, Fire, Earth, River, Ocean, Mountain, Forest, Thunder, Time and Sound. If I had to gamble, I'd say you're a Thunder type, but let's test that theory."

"Do you always carry t-that?"

Allison looked at the weapon and shrugged nonchalantly. "Sure. Now, Kira, everything is going to be okay. From everything you've told me, you only manifest your abilities under stress, so I'm going to cause a little stress."

With that the baton fired to life, electricity coiled around it and startled Kira to stand taller. The hair all over her body rose, meanwhile Allison eased back, her left leg bent slightly, her right leg pushed back and her right arm drew back while her left was used as a guard. "But I promise, you are not going to be in any danger."

It felt like air in her lungs were coming apart by particles and the air around her was starting to change weight. Kira looked to Allison in panic, "Wait, no. What about you? I don't want to hurt you."

"You won't," Allison swung the baton forward, but made no contact. "All you've got to do is take the electricity from me before I can make contact. It's okay, I'm trained for this."

An excitement stirred up in Kira different from every time before, and while her mouth opened to protest, her hands came up, palms out and legs in a stance to fight that mirrored Allison. For someone who never took an interest in competitive fighting, she somehow knew the accurate form and stood ready for every sparking blow before Allison shouted "Let's Go!"

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Track 13 - Take Me Home (Feat. Bebe Rexha) (Caveat Remix Radio Edit) by Cash Cash

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Saturday, Late-Night at Lydia's Party; Kitchen

"I'm missing my date," Bennet said like it deserved severe recognition.

"At least you have a date," Stiles said over the munch of a tiny burger the size of two fingers.

"I don't have my date, that's the problem." Bennet leaned in, not to threaten but to certainly make the conversation something less comfortable. Stiles seemed distinctly unfazed. In a display of
slight but genuine nerves, he tugged at his collar. "Have you seen Allison?"

Stiles’ brow arched in recognition, this was Allison's other 'date.' "How do you misplace a whole person? Aren't you guys trained to find things?"

The scowled it earned him was virtually artful. "Could you just answer the question?"

"Sorry man," Stiles squirmed away, his backside inelegantly scraping and pulling up tablecloths as he went, "I haven't seen her since the last time I saw her."

"And when was that?" the traditional crossed arms and scowl were delivered on point, with the fierceness of a Hunter's silent threat.

To which Stiles grabbed up another slider and stuffed it in his mouth. After an awkward staring moment, he gulped and answered, "The last time I saw her... was definitely the time I saw her last." And followed up with another slider, which he magically yanked off the table without breaking eye contact. He could keep up this game for as long as he had sliders and Lydia's caterers set him up with enough of his favorite snack to keep him there for at least an hour.

Sensing the silent dare, Bennet grunted in aggravation. "Just tell her to call me, okay? I'm worried. That's not too much to ask." He didn't wait for a reply, just spun on his heel and slipped easily away through the crowd.

Stiles kind of felt for the guy. He'd only known Allison for a hot minute and if she didn't reply to a text it drove him nuts. Meanwhile that guy probably spent a lifetime having one nervous breakdown after another dealing with Allison. With a sigh, Stiles realized he still wouldn't consider changing his dynamic with Allison, they were in a good and tenuous place.

Off in a deep dark basement somewhere, manned by 2 strapping young Werewolves, Allison faced a volatile shapeshifter and her poor bastard date thought he had a chance to find her by asking around dancefloors. Stiles felt for him but not enough to get involved. Definitely enough to stress eat to keep his mouth shut.

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Track 14 - D.A.N.C.E. (MSTRKRFT Remix) by Justice

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Due to insufferable dry mouth, Stiles considered getting something to drink and his nose tingled of the acidic smell of spirits in the air from the spiked punch, which strangely pulled and pushed him away so he stayed a little away to appreciate it. He found Lydia poolside, dishing out punch for the natives in a brilliant blue party-dress and practiced party smile. The way she moved in contrast to the music was very telling. It said that the party was hers, but she wasn't partying.

Hiding behind the pillar of tangled fairy lights and ivy, Stiles searched the area for anything, something he could use to manipulate this situation. A small smile spread across his face when a dizzy Greenberg happened by. Stiles spared the guy future embarrassment by settling him to sleep in a nearby couch and liberating him of a punch glass.

"Fill 'er up," Stiles played at her attention, drawing her away. Lydia's smile melted from party-professional to pinched-tight to something seemingly piqued-amusement.

Thankful of a metabolism that prevented intoxication, Stiles played at being a little buzzed for a while, and like your average light-weight marveled that the punch was sweeter than he expected.
"Then you shouldn't have been drinking it like shots," she hassled him. When Lydia smirked, Stiles nodded his head in recognition because it was one of her most genuine smiles he'd seen all night. Progress had been made!

"You've been plowing me with alcohol. Probably to take advantage of me," Stiles cooed, Lydia rolled her eyes. "Then you should finish this one for me. Are you not partaking?" he sounded almost concerned but sweet, so Lydia took the drink and sipped it staying beside him instead of chasing attendees.

"It's your dance party and you can dance if you want to," Stiles teased in a sing-song. "I bet you haven't even danced once."

Lydia sipped again to keep from answering.

"You wanna dance with me?" Stiles asked a little loud, leaning toward her ear.

Lydia swallowed deep and nearly gagged on her scoff while his stare turned to a glare. She finished, "You're kidding? That's a no."

Stiles looked as if he'd been hit in the stomach and his stumble backward was only half fake.

"Come on." He followed her as she marched back to the decadent garden fountain, that was beautiful and vast and jerry rigged to spew ruby colored liquid intoxicant. "Stop worrying about everyone else, your parties are always perfect. Why won't you just stop trying to control everything?"

Lydia looked over at him, "what do you know about it? You don't know how I do things anymore. And you weren't even invited."

"Sure," Stiles bobbed his head, shoved his hands into his pockets and while studying her face, his gaze softened as he neared. "But Lydia, if you want to waste time standing around arguing about what I do and don't know about you, we'll miss out on your party. So, let me try again, come on and hang out with me."

A real smile started to spread on her lips, "I've seen you dance. Awkwardly."

Stiles stood back, gestured for her to lead toward the dancefloor. "Then come on and show me."

"I'm sticking with no." Lydia smirked, crossed her arms and did that thing that drove him crazy and stepped into his stare, like she could stare down the sun. "I'm hosting my party."

"I thought this isn't even your party. It's Danny's," Stiles grinned, impishly.

"Whatever," Lydia snapped and spun away, walked around the fountain. Stiles followed determinedly, she seemed more amused than annoyed that they'd fallen into playing tag. "I don't care. I'm not going to apologize for wanting things nice and perfect for everyone else. Maybe you guys only want to run off to your corners to have super-secret agendas, but I'm trying to make one night where people can drink, dance and dress to the nine's..."

"Well, I think you look beautiful," Stiles said frankly and meant it. How she made the career effort to zip upstairs and switch from hostess wear to evening wear was beyond his comprehension.

Lydia swung around and froze mid-step. "I-I don't... I didn't dress up for compliments." Her eyes were wide and face looked flushed under his gaze.
He shrugged, "I know. But you do. And look, you might not have super-secret agendas but you're not just a girl either. Stuff with us," he gave a wide gesture flinging to the house and their friends, "and stuff with school," he gestured around toward the air and their classmates, "and stuff with us," he pointed between them and spoke slower, "has been tough. So why don't you take the night off and do something normal, like have a dance?"

Lydia tilted her head. "You are a terrible dancer," she argued, and stepped further away.

"If you won't come over and come on to me," Stiles flinched at the mis wording but continued unapologetically, "then I'm going to Muhammad over at you."

Trying not to laugh, Lydia recoiled as Stiles flailed in her direction, with arms thrust in the air off beat to the music and head tossing around seizure-like. "You can't make a verb out of a parable!" she insisted, and finally grabbed hold of him by the wrist. "I am not doing this because you convinced me to, I'm doing it out of pity."

"Whoa," he barely managed to keep up with her yanking pace. "Whatever you need to tell yourself!" he whisper-shouted.

{Saturday, Late-Night at Lydia's Danny's Party; Basement}

The round plumes of electrical clusters that Kira pulled from the baton grew with each gesture. While Allison made her steps as steady as an expert dancer, Kira lunged with hungry reaching waves.

"This is crazy," Kira said like she wanted to stop but her body kept reaching.

Allison kept true to her words and never once made physical contact, each measured step pivoted out of Kira's reach just so and stabbed close enough to her face her hair would be left singed. "You're doing fine. We can stop anytime you want."

Time felt trapped for them, and Allison was a sweat sheened warrior in a summer dress while Kira side-stepped like an animal, in her floral combat boots, yanking violent static from the air.

"I am running out of battery power though," Allison half-chuckled, half-panted. Kira slowed to a stop. "Feel like doing something about that?" Allison turned the weapon off but didn't close it. Stepping closer to Kira, she hoped of all the times they'd tried to see eye-to-eye, this was another one of those. Another 'New Girl' moment. It was something of the same for Allison, a new special friend to keep secret.

"What do you mean? Are you just playing around?" Kira asked. Like a switch flicked inside of her, without her control the electricity Kira was learning to manipulate was no longer at her fingertips.

"This is how I'm training you." Her eyes studied Kira's face. How Kira looked down at her hands, flipping them over in disbelief although they'd been going at it for nearly a half hour. "You see, you don't always have to bring out your ability because you think someone is going to hurt you. Come on, did you really think I would hurt you?"

It seemed like for as far back as she could remember she'd been drawn to Allison. Kira didn't really
feel like she belonged with anyone, anywhere, but she wanted to confide in her, depend on her and talk through Ms. Ramsey's Calculus with her. Kira took Allison's free hand and lead her to a mat, the sort that someone rolled out one their front steps when it rained to keep from slipping. She prayed it was rubber and not some substitute. There, she was grounded, that meant safe, right? There was nervousness that leaked through Allison's excited face, her toothy grin and shiny eyes made up for the difference. "I trust you, you can handle it," she reassured.

With that Kira, while keeping eyes contact with Allison she held up her right hand, palm flat and fingers splayed. Her breath calmed, eyes concentrated, her mouth twitched at the corner as the energy around them that began to reverberate. Energy both delicate and powerful enough it caused their hair to rise and skin to buzz. The baton turned on, its low hum was nothing compared to the sparks that burst to life when she placed it in the flat of Kira's palm.

"Ready to jump start this?" Kira asked, the eager one this time. Allison nodded, her grip tightened in Kira's right hand not that she felt it. She focused on the fireworks.

For a few moments the baton looked like a sparkler; the center of it a burst of white light, while a growing halo came off of it that seemed like it could be either cold or really hot but just seemed powerful and a waterfall of sparks was spilling onto the ground.

"Careful," Allison warned, "I just want it charged, not fried."

Kira's smile expanded, just like the feeling of knowing how to tone this up or down. It was in her alone and unlocking it felt like the rightest, funnest thing in the world and she never wanted it to stop, it felt like running, it felt like running too far too fast. And she thanked god there was Allison's hand was there to pull her back.

"That was... that was awesome!" Kira withdrew quickly, but she sensed the flow of electricity along her skin, spinning around her, around them like a blanket for a split second before it dissipated back into atoms in the air.

The baton buzzed a second or two even, then that dissipated too. But those sparks were nothing compared to the wattage of Allison's dimpled and spreading grin, "that was amazing!"

Giggling from excitement, their clasped hands swayed wildly between them while they twisted and bounced around in place. Until Kira stopped still in shock. "You're not on the mat."

Allison moved away and brushed off her clothes, letting Kira note everything and said smugly. "I never was. I stepped off the moment you started to spark."

She grabbed her weapon, grabbed her purse and grabbed Kira's hand again when the girl hadn't moved an inch due to shock. "You've got more control than you give yourself credit for. Now, come on. Let's go celebrate this victory with some ice cream."

Track 16 - The Youth (MMMatthias Remix) by MGMT

{Saturday, Late-Night at Danny's Party; Foyer}

"I'm going to casually just sit right here," Bennet took up position on a bench, and while his posture was easy he felt ready to pounce. "And I'm going to keep a casual conversation with you, Scott. It is Scott, isn't it?"
Both Isaac and Scott nodded in unison, regretting not having taken up space on the bench themselves, regretting not keeping a more casual guard than the obvious side by side stiff posture as gargoyles at the basement door.

"Cool," Bennet nodded. "I'll just sort of talk at you. Maybe about weather, maybe about sports. Then it's going to get late, it'll get close to my date's curfew and I'm going to pass through that door." The gesture he used, with one eye squinted and two fingers like a gun felt aggressive even in slow motion. "And you're going to let me in, how's that sound. You wouldn't want to make some sort of scene at Lydia's house, she is your friend right? I don't think Allison would like that. Nah, I don't think she'd like to see me mess up her friends, would you?" He smirked and finished his beer with long and exaggeratedly slow sips, ignoring their discomfort. Either from embarrassment or disbelief.

"Well," Scott started he edged away from the door, leaving Isaac to lean alone, while he edged further along the space between Bennet and the basement. The look of bewilderment and thoughtfulness across his features were pretty common but he kept connecting back and forth glances between the two. "We've been having a great lacrosse season. We're on our way to the championship. Have you been- you should come see us play."

The basement door swung open unexpectedly, leaving Isaac and Scott jumping to their feet while Bennet waited a little before moving around them to see what came through. Allison looked surprised that any of them were still around. Kira laughed a little out of embarrassment and worked her hands over her hair to keep strands from bouncing with static electricity.

"I thought the party was over there," Allison's wryness set them into moving out of the small hall, and back to the main room. She gave each of them a specially catered warning look that they should have known better. But Bennet met her with one of equal measure, partnered with a quick glance over her shoulder to Kira then back. He had questions. Allison didn't keep his gaze after that.

Track 17 - You & Me (Feat W. Darling) by Bassnectar

[Saturday, Late-Night at Lydia's Party; Back Garden/Nearish the Pool]

More and more accustomed to considering her friends' supernatural senses, Lydia brought Stiles to the far side of the backyard, far into the swing of things but on the edge of people and sound. The smell of flowers clinging to her fence was preferred although it did little against the general gnarly smell of partying people. And the distance from the thumping music was kinder to Stiles' senses but didn't do much to prevent it pounding through his brain. At least even though people danced near them they didn't rub up on top of them. Without being asked, Lydia took all of this into consideration, but then seemed uncertain at how to start moving once they got to their designated spot.

Instinctively, Stiles tensed up to have Lydia pay close attention to him and competitive, adolescent!Stiles bit him hard in the ass so after cheering "Watch This!" he began to impress her with his 'Moonwalk'. That snapped Lydia out of a trance except, rather than march off indignantly she pulled him close up to her.

"No. Now, okay just- right, no. Here- better but just-" she interrupted herself with each harsh instruction and Stiles wondered how Prada put up with her.
In the end they faced one another, feet at a box-step, eyes locked. His hands lay light and twitchy on her hips, her palms were placed flat and smooth-like against his collar almost hovering.

"This is not like the movies."

"You're right. This is not like the movies," Lydia reminded, her focus much more pinpoint than his. "Stop looking down or you're going to headbutt me."

The music moved fast and faster and even faster while they were noticeably slow. But as a beat struck evenly their bodies moved with it and eventually Lydia's competiveness showed up little by little. In the tossing of her hair from side to side, in the sway of her hips and the way Lydia finally sped up to meet the music and Stiles had to wrap his hands a little tighter on her waist to keep up. Stiles stood a little taller, leaned a little further with a playful expression on his face. Lydia smiled broadly at him, she lace-locked her fingers behind Stiles' neck and kept her arms stiff even as they bounced closer and faster to the pace of the music.

"Allison's decided to help Jackson," Stiles said loud enough for Lydia to hear but no one else. She gave him a sharpish, surprised stare but didn't stop moving in sync with him. Lydia's nose scrunched slightly but her enjoyment wasn't exactly washed all away. So, Stiles went further, "I've offered to help her."

Her brows went up in disbelief but she smiled and said "that's real big of you."

He shrugged. "Heard he saved Isaac from decapitating Danny the other day. Left him with a real gnarly bruise. I guess, like the one he left the day he fished you out of the swimming pool." Lydia's nose scrunched further as if she smelled something distasteful but since she didn't run away, Stiles pursued his theory, "I figure if he's preventing Isaac from being a murderer and saving Danny's and Kira's life he can't be all that bad... I'm not mentioning yours, because there are those moments when people say 'it goes without mentioning' and then they mention it, that just ruins it for me-"

"But you wanted to mention not mentioning it," Lydia sounded more suspicious than confused.

"Because I-I-I just figured if you didn't mention it, there must have been a reason. Anyway, you should probably know everyone is over there trying to help Kira figure some things out."

When Lydia shrugged again, her arms tensed around his neck and her measure of ease fell away a little. As the songs changed and music accelerated, people nearer to them moved fast and bumped them side to side and broke them apart. Stiles hopped closer, turned Lydia around and let him press her flat against his chest as they moved to the music. Finally, having her full attention he talked into her ear. "You okay?"

She "m-hmm"ed. It went unheard but Stiles felt it rattle against his chest. After a few seconds of her finding a rhythm again of rocking her body in tune with his, Lydia insisted "what else?"

"Nothing," he put off. Forgetting while his hands wrapped around her waist her hands were free to wander, she reached her left up, slithered it sweetly back and up his neck and gripped painfully at the hair at the nape of his neck. He squawked his admission, "Fine! The guys are using some stuff I brought back from the Hales to maybe look for Cora. It's a long shot-"

"The stuff about the Nemeton?" she eased up but left her hand where it was.

"Yep." Stiles spun her out and brought her back tight against him, with one hand gently holding onto his arm and the other wrapped around his neck. He kept his hands less twitchy at her hips,
then at her waist and then clasped at the small of her back as they slowed in contrast to the world around them. They moved further from the crowd again, practically against the wall and swayed to the bass, the most basic connecting beat. When he spoke again, he didn't have to speak loudly but he spoke slowly, "there. That's our super-secret agenda, what's yours?"

Lydia closed her eyes and sighed in a way that meant he was treading on thin ice, over hot coals. Instead of her usual glare, she tucked her head against his collar and hid her very readable expression from his, assuming her heart rate and chemosignals would be virtually unidentifiable in the mass.

"Come on Lydia, I want to help." He lightly butted the side of his head against hers. The only reaction was her head twisting so that she rested more against his shoulder and she could see the crowd. "It's not right. Just because I call to tell you when I'm poisoned and strung up a tree doesn't mean you can't tell me you just drowned."

"I told you that you were poisoned..." she said with a smile part sassy, part impish and one hundred percent charming. "And anyway, you weren't listening."

"I'm listening now," he hugged her to him gently, reminding of his there-ness, "I'm noticing things. You're spending a lot of time working at the party you should be partying at."

Lydia eyed Stiles hard, a little judgment for ruining an in tune moment, so rare, she could measure them specifically by the number of songs gone by. "I'm just concerned for my guests," she said frankly.

"All of them or specifically the supernatural ones," he eyed her back, undeterred by her steely-eyed gaze. It didn't work during their childhood 'dare wars' it wouldn't work now. "Did you read something in the bestiary?" when he asked, he felt a little shaken to think of the facts Hunters would have catalogued away about him. But hearing it from Lydia's lips felt a little lighter than a verdict.

"What makes you say that?" she smirked, readying for it. "I did a lot of reading."

"But was there something specifically you're looking for?" he almost didn't want to know, but something had gotten under her skin. The selfish part of him wanted to blame the studious obsessive part of Lydia and not the abandonment issues triggered by his little road-trip. "Come on, if there was some sort of freaky-Friday, every one's date turns Werewolf at midnight thing and the Werewolves get the night off, you should tell me so I can invest in leashes..."

"Some kind of cure for foot in mouth disease?" artfully Lydia rolled her eyes and craned her neck in a way that also tossed back her hair. Momentarily contrite, he scoffed low at her haughty display, at the way she found smallest gestures to be the easiest way of cutting him to the quick. And that over-developed need for control only proved why she needed him around to begin with.

"Shutting me up would be a prophetic injustice." Stiles smirked and stepped closer, almost enough to boop their noses. Startled Lydia had to step back, her haughty smile wavered and a laughing one flashed by. "Part of the reason I'm asking is because I know, instead of talking to anyone you've had your nose in research for days. Now you've got a night off but you're eyeing the crowd. Not like you're on the prowl, more like someone might rob the place."

Accustomed to being gossiped after, Lydia asked after a thoughtful beat, "the other part of the reason?" She looked challenged rather than discomforted, having people talk behind her back usually meant questioning her relationship status, but Stiles wasn't some regular kid.
"Because maybe I want a reason to help." In an attempt to look meek, Stiles looked feckless and
the scrutiny in Lydia's eyes made him squirm, which only made him try harder. "Maybe I can see
something in the crowd you can't."

Lydia's expression was hard to read. The face of a girl putting on the many façades of hostess,
investigator, socialite, Banshee and the friend sitting shotgun in the car.

"Fine." She rolled her eyes and a gut-deep uneasiness in Stiles rolled in with it. "The new moon is
Monday and maybe it won't mean anything. I read somewhere that shapeshifters affected by the
moon can be instinctively drawn together around the new moon."

"Like how packs are together for each other?" Stiles' uneasiness increased, as did his intrigue and a
more determined expression spread on his face. This seemed less like a solution to his problems
and more like a dice roll.

"I didn't say they're stronger because of the new moon," she insisted with a shake of her head. Her
words became intent, and calculated "No, definitely not strong. Just 'drawn together'. The full
moon makes people strong on their own, this is the opposite. I didn't know that when this party
idea came up... I probably should have cancelled it." Her voice changed to a hoarse whisper as
Stiles shoulders squared. He didn't pull away so much as he thought away, his eyes dancing all
over the place until Lydia's words stopped. Then they strayed back toward her.

"But you didn't." It sounded half-accusation, half-question.

Biting the corner of her mouth she said nothing to defend herself. Stiles studied her face to see an
apology but sensed only the same sameness he sensed upstairs. The same carefully constructed
empathetic angry-sad person trying her best to keep it together.

"So, now that everyone is under one roof, you're thinking of playing a dangerous game of whodunit
or baiting the the big-bad IT that's been creeping on kids from the High School. I know you're
genius level smart," he said, trying and failing not to let his admiration fill his voice too much.
"And I'm pretty sure I might be the only one who's figured you've been trying to create a mystic
'Get Out of Jail Free' card. But you're just going to get yourself really hurt. And I can't just sit back
and watch."

"You've confused Monopoly with Clue," she mocked and leaned back in his hold. She felt
conflicting feelings of uneasiness at being found out and relief for having an ally. "And the big bad
IT wouldn't be the only one creeping around if the Kanima is struggling to keep control, as much as
I've noticed Jackson struggling to fight back."

"So, I am right about the rest," his smile broadened when he looked at her, and he moved closer so
that his head bowed practically leaning his forehead against hers.

"Maybe. Or maybe you're projecting," With eyes closed, and shook her head gently, Stiles
eagerness reminded her of how tired the guys could make her. "Maybe it's because you like to look
for conspiracies in every corner."

"What do you want me to say, huh? That I'm crazy, totally paranoid?" his brows rose with mild
amusement, "None of this is new information. Now you're gonna try to at least give me the benefit
of the doubt?"

"And?"

"And believe I'm 100% here for you. I'm not going anywhere. That is me, settled here. I mean
around town and you know, near your general vicinity.” He flashed an overly wide grin, then brought the wattage down in fluctuating increments, "75% most of the time actually, I've got to time share with my Dad and them... 60% at the very least."

"Stiles! I've got it, I've got it." Then skeptical with narrowed eyes, she brought her hands down, and held the collar of his button up. "Alright, I've given a lot of benefit to a lot of people,” she groaned and frowned deeply, fresh in mind were vague half-remembered images of collapsing bloody against the Nemeton. Followed closely were memories of being crushed between Stiles and Scott under smoky debris of the Hale House fire, or jarring juxtaposition of watching semi-dead Jackson through the hospital window, along with holding Allison crying herself to sleep or sitting beside Isaac after he came back from the dead. These felt more like nightmares than memories.

"But have you thought maybe I'm just not cut out for this." When Lydia's swaying slowed, Stiles moved to match, holding her with his hands at the small of her back.

"What are you talking about?" his brows arched up in surprise. "People flock to you, you're always surrounded by friends. You're the most confident, ambitious person I've ever-"

"Lydia!"

They caught her name over the chorus of the dance song at the same moment, and they both tensed in that feeling of abrupt disappointment to have their 'there-ness' interrupted.

"Lydia!" Danielle called from several feet away and through the tangle of people, "we're out of beer!"

Lydia's groan sounded nearer to a growl as she turned to answer her, "so?! Handle it!"

"I need you to handle it!" she said with enough authority, it made people around them stare and step back.

"It's Danny's party! Ask him!" when Lydia looked around and could finally make out Danielle, beside her clung Danielle's best-friend Heather, waiflike and strung up skillfully in a pretty corset while making eyes at the sky. "Aiden said to ask you!" How Danielle's voice carried through the crowd was remarkable, and it made Stiles wonder that anyone needed enhanced hearing at all with someone like her around.

After taking a deep breath, Lydia stilled herself and pressed fingers to her temple, "they should have bought a keg."

Wondering at it Stiles remembered, "They did. I saw Allison's friend help Danny drag it in."

Tired of the shouting, Lydia parted the sea of people and marched toward the house. "How did they finish a keg?"

The expression on Danielle's face was less than amused, beside her Heather looked dopey with hilarity and lacking sobriety. She jabbed a thumbed toward the far side of the backyard, opposite the pool where a tennis table had been set up and cheering went on to the tune of anarchy.

"There's a girl over there blowing everyone away playing flip cup," Danielle might have been put out by the predicament but she sounded impressed none the less.

"She drinks beer like she's trying to get drunk enough to forget she's drinking beer." Heather hiccupped, then swayed against Danielle's arm.
Wiping at her face, unsure of whether she should help Danielle get Heather somewhere to wash up or try to resolve the beer dilemma, Lydia groaned inwardly at the inferiority of these aggravations. There were more important things to focus on and with Stiles finally at her side Lydia felt like she could make headway- that was when Stiles made a pained sound which yanked at her heart she wholly didn't understand.

Track 18 - You're Out (Frankmusik Remix) by Dead Disco

{Saturday, Late-Night at Danny's Party; Far side of the Poolside}

The girl's kohl-rimmed, light brown eyes caught their gaze through a hundred faces and over eighty feet away. The last in a line of nine cups of beer went down with a cherry red smile and followed by an uproarious table of cheers. Like a fish out of water, her liquid consumption was seemingly unending, meanwhile her charisma was supernatural to where the game of flip cup went mad with fans. She gave a wink, slipped on a little black leather jacket before making a long-legged pivot on 4” leopard print pumps and made for the garden exit. She left a wake of uncertainty that pulled a whole pack of stares along with her.

Danielle took their stillness as a cue that they had the situation well in hand, and so took Heather ambling inside.

Stiles stood gap mouthed and eyes blinking rapidly, struck dumb and divided as he gazed across the pool. The last time he had an expression, imploring, like he somehow forgotten which way was up it was because he wanted someone else to pull him from wreckage. This wasn't far off from it.

{Saturday, Late-Night at Danny's Party; Near side of the Poolside}

Lydia glanced at him, her bright eyes seemed dark and dilated, her shaky hands steadied on her hips and her lips worked intense enunciation around the words, "What. The holy hell. Is that?"

"It's Erica," hovered beside her, Isaac's voice came in swooping like a cloud. The music sounded dim by comparison and Lydia tried not to jump.

She twisted at the waist to see each of them, to notice the blanched desperate look on Isaac's face, wide-eyes searching for validation that he wasn't dreaming this. But while Stiles looked baffled maybe even a little excited, Isaac looked disturbed.

"That's the girl who attacked me on the road," Kira said less like an accusation and more like reporting the weather. When they looked for an explanation, she stood near and behind Allison who had her hand on a weapon, readied in case there might be another attack. Allison stared at her friend's with determination on her face that was inscrutable but a stance that meant business. And a few feet before her stood Scott, something drifting between Isaac and Allison, like he had guided or guarded one world to the other and maybe wouldn't have brought them through the pool door if it meant walking into this landmine.

"Yeah," Scott nodded, his chest collapsed in a sigh that meant an apology, he wanted it to be true and not true. The concentration in his face, displayed open conflict to want to repair the damage done by the girl in the micro-mini who easily hurt his friends by strutting off into the late night chill. The moment he stepped forward it broke the spell she cast and sent Isaac into a protective urge, the flight before a fight.
"Stiles?" Isaac asked. The question, it was the one thing Lydia wanted to say but also didn't, "Are
you going to just stay there?" Unintentionally, Isaac bumped Lydia's shoulder hard as he went by
and started to shove into the crowd.

"Stiles," her voice croaked low. Looking back, his expression turned distant and forlorn, like Stiles
almost seemed surprised to have Lydia nearby. Stuttering to speak he opted to say nothing. After
Stiles didn't even give her the good graces of an argument, Lydia turned to Isaac.

"Isaac!" she called after him but she meant to say 'you said no drama. I trusted you and you broke
your promise!' With fist clenched she stumbled, "and be careful!"

"I'm sorry!" Isaac meant it, "I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" Yet he pushed forward, shoving people aside,
Isaac looked back to Stiles and the tie between them yanked like a leash making it difficult to keep
going without him.

Another apology. Once Stiles heard that rolling through the air he remembered the last words
between them and knew Lydia would take his leaving like a slap in the face. His mind boggled,
eyes went unsteady and the color drained from his face.

"I'll be right back, I promise," Stiles swore once more. While she tried to keep her cool she colored
with her upped and angry heartrate.

There was no argument, just shadowed bright eyes that stared openly. Pleading, Stiles gripped
Lydia's bare shoulders hard, his very human nails leaving impressions of desperation for
understanding while Isaac's retreating calls kept distracting. "I have to see. If it's really --Wait right
here, Lydia. Can you just give me five minutes? I know, I'm sorry. Just, but, just stay here,
continue being mad - or not - if you want, or whatever works for you, um, but I promise I will be
right back, and then we can scheme - Yeah? Okay, just five minutes."

With that Stiles had gone into a crowd of limbs before disappearing behind the swing of metal
garden gates, closing him off.

Scott stepped forward too late to stop him. He took up the space beside Lydia, and didn't move to
touch her or begin to say a thing. Together they observed the scene like they weren't seeing the
place at all but looking through everything. When Lydia blinked finally and stared over at Scott, he
shared a quavering smile and tilted his head, as if to ask 'are you okay'. Robotically she nodded but
after a moment dropped the pretense. A sense of utter dismay set in, their bubble went up, their
world of pent up every which 'why-me-ness' came to the surface and she stared blank faced up at
him. "What the hell is going on, Scott?"

"I don't know," he worked to fight back his feeling of slack jawed awe. Scott kept his eyes steadier
and the other hand touched Lydia's shoulder where Stiles' hands clenched too hard. "I'm going to
find out."

And when Scott raced off she believed he'd be right back. There was a little comfort in that, but
there was more comfort in knowing she never promised to stay and wait.

Track 19 - It's Time (Jeriqo Remix) by Imagine Dragons
By the time Scott caught up with his friends, they'd made it along the street and past all the parked cars. Stiles left a dent in the back of someone's Toyota by hitting it in frustration and Isaac was three cars further along the way standing on the hood of a Mazda Scott recognizes as Allison's. He prayed they recognized it, too, and didn't leave a mark. So much for keeping a low profile.

"Is it really her?" Scott asked. His voice was like a needle cutting through tension.

Stiles finally looked up from down the lane. His lip trembled but his voice was steady. "I've got no clue, Scott. The party was too crowded. I couldn't sense anything through all the people and noise."

"I can't get a scent or hear anything, even now," Isaac added.

"What do we do?" Scott cleared his throat, hoping could calm a little if they could work together.

"We?" Isaac hopped down and landed close by. His eyebrows furrowed, "shouldn't you be inside and dealing with your own girl problems? Leave this to us."

"Oh," Scott said and stepped back, "I just figured I could help. If the three of us split up we'd have a better chance of finding her."

"And what would you say if you found her, Scott?" Stiles asked. He neared, quieter than Isaac had, his tone bringing a calm with it.

Scott shrugged.

"If we find something, we'll let you know right away," Stiles emphasized the word 'we' to remind Isaac that it mattered to keep their friends in the loop, however peculiar it seemed. "'cause if she came to us now, then I'd like to believe we're all coming together for a reason that isn't some blow out kegger."

"You think she's just trying to lure us out?" Isaac turned his eyes to Stiles, their fierceness coloring mildly yellow in the dark.

The silent rolling of Stiles' eyes virtually screamed 'are you kidding me, you goddamn moron! Her gaze was practically a yanking line! Her footsteps, fish hooks!' Then he grabbed Isaac by the sweater sleeve and turned toward the street again.

"I can't help you if you keep taking off," Scott interrupted his exit, Stiles froze. And Isaac shifted his weight back, like he wanted to give them space but he didn't want to leave Stiles behind.

"I can't figure this out if I have to watch your back too." Stiles put a hand on Scott's shoulder. He squeezed gently to reassure him that there was no way he sincerely wanted to leave without him but circumstances kept turning out this way. Scott exhaled loudly, rested a kindhearted hand on top of Stiles' and watched them split up and run off in separate directions.

The promises Stiles continued to give didn't feel empty exactly, they felt numbing. It helped that Isaac started to speak up, to cut in a little and assure "once we figure something out, anything out, 'we'll' let you know."

"I know you will," Scott nods to the both of them, it even gave Isaac pause to see how much he believed in the both of them. They nodded in return before they sped along their way.
When Scott returned to the party there was a fresh, raw sense of the protectiveness that he'd somehow betrayed his friends. Here they were all together where they should have been safe under, in their homes but wolves had gotten in the door.

Taking a deep breath, deeper still and Scott let a source of something powerful settle in his core and imagined what it would be like to reach out and hold onto each of them. Each of his people, each and every person in the party, not just those who he loved but yes, those especially. When Scott stood in the garden doorway, encircled by iron and framed in a glow invisible to the eye, he could see through the crowd in a color redder than bright licking flames. The severe well marked shape of Allison across the pool highlighted brightest among them all, in the familiar thrumming heart of the one who mattered most. Near her were people, ones she cared about, who cared about her and he cared about her. A human friend, Bennet and the brilliant glow of a fox vibrantly hugging around Kira's shape. When Scott eyed the rest of the backyard, there were other piercing shapes that burned brighter than most. Some were dancers who were caught in a moment, or lovers on their way to a place, but a few made Scott's pulse race with a baser instinct that had his claws out, and fangs digging harshly into his lower lip.

There was especially the shape of a man beside the DJ booth, whispering intimately into Danny's ear. It wasn't the fact that the guy vibed like a Werewolf, it was because he felt familiar. Even over the distance he felt faintly like something not exactly of dying, but something like killing and woods, and something that reminded him of the trauma of Isaac's death. Snapping back to himself, Scott knew he had to investigate. 'We', he thought, remembering the look on Allison's face, caked in dirt, pulling Isaac's broken body from a ditch. 'We' had to investigate.

Track 20 - Shady Love (Silkie Remix) by Scissor Sisters vs. Krystal Pepsy

{Saturday, Midnight throughout Beacon Hills}

By the time they gave up and returned to Lydia's property, a black Camaro skidded to a halt in front of them. The wheels left black marks on the pavement and smoke kicked up. The locks popped open and the driver's side window revealed blonde wavy hair framing a dangerous look.

"Get in, losers," she grinned like she had her fangs out when she didn't.

"Wai--wha? How can you afford a car like this?" Stiles balked, hesitating before he thought clearer. "Right. You stole it."

Rolling his eyes, Isaac yanked the back seat door open and gestured aggressively for Stiles to get in already. "The hell are you thinking!?" he riled, "you're stealing cars now! And wait a second!-" in an attempt to climb out of the car over Isaac's lap he didn't compute the car was already in motion. "There is no way I'm going to stay in a car Erica is driving!"

"Come on, it's not that bad Stiles," she laughed through the rearview mirror. "I've gotten much better." She swerved speedily and skillfully around a corner to prove a point. The guys slid uncomfortably around in the back seat before remembering to strap into their seatbelts. "Anyway, think about it this way; if we crash, it's not even our car."

Isaac groaned the loudest, Stiles simply buried his head in his hands.

"Erica, we aren't here for a joyride-"
"Oh."

"I thought you were dead." Isaac didn't say we. He barely acknowledged Stiles beside him. "I've been feeling guilty about-about how everything..."

"Where the hell have you been, Erica?!" Stiles started in on his own thread.

"Oh, the two of you," she cooed. "You've got to admit, you don't exactly look like you feel guilty. You look pretty okay to me."

"If you've been okay this whole time, why haven't you-?"

She 'woooo-ed' as they sail over a speed bump. On purpose or not, it sent the back seat into a silent spell. "Never said I was okay," she clarified and continued carefully "And Isaac, you shouldn't feel guilty. You two had a lot going on. It wasn't like this was easy for any of us, I'm just happy to see you guys. Surprised, but happy."

"You're surprised?" Stiles edged, she made it suspiciously evident she knew more about them than the reverse.

"I didn't come to the party tonight to meet up with you two," she licked her lips and searched the road with a little more concentration. Her speed slowed while her thoughts sped up. "I came here to check out your friend."

"What have you got against Kira?" Isaac snapped, grumpily. He wasn't going to fight Erica on Kira's behalf, he wasn't sure he could but he definitely wanted to know why she would put him in that place.

"The firecracker?!" Erica barked with laughter, she struck the wheel with the heel of her palm. "Oh, that's funny. Real funny." The more she said things were funny, the less convinced she sounded.

Stiles leaned forward, through the seat, pressing Isaac back in his chair to grip Erica's shoulder, "you're watching Scott?"

Startled by his touch, she jumped away, the car swerved but Stiles didn't let go.

"Yeah, of course Scott!" she shrugged, her growling tone and foot on the brake sent him flying back. She had made so many spinning turns Stiles had become disoriented and wasn't sure how, but they'd ended up on roads closed down due to construction. If they crashed here, it would be a while before it would be reported or even heard. From Erica's haughty expression, it seemed she banked on that.

Speeding up once more Erica started on a spin, applying enough centrifugal force to keep them seated.

"I was just fascinated!" she said casually, while at a screaming volume. "What is up with this guy? I mean he's hot alright, for a... what is he? Not a Beta, not an Omega. What's so great about him that Isaac gives up looking for us to shack up with him? And then Stiles heads home but comes all the way back here just to be best-buds with him? That lightning bug and Hunter are stuck to him like fly paper and I don't get it!"

When she hit the brake this time even she yelped and had to hold onto the roof to keep herself from feeling off-kilter. After a moment of dizziness, she refocused and twisted a little to eye them both directly. "What is it? What's so different about him?" Feeling a little exhausted and emotional, Erica's voice turned hushed.
They looked to each other and then to her, feeling cheated that those were the first words she'd shared with them after coming back from the dead.

"I'm not-" Isaac started, surprising them all at his protectiveness. "I'm not going to tell you anything."

After staring at Isaac intently, Erica sighed and asked knowingly "because he saved your life in the woods?"

Isaac felt upset she knew but never ask about the incident or his well-being afterward, "no. Because he would do the same for me."

"Stiles?" Erica quickly glanced away from Isaac to conceal any flicker humility. "You got anything?"

"Erica, you know what you're doing is messed up." Stiles set his jaw and glaring hard he studied her face, refusing to look anywhere else in case he might find a chink in her bad-girl façade.

"I figured you'd say something like that." For a long moment Erica kept Stiles' stare steadily, then flashed a grin, shrugged lightly and faced forward to put the car into motion. After a long swift drive from the nowhere land into Lydia's neighborhood, she finally broke the silence, "I know we are at war, we do whatever we've got to do to survive. Someone's expecting me so I'll drop you back off-"

"If you figured we would say that, why didn't you just ask us this at the party?" Stiles insisted, gripping the passenger seat to stay forward.

Erica laughed a scoff and drove faster but with more caution, "I didn't expect the party to be at her house."

"Stay away from Lydia!" Stiles snarled. He fell into the backseat after his claws went through the leather seat like butter and didn't support his weight, "if you harm one perfect strawberry blonde hair on her head-"

"Okay, this isn't going to end well," Isaac sighed, placed a hand on Stiles shoulder and another on the driver's seat, bracing the distance. Erica brought the car to a screeching halt once more and when she did, Isaac turned to her and nailed her with a yellow-eyed glare. "But he's right. Lydia is off limits."

That smile, the wicked one pulled at the edge of her lips again and broadened until she broke into a cackle. Shaking her head, Erica put a hand over Isaac's and smiled toward Stiles. "Lydia? Like your Lydia? Like you used to 'horde all the best swag for her Christmas presents' Lydia?"

Isaac looked between them confused, but saw from the flush in Stiles cheeks there was a sibling's understanding there that zipped over his head.

"Oh, your best friends turned out to be a Werewolf and a Banshee," her eyes danced around in thoughtful recognition and Stiles sat up in panic.

"Erica? Erica, what's going on here- You can't tell anyone," Stiles pleaded and she looked at him like he just challenged her to a dare.

Before she could answer, the passenger side door swung open and someone jumped in. Someone dark-haired scruffy, and familiar with Erica. Someone else who happened to be a Werewolf.
"Reïka, hit the gas! The Twins have blown up the party and the cops are coming!" At that he swung around, growling. His eyes went blue and twitchingly he gripped the dashboard. "What have you been up to? Deuc is going to be pissed about this."

"Deuc's not here," Erica snapped at him, an impatient terrifying slide of her heel against the pedal threatened to rev them forward. "Guys, unless you're coming back to meet my pack- you should go."

"Pack? What pack?" Isaac's said close beside her, she had to turn to meet his face. She gulped instead of answering. "Is that why you aren't mad I didn't look for you?"

"It's more complicated than that."

"You realize, if you joined one of them, you joined someone who tortured Derek?" Isaac wasn't used to being ahead of the game and even he was surprised to come to a conclusion as quick as that. It hurt and surprised him to realize it.

"Reïka, we don't have time-"

"Meyers," she hissed, at her pack member, "give me a second!" then swung back.

"Erica," Isaac tried to say something but wasn't sure where to head with his pleading. It left him drowning in fear and wonder, "why are you doing this?"

"I am loyalist," she said. Her tenseness, and tightness dropped and hand touched his and words meant less than her touch on the back of his hand as she felt real. Realer than any and all of his nightmares. And he imagined her words to mean whatever he wanted them to mean, for now.

"Wait! What do you mean, 'blown up'?" Stiles hopped forward, ignoring the other Werewolf's agitated state until he growled again. "You talking literally? Figuratively? What Twins? Did the Twins blow up?"

"Stiles?!" Isaac insisted, halfway out of the car, "let's go!" He reached in and dragged Stiles out by the collar. They half-stumbling, half-running went up the yard into the house to see what was going on. And even though Erica drove off of the road at a breakneck speed, she waited on a road a few streets away that hung over Lydia's street. She watched the proceedings until she was certain her foster-brothers would be okay then they drove into a construction area, dumped the car and ran the rest of the way home. Whenever Meyers threatened to open his mouth about her checking in with her old-pack she reminded him the reason he didn't notice to begin with was because he was talking up under-age girls.

Smiling, she spoke to Deuc until morning, reporting her version of the truth and she had her brothers in her head for the first time in too long a time. Angry, happy, stupid voices and she felt dazzling for it and her story-telling was on point.

Track 21 - Heartbeat (Michael Brun Remix) by Childish Gambino

{Saturday, Midnight at Danny's Party; Poolside}

It was a useless, obsessive and greedy thought to imagine how different life would be if Lydia had just cancelled the party. Cancelling it would have robbed her friends of this unique opportunity,
yes, but it flittered through Lydia's mind anyway, after all hadn't provided any clues to who the Kanima's master might be. Jackson hadn't even turned up.

To calm her thoughts, Lydia tried reciting mathematical equations in her head, and when that didn't work she whispered them to keep from screaming.

"You look like you could use a breather," Aiden said, coming up beside her. It wasn't the best line, but at least he wasn't trying to get her drunk. She swung around to face her, lips pursed, chin high and eyes hard ready for the next ruinous follow up. "I have my bike outside..."

"You want me to leave my own party," she arched a brow. Aiden was exactly as handsome as Danny advertised, if advocating your boyfriend and then supplying a copy was an advertisement. He reeked of charm and his body tight T-shirt left little to the imagination. Which was good, because Lydia's mind felt exhausted.

"Isn't it Danny's party?" He smirked, with brown eyes that shone and fascinated her with how they looked at her. They watched her with pinpointed remoteness, with openness not entitlement, or childhood, popular and Banshee!Lydia just the Lydia one with or without a party options. Aiden wasn't very blind for a blind-date. And he was her type; available.

Lydia looked toward her friends, her friends who were left. Allison seemed caught up with her Hunter friend Bennet over whatever mysteriousness occurred in the basement with Kira. And Danny, indeed manned things at the DJ booth with his boyfriend Ethan. Danielle hovered back in the kitchen, shoving off buzzed busybodies trying to raid the cabinets. That left Lydia with little do, other than Hostess smiles and return to serving drinks.

"Alright," Lydia stood and led the way effortlessly through a sea of people. At the front closet, she shoved aside a couple making out to get her jacket and when she grabbed her house keys, she dangled them in her hands like a cowboy spun their pistol.

"Can I drive," she said in false sweetness that said, 'you'd better let me.' Aiden laughed and the lightness of it, the lack of drama and open-airness made her smile. Beside the black motor bike, without discussion he handed her a helmet and promised her on the open road. Lydia knew where to head and looking back at the house she didn't feel any pangs to stay at Danny's party all.

Track 22 - PUMPED UP KICKS (DUBSTEP) by Foster The People

{Saturday, Midnight at THE Party; Kitchen}

"They were right when they said Lydia Martin throws the best parties," Bennet said, smugly. He nodded, with just a jut of his chin toying with his new acknowledgment of Scott's Werewolf status. Even if it was useful especially at this point he had to take the small amusement where he could get it.

Allison frowned and delivered such a glare, "the battery on my baton is dead."

"The least you can do is admit this is a blow out," he harried despite his dialogue.

Allison rummaged through her purse, and glanced back at Scott. "Are you sure that's the Alpha who attacked Isaac?" When Scott shrugged, Allison reviewed all the stories she'd been listening to over the night, from Stiles, Scott and Kira especially. "What about you?"
Kira's head snapped up. "Why? I didn't see anything?"

"You might have sensed something, too. You did end up there," Allison offered, her mind worked at an increasing speed. "You might not even know what you could have detected if you don't try. Just try, focus on him. Does he seem familiar?"

Together they looked through the kitchen window over toward Danny's makeshift DJ table, set up in the narrow slab strip along the opposite side of the pool. There Danny and Ethan took and ignored music requests from party-goers, but mostly they danced and stuck to themselves.

It was only a little quieter in the kitchen because it was further from any dancing, but it didn't feel like it. It just gave their group space to really speak and kept them from being sensed while it kept Ethan within sight. Who knows what he would have overheard already throughout the night.

"Yeah..." Kira admitted, quick to undercut her comment, "but he's also been around the lacrosse field."

"Are you sure?" Scott pleaded this time, eyes both soft and penetrating.

"I think he was there that day, but it's just a weak feeling." Kira searched once more, but instead of searching her mind she tried to remember the way the rushing feeling of wind and ground felt around her. When the woods felt a bit real to her senses, then so did the memory.

"Well, whatever you want to do about it, figure it out quickly because he's spotted us. And his eyes have gone all blue," Bennet warned. Brass knuckles appeared on his hands and he moved through the glass doors to the pool without hesitation.

"Blue eyes?" Kira asked but Allison shook her head, to imply now wasn't the time to explain, but yeah that was a bad, BAD sign.

"Wait," Scott insisted, speedily went after him and put his hand on Bennet's arm "we can't just do whatever we want, if we're not sure, and he hasn't even done anything."

"He might do something-" Allison suggested, charging up behind him. Scott looked between the two. A kitchen knife appeared in her hands when she couldn't find a useful weapon in her bag. Her agenda seemed clear in mind.

"Yeah, but he might not." Scott shook his head, "Erica showed up and didn't do anything. Maybe they're just trying to give us a message."

"Guys, why don't we ask Lydia? Didn't she sense when Isaac died, maybe she might recognize something?" Kira asked, her voice a gentle interjection concluding their hypothesizing.

They turned to each other, staring in a panicked realization for their missing friend. Allison broke the stillness quickly and eyes the crowd. "She's not here."

Scott sensed through the home, "she's not even in the house."

"Who? Lydia?" Danny answered, half-shouting, having neared them to get a drink and entered within a range of hearing. Topless and covered in a layer of sweat from dancing, he looked at them, grinning and pleased with himself and his party. "Ethan, have you seen Lydia?"

"Who's that again?" Ethan feigned obvious ignorance in obnoxious playfulness, Danny laughed but he was the only one.
In a switch of traits, Scott growled, his teeth bared and tension in him uncoiled. He prepared to tackle, but Allison pushed past him, not because she was fast but because Allison knew when she moved Scott would hesitate. And her skills were honed. She could subdue where he would maim.

With her left arm, Allison flew forward pushing Ethan to fall stumbling backward into the DJ equipment, with her forearm against his throat, to the crowded pool on the left, the kitchen knife lowered to his abdomen went unnoticed. To Danny and anyone nearby it looked like Allison maybe drank a little too much and couldn't take a joke, her jacket covered the angle of the upward tilting blade pressed into the center of his breastplate. If he didn't answer, at best he'd be exposed. Kira picked up the baton that rolled out of Allison's purse and flicked it to full length, preparing to at least try to make use of her newfound focus. Danny was too startled to react and Bennet worked to calm/restrain him while still ready at arms. Belatedly, Scott woke from his fury and tried to think of a way out of this conflict.

"What the hell did you did to my friend?" she hissed low, and asked quickly.

"No clue, Hunter." Ethan chuckled, "but you might want to think, if your friend didn't sense her here she probably took off." He placed a hand on Allison's arms, steadying her grip with his rough fingers. His mouth turned into a long mean line just like his tone. "Probably because this place is a goddamn mess, just like everything you guys touch."

"What the hell do you mean by that?" Allison scoffed, her surprise genuine.

"The packs wouldn't even be at each other's throats if you Hunters weren't butchering us."

Ethan leaned further against the wobbling table, he backed away as the knife broke the skin and left a line of red that blended along with the sweat and glitter that made a smearing line of pink along his naval.

"Did you hurt my friend?" when Allison breathed out through her nose, her eyes followed the trail. She eased up the choke hold but stepped further forward, her knife twisted rather than pulled back because she wanted Ethan to fall on it if he thought of moving. The war the Werewolves went through barely stayed on her radar and Allison forgot their suffering in light of her friends. Of course there would be spillage and she worried if this was qualified.

"Typical." He scoffed in return, his youthful face undercut his old word cynicism. "Your friend hurt us and you're justifying it with more paranoia. Go ahead, hurt me. It's not going to bring Lydia back. She took off, I didn't take her."

"Allison, he's been with me all night," Danny interrupted and argued in earnest. His face looked both angry and pained. Scott gave her a warning glance over the distance, a silent admission that although while Danny's heart beat fast it didn't beat false. In a very human, very boyfriend way, Danny had stepped in. They held back with a veritable skid. Danny continued, "He's been helping me set up and hasn't left my side. Maybe you're confusing him for Aiden?"

Their reasonability and calm had her hiding the weapon entirely but the look of threat didn't leave her eyes. Danny watched her with pity and absurdity, he convinced himself she must be a violent drunk to act in such a way and Scott... Scott shook his head to warn them to back off. They were getting answers anyway, why make things worse.

"Guys- the table!" Kira shouted out a moment too late before the DJ equipment teetered over and fell into the swimming pool, setting off at first a splashing thud, then a delaying spark and titanic burst that brought down most of the fairy lights nearby in a sparkling whip of flames.
The DJ booth was on a slab of path far enough away from passersby they alone were nearest the dangerous collapse. The DJ himself got thrown backward and flying into bushes, nowhere near the outfall. Whereas Ethan shoved Allison to the ground, jumped beyond her to throw himself over Danny, rolling them away from any stray wires that flung around, tangled and pulled.

Allison rolled out of the way then scurried to reach for Scott and they reached sanctuary behind a pillar. A temporary sanctuary, as the cords above them started to spark alive and fall down. Bennet unfortunately fell to the pavement, hit by a stray cord and while there would only be superficial burns, he remained unconscious. Allison tried to reach for him, and even Scott made a few failed attempts due to the live and whipping wires overhanging the pool.

Surprised at first, instead Kira breathed in and then out again, but despite her exhaustion advanced and jumped onto the exposed piece of table left floating above water level. It wasn't the deepest pool but the table seesawed. Kira reached back and in one fell swoop thrust the baton into the heart of the sparks, live cords came to coil around it like the folding petals of a blossom. And for a moment, anyone able to avert their eyes to the fireworks might have made have been able to see the bright light in Kira's eyes and the wonder in her face on bringing all the electricity back into the baton's dead battery. Maybe a little more than strictly necessary to charge the baton. The house lights flickered on and off like a strobe light, no one would have been able to focus and witness her really and if anyone had they would have explained it away for a party stunt.

Scott remembered the house's layout, ran to the power supply near where they kept garden hose, yanked the little door open and pulled down every lever inside. In the darkness, party-goers' outcries turned to hoots of laughter and delight. Sighing in temporary relief Allison ran to Bennet's side to assess the damage but he was already waking up, disgruntled that his suit was ruined.

"Ask about 'the Aiden'," he reminded, ignoring the disarray of kids milling around to their own antics.

"What about him?" Ethan came over, feeling a little pity for Bennet's pains while he rubbed at the mark on his chest as it healed unseen from his boyfriend.

Allison parroted "Who's Aiden?"

"Ethan's twin," Danny said and Ethan smirked, wiping blood and sweat off of his lower lip.

Unable to stand yet, Bennet leaned up against Allison, pushing back the hair tumbling out of her tie he whispered low into her ear, "their faint sense? What if it's because they weren't sensing one of him." Allison showed no overt signed of acknowledgement but clutched his hand hard and played off his reach for her as grip for balance.

They both turned to look up at Ethan, as Scott and Kira rejoined their discussion, Scott asked, "There's two of you?" Hating that he understood more and more answers often made matters worse.

"No, there's one of me." Ethan corrected, proudly. "And then there's my brother, even if we're practically inseparable-"

"He's been helping me set up and hasn't left my side. Maybe you're confusing him for Aiden?"
Danny rejoined, "Hope he'll be helping me straighten this out too."

Scott apologized. Profusely and wondered at it, wondered at the exact answer this meant all with his eyes locked on Ethan. Shrugging it off onto his brother, pawing at Danny, helping clean up the party, delicately assuring his boyfriend everything would be fine... Scott gripped tight onto one thought. And the grip was tight enough to claw into his palm, "there are way too many Werewolves here together."

"Tell me about it," scoffed Bennet as he came to stand and rubbed at his neck. He still wore his brass knuckles. When Kira helped Allison up she handed back the baton, but Allison told her to keep it with pride in her voice and a gleam in her eyes.

It wasn't just stress over identifying the "who's who" in this lycanthropic entourage. It was the collateral damage, but he'd seen enough teenage movies to know how to clear out a party.

"Hey," he said muffling his voice but hyping his tone into his cellphone. Scott dragged himself into the quietest corner and keeping his eyes sharp, he continued to complain to the police. "I'd like to make a complaint. My neighbors are throwing a party. A really loud party. I'm pretty sure there might be under-age drinking, too."

Track 24 - When You're Around by FrankMusik

{Saturday, Midnight at the Martins' house; Hallway - Garage}

"I can't be caught like this," Kira's voice in a low trembling panic. Allison spun around, the room looked like an ant farm falling over but it wasn't in her nature to abandon her ground. But Allison could tell there was a desperation in the girl's voice that meant she didn't want the cops to see her, it meant the control she'd tested throughout the night might have been beyond their limits and it meant Kira was asking for Allison's help.

"Come on," she wrapped her fingers around Kira's wrist, her voice was firm and commanding. Ignoring the thundering nonsense above and around, Allison led her through one door down a hall and then another. Until they were locked off in a private space that led between the main house and the garage exit. Allison assured her that no one knew this place, no one except Lydia. And maybe Scott. Probably Stiles. "Just stay here. Stay... stay and wait until the police car drives around to the back of the house. Listen carefully, and when it feels safe, go through there, cut through the neighbors' yard and make a run for it."

Kira nodded and nodded. When she grabbed hold of Allison's arms, it was uncertain but letting go was a chore. But Allison's smile, bright even in the dark felt reassuring. Despite the noise upstairs, the panicky smells and childish yelling, despite the receded sound of sirens she kept in mind Allison's impish smile and remembered to safeguard herself in the narrow dark and wait until it felt 'safe.'

After a deep-diver's breath Kira pushed it open and popped through to the other side. Hunched low, she glanced back and forth and all around to wonder at what they were up to in the garden. How to get out through the windy roads of Lydia's neighborhood without getting lost or seen for that matter-- or even how to get all the way from there over to The Hills, didn't blip onto her radar yet. Disoriented Kira stumbled stilted along the road, in the wrong direction, until she caught sight of Jackson further along the road.
His silhouette was firmly implanted into her mind even in the lowest of lights and over time she was less afraid of it. Around Jackson she sensed a sort of glow, an aura if you will of blue, dark blue. Even over the distance she felt a drive to go to him and change something, anything. Hoping she found some kindred like she hoped for in Scott, she snapped a picture with her phone but it didn't show the colors she thought were there. On second viewing, there was nothing there at all. Kira ran toward him, with Hyundai just at the bend of the road and he stood beside it looking distressed. Jackson had a handful of stones, the flat fake type people used in their gardens and he chunked them at a shadow. Not with anger but with impatience, and at the sight of her he sped up his intent.

Kira's skidded to a halt when she neared the bend. A bright-eyed Coyote blocked the road, a Coyote larger than any she'd ever seen (on TV anyway) and that moved like it danced around the rocks he threw. Like it took his threats as a game rather than anything weighty.

He said "get out of here!" like it had piddled on the couch. "You don't belong here!" like segregation was a thing but he didn't sound threatening. If he had, Kira suspected, Jackson probably would have run it over with the car.

But everything changed, the mood, his tone, the air, his aim and the Coyote's movement the moment Kira came into frame. Everything felt suddenly severe.

"I said get the hell out of here!" and this time Jackson's stone hit its mark. Instead of skidding at the Coyote's feet it connected just under the shoulder. It gave a sound, something like a growl and something like mewl but at a pitch that made Kira shudder. Knowing his words, acknowledging their intent if not their language it hopped back and spun in a way that didn't threaten so much as bowed out and then the Coyote ran off through gardens instead of toward the Preserve.

"You don't belong here either," Jackson said climbing into the driver's seat. He didn't ask her not to stay, and she didn't ask questions because she wasn't sure where to begin. Aside from that he gave Kira a once over, standing at a panting stop in the road's center with her bag clutched to her chest and eyes wide and wondering. How does one plead the case, 'the cops are two minutes one way and my parents are ten minutes out, so could you just--'

"Just get in," Jackson submitted and grinning, Kira raced around to the passenger side.

Track 25 - Young Blood (Renholder remix) by Naked and Famous

{Saturday; Even Later Evening/Rather Close to Sunday; Twilight - Martin's front lawn}

Skirting up the lawn toward Lydia's garden, Stiles caught sight of the flashing of police lights and had the impulse he should have followed a million times but never did. He called his Dad. The Sheriff turned up basically seconds later to keep them from being listed along with any of the party-goers/escapers.

In the crosshairs, Parrish caught sight of the two of hopping out of a 'friend's' car, meanwhile his Dad happened to be a few blocks over. Coincidentally Stiles' Dad was looking into an animal complaint he'd found suspicious nearby. And Deputy Parrish (good ol' pal Jordan, road trip buddy extraordinaire) handed them over to his Dad straight away and pretended he'd never even spotted them at all.
Less coincidence, more Rumy keeping true to his side of the deal with the Sheriff. Rumy intercepted an emergency complaint call rerouted to animal services. Evidently he had a young field officer, specializing in Tech Intel who may or may not have set up a spy bot to look for suspicious search words, 'Large,' 'Coyote' pinged high on that list.

All things working in Stiles' favor, he felt there was wiggle room to argue.

"I feel like it doesn't really count as being involved with the police if I called you," his face contorted into a pressurized squint.

It was the best tactic Stiles could come up with as he rejoined the party after a dramatic blackout and while panicked people still trickled out.

"And technically," Isaac pointed out despite not having had his opinion asked for, "we weren't even at the party when all of this went down."

"Uh-huh," Sheriff Stilinski said with a disdainful sort of disbelief in his voice. "Where were you two exactly?"

In simultaneity they answered "Mexican take out." Isaac answered. "Chinese food." Stiles answered. They looked to each other in frustration. When they looked back to the Sheriff they reversed their answers, in unison.

"Which is it?" he crossed his arms, and leaned back against the Cruiser to give a more rigid stare.

"Both." They replied.

"And where is it?" he asked, rubbing at his chin in scrutiny.

They looked to each other and then replied. "We ate it."

"Guys, fine. At least you weren't in the house," he groaned in exasperation, "I don't think I can deal with any more embarrassment of having the Sherriff's son arrested at the scene of an incident." He immediately regretted it after he said it, the cringe in Stiles' face was evident. He hadn't been considering the very public negative attention he had been bringing to his Dad's reputation and his career. "That's not what I meant."

"Nah, no. You're right," Stiles grinned, his face easing in increments. "I guess in the future I better get better at not getting caught. Kidding. Kidding." His false cheer made Isaac uncomfortable and he had to ease back a step and leave them to their awkward father-son bonding-ish-ness.

"Kid, I just mean, Goddammit it-" he reached forward and held onto Stiles shoulder, and then in a more telling gesture reached for Isaac's. "Are you two okay? You two safe?"

"Yeah Dad," Stiles felt taken aback by the shift. "Of course."

Isaac nodded, then thought to speak, "If something were wrong, we'd call. I'd force him to call."

He smiled at that, unsure if he believed them but grateful anyway. "Do you have any idea what happened?"

They shook their heads. Stiles looked back anxiously toward the house. "Can we go in with you? I promised to check in on Lydia."

"Absolutely not." His Dad squeezed their shoulders a little harder. "No one is allowed through the
back yard or the front door while we're clearing guests out. That is, the front and back door are
closed off to guests, people who aren't welcomed by the owner... can't go through the main
entrances."

"Oh," Stiles popped up onto his feet, his eyes bright and an animated expression dancing across his
face, "awesome. I mean, thanks." He started off then doubled-back and threw his arms around his
Dad's neck.

Isaac sighed and watched him head off toward the garage side-entrance, waving over his shoulder
at the Sheriff.

"You're not headed with him?"

Isaac shook his head and look to his feet. "I think I've got to call it quits on tonight," he admitted,
exhausted. There was a lot to process, not to mention reliving when retelling it to Scott the others
later on felt like a bit too much.

"I can arrange you a car back-"

"I think I'd really like to walk. Sheriff?" Isaac fiddled with his hands because he imagined if he
stopped imagining touching Erica's shoulder he would forget what it was like to hold onto
something, someone both here and gone. "Why is family so difficult to figure out? I know we're
not supposed to take them for granted but - shouldn't they be reliable too?"

"Listen son," Sheriff Stilinski sounded like something of an open wound suddenly. Isaac knew
asking him was more than a little thing because of his issues with Stiles. He figured actually that
made him the best candidate because at least they had that abandonment issue in common. But
sensing the hostility that wafted off of him made Isaac realize his selfishness. "I'm an only kid. And
I got one kid. As luck would have it, Scott came along, then Lydia, now you. I seem to keep
collecting more and that's great. And I watch out for this city because I want to feel like I'm a part
of something bigger." After a breath he looked down, like on the floor between them was the
explanation for their divide. When the Sheriff looked up again, sure enough there was a warmth
and connection that made Isaac feel like he could be injured for sharing that much affection. "All
you ever have is what you put into it."

"Yeah, thanks for the insight." Isaac's brow furrowed, his hands stilled and clenched in
consideration.

The Sheriff regretted not driving him home instead, the few short minutes it would have taken he
felt cost him more in the end. And it started to really eat at him. It became clear that Stiles
normally tried to slip from custody, and he could spare the time it took to drive home but could
Isaac? In his gut a growing feeling started to haunt him, like another kid had disappeared and it
scared him. It made his thoughts race to try and figure out, what the hell he was going to tell Stiles?

Chapter End Notes

CREDITS:

Argents - Team1; Victoria, Chris & Allison.
• Rumy - [Sgt] Recon; Special Forces & espionage. Chris' right-hand & Allison's
godfather.
• Axel - [1st Lieut] expert tracker, marksman & Allison's 2nd cousin.
• Bennett - [Field OFC] Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old & Allison's friend.
• Leveque - [Field OFC] Recon; Terrain-Orientation & Mechanics.
• Ulrich - [Field OFC] Recon; Civil-Orientation.

Argents - Team2; Kate.
• Livy - [1st Lieut] Recon; Force-Orientation, R.I.F. & close-combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's closest friend.
• Tyhurst - [Lieut] Recon; Civil-Orientation, Cyberwarefare, has CIA background. Referred to as 'try-hard.'
• Norm - [Sgt] specialty in Medical Intelligence & as a Longbowman; an archer/longbow. JR's brother & Roman's Uncle.
• Roman - [Field OFC] Marksman/Sharpshooter, 19yrs. old & a weapons expert skilled in precision shooting. JR's son & Norm's Nephew.
• Fry - [Field OFC] specialty as a Tactician.

Argents - Team3; Gerard.

Hale (Present Day) Pack; Derek Alpha
• Isaac - [Omega] bitten-Werewolf taking refuge in BH.
• Stiles - [Omega] bitten-Werewolf recently returned to BH to reconcile his family(s).
• (missing) Cora - [Beta] possibly held hostage. *Chapter 16
• (missing) Boyd - [Beta] ?
• (missing) Erica - [Beta] ?

Hale (Heyday) Pack; Talia Alpha
• Peter - [Beta] Talia's brother, Uncle to Derek, Laura & Cora.
• Rose/Ruby - [Beta] Talia & Peter's middle sister, Aunt to Laura, Derek & Cora. Survivor of the Hale fire and guardian of the Homestead.
• Laura (age 17) - [Beta] was last seen struggling to pull survivors from the Hale House fire.
• Derek (age 15) - [Beta] pulled from the flames by sister Laura & ushered to safety by their emissary.-- next seen, dead in Beacon Hills Preserve *Chapter 16

Other Specials
• Braeden - [Mercenary] Former U.S. Marshal, freelanced after she became too personally invested in supernatural cases. *chapter22
• Lydia - [Banshee] 'A Banshee screams preceding a supernatural death not as a premonition but to highlight the likelihood of supernatural events that result in deaths.' *chapter 8
• Jackson - [Kanima] characterized by claws that secrete venom that temporarily paralyzes victims, a double row of sharp fangs, & a tail. Unless a Kanima resolves what in its past caused its mutation, it will eventually cocooned stage & emerge as a winged creature. Unlike a werewolf, a Kanima seeks out a master instead of a pack. It will carry out whatever vengeance its master bid. *chapter 12
• Jennifer Blake - [Kanima's Master] *chapter 20
• Kira - [Kitsune] "There hasn't been a documented case of a fledgling Kitsune (manifesting attributes) this powerful, to carry a thunderstorm in her back pocket on a whim. Not in a hundred thousand years." *chapter 18

Twins' Pack; Aiden & Ethan Carver Alphas
• Marta - [Beta] Feisty old lady, motor head. #2
• Bridy - [Beta] Older than she looks, because she's easily underestimated she makes good spy.
• Gus - [Beta] natural-born, loyal highly skilled fighter with a tendency toward the psychotic.
• (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, partnered to Naylor.
• (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
• (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
• (deceased) Coot - [Omega] Deb's partner & killed by the Monster.

Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha
• (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed #2 & thief/tradesman & held captive in Fairvale.
• Lark - [Beta] she is a cousin to Kali & closely bonded to Huntington.
• (captive) Huntington - [Beta] Friends w/Gus and partner to Lark, kidnapped by Deucalion *Chapter 21
• (captive) Santos - [Beta] Stern mentor, kidnapped by Deucalion *Chapter 21
• Levi - [Beta] neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
• (deceased) Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed & romantically associated to Aiden.

Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha
• (captive) Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' #2, genderfluid, Werelyn -- kidnapped by Deucalion *Chapter 21.
• (deceased) Dr. Kane - [Omega] both a Doctor & their torturer. *Chapter 21
• (deceased) Quint - [Omega] eager to please teen & Dr. Kane's son. *Chapter 20

Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha
• Søren - [Beta] #2, Danish man, a skilled negotiator until his temper is piqued.
• Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
• Nik - [Beta] thief in residence, Mac's daughter.
• Meyer - [Beta] Reíka's partner in crime.
• Reíka - [Beta] formerly missing, presumed dead, Erica of the Hale pack. *Chapter 23
• (deceased) Mac - [Beta] thief, the Monster's 1st victim.
were (you) changed

Chapter Summary

In Beacon Hills proper, Stiles, Allison (and Scott) are left to clean up after Saturday's party broke apart, as final proof of a murderer surfaces. As Lydia and Isaac travel the edges of Beacon County with partners running more to their speed with the company of an Alpha from a rival pack, Aiden and with the recently un-deceased, Erica.

- Playlist Available - http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/24-were-you-changed
- Also Available - https://www.youtube.com/user/bhanesidhe/playlists

Chapter Notes

- After finally saying goodbye to the Hale Homestead, Stiles arrives back in Beacon Hills with a Jeep full of luggage, dated presents and family secrets.

- In the on the cusp of the New Moon, Lydia/Danny's Saturday night party attracts all sorts, including the Twin Alphas (Ethan and Aiden), Kira (the friendly neighborhood Kitsune), Reika, (the recently undead Erica) and Jackson (a Kanima casting rocks at a Coyote).

Chapter 23 Note; "Topaz and Aquamarine"
An inside joke only I found funny and my auto-correct, Scorpio, beta found utterly upsetting. Because of Teen Wolf's wonderful inconsistencies, it is on official record that Lydia's canon birthday is both November 22nd and March 19th. Hence, two contradicting birthstones. ;-}  


See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Track 01 - Seconds by Ghost Loft

[Sunday; Dawn -- the Cliffides near Mr. Martin's Lake House, by Fishing Town Just South of Fairvale]  
The view looked spectacular if not for the updraft. The skies were a perfect blue in the distance and the color crawled toward them while the branches nearest them slowly reached out and turned more and more into the colors that made out trees. Lydia never feared cliffs but felt put off by
them. Very put off.

"The Cliffside aren't that beautiful," Lydia cut Aiden off, and that was all she explained instead of clearing up why they had gone out of their way. It was like telling a tourist they weren't allowed to enjoy the sights.

Once they pulled into the shoulder of the road, at first Lydia asked for him to keep some distance from her but after the sky started to light the place she wanted to know Aiden thoughts.

Not the least insightful pretty boy, instead of giving his thoughts about the scenery Aiden thought about the girl and asked "why come all this way Lydia? Even if they're this beautiful, especially since you don't like it very much?" (Although, he sorta did).

Instead of humoring him with an answer or an excuse, Lydia hugged him and asked if he would take a selfie with her. All smiles, they watched their steps while edging closer and closer to the lip of the cliff. It was hard to imagine she was ever scared to go there.

Back at the bike, editing the photo on her phone, Lydia said in a thoughtful small voice "if something bad were to happen here, what do you think would be the point?"

"The point?" Aiden felt too thrown by the bleakness of the question, from 'possessed party-girl Lydia' to think of a reply. "Are you threatening me?"

A perplexed grin flashed by, Lydia felt a little gutted that they were having two different conversations. Lit by the dawn, face flushed, hair mussed and wearing last night's party dress she seemed too tired to help him along at game of catch up. "Sure. Maybe I am threatening you. What if I were to knock you off this cliff, what then?"

Swagger unwavering, Aiden came to her side and wrapped his leather motorcycle jacket around her goosefleshed shoulders and smiled down with a crooked, confident grin. "My brother would do something about it."

"No one knows we're up here."

"He'd know right away."

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah, we're connected like that."

Once she considered her party turned into a magnet for a certain type of people, it wouldn't have surprised in the least. After spending the last few minutes attempting to edit the massive lens flare his lights reflected in nearly all of their photos, she didn't doubt him. Lydia simply accepted that she was beginning to develop a 'type'.

"Even this far away your brother, you'd just know it if something were to happen--"

"We'd feel it."

"Do the two you feel everything the other one feels?" Lydia asked, sliding a hand up along his collar and she pulled him down for a kiss. After a long moment Aiden broke her passionate display.

Clearing his throat, "not everything, no."

"Good to know," smirking, she said pertly. Lydia kept the jacket and climbed back onto his bike.
This time Aiden took the driver's seat but not before she insisted on a few more proper photos. Lydia had an off-kilter pleasantness about her so he denied her nothing.

When Lydia took their picture again, the Cliffsides stood behind them in clear view and they sat on his bike. They played and posed with ease, Lydia curled up against him and grinning Aiden let her shove the visor down on his helmet. The wild breeze swept her hair straight up off of her neck making it look like a veil, while with the collar flipped up and one arm flung around his neck, it looked like she flew. She kissed the helmet and it left a mark. With the visor flipped open, Aiden's eyes squinted shut with laughter while they faced each other, divided only by the stained shape of full red lips on the rim of the helmet where his mouth should have been. Lydia's photo reflected how light-hearted they felt. At their next stop, she would buy him sunglasses for sure. Then photos by the lake or maybe a brunch somewhere?

While she showed him the end result and posted the photo on-line, Aiden's curiosity compelled him to ask, "what about you? If something bad were to happen to you here--?" but he didn't finish the question because it felt like too weird a statement and she cast him a strange look because of it.

Suddenly Lydia's light eyes went cold, flat and her mouth pressed into a fierce line of concentration. Her heart beat rapidly but only for a moment, then she reined it in with a sharp breath and glanced back down at her phone. "My friends would figure it out." After a little scoff she added, "Eventually."

When she looked up again her smile looked tight, a little bitter and she laughed a bit bleakly until Aiden laughed along feeling drawn into her dark humor. Then suddenly, Lydia decided they should leave, "we shouldn't have gone off the path. It's not safe here."

Aiden assumed, rightly, it wasn't his place to question. Lydia didn't seem to be talking about the highway when she said 'Path,' and anyway the place had given him the willies from the beginning.

For a little while Lydia simmered in her dark humor but she felt determined to end it once they stopped again for coffee. After such a faraway detour Aiden complained offhandedly coffee might not be enough to keep him awake, but Lydia said suggestively she knew what would.

In the coffee house washroom, they wedged the door closed with his jacket and used the counter top by the flower display for better leverage. Lydia said a quickie would clear his head but she really hoped it would get her head clear of the chilling images of shadows and cliff sides. And try to warm the chill out of her spine.

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**Track 02 - Paradise Circus by Massive Attack**

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{Saturday; Late Evening/Rather Close to Sunday; Twilight -- Main Street, Beacon Hills}

There were screeches of the wheels on the asphalt. It pedaled up the smell of rubbed up melted rubber and made what seemed like smoke but wasn't. It made her easier to follow. The stolen car had been dumped. Not near the woods or in an empty lot, but right in the center of town, near enough to the police station to make a mockery of the theft. It was dropped off in the alley behind the cops' bar. And the driver vanished from CCTV somehow despite the alley not having a back exit, in the impossible way. As if the thief or thieves must have climbed over impossibly steep walls.
By the time Isaac caught up, the Camaro was already being poked at by a few official types. He was left at a crossroads, equal distance between going home or heading up to the Hills. Scott wasn't super forthcoming about the how, who or why he had gotten jumped on the road. But Scott had been clear about the where; in the Hills near Kira's house. And at the party Isaac overheard Kira say "that's the girl who attacked me on the road."

"That's the girl."

"The girl."

That's what it narrowed down to. It didn't matter that his sensory overload from the party exhausted him or that the chill from the night made mincemeat of his cardigan. The Stilinskis’ house and their closed off neighborhood stood North, meanwhile Kira's and possibly Erica's could only be South on newly built estates where people carved out private roads.

Yeah, okay. It helped that he didn't have school in the morning and he had Melissa's permission to use Scott's bike. Technically, Scott would have to forgive him. Stiles would come along to his way of thinking, probably. Or at least sympathize, so Isaac gave the crime scene wide berth and headed to the Hills.

{Sunday; Dawn -- The Hills, BH}

For an up and coming area that maintained virtually unoccupied, there were quite a lot of 'Loops', 'Paths', 'Blvds.' and 'Lanes' before he found the right one. Two thirds up a mountain, at dawn and almost out of gas Isaac found Erica along the long road, wearing torn up skinny jeans and with a gas container beside her studded leather boots.

"Took you long enough," she grinned and handed over the bottle, easy as one-two-three. They didn't talk right away, just smiled softly toward each other as if this were causal; Erica waiting and watching over while Isaac filled up the tank so she could hold the empty bottle while he walked the bike along off-road where she led.

"You didn't say I shouldn't have followed. That's what you're supposed to say," Isaac said. Still a small guilty timbre ran in his tone and she made a face of displeasure at the sound of it.

"Look, if that's what you want me to say, write me a script." She looked ahead and away from him, along the road that wavered before them.

Isaac gave it consideration, what would be the scenario, what it would be that they should say because whatever came before that moment suddenly felt like it didn't matter... except for instances when it really did. "Say I did, would I be making it out to Reíka or do I get to pretend Erica is still in there?"

Erica ran her tongue across her lower teeth and rolled her eyes in a show of barely contained annoyance, "I don't have a split personality, you jerk. You do seem to have a lot of expectation for how our conversation is supposed to go."

It went quiet again, from awkward to casual as Isaac just watched her profile as the sun crept up and made it something that changed from gold to realer than real. Erica looked back, determined to make a scrunched up face until he laughed. Instead, Isaac poked out his tongue and she laughed, then they both looked ahead.

"Alright, no script. I'll stop."

"Good. Because I'm glad you got your ass up here," she inhaled with relief, her shoulders lifting
and dropping with the sense of it. Neither of them mentioned Stiles because it was on him to own the responsibility of presence. And while it was likely Stiles had his own script to live up to, Erica also had expectations. "Because I did think there were lots of things that we should talk about."

But when Erica said 'we' she hadn't meant the two of them. Hell, Erica hadn't even meant them three, being she, Isaac and Stiles. She meant they should also speak with the man who waited calmly at the road's end, leaning on the wooden fence.

"What if I don't want to talk to him?" Isaac hesitated and Erica pressed her lips together, a familiar uncomfortable smile but a pleasant one nonetheless.

"Then go." She stepped away, "or stay." She took another small step further, her eyes on him with her fingers snagging along his arm as they withdrew. "And go later," she dragged out the 'r' in the word 'later' with a playful purr and grinned when Isaac cracked a smile.

Track 03 - Look At Where We Are by Hot Chip

{Sunday; Dawn -- Mrs. Martin's House, Aires West, BH}

"Take it." Allison insisted, pressing her car keys into Scott's hands. "You've got to get home before your Mom finds out."

"It's not--"

"Honestly, Scott. It's either this or end up grounded forever," she laughed lightly. The concern Allison felt was genuine but dual-edged, and Scott he didn't need to know that. All bright eyed and sweet-faced familiar, her concern for him surpassed whatever trouble she might get into. And anyway, "Bennet and I will come up with something. I just, I just really want you to get home safe."

When Allison gave over the keys, they hesitated to let go.

"Before, you were intense and kind of awesome," Scott sighed a little when he smiled. "I'm grateful for your help. Your help with Kira and the--" he gestured toward the pool where people still milled around.

"I'm glad you came." Allison barely suppressed a smile. Nodding, she pulled her hair behind her ears and thought on how to get across this was more difficult than she let on. How much help would be enough to redeem her messed up her family? But being with Scott, just staying around his nature always made her feel worthier. "You never come to Lydia's parties."

"Are they always this--" Scott stepped closer, feeling sincerely affected by their misadventure, as if things were always meant to be this way and always should be. The crookedness of Scott's smile said as much and so Allison cut him off.

"I have no idea, Scott. I always skipped them to stay home with you." Allison's reminder felt like cold water. When they were together things were different, not just their social lives and there were bound to be more changes. They stepped apart. Rattling the keys in his hand, Scott nodded in thanks. She smiled again, not as bright as before, when she pushed him out of Lydia's front door.
"Did you get rid of him?" Stiles said at a loud whisper, tip-toeing into the kitchen.

Allison threw him a lopsided smile over her folded arms on the kitchen countertop and gave barely a noticeable motion that could be considered a nod. He leaned over and gave her head a tentative pat.

"You did good, kid." Stiles scraped the stool back and dropped himself down beside her. "Alright, so we've seen one kid home safely, have you heard from Lydia?"

"Not a word," Allison sighed.

"Have you tried texting at least?" Stiles' attempt at nonchalance looked like he was trying not to fart.

Allison hopped off the stool and out of striking distance, for his own safety, and started the coffee maker.

"Did you?" she snapped testily over her shoulder and got silence in reply but noticed Stiles shredding the corner of a paper towel. "Of course you did. I just thought since you were back home she might have felt differently," she let out a breath. Leaving the coffee maker to do its job, she went back beside him and she buried her head back into her arms.

"Well, you're her best friend, wouldn't she answer your beckoning calls before she'd answer mine?" Stiles chuckled low and bumped shoulders with her.

Another scoff, muffled from beneath the mound of Allison's hair and arm sleeves. "Lydia answers to no one's beckoning."

The brewing coffee and the sound of the pool draining pump made contrasting earth rattling noises. It created an uncomfortable surround sound that reminded of their unstable state. Stiles' eyes darted around, trying to will the Martins' home to repair itself. When that didn't happen, he propped his chin up on his folded arms, a pose identical to Allison's. She looked over at him, her expression tired but grinning.

"We should start with the pool, you can get the DJ equipment out."

"Oh, right. And you?" Stiles frown became a prominent pout.

"I'm going to run around the house, collect garbage and assess damage," Allison shifted around the dishes in front of them in search for clean-ish glasses to serve them coffee.

"Why do you get the easy stuff?"

Her brow cocked, it said he should know better than to ask. "Are you really going to complain about the heavy lifting?"

"No, but I was just wondering if you wanted company while doing the easy stuff--" when he couldn't weasel his way out of the harder chores to the Hunter, because of his supernatural properties Stiles started at a whine, "because, Allison, hard stuff is hard! Even with super
strength!

Mouthed gapped in outright despair of him, Allison turned her back on Stiles and went to serve them both a much needed cup of coffee before they got on with the task of making Lydia's home not a train wreck. Stiles thanked her profusely and drank his cup at a scalding gulp, despite her warning that it was hot.

They drank the second cup together slower and Stiles actually had a chance to enjoy the taste, "this is like blackberry--"

"Mmhm. Blackberry cobbler. Coffee has a high value here, so she likes to keep it interesting."

Allison let out a sigh once she finished her glass and shoved off her seat. "Enough delaying the inevitable."

Stiles was less enthused to get a move on, not because he didn't want to work, which let's face it he didn't but because he felt bad stealing some of Lydia's flavored coffee on top of everything else.

"Don't you have a girl's code?" He chased after Allison and found her not at all hiding and in the living room, "like a secret way to get a hold of her that no one else can?"

Allison looked startled at Stiles' entrance, and then puzzled over the question. Her eyes darted around the room and her heart hopped a beat. She hadn't been given the opportunity to think of not lying... or a witty half-truth. And it showed allllll over her face. Thankfully, the cloned phone Allison had for Lydia was actually miles away with her quiver and long bow. Otherwise she probably would have glanced toward it like a newbie and given away the game.

"You do." Stiles zipped down the little incline, tripping around the furniture.

"Stiles, I think we should let this one go." Allison kept her head down low and tried like hell not to make eye contact again. "Ethan was right, she wasn't kidnapped and she takes off from time to time. Maybe she just needed a break. I told you before, she isn't like us." That did it. It broke her a little to hit that note and she stopped what she was doing to face him, speaking up for Lydia ached. It ached to think strong-willed Lydia would ever have to feel backed into a corner and need to be spoken up for.

Allison raked a hand through her hair, trying half to keep it from her face and half to tear it from her scalp, "Try to remember, Lydia wasn't raised around all this weirdness. She's trying to put on a brave face, but she's needs to take it at her own pace."

"Isn't that why she had the party," Stiles stepped forward, eyes larger with every wild contemplation. "To surround herself with all this 'weirdness'? Like, like some sort of supernatural immersion therapy?"

"That's not it at all. She wanted a break-- it backfired, like all of our plans seem to." Allison started pointedly and ended at a grumble.

"Then shouldn't we try to find her." It wasn't a plea or a question but a demand. And his tone was becoming a little more unhinged by the moment. "She just disappeared and didn't tell anyone-- and with one of them."

"What?" she scoffed. Her shoulders dropped, a tender look spread across Allison's face as she rationalized what Stiles wouldn't. "A Werewolf? Someone she just met tonight? It's a bit hypocritical."

"We can't trust them." He hopped in place, gesturing wildly toward the pool. Stiles face said
hysterical while his voice got smaller and tighter. "You saw how they were."

"I did, and I came to a different conclusion." Allison patted his arm, moved around him and started to sort out the main room.

After gripping the air and silently screaming, Stiles followed, occasionally but not really helping. Allison put down paper towels to soak up spills and righted fallen portraits onto the mantel, righted the chairs, put bottles into a trash bag she dragged with her along with any broken glass she found along the way.

Eventually Allison explained, without looking in Stiles' direction, "They were right, Isaac attacked them first in the woods. Danny's been dating Ethan for a while and invited them here. And we jumped him for it. We could have hurt a lot of people because we were acting without thinking... I think maybe we should wait, see how this thing with Aiden plays out."

"What if he hurts Lydia?" Stiles stopped, blocking her path with his hands on his hips like an angry parent.

"What if he makes her happy?" Lifting her head, Allison stood up straight slowly just to test his patience.

"You're joking," he said with a smirk, and then when he saw she didn't grin back, he bristled with outrage. "Don't you think it's a bit convenient? What were the chances of him even meeting her in a party this big?"

"Pretty good," she shrugged, bit her lip as she considered whether or not to share her next words. "Danny was the one who set them up."

Stiles arms drop, his back stiffened. "How did you figure that out?"

"He told me when I checked to see if he got home safe. See what happens when you ask questions?"

"You think you're real smart, huh?" he said half-joking, half-bitterly. Allison chewed her lips as Stiles continued to talk, anticipating the worst. "What about what Ethan said to you? Scott told me it was more Hunter drama." A no-nonsense tone eked through his words. He hadn't meant to bring this up with her before talking it out with the guys, but... "Erica wouldn't be hiding in with that bastard Deucalion if it weren't for this war. Is it true, did the Hunters start this war?"

With a sigh, Allison shook her head slightly before speaking again as if she were disappointed with him or her herself or her family or just life.

"My family is always up to something, but I don't always know what." In an instant her frown turned into a flash of realization. How long ago had Axel converted the Lodge into a torture chamber? Her heart must have skipped a beat because Stiles looked ravenous for the truth. Stiles was probably the only person as desperate for the truth from her family as she was. But that didn't mean she had the truth to hand over. Half-truths would have to do.

"When we were all at the Hale House," burying his face in his hands, Stiles started to pace while plastic cups were kicked underfoot. He reached back on sensory memory rewound as much precision as Mistletoe corrupted instinct would let him. The memory surfaced too quickly but always too hazy. "There was a sign for revenge painted on the door. But the place was locked up so that a Werewolf couldn't get in there. Did a Hunter put that there?"

The garbage bag fell ignored to the floor beside her. "I don't know. I hardly remember that."
Meeting her eyes, Stiles gave her a hard stare and Allison struggled to hold it. "That house was a trap meant for a shapeshifter to find, but it was set off too early."

"Just like Lydia found Derek's body too early." Allison was the first to break the stare. Her hands fluttered as she shoved her hair out of her face, as her thoughts raced. "Remember, she found it before the mutilator had a chance to pose it."

"Did a Hunter do that, too?" Stiles took a step and leaned close.

"Stiles, I've got no clue." Allison's voice flared, sharp but controlled. "I didn't know about the house, how could I connect it to the body?"

"You said so!" excitedly he flapped his hands like he beat an invisible drum, "in that room of yours! Before you said a Hunter or a druid or an-an emery--"

"An emissary," Allison recalled the words, "any anyone who's read a bestiary could have set that up. But you think it's all the same person? That this is their MO? What's their motive?"

"How 'bout breaking a treaty?" Stiles eyebrow rose in increments with each punctuated syllable. Allison calculated the information, she gnawed her lips in thought. "So, the one who set up the trap at the Hale House put the barricade in the woods, also had to be the one who cut Derek in half?"

"Maybe? Probably?" Stiles fingers clenched, and he shrugged in a tense, panicked way, like he didn't want to be right, "But they knew the place too well. It's all focused around the Hales, it's like they know everything about them."

"Like an expert." Allison mouth went dry, while she felt all of last night's food climb up her throat. Thankfully she had skipped dinner and never got a chance to eat or drink a thing at the party so her stomach was empty.

Stiles didn't reply, rather he responded to the sense of someone nearing and raised a hand for Allison to hold off.

"Well, the experts are due any minute," Natalie said walking in from the front hall, "why don't you leave the cleaning for them. What are you kids still doing here anyway?" Despite the clear exhaustion in her face, she perked up, put the pet carrier down in one hand, her shoes and purse in the other. "Is that coffee I smell?"

Stiles and Allison looked to one another in horror, then to the tornado of a room around them. Then toward the tapping paws the Pomeranian lead toward the kitchen where Mrs. Martin started to make cooing noises over a pot of coffee.

"Who would like home-cooked hangover breakfasts?"

"The only hiccup has been--" Stiles whispered in a rasp.

"I know, Lydia." Allison nodded, talking low while leaning on the palm of her hand. "She found Derek before the pose was set. She set off the trap and broke all the boundaries in the woods."

"I guess that's part of the Banshee package, hopefully with less explosion in the future."

"And drowning. Don't you think we should go get her now?"
"Get what?" Mrs. Martin turned back toward them, she placed more silver dollar pancakes onto a platter between the three of them.

With a lack of room on the counter and limited clean dishes, Mrs. Martin selected a large platter to deposit silver dollar pancakes, strips of bacon and lightly scrambled eggs with bell peppers, onions and tomatoes lightly fried in there. It kept her hands busy and just outside of hearing distance while the smell kept them hypnotized in their seats every time they thought of stepping out of the room.

"We're just worried about Lydia. Aren't you?" Allison said through a mouthful.

"No, why? Did she say something was wrong?" Mrs. Martin pulled up a stool beside them and started poke critically at her breakfast invention with her limited supplies.

"No, it's just--" Allison gulped harshly and looked to Stiles for help, he looked away and sipped slowly, very slowly at his cup of coffee. "I mean, if my Mom came home and found our home turned into a wasteland after I had a party."

"Let's be clear; this was Danny's party." Mrs. Martin said strictly, followed by nibbling at a forkful of egg. She gave it a critical nod of approval and before continuing, "And anyway, Lydia called the cleaning service first thing this morning, she called me right afterward so I could let them in. It's why I'm shocked to find you kids still here." When Mrs. Martin continued to eat, she did indeed look up at two shocked faces, so she made a gesture that they should put food in their open gobs.

"So, wait," Stiles replied, mouth full and still eagerly chomping away, "she called you? You talked to her? Like on the phone?"

"Yes. Well, texted." Mrs. Martin sniffed moodily and reached for her purse, she stood and brought over the coffee pot while she scrolled through her phone with the other hand. "She's in a funk," she explained as she placed her iPhone on the countertop between them. On the screen she tapped open her Instagram app, scrolled for a while through some floral displays, fashion images, vaguely familiar strangers living their best life, finally there popped up the picture of the two looking cool with their shades and their smiles sunning off on a dock; Lydia twisted to keep hold of the phone for the photo while keeping her arms wrapped around Aiden. "But she looks alright, see," Mrs. Martin proved her point and while they stared down at the evidence she refilled their cups.

The caption read; 'No Sleep Till Beacon!' 

Stiles tsked before he could stop himself. The guy looked like a tool. Allison smirked at Stiles’ inability to curb his territorial impulse. He hadn't even met Aiden and she had no doubt Stiles would have puffed out his chest, snarled and breathed smoke through his nose just to make a point of it.

"She's at the Lake House." Mrs. Martin answered a question they hadn't thought to ask yet. Her breakfast abandoned, she held the cup of coffee to her mouth, cradled it with both hands. Nestled back onto her seat, she looked all the more uncomfortable for the acknowledgement.

Sitting back, Stiles looked to Allison in concern and went back to lancing his bacon and gnawing it in loud chomps. Allison handed the Mrs. back her phone and waited for further explanation.

"She said she needed to clear her head, so she drove out there with her friend Aiden late last night. Of course, her Father was fine with that, so who am I to say 'no'?" She rolled her eyes and shoved the iPhone aside. In her moody little funk, she reminded them more and more of Lydia, pretty and a little petty.
"So that's near her Dad's Lake House?" Allison leaned further and said softer.

"Yes, Allison. The Lake House her Father owns. You need more coffee?"

Shaking her head no, Allison sounded apologetic for pushing the subject, "I just, I'm surprised that's all. I had the impression that she didn't like it out there very much."

"Pah," Stiles leaned over the table abruptly and clumsily caught the coffee cup before it toppled. "Lydia loves that lake... loved... past tense? What the hell man?" He turned from feeling confident to concerned to agitated quickly, it felt like being an amnesiac waking from a coma sometimes when he tried to relate to his friends. From the way Mrs. Martin looked at him in that pitiable way (which was becoming quite common), he felt pathetic. "I think I need a nap until all of this, whatever this is, is over." He downed his coffee to keep from complaining further.

In an attempt to ease tensions, Mrs. Martin stood off and started to dial Lydia's number. To their surprise, Lydia picked up with speed, but they only heard the one side of the conversation although they could well assume what went on from the expression of her mother's face.

"If you're that worried, I could call-- Hey, just checking in. Your friends are-- oh, right. Love you, too. Well. That explains some things."

"What things?" Allison perked up, trying to sound hopeful but coming just shy of it.

"She said to tell you her phone is dying and she'll get back to you." Mrs. Martin looked back toward them with an unreadable expression on her face.

"Her phone isn't dying, is it?" Stiles voice sounded leaden. He was already on his feet.

"That's the same line she tells me to tell her Father whenever he calls." Leaving her iPhone on the counter, she moved to collect the platter of food and started to clear everything away. "I'm not sure what you kids got up to last night, and I'm not going to press you, but if you're sticking around out of guilt, then the two of you should probably go."

"Mrs. Martin... I'm really sorry." Stiles rubbed the back of his neck, his breaths were uneasy and he felt agitated with himself that he could come up with nothing perfect, clever or smart to say to fix this so he turned and speedily left the Martins' home.

"That's not it..." Allison began to explain, she wanted to argue. In part, Allison was certain she could, not just because she was a fighter and knew she was in the right, but between the two of them Stiles was the one that Allison could better help. Not to mention, "He's my ride." She raced around the room to grab her jacket from the back of another chair and her purse from the counter. "Bye." Each time Allison made eye contact with Mrs. Martin she hoped she could exude the amount of remorse she felt for leaving things as they were, but without Stiles beside her it felt like a worthless endeavor. "I had a lovely time."

Inside Stiles' Jeep, Allison climbed in beside him and they waited in a stilted silence and didn't broach the topics of Alphas, conspiracies, missing Betas, Kitsunes or Banshees on the run... instead they soaked in the guilt of being bad-kids who took advantage of a nice person. When Stiles finally turned the car on he took a minute for it warm up and before he took it out of park, turned to check in with Allison and see that they were on the same page.

"We are shitty people."
With a warm voice and sleek tones, he charmed Isaac as immediately and intensely as he intimidated him. He tried to invite Isaac back to the house, but Erica said she felt it might be too forward for his first trip out, but thought Isaac would be back soon. And the moment the words were spoken, Isaac knew they were true. The man said Isaac would always be welcome in their home, as long as Isaac wanted to do right by them--

"Do right?"

"We don't ask anything of one another, just loyalty."

"To the pack?" Isaac felt a little disloyal just talking about it. Sensing that Erica touched Isaac's arm lightly to remind that she still stood beside him, even if she would be going home with the other guy.

"If that's what you want," he answered, coolly. "Or to a code. Or a person. Loyalty is the only thing to hold onto when our metal is tested and we are alone. Isn't that right, Reíka?"

Erica nodded, her demeanor darkened significantly and she looked to the ground. "Yeah, Deucalion."

"This is a cult," Isaac blurted. His eyes flicked over up to Erica's new Alpha, like blade of a knife, "you changed her name, kidnapped her, brainwashed her and probably tortur--!!"

Erica busted out laughing while Deucalion stared on in surprise. She covered her mouth to keep her laughter from breaking the sound barrier for all of its guffaws, while Isaac began to look infuriated even Deucalion gave her a concerned look to maybe rein it in.

"You've got to be kidding me!" she hopped up onto the fence with ease and just for the act of looking down over him. "If I could sum up my experience here, I'd say, definitely transformative. But brainwash, no."

"Isaac, we don't generally practice kidnapping people, but we don't turn people away, either." The hand on Isaac's shoulder surprised him and made him jump but he didn't shove it off either.

"What happened at Northbridge changed me," Erica narrowed her eyes, wondering if Isaac understood. Isaac may have been there on the road with her but it seemed that maybe he wasn't "THERE" with her. "Can't go back. Can't be that girl anymore. So I changed my name, no one else."

"Reíka was brought to us in great need but chose to stay," said Deucalion, he stepped toward Erica, toward Reíka and she smiled at the act. "Like any refugee during this tumultuous time--"

"He means like Omegas. Like us," Erica kicked at the lower rung of the fence, her annoyance and amusement in harmony. "You don't have to be so wordy."

Deucalion looked toward Erica, his lips curled at the edges in a way that broke character from his cool demeanor, and he looked back to Isaac, "that is to say if a person crosses our path, and they're an asset and loyal they're welcome to stay. There is safety in numbers. When was the last time you felt safe in Beacon Hills, Isaac?"
While considering the question, Isaac looked away. Her foot tapping and kicking at the air was a familiar yet foreign habit that seemed like something his pack member Erica would do. Isaac didn't know if it was in the script for Reíka to do. The thought niggled at him while Deucalion kept up with the hard sell.

"How does you changing your name prove you're loyal?" Isaac finally asked, after Deucalion headed off back to the house.

Erica was surprised by the suddenness of the question but not that it had been asked. Her kilowatt smile melted his brain and while Erica's hands felt soft their grip was rough, as she pulled up Isaac's collar and closed his cardigan.

Erica leaned over and whispered to him, "Because, Isaac, I'm loyal to #1."

Somehow that did not surprise Isaac.

"So... you wanna come up and see the house yet?" After hopping down onto the opposite side of the fence, Erica yanked him a little with her. "Because there's someone in the basement, I think it's about time for you to see."

"I thought you said I wasn't ready?" Isaac caught her hands at the wrists just as she let go, he held them tight, tight enough that she couldn't squirm or wriggle her usual way out of it. Erica gasped and chuckled at the sudden forcefulness of it.

"Oh, you're not." She frowned deeply, part for play and partly sincere. "But you're never going to be for this. So, I can show you, or you can try to storm the castle later and get ripped to shreds by a half dozen Werewolves, a lot stronger, a lot more savage and desperate than you."

Pained to agree, Isaac released his hold, left Scott's bike leaning and climbed over the fence to follow her path. The tone felt like it should have been a midnight walk to the gallows and not an early morning stroll through a meadow. They fell into stride with each other the way they always did and when they made it to the idyllic family home, two people met them on the porch.

Meyers, Isaac already recognized from his brief guest spot on the Camaro, the other was a taciturn curly-haired woman with prominent scars on her collar. When Meyers moved to block their path, the woman put a hand on his shoulder and only made to follow. Erica just waved 'hello' with false cheer and marched along with Isaac in tow.

The luxury of their home wasn't lost to him, just like the sparseness of its furnishings. From their time living on the Res. (and the rotation of Hale cousins looking for a place to lay low), Isaac knew the look of people unwilling to set roots. Erica walked an easy line through the wide kitchen, around the bend and underneath the stairs to yank open a door painted bright yellow. By contrast, the other side might as well have been a dungeon.

The smells that assaulted Isaac were unexpected considering his senses, he had smelled there would be chemicals but the place reeked of cleansers. With mattresses mounted to the walls to dampen sounds and the wires hanging from the beams overhead were stretched and refastened several times over; it wasn't Argent level design techniques but this was meant to be some sort of secret chamber.

The door behind them slammed and locked closed. The woman from before stood guard with her hand on a heavy duty door jammer. Erica grabbed Isaac's arm as he tensed enough to growl, and she pinned it at his side to warn him not to run or fight.
"A little further," she urged. "Jonsen isn't trying to trap you in. She's here to keep them from getting out."

At the mention their direction, Isaac saw flickering and heard hissing sounds. Both curiosity and Erica's urging got his feet turning in a forward direction. Isaac convinced himself, or rather nostalgia did that if things went sideways Erica would have his back. They would somehow make it back to Stiles and together they would figure out a real escape from this 'Looney Tune' town.

Once down the last two steps, the figures of two people sat by the far wall. A man and woman of fair hair and complexion were bound to their chair legs from ankle to mid shin, and their arms were strapped to armrests where they connected at the wrists, elbows and again at the bicep. The straps were of undiscernible but obviously unbreakable metals, and their bodies were sweaty and exhausted. Their hair looked matted and burned a bit, the only signs of earlier torture, and their clothes were in tatters but aside from that they looked to be in otherwise well-preserved conditions.

"Erica?" Isaac looked at her from the corner of his eye, unwillingly to turn entirely away from the scene in front of him. "What is this? You wanted to impress me because you guys could catch another pack's Betas and torture them?"

"No another pack," Jonsen explained, her accented-voice small and emotionless. "Those were ours."

Isaac had almost forgotten she stayed with them. He twisted around to look at her, leaning further against Erica as he did. Her grip tightened slightly due to nervousness and part of Isaac understood. He didn't want to run either but Isaac started to doubt that Erica would have his back or if she would stand her ground, to let something like this happen to new pack members. What would Erica let happen to old ones she already abandoned?

"Meet Jonny and his fiancé Lennie." After clearing her throat, Erica spoke a little firmer and yanked Isaac to move further into the room with her. "These two deserters hid when their pack was threatened. Afterward, they turned up with a half-dead Omega and expected a hostage to buy goodwill and consent to quit the pack." Her voice dripped with disdain and Isaac began little-by-little to get what Deucalion meant; disloyalty was dangerous but loyalty felt fiercely could be just as dangerous.

"That half-dead stray they pulled out of the gutter, well," Erica tsked with false ease, her bitterness screwed up her face, "that was me. So, now they pay the price for their disloyalty and I get to choose what to do with them."

Track 06 - Brother by The Mispers

{Sunday; Midday -- McCall's, Lakewood, BH}

"Hey, I'm pretty sure Kate is the second killer," Stiles grinned tightly, rolling on the balls of his heels, "now what are we having for breakfast?"

Before Scott had time to process Stiles' words he had shoved by him and entered the house. He said a hello brightly to Melissa and gave her a hug and a kiss. While Scott squirmed mulling over this information, Stiles gossiped vaguely with the Missus about last night's party.

Scott made breakfast for everyone as part of his grounding and Melissa took his sullenness as part
of his punishment, not at all as his agitation with Stiles' nonchalance.

"Second breakfast, actually," Stiles luxuriated in heaping on his serving, "I had breakfast with Mrs. Martin while I helped clean up this morning."

"That was so considerate of you," Melissa said, awestruck. "And surprising."

"I know, isn't it," Stiles said with a sarcastic lilt to his voice aimed to jab at Scott.

"Sure sounds like it," Scott said at a mumble while he tried (and failed) to flip an egg without bursting its yolk.

"It really works up a guy's appetite," Stiles rubbed his stomach exaggeratedly. "Man, and what a wild night too." Stiles built up a fiction of half-truths punctuated with useless facts about what foods there were and decorations he observed. When Melissa asked who else was there, "Oohhhh, the place was packed with the strangest people, I wouldn't know where to begin. Scott is lucky to have missed it."

"Sure was," Scott sighed, and took a long draught from his second glass of milk.

His Mom left them to finish their breakfast together, to have their 'guy time' while she went out to do some food shopping. But she expected Scott to still be there and be grounded when she got back. Stiles saluted and assured her that he would see to it.

"How'd you get in?" Stiles asked, slamming his chair back down from its tilted position once the door shut.

"Fine." It annoyed Scott when Stiles kept switching topics in that veiny twisting way the Mad River did. "I left Allison's car two blocks over and got in through the window a half hour before she woke up. I had a chance to shower and try to sleep a little."

"Try?"

"Of course, I couldn't sleep." Scott groaned, rubbing hard at his face in aggravation. "Stiles, what the hell are you talking about? You know Kate is the second murderer?"

The chair scraped further toward the table, Stiles' elbows dropped down onto the surface and he propped his chin on his upturned palms in giddy interest, "I know, right! Clear as day!"

"So, you have proof?"

"Well," Stiles eased back and picked up a piece of bacon, "no, but it's obvious isn't it. She's evil."

Scott sighed and dropped his head into his hands. When he looked up again, Stiles waggled his eyebrows at him and kept chomping away. Somehow that just made him hungry so Scott lifted a fork and started to snag away at the edges of his eggs.

"Thinking she's evil is not enough. What does Isaac think?"

"Dunno." Stiles frowned lightly and sniffed in discomfort. "I'll ask when he gets home. It's not a conversation to have over text."

"Not a conversation to avoid either."

Stiles face fell a little further, he thought about it and answered, "Allison thinks so."
"What?" Scott knew better than to assume Stiles was being straight forward. "She said so? She said, 'I think Kate is a murderer'?

"No." To obscure his embarrassment, Stiles took a loud long sip of milk, then added sharply, "But I didn't ask! It was distinctly alluded to."

"How?" Scott asked straightforwardly but Stiles shrugged while taking another sip. "If you didn't ask, then how could she have agreed with you?"

"Trust me, she was too tired to lie." Stiles chewed hard on the end of a piece of bacon, "I'll confront her on it when we talk later."

"Do you talk to Allison often?" Scott asked, the gap between words asked something else.

Stiles gulped down his mouthful to give a toothy grin, "we don't always talk about you if that's what you're asking."

"Wasn't asking." Scott stabbed the yolk open on his eggs.

"Of course not," Stiles snorted mildly, he stared around the room at the comfortable clutter. He hadn't been in the McCall's in the daytime when he wasn't feverish and it made him think cozy, comfort things. Stiles looked back to Scott and smiled warmly. "You'd never ask. That's why I'm saying it. Just like I get to ask her about things you wouldn't, about keeping tabs on, you know what… you know? *The Creature Walks Among Us*?"

Scott shrugged and decided to throw out his wildest, best guess given the circumstances. "Jackson?"

"Ding-ding." Stiles sounded a little proud, but mostly relieved. "Got it in one."

"You're working together to help Jackson?"

"To help Jackson? Ssuurree, the particulars have yet to be seen." He licked his lips in consideration and looked off for a moment in thought. "This does throw a wrench in things but doesn't make it impossible. Her Aunt's a murderer. I just know it."

"Stiles, you can't turn up on her doorstep and say 'good morning, I think your Aunt's a murderer'."

"Pfft, I'd never say that," he cringed in offense, "I'd say *J'accuse*...!" with that he held up his butter knife like a scabbard. Scott snickered at that. "I get it, I don't have proof yet and I don't want to rock the boat--"

Scott stopped eating and looked up slowly. "So what is it that you're asking?"

"I'm asking if you wanted to come with me to find proof," Stiles' attempt at a meek grin was virtually lecherous.

Scott slowly shoved away his plate, his appetite abandoned him. "You've got to be kidding me. There is no way we can go back to the Hale House. That place is demolished, it probably still reeks of poison."

"Maybe. Probably." Stiles nodded, conceding each point, less so each time then straightened up, "That's not the point. You wanted to go back to the Preserve to look for your origin, then let's go. I just think we should broaden our search," Stiles connected threads like a master weaver.
"Do you think they're connected?" leaning forward, Scott asked.


"So some things are connected?" Scott's expression tightened, crushed in an attempt to make sense of Stiles, an effort that took all of his talents.

"Yes." He nodded once, absolutely certain. "Kate is. She came to town the day Derek's body was found. Within hours. She turns up at the Hale House within minutes of the explosion without any real reason for being there. And then..."

"And then?" Scott lifted a brow, interested but not sold completely.

"There's Lydia."

"Is there something wrong with Lydia?" the alarm in Scott's low voice was palpable.

"No. God, no!" Stiles waved his hands in the air, like he could wave off traffic, like he wanted to push back all of Scott's anxiety with one fell swoop. "Nothing is wrong with Lydia. She's been perfect, a perfect Banshee. But she's been blocking this at every turn. I don't believe in destiny or anything, but I think-- I think this is crucial."

"Crucial how?" Scott bit his lip. His investment in this conversation, in this venture was imperative but uncertain.

"We have to do this," Stiles was incensed, "and we have to do this now. Lydia is the only one who could have prevented these things from getting worse. And being from Beacon Hills and from the Hale pack, I'm the only one who could have figured this out."

"And what am I supposed to do?" Scott hated the constant paralyzing feeling that change could affect them but he could not affect change. And this, everything Stiles said, even the way Stiles said it reminded of that weakness. It reminded Scott the only time he felt powerful was when he let the Monster-Alpha take control.

Stiles looked at him in disbelief, and then smiled, "What you're best at? What you've always done, Scott? You look out for us. I can't do this without you."

"Of course you can." Scott shook his head in dismay, his voice barely above a whisper. "You're smart enough. The two of you could figure this out--"

"I'm not brave enough, not without you." Stiles voice turned soft, very changed from before. A mildness came to it and on the table top Stiles clasped Scott's hands to keep them from shaking. "Kate is threatening my pack, this Monster is hurting my family. You tell me, how do I get through any of that without you?"

"Shit, dude." Scott sighed, a weak smile tugged at the side of his lips. When Scott looked to Stiles he saw through their years apart and nothing stood in between. With one hand he rubbed his face, like he could wipe the exhaustion of years of psychosis while the other hand reached for his friend's and lightly wrapped his knuckles. They grinned at each other after that, not exactly laughing but just shy of it.

"Tell me what you're thinking." Stiles looked surprisingly still for once and watched Scott with nervousness.

"There isn't a destiny." Scott leaned his face on an upturned palm, the other hand still spread along
the table, tapping the table top lightly in thought. "But there is a plan, and someone else has it out against our home. Why else would we have three packs, Isaac and Kira--"

"Four packs." Stiles corrected, and held up four fingers on his right hand. Then like a magician, he knocked it against his left hand and held up two fingers on his left hand and three on his right. "The Alpha Twins; Aiden and Ethan. Which brings us up to five Alphas, not counting our resident murderous psychopathic Monster-Alpha."

"Alphas can be twins?" Scott titled his head in curiosity, sitting back he extended his arms in front of him. "Alphahood can be shared like that?

"It's rare, but not unheard of." Stiles sighed, and waved his hands like this was just another of all the crazy factual things Scott just had to accept already. "If an Alphahood isn't transferred entirely, when it's shared it has the best chance to stabilize between siblings. What? I have experience with it."

Scott nodded, crossing his arms over his chest and gave this a deep think. He applied this new information to the present. "Allison didn't know anything about them."

Stiles wasn't at the party when they confronted one of the Twins, he had no way of evaluating the situation and had to trust Scott's judgment but "Her family might've. I can ask about them, too."

"Do you think she knew that Erica was alive?" Scott contemplated hard enough it made a crease in his brow deep and discerning. "How are you doing with that anyway?"

Stiles made a flippant, gesture fluttering through the air, "haven't had time to process. Maybe when I've talked it over with Isaac. Maybe when I've had some real sleep. Maybe I will ask Allison but I don't see any good coming of it, she looked just as surprised as the rest of us, and she never knew Erica before her whole rebranding. But if there's one thing this town has taught me; until you've seen the body, don't assume they're dead."

"Could you ask her a couple of questions for me?" asked Scott, he stood up and moved to collect their dishes regardless of whether they were done or not. While hovering close to Stiles he flashed a most charming grin.

"Sure, I'd love to be your go between!" Stiles said with all the sugary sweetness of a child in a breakfast cereal ad, as he shoved away his plate having lost his appetite.

Obviously Stiles' sense of urgency left an impression on Scott, either that or he just wanted Stiles to go over to Allison's for him. Like now, already. Second breakfast was over.

Track 07 - Direction by Hugh

{Sunday; Midday-Noon -- Yukimuras', The Hills, BH}

Tugging her knit hat over her ears, Allison readjusted her comfort thoughts and actions. She could run the idea by her friends. She could call Bennet for backup but when in the Jeep with Stiles, it struck Allison he seemed really in support should she make another impulsive and reckless choice.

"We're already on a roll," had been his sage reasoning.
Driving her up to the Hills had been easy enough, Stiles was even kind enough to offer to linger outside and give her a ride home but Allison (as per usual) was determined to do this on her own. She rung the Yukimura's doorbell with as much confidence that a sleepless Hunter, a night after partying and taking on an Alpha on her own and out of her depth really would. When Kira's Mom opened the door, Allison's had been yawning so wide she might as well have been at a dentist's office.

In any case, no one felt more surprised with her presence than Kira. In fact, there seemed an oddness in Mr. and Mrs. Yukimura, like they were already familiar and anticipating her arrival. That hardly surprised her, not if part of her Hunter team helped evacuate Kira from the hospital after the storm.

So, Allison showed all-smiles, maybe a little too forced, while she walked across the threshold and let Kira, joyful and chirping Kira, give her the 'fifty-cent tour'. Fresh from a shower, dressed in yoga pants and puppy slippers, Kira dragged Allison along by the wrists from room to room until she could loudly declare "And Now My Room!" before disappearing into her inner sanctum.

After turning on some loud music, Kira dropped onto the foot of the bed while Allison tore off her hat, coat and dropped her purse onto the bed beside her.

"What's going on? Why did you call?" Allison asked with a wrinkle in her brow, a deepening feature.

"I needed to tell you about-- these things I've been seeing." Kira said low sounding confused.

"Dreams? That's not uncommon."

"But I'm not asleep when they're happening," Kira gripped the edge of the mattress as if she were to fall off. "They're not exactly the craziest things but they're not normal."

"Okay," Allison slowly lowered herself on the mattress beside Kira, "tell me about them. Let me sort it out."

"First, there's Lydia-- t-then I keep seeing Jackson and now, I saw a Coyote with him." Kira tried to get the words out, and although there was intensity behind each of them there wasn't enough for Allison to go on.

"Are these things that you're supposed to keep secret? Is that why you feel bad?"

Kira thought about it and then shook her head.

"Are they just confusing?"

Kira nodded profusely.

"Alright." Allison tapped her finger on her kneecap and looked around the room for something that might help her get Kira's words out. "Do you have that storybook about the Kitsune?"

Kira nodded again and Allison stared at her blankly for a moment, "okay, could you maybe get it--" and then Kira jumped into action. Alone in Kira's bedroom Allison took the time to reevaluate what she was doing and the finer points of why she was there.

Processing thoughts through her tired mind the facts, focusing solely on the discoveries that were Kira centric, abandoning the drama of the others no matter how they triggered her insides. Pulling her feet up underneath her, Allison thought maybe it was about time she drew up a NDA for all
their friends to cover all the secrets they seemed to be trading. It surprised her when Kira dropped down on the bed besides her prattling on about this thing this time when her parents said that deflection.

Allison caught up the book in her hands and flipped through the pages. The book was dated and definitely something unique to their family. She flipped back and forth through the pages until she found something that looked vaguely familiar. The shape of women wailing and collapsing onto themselves, oozing up from the earth along the roots of ancient trees, among the limbs of the dead.

"Here," Allison settled on the page and wished it looked a little less horrifying, although to be fair the bestiary didn't have a flattering representation either. "This is a Banshee."

The expression on Kira's face said more than her words could. She touched the border of the cover like touching the page might burn her and her brows shot up high enough they almost disappeared. The image reminded Kira clearly of the shadowy shape of how Lydia glided through the trees of the Yukimuras' backyard in the freezing silver rain while lightning shattered the air.

"Lydia is... this." Her mouthed stayed open while she tore her eyes away. It wasn't a question at all. Allison nodded and gave her a pitiable look. "She looked like this, just like this when I first saw her on New Year's Eve."

Thoughts consumed Allison. A patchwork of bizarre that warped together and pretended to make sense till it nearly choked her, so she gulped hard. "You saw her over the Christmas break?"

Kira nodded.

"Okay, let me think for a second," Allison kept a hand at her mouth, her eyes darted back and forth while her mind raced. Then she looked from the page back to Kira's face, "you saw her like this? Where? What happened?"

"Here," Kira slid the book off of her lap onto the bed beside the both of them, "she broke into the backyard." Jabbing a finger toward her bedroom window, she indicated where and Allison stared like she could imagine it happening. "I went out to see who she was. To see if I could help her. She looked... she didn't look like herself at all. But she just told me to 'run'."

"Run?" Allison stood and went to the window, she had her hands on the glass and while measuring the high trees and steep walls with her eyes. "That's all she said."

"That's it. She told me I need to run, then she went back in between the trees and I couldn't find her," Kira's voice grew quicker and more demanding. "You get how that's nuts, right?"

Allison nodded, then she slowly smiled and turned back around "you're not nuts. Believe it or not, things are beginning to make sense."

"Are they?" Kira demanded but she sounded like a child excited to get a new toy. "Can you tell me when they begin to explain why seeing Jackson glowing is totally normal, too?"

"Seeing auras isn't uncommon," Allison pressed her lips together, partly smirking and partly to not laugh at Kira's comically pained expression. "When you left the party last night you were practically sparkling. It's not surprising your other instincts are kicking in quicker and quicker. The Kitsune is part of your ancestral blood. You were born for this, it's like muscle memory."

"So, that its. There's no going back." Kira moaned, and with one hand she reached for her head as if it would topple over, "I'm just going to keep going until I eventually burst into flames."
At that Allison did laugh and came to sit beside Kira, while looking around she saw that Kira placed Allison's baton on her bedside table. She tilted her head toward it, and Kira followed the line, "you're a natural talent. You know how to fight without even trying and you know how to run. That's why you're on the team, right?"

Kira dropped both hands onto her knees and clasped them there, she remembered that had been her thought process when joining up. Grinning, she nodded back.

"There is a sword in the den, hanging over the fire place," Allison gave it pause but figured knowing the truth was better than constantly guessing. She reached over to her purse, pulled out an eye liner pencil and drew a Kanji that looked almost like the number 5 on Kira's palm. "It has this symbol on the handle."

Kira shook her head, confused. "Those are shards," she insisted. "They're just artifacts my Father collected years ago. It was shattered over a hundred years ago--"

"That belongs to you," Allison insisted. "It's ancestral. Trust me, with all the collectors I have in my family, I've seen the type. You said your Dad collected them, you might want to ask him where he collected them from."

Kira stared down at her palm and clasped the one hand in the other.

"Speaking of talking to your parents," Allison scooped up her belongings, "mine are going to kill me."

"Wait!" Kira jumped to her feet. After a frozen second, she remembered why the urgency and raced around to find her Nokia, she quickly texted Allison.

Confused, but trying to work on a time crunch Allison opened up the image right away and stared down at the silhouetted profile in a street that looked nearly identical to Lydia's. There were oddities about the photo, but nothing she could put her finger on right away.

"What's this?"

"Jackson. Last night, he drove me home from Lydia's party," Kira came up beside her, pressing up right along Allison's side, virtually sharing the same physical space.

"But he wasn't at Lydia's party," Allison blinked down at the image, curious to see what it was that Kira found so fascinating.

"He wasn't, because he stopped down the street to stand in the middle of the road and throw rocks at a weird huge Coyote," Kira said low and Allison slowly looked up, staring at her with surprise.

"All night?" to which Kira shrugged, Allison looked back at the photo and tried to see what Kira saw. There was no animal, there was barely the shape of a Jackson through a distorted mist. "Alright, thanks. I've got to go."

As she slipped through the front door, after waving goodbye from afar to the Yukimura parents who were off in separate rooms in the house doing their separate parental things, Kira tugged at her sleeve.

"Is everything going to be okay?" Kira asked sweetly.

"Yeah, of course." Allison nodded, rocking onto the tips of her toes to try and assure even herself of the positivity in this declaration. "I'll look into this. And I'm sure Lydia will check in in a little bit.
School's tomorrow, so, you know.”

"I meant with you," Kira's smile dimmed a little with her concern, "are you going to be okay?"

Blinking rapidly, Allison couldn't think of a reply, so she just nodded and walked away.

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Track 08 - Awake My Soul by Mumford and Sons

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{Sunday; Afternoon -- The Argents', Westwood, BH}

"Bennet came home."

"Yes," Allison conceded.

"With injuries," her Dad criticized her, arms crossed along his puffed out chest.

"Well I didn't give them to him," Allison said flippantly, tying her hair up after a well-deserved shower.

"I'm going to ground you!" he groaned. Grasped at the air like he could strangle it. "Yes! That's what we'll have to do! No parties! No after-school activities! No boys!"

Sighing, Allison turned to face her Dad who loomed in her doorway with a much creeperier Axel behind him and Norm finishing up the parade of cronies.

"Is Bennet okay?" she asked Norm over all of their shoulders. He gulped in surprise at being addressed, then nodded curtly, trying to go back to his straight-faced disapproving mean-guy routine.

None of them appreciated whenever Chris took on his Dad-shtick when they should be on Hunter business, and like it or not that was the card she had to pull now.

"Look," she threw her hands up in the air and started to slither an awkward path through them, "ground me or whatever, but hampering my progress seems pointless at this stage."

"What stage?" Axel put up a hand for Chris to hold his tongue while Allison to finish up.

Allison padded barefoot along the hall carpet to her parent's bedroom door and gave it two tight raps before she turned back to face them, "I figured out who attacked Isaac behind the school."

Her Mom swung opened the bedroom door with the violence of a vampire leaping from a grave that finally made Allison jump and take pause. Victoria must have been up all night waiting for her, plotting and calculating. If Allison didn't make this debriefing worthwhile there was a very good chance she could get deported to her Grandfather's team in France and never see the states again.

"I-I think this it's time to sit down, in the Family Room," Allison suggested. Victoria looked unconvinced but conceded and agreed to meet them there in a minute. She would reach out to Tyhurst and Livy who were still in town. With a sigh Allison shuffled quickly toward Bennet and Rumy's room.

Their bedroom door opened quickly as well, maybe not with springboard quickness but with a
speed that gave Allison great relief to see their friendly faces.

"Time to pay the piper?" Bennet smiled, he looked puffy eyed from what little restless sleep he had. The right side of his face was scraped up from a bad fall poolside the night before and seemed to be walking off a limp. He played it off on the way to the Meeting Room and used Rumy as a cane.

Even at capacity, the Meeting Room still felt like they could camp out there for a few weeks, maybe not without killing each other but with arm space certainly. They all took seats at the table with Allison and her family at the head. Nearly everyone took the time to change, but Allison stayed barefoot, in yoga pants and an oversized T so that she could curl, squirm and stretch with ease and wait for all the eyes to settle in with their scrutiny.

"There are some more Alphas in town. Twins," she said with practiced cold Argent authority. "They turned up at Lydia's party last night."

"Why would they turn up at a teenager's party?" Kate scoffed a little harshly, mostly sleepily.

"Because they're teenagers. Teenagers tend to turn up at parties." Allison snapped quickly. She looked at her Dad as she did so. Partly because she wanted her Dad to lay off on her about going to the party already and partly because she wasn't sure if she could look Kate in the face right then.

"Do we know who they are?" asked Rumy and beside him Bennet answered quickly "Aiden and Ethan. I've never noticed them before."

"They don't attend BHHS. I know that for certain," Allison put her hand to her chin in thought.

"Then how did they turn up at the party?" Livy started in exactingly, her dark eyes penetrating.

Allison took in a deep breath, "Lydia didn't invite them. But kids from all over were turning up, from the high school the town over. From the nearby college. All over. They could have just been drawn in by the amount of activity going on."

"It's not long 'til the New Moon," Axel rubbed at his jaw in thought, "it's surprising more didn't turn up."

She and Bennet looked toward one another, he waited for her leads as to whether to come forth about the other guest appearances throughout the night.

"Did they attack Isaac?" Victoria sounded more dubious than curious, "did they hurt anyone?"

Allison tried not to feel embarrassed "I couldn't guess their motives outside of being party-goers."-- And partly as a deflection, partly because she knew it would come up to bite her on the ass eventually-- "There was another Werewolf there. She did come to rile things up, maybe to spy, I don't know, I didn't get a chance to confront her."

"--so you got a chance to confront the Twins?"

"-- did you recognize her?"

"--how did you know she was 'antagonizing' if you didn't speak to her?"

Blinking, Allison took a step back from the table, too overwhelmed by their barrage. When her Mom went to strike the table and ask for silence Allison put up a hand to stop her, to stop them all.
"Uhm, Roman; no. I've never seen her before. But I can write down a description. I'll sit with Fry and draw up a composite in a few. Livy; I confronted one of the Twins. His name was Ethan. Bennet and I engaged him--" with that she nodded toward Bennet, who waved cheekily and made a displaying gestured toward his injured cheek. "--no one was injured."

"Hey! I - I had a concussion," Bennet scoffed, giving her an incredulous glare.

Allison rolled her eyes and waved him off, "well, nobody got seriously hurt. We didn't get anything from Ethan aside from resentment. He blames Hunters for starting the Werewolves' war."

"That's not surprising," scoffing loudly, Roman leaned back in his seat, all eyes zipped toward him. "What, like it's a new thing for the mongrels to blame us for everything that makes them hot under the collar?"

Sitting across from him Bennet explained, with strained patience "he said something about murder--"

"Butchering," Allison interjected.

"Right," Bennet looked to her with a nod than back to the rest of the table, "butchering Werewolves. I don't think he was talking about these murders we're investigating here." Glancing briefly to Rumy, without Rumy giving him any leave to say further and without Rumy making eye contact to give away his source of information Bennet continued. "I've heard there's been some action going on outside of Beacon Hills, some real bloodshed that we're not hearing about but the Werewolves are."

"Nonsense," Victoria and Kate answered in near unison although their tones were opposite. One scoffing the other confident. Victoria gave Kate a glare to stand down in talking to her superior. "There is no way the Werewolves could know something that we don't. We've got Beacon Hills on lockdown to contain this threat."

"The town?" Bennet looked confused and asked immediately, Rumy then gave him a look of warning.

From his seat diagonally Chris answered coolly, "No. The County. There is no getting in or out of this place without us knowing."

"Then how come we haven't stopped this yet--?"

"Alright, alright kid," Rumy wrapped his arm around Bennet's shoulders and hugged him firmly, shaking him hard enough to nearly crush bones. "I'm sure that'll all be clearer in the mornin'. Now, how bout we let the boss get back to her debriefing?"

Looking confused but conceding, they all looked back up to where Allison stood hunched over at the head of the table, leaning her weight on her left arm and the thumbnail of her right hand between her front teeth.

"Allison?" Rumy called her back to earth. Chris' face looked a bit sour but mostly intrigued to sit back and listen further, Victoria stepped aside just to watch.

"Right. What else." She seemed to work on auto-pilot after that, her mind there while her words were here. "I engaged the Alpha. I can only guess he didn't take my head off because he was surprised or at half strength without his Twin. Or both. Or because he didn't want to." That seemed to impress the table enough into silence. With that she could ask of them to do more research on Twin Alphahood. It seemed rare and they had little or no knowledge about it in the bestiary. Ulrich
seemed eager for the research work, to reach out to other Hunters nearby and see what they might know. Leveque less so, but with the little time they had they needed to use the resources they had. So, Ulrich went south and Leveque east to tap Hunter resources and come back with other archival facts.

"There's also the Werewolf girl at the party to deal with," Tyhurst brought up, sounding a little too bloodthirsty for her liking.

"What about her?" Allison tried to shrug it off, but knew her tiredness was wearing at her sense of bravado. "She's just another teen. She could be a Beta from their pack, she could be an Omega. If I see her turn up at the school, I'll let you know?"

"Shouldn't she have sensed you?" he squinted, nailing her with a hard look of scrutiny. "A house full of hormonal teens and loud music, but you figure out who she is before she figures you out. Didn't she notice your Werewolf friends?"

"Obviously," Allison half scoffed but mostly just shrugged away from his stare, "that's how I figured out what she was up to. But they ended up chasing her away."

"Is that when the Alpha attacked you?" Livy asked cockily.

"I -attacked- him," Allison looked over to glare at her.

"Well, didn't you think that maybe it wouldn't have escalated if you weren't sending your pets off to hunt for you?" Livy's voice turned silkier the more venomous she spoke.

"I didn't orchestrate anything," as much as Allison tried to maintain control, she had become too tired and her voice began to raise in pitch, "if that's what you're trying to suggest."

"Maybe, not dear." Livy's brow rose as her tone lowered in amusement, "And you have only just turned up home nearly 10 hours after the party ended with an elaborate tale painting yourself as quite the hero."

"You haven't explained the time gap," her Father agreed, his voice came from beside her, forceful but somehow a little kinder.

"I was hoping to do that--" she wiped at her face, agitation shaking her very bones. Finally, she admitted. "I was at the Yukimuras'."

"Everyone," her Mother's voice was suddenly very close beside her and booming. "You've got busy work. So go, get busy."

The room cleared out quicker than sand, as little ants draining from a cracked ant farm, surprised to see Bennet leave hobbled and leaning heavily on Roman's shoulder, then she felt a tap on the shoulder. While Axel argued with her parents at being excluded, and Kate whispered secret instructions her right-hand, Livy (while the witch glared haughty daggers in her direction), Rumy tapped Allison's shoulder before leaving and whispered, "Oh, I can't wait to hear what you must have thought of Noshiko and Ken. Man, have I got some stories."

Track 09 - BTSK by MSMR
Back again in the Argents' atrium, where an exotic purple Wolfsbane stood newly on display by the stairwell and crosswise, alongside the doorframe, mounted the large battle axe Stiles remembered from the Meeting Room. They certainly 'Huntered' up the place since the last time he visited. Stiles whistled easily to play off his anxiety while he paced the area, under the watchful eye of the man he knew well to be Allison's Godfather (and his Dad's new BFF).

"The redhead," he said with a very thick tone of disbelief.

"Yup," Stiles said with a pop to his pronunciation.

"Is dating you?" Rumy leaned onto the end of the banister, grinning like a bandit.

Stiles glared and nodded.

"Like for real?" He said like a gossipy teenager.

Stiles stopped pacing, he turned to face his adversary. With his arms crossed and his jaw working overtime to think of a raw bitter comment he glared. "Why is that so hard to believe?"

"No reason," he gave a thin lipped smirk, shrugging off the comment. "I just don't see it. Seems like bullshit to me, no'fense."

Scoffing and throwing his hands up in the air, Stiles whined, "why do people say 'no offense' when they're going out of their way to be offensive?" then he whirled back around to jab a finger toward his enemy, "and me dating Lydia is no stranger than you courting my Dad. Oh, oh yeah! I know about that!"

"Are you really jealous because it's more likely for me and your Father to have something real than the two of you?" Rumy rubbed at his unshaven jaw while drawing out the sentence, in a torturously slow way. Stiles gaped and jumped away from each word until his back smacked into the axe and he jumped around to stand upright.

"You are a bad man," he glared. "I just wanted to come here, innocently and friendly-like for a little assistance from a 'friend.' I wasn't expecting the mental violation."

The man stepped further down, dropping to sit on the last step and pat the empty space beside him for Stiles to sit, "so it is assistance you came here for. You could have said so from the get go."

Reeeeally, disliking the guy had gotten as much info out of him in the time less time than it took for Stiles ask to see Allison, so he scuffed his sneakers when he moved along as a sign of rebellion.

After sitting down, Rumy began question, "This is about Lydia?" Stiles nodded. "Is she okay?" Stiles shrugged. "Do you know where she is?" Stiles scoffed and stared down at the floor between his brand-new, not very well cared for Nikes. "Did you want us to find her?" Sighing, Stiles twisted to face him. The man wasn't a large man but he had a large presence. They shared the step and yet he felt like if they had to fight, with the battle axe within swiping reach Rumy'd give him a decent fight. His grey eyes didn't look away when Stiles tried to glare him down.

"I don't want anything from you."

The guy waited a thoughtful second, and then chuckled. "Funny, that's not what Lydia said the last time she was here." Stiles nose flared and jaw set hard against any words that might burst out stopping the man interrogation. "She's always here. Hanging out, working with Allison," he
smirked enjoying the vagueness of his words, "and now your Dad is all about hanging out. It makes you wonder if they're willing to make things work, why're you still running around at the seams? Don't you know that's where things tear apart?"

"Do you know you're weird? I mean you've gotta see that," Stiles' brows arched to an arch of comical proportions, "like to the point where you might need to wear one of those nice white vests that make you hug yourself." After a moment when the man shook his head in defeat, Stiles patted his shoulder and stood, putting as much distance between them as logistically possible, he added "Good talk."

"Stiles?" Allison started to rush down the stairs after Bennet retrieved her from wherever she had been hidden away inside the confines of the Argents' cavernous fortress. "Rumy?" she added in a mortified tone, "What's going on?"

"He's misplaced his girlfriend," Rumy jutted his thumb toward Stiles, "we've misplaced an asset."

Allison stopped her descent. Despite already looking exhausted, whatever color was left to her seemed to leave her cheeks and even Bennet froze behind her, looking startled and bruised. "She still hasn't turned up?"

"Still?" Bennet asked, yanking at Allison's arm. With a sigh she shrugged him off and gestured for Stiles to come upstairs.

"Come on, let's talk in my room."

Rumy made a wry comment about inviting boys up to her bedroom unsupervised, but Allison ignored him with the slam and the locking of her door.

"What's up?"

"He's super great by the way! Is he naturally wired to make you feel like you're on trial for stealing all the cookies in every cookie jar, ever?" Stiles began to pace as Allison crawled up onto the center of her bed and pulled her knees up to her chest.

"Well, yes." She smirked cheekily, "he's an expert in espionage and interrogation, plus he's my Godfather. He gets a bit protective of me. If he didn't try to make you wait in my Mom's garden, it means he must like you a little."

Stiles eyes twitched at the mere suggestion of Victoria's notorious herbal garden of doom. After a giggle at his expense Allison insisted Stiles catch her up on exactly what it was he came to tell her in person. What was so dire he was willing to 'take on a house full of Hunters to come banging on her door'?"

"Well, beside Lydia, Isaac is also M.I.A." he said flippantly, but it was obvious from the veins in his neck this wasn't an easy thing for him to deal with. "Evidently he told my Dad he was going on a walkabout. I know in my gut, in the deep dark bowels of my insides he's fucked off to find Erica. Without me!"

"Is that a bad thing?" Allison tried to see the awfulness in that.

Stiles spun around, hands clenched and breathing heavily "well, no. Maybe. I don't know! Come with me to search?"

"Erica, Isaac or Lydia?" Allison brows cinched in thought, with eyes focused tight and she dropped her chin onto the tops of her knees.
"All of them! Aren't you trained for this?! Isn't that what you always say?!" He kept running his hands through his hair until everything spiked at mad angles.

"Alright, calm down." Allison crawled over, grabbed both wrists and pulled him kneeling onto the bed. "Think. Did you come here to actually ask for my help? Or are you tempted to take off and you're looking for me to validate that reckless impulse?"

"What?" Stiles quieted, startled and flinchingly he settled. "No. I just... don't know what to do. With Lydia on the lamb and Isaac taking off, I feel like my circle of friends is coming apart. There has to be something to do. Sitting around and worrying shouldn't be a pastime. There's just got to be something."

Sighing, Allison shook her head and settled, legs crisscrossed beside him. It was bitter to know this burden shared was doubled instead of eased, but still it was shared because that's what friends did. "You're not alone. I'm still here."

"I like your room," Stiles glanced around to avoid awkward eye contact, while smiling goofily from the warmth of her statement. "Alright," he side-eyed her "still BFF's."

"4EVER," she flicked hair out of her face with a comical air and he smirked. Keeping lightness in tone she said seriously, "that's not all you have to be grateful for. Erica is alive. That's something, right? Without having to lift a finger, Lydia uncovered the Alphas who attacked Isaac. And Scott's helped give refuge to a Kitsune."

"About that," Stiles turned to her with bouncing interest, "you never said what happened in the basement. You guys went down giggling and frisky A.F., next thing I know you blew up Lydia's backyard."

"It really isn't more complicated than that." Shaking her head, she closed her eyes embarrassed at the memory, "we misjudged the whole situation. If Kira hadn't figured out how to control her range over electricity, we might have fried the sophomore class."

"So, we know for sure she's a Werefox," Stiles pursed his lips in consideration. "Good to know."

"I guess you could say that, but that's not all." Allison shrugged, and then snatched up her cellphone from the bedside charger. "She ran into Jackson last night."

"I thought he wasn't at the party," Stiles crawled further onto the bed, crowding her personal space.

"I thought so too, but it looks like he made it to Lydia's block at least. See?" Allison pulled up the photo Kira forwarded to her. The distorted image of Jackson of standing in the center of the road, in harm's way chucking stones off in the distance made for odd display. Stiles snatched up the phone anyway and stared at it like it contained the Holy Grail.

"She took this."

"Yep."

"Then what?"

"Then she went over to him." When he gave her a lecherous look Allison took a deep breath and said the more incredulous thing, "then she let him drive her home."

Stiles didn't react at first. He fiddled with the image for a long while adjusting the settings. When he handed it back to her he pointed off through the bushes. "There. What do you see?"
Squinting she looked through the leafy bushes at what looked like "Porch lights maybe."

"Those seem like Beta blue eyes." Stiles said somberly, "Jackson is tossing those stones at a shapeshifter."

"How do you know that?" Allison grabbed the phone back and held it closer to her face. "Kira said something about the Coyote seeming 'weird'. Maybe she meant shapeshifter-weird."

"So we're weird now?" he made light, with the cock of a brow.

She rolled her eyes and ignoring him as she pointed down at the phone, "that's not the only interesting thing. Look at the car."

Stiles blinked and analyzed it, memorizing the familiar details, "what about it?"

"It's not Jackson's. He's been driving a truck since his Porsche was totaled so--" with a bit of a grimace she proposed, "He might have borrowed this one in a pinch. And I've seen it around school."

"So, he borrowed a friend's car... except Jackson doesn't have any friends," Stiles scoffed lightly, joking a little but it was an observance nonetheless. Jackson had been incrementally cutting off anyone who cared about him, ever.

"I'm just speculating but what if he was sent there by his Master. This isn't regular Jackson behavior," she shrugged, the assuredness read in the way she bit her lips but her eyes said otherwise. Allison wouldn't have proposed this if her instincts weren't surer than sure. Definitely sure enough to share with Stiles.

"This might be proof the Kanima Master is creeping around the School?" Stiles gave a little laugh in relief while staring back at the photo. It was something alright and he couldn't help but try to place the familiar red little bastard and came up short.

"It's not just someone at school." Allison said smartly, "I've seen it in faculty parking. Come on, think about it. If the Kanima has to be near him a lot, don't you think that makes sense the Master is staff?"

Stiles glanced at her fiercely, "but who?"

"Don't know. This is just guesswork," she pulled the phone delicately from this hand.

Glancing around the room again he took a moment before ticking off theories on his fingers. "1) The second murderer is probably a Hunter, 2) the Kanima Master is probably at school with us, 3) My friends have probably, definitely, fucked off to join the circus, 4) there are Twin Alphas in town that we owe apologies to for them kicking our asses and 5) the fledgling Kitsune is doing a better job of rounding up the bad guys in one night than we've done in two weeks."

Petting his shoulder Allison said, "I think what you really want to say is, you think Kate is the second killer."

After a quiet moment of staring off, Stiles nodded and she brought her hand down to hold in the both of his. Sighing deeply, Allison rested her head on his shoulder, while rolling the list of theories in her head realizing that even if they had a place to start they didn't have anywhere to go with this information.
Track 10 - In The Woods Somewhere by Hozier

{Sunday; Afternoon -- Northbridge, Beacon Hills}

The wind lashed at Isaac's neck and face, but his back felt overly warm. It felt large with her weight up against him, her warmth enveloping him from behind and the road rattling beneath were things that kept him questioning consciousness, but once Erica told him their destination he started to question his reality.

It wasn't like Northbridge had been a forbidden place for him. Come to think of it, Isaac had no idea how Stiles could cross over the towns' borders easily when flashback haunted him just nearing their destination-- but lo and behold they had arrived. And Erica wouldn't just direct him to the section of the road where their pack had been attacked, chased and torn apart. No, she left Scott's bike with two strangers (that scruffy looking Meyers guy, again and some other Werewolf he'd yet to meet, a tall wiry woman named Nik) then lead him right into the green thick leafy trees where they'd been run off the road. Erica's heart beat like a hammer but her foot fall was unwavering as minutes later she came to the cliff side, over a steep monstrous quarry with barely a sip of the Mad River cutting through it.

It was the place. Isaac held onto Erica's shoulder while they looked down over the place where he once left her for dead, but remembrance was not what they came for.

Deucalion stood on the lip of the edge, Jonsen beside him looking feral and ready for a fight. While at their feet were the shapes of Jonny and his fiancé Lennie, bruised up and blindfolded, knelt before them. Isaac gulped and tore his eyes away from them. Erica couldn't seem to take her eyes off of them. The fact that it was midday, that the sun might have still been out, bright and witness to the savagery made Isaac frightened. Or it could have been the location?

"I'm curious, Reíka. Why would you pick to meet here?" Deucalion asked, he had laughter in his voice but his face read bitterness.

Erica breathed deeply, she stood tall and dug her boots deep into the soil beneath her, the soil that she could still smell her blood in. "My connection to my pack ended in this place," she didn't say 'because of you' as much as Isaac wanted her to.

Isaac's eyes narrowed, glaring at her, willing for her to be angrier and to say the things he felt. Instead Erica stilled herself further, and Isaac couldn't imagine she had the same flashbacks he did when walking between the trees, vivid scents of the rainfall mixed with blood, the sense of panic, sounds of the howls and screams of pack members while Alphas dropped down like meteorites.

Although, not timid by nature, Erica wasn't made of granite either, and she reached her hand back blindly for Isaac. Coming forward, he looked at Deucalion, at this ferocious and familiar face, Isaac gripped Erica's hand tightly to loan her all the strength he now understood she would need.

"It makes sense to end your connection here, too." Erica said it toward Deucalion, but she was unsure to whom she aimed it at.

When the two on the floor made sounds of protest, Jonsen hit one of them to stop and both of them slumped forward in hovelling defeat. Deucalion only looked toward Erica.

"That's not how we agreed. Reíka's meant to choose."

"My choice is that Isaac chooses for me." Erica said, her chin jutted forward in that way she
always did when she meant to pout for a later curfew. But even though Isaac recognized it, they
didn't know that. Just like they didn't know that Erica never usually got her way.

"What is this supposed to mean?" Deucalion's demeanor was already commanding without wolfish
features coming into play. When his voice hardened, the Betas at his feet cowered. "If you're
having people make your choices for you, then you'll only ever be indifferent."

"I'm not indifferent, I'm not confused." Erica refuted, she took her time to calculate her thought. It
felt a lot like making it up as she went along even though Erica had envisioned the place and time
for their confrontation. Without looking to Isaac, she kept him the center of her focus, their
connection a figurative jumping point while she moved one step forward, letting her arm stretch
back a little. "I just wanted to think about someone else for a change."

Almost forgetting he wasn't watching a performance, but was in fact an active participant, when all
eyes turned to Isaac, he didn't react. When he finally did, Isaac put one hand to his chest in surprise
while dropping his mouth opened in a shocked and silent 'oh, me?' Then letting go of Erica's hand
he stepped forward, crossed her path and stared down at the two people with knees damp on the
filthy ground.

Their faces were dirtier rather than puffy or bloody. And their clothes were less torn than filthy.
Glancing past Deucalion into the quarry and everything felt suddenly like the most complicated
algebraic equation Isaac had ever been confronted with. The idea of flinging someone to their
deaths seemed beyond ridiculous, preposterous but that's what had happened to Erica. And maybe
these people deserved to see the same thing happen to one of their own? Maybe that would be
justice? Maybe it would give Isaac some sense of closure, and in the recesses of their mind
Deucalion's people knew it because they already gave Erica clemency for it... but Lennie and
Jonny? They might not have put Erica in harm's way but they weren't heroes in any respect. So,
where did that leave Isaac?

"Let them go." Isaac said, his voice thick and jaw clenched. He was nothing like these people. He
wouldn't attack without cause, and wouldn't hurt without reason. His pale eyes snapped up to look
at the glowing eyes of Werewolves older and far stronger than him. "Just let them go already."

With a quick nod toward her, Deucalion sent Jonsen along with their captives. She leaned down
between their sweaty bent heads and whispered some instruction before dragging them to their feet
and away. They made excitable sounds by way of gratitude, but Isaac flinched out of their reach,
their voices felt like poison to his ears.

When Isaac turned around, feeling a little light-headed and still trying to grasp what had just
happened, Erica came into view to grab him by the shoulders and straightened him out. Neither
looking relieved or upset, just looked concerned. After pulling a stray leaf from his hair Erica
straightened his collar, tugging him upright and nearer to her. Her stare was penetrating and
focused solely on Isaac like they were alone on the top of that mountainside. Which made him
confused for a second, Isaac wanted to ask her why they were still up there if being above the
quarry made her shake with fear? Then Erica placed her hands over his, on his chest and Isaac
realized his hands were the ones trembling.

"This means he comes back with us?" Jonsen said returning to them on the edge.

"I didn't come here as part of an initiation," Isaac closed his eyes and tried not to snap at her.

"Then why did you come here?" the way Deucalion said it, the way Deucalion had been watching
him with silent judging hard-set and glowing Alpha Red eyes made Isaac realize something.
Whether Jonny and Lennie lived or died there, it meant loss for Deucalion. They would never be
trusted back in the pack. His Betas were taken from him, which was what Erica and Isaac had done to him.

"For her." Isaac looked at them both, and said it like it was the most obvious thing in the world.

Despite the likely (though mistaken) threat of the Monster-Alpha the night on Northbridge, when the Hale kids were nearly destroyed, Jonsen had kept Deucalion company. All of Alphas attended alone but their bond meant unwavering loyalty even at impossible odds. They were the sort of people that recognized wild-devotion when they saw it in others.

With a small acknowledgment, part-grunt part-nod, Jonsen aimed a look of approval toward Isaac. Deucalion looked between them, his brow quirk with slow uptake of interest. Then a secret look between them, eased Deucalion's gnarled, tense expression. When he looked back to the kids his features finally went back to that of a man's, but they took their time. His lips were a thin with a hard pressed smirk, "Isaac, I meant what I said. You're welcome to--"

Without letting him finish his sentiment, Erica tugged at Isaac's hand and started away. Without running they moved quickly and without looking back. They were back at the bike in no time.

The same two from before were still waiting roadside by their motorcycles but a junky sedan from early they had seen Nik lounging against, the one large enough to move two people, had suspiciously disappeared from the scene. The glares Isaac and Erica received once they stepped out of the bushes were mixed and troubling but no one made eye-contact and she rushed them speedily on their way.

They cut through town, instead of heading back to The Hills they moved away toward the Industry Bridge. Erica weaved the bike off road, barely seen and came up through an overhanging hill Isaac hadn't known existed for all his racing around town.

On the edge, looking down over the town Erica breathed easier and when Isaac came up alongside her he thought he knew why. He saw the clunky sedan make its through traffic, beyond the construction area and onto the highway.

"They're gone." Erica said to Isaac, and glanced up when she noticed he finally caught up. She smacked his shoulder lightly. Delightedly, she breathed out, "They're gone!"

Not because she doubted Deucalion would keep his word, although for a couple of hours Isaac thought so. It was because Erica envied them their freedom. Those betrothed two, got out and they had each and she hoped they might have made it out of Beacon Hills County alive.

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Track 11 - Your Ghost by Greg Laswell

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{Sunday; Early Evening -- Deucalion's, the Hills, BH}

"How long ago?" Isaac popped a slice of apple in his mouth.

"Not long," Erica cut another slice with her pocket knife, "those two handed me over to Deuc a couple weeks ago."

Isaac shuddered at the thought but gave it a second thought, frowning deeply he leaned back against the wood plank at his back.
They'd been sitting on top of Erica's so-called bed, listening to music played loud-ishly and catching up for over an hour. There was a lamp with a scarf thrown over it casting a pattern of lavender and vague stars across the pale blue room. One side of the room was a bay window, the other wall had a bar rack with a shelf on top that held her clothes and knick knacks and underneath that were arrangements of shoes tossed in disarray. In the center of the room was a mattress on the floor with a sturdy canopy frame around it. The one outlet had a cheap extension cord overwhelmed with a laptop, phone charger, the lamp, an additional alarm clock because she was a monster to wake up in the morning and the phone alarm was never enough. But compared to her room at the Homestead, the place felt barren and barely lived in. She explained she preferred it that way. She never wanted the place to feel home-y or permanent. Experience taught her better than that.

"I'm not sure how long but those two kept me in knocked out in the back seat of a car until it was convenient to hand over. They figured I'd make collateral."

"But where've you been since before they found you?" Isaac munched loudly.

"Hard ta 'splain." Erica shrugged and nibbled on her slice of apple slower. Her bare toes, shiny bronze polish and everything, lay draped over his legs and dangling off of the mattress and onto the carpeted floor.

"Try," he resettled her pillows by example, "I've got the time."

"I've even watched you play lacrosse a few times. You looked good." She cut off his grumbling, in a comically lecherous tone that made Isaac kick her and she kicked him back. He made a 'gimme' gesture and she leaned over and passed him another slice of apple.

"You know, near death experiences really knock it out of you." At first she mock pouted, but when his stare turned into a question, arching his brow to silently ask 'how much do you know?'

With a deep sigh, Erica look up and off to the side. "I can tell you what I remember clearer. Once I healed up, I went looking for survivors and found the two of you playing house. Why didn't you come looking for me?"

Isaac cringed at the question. In his nightmares, she asked him that a thousand times and he had a thousand answers. Now with her handing him apple slices and making light of the darkest things, the words escaped him. He crossed his arms, one hand over the other he could feel for a scar that had already healed over but reminded how super strength and fast healing didn't mean immortality, and if they both knew it intimately why had she let Jonny and Lennie get tortured for 'a couple of weeks'?

"Just because you felt hurt and abandoned," he narrowed his gaze to get past his sense of hypocrisy, and tried to reach out to his foster sister, his pack member, his Erica through the wound, "it doesn't give you a license to go around keeping people trapped in the basement."

"Why not?" she huffed, tossing her hair over her shoulder she sat straighter, with her chest puffed up, leaning on against her arms. "That's what they did to me. They kept me knocked out in the backseat of their car until it seemed convenient to pawn off a Beta from the Hale pack in exchange for way out."

He scoffed, "you gotta be kidding? Then I guess I have a right to find my Dad and beat him, shove him in a box. Forgetting everything that has ever happened between us, every good memory I've got of him, everything I've learned that taught me to never give up. That brought me to the Hales to begin with." When Erica cocked her head to the side, watching and calculating his words, the light made her look phantom and his nightmares felt tangible but somehow the words came out easier.
"You and me, and Derek, we all know-- Dying again would be easier than letting each other down."

"Geez, you're really messed up, huh?" Erica gave him an out after he stared at her unblinkingly for half a minute. Then she switched it up, and started again in a nearly cheerful tone. "There was this one game," she chuckled in a way that nearly made her choke and made him laugh. "I went to one of your games, one of the first I saw you play. I went to say something and boom! Everything went nuts," she had her fingers wriggling in her hair like insect limbs. "I fell between seats and woke up underneath the bleachers. I was lucky not to get crushed, but when I looked out later, you and your friend Scott were running the opposite way from everyone else. They went to the main exit, but you went to that Argent girl's car. Talk about nuts. After that, I wasn't sure if could just walk up to you--"

"You should have." Isaac remembered that game, hearing Lydia scream for the first time, hearing the scream that made the Cyclones lose their first game of the season and the scream that broadcasted Derek Hale's death. No wonder Erica collapsed. Isaac stretched back and sighed deeply, imagining how different the night would have played out had he found Erica instead of Stiles. "I would have. If I had known you were right there."

Tilting her head slowly, she considered the sincerity of his statement and put forth her own proposition. "Stay. Crash here. You'll be safer here with a real pack."

"Sure," her legs rose and fell with his laughter. "Stay with the warring packs, while they've called a war. And they're all murdering each other in the woods for no reason."

Her eyes shone, they held his fiercely and she pulled her legs off him and started to climb to her feet. "Fine. Go hide in plain sight. Where everyone else watches you like bait for the big game!"

"Erica." Isaac watched in stunned confusion, he lurched forward and grabbed her left hand before she stepped further away, her breathing was hard as she stared down at him and her teeth had gone sharp without realizing it.

"Stay. Stay the weekend." She clasped her other hand to her mouth when she realized, and composed herself.

"Ok, but you know it's Sunday." Nodding, Isaac shifted and slung his legs over the side of the bed to sit with her standing, knees knocking against each other. "And we're not done talking."

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Track 12 - Move to the Ocean by Brick+Mortar (Baauer Remix)

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{Sunday; Evening - the Stilinski's, Beacon Garden Community, BH}

Heading home soon after, Stiles felt weariness in a way he hadn't since his first night back home. Since he first collapsed in his bed, staring up at the ceiling, tired but not sleeping, letting his mind war at one evil question; 'What next?'

There were creaky steps and there were 'creaky' steps. After just getting off the phone with his Dad, reassuring him of a safe return, he launched up his creaking home steps that suddenly didn't feel safe at all. Stiles couldn't dare bring himself to move an inch further without the confrontation he sensed coming on. The time of day felt a little too perfect because he didn't want the sun to go down without settling things between them. That and Stiles liked the way dusk changed the colors
of everything, he especially like the way it made Erica's normally fair white gold hair turn to a sort of orangey pink.

"Hello again." Her smirk wasn't quite as disquieting as the night before. She sucked her teeth the way she would in their 'I dare you' days but kept her hands tucked deep in her jacket pockets and wouldn't make a move toward him.

"Hi," Stiles reversed down the steps without turning around, looking a little robotic while he did it. He cleared his throat and looked around, waiting to see if any of her cronies or his friends would pop up and interrupt.

The tenseness in the air between them pole vaulted between clash and play, while they remained fascinated with the sight of each other.

"Erica." Stiles said and his voice peaked slightly, he brought it down immediately trying to mask his surprise, "I still can't believe you're alive. You look- you look good. I mean you always looked- but you look, like okay."

"Are you happy I'm alive or that I'm hot?" Her eyes crinkled in that near laughing way she had.

"I've been waiting for you to turn up." He ran his hand through his hair and cleared his throat to get back on task.

"Oh really?" As Erica stepped a little closer, she lowered her to keep in turn with his. "Why's that?"

"I wanted to thank you." He waited for a reaction. For a long while he watched her face, her big dark eyes and wide smile framed in cunning cherub waves of gold. Licking his lips in nervousness, when there was no recognition behind those searching eyes Stiles braved on. "For what you did for all of us on Northbridge."

"Ohh," she chuckle-scoffed and looked away, her realization was hard hitting. "The dying thing."

"I've been wanting to say that for a long while." He bit his lip and stood in front of her suddenly, his hands clenching and unclenching. "So..."

"So, you said it," she shrugged. He couldn't sense any ripple of ease or upset about her, just her usual sort of twisted antagonist humor bubbling underneath. Nothing cruel, just something brewing. "Do you feel better?" She smiled.

"No? Yes? I'm not sure I was supposed to so much as I just wanted to say it." His face screwed up in a grimace of confusion.

"Good job, then." Once Erica gave his shoulder a hearty pat Stiles started to laugh. And her smile started to soften a little. "I'd do it again... don't look so shocked. You'd have done the same thing too if you were in my shoes."

"Maybe." He exhaled deeply, rubbing the back of his neck and deflated a little upon reflection of his time spent as a camper in the Preserve. As an observer rather than a doer.

"Or maybe something just as stupid." She suggested, wryly tilting toward him a little.

"Can't you just let me say 'thank you'?” Stiles shook out of it, closing his eyes and grinning a little.

"You're welcome." She nodded, and tried to banish what little she could remember of that night away, tuck it away and wrap it with a bow of his gratitude, marked with a note of never to be
Together they sensed, and looked toward where Isaac exited the Stilinskis' home, hunched rather more than his bad posture called for, layered up with a leather jacket and coat over his usual cardigan and his school backpack stuffed to the brims. Isaac made a concentrated effort not to look in their direction and made a beeline toward a motorcycle parked curbside.

"Erica, you're not taking Isaac." Stiles glared back at her, while she moved to put her body in his line of sight.

"What do you care?" sighing Erica pursed her lips. All light-heartedness lost from her tone of voice, "If he wasn't made part of your pack, if you hadn't felt like he was forced on you to begin with-?"

"That doesn't mean I'm going to just let you take him." Stiles growled low cutting her off.

"But I want him Stiles, and you don't." Erica growled back, her eyes turned fierce and hard. Her teeth gnashed but she had a way of looking animalistic without changing. It made Stiles feel less than, it made the animal in him want to unfurl and she knew just how to antagonize him, to make him feel weak and wrong. "And he wants me."

"So what's this supposed to mean, then?" Stiles leaned forward, nearly looming over her, his nails bit into the palm of his hand. "Is this like formal notice? You guys are quitting the band?!"

"We're going someplace you can't follow," Erica's voice sounded both commanding and threatening, although she started to step back. Not out of fear but because they were getting ready to go. His pack was leaving him, again.

"I could try," Stiles said low, his voice deep in his throat. Desperation gave it reverberation and a strength moved into his limbs like vibrations as he prepared to run after them.

"It'd be really hard without this," Isaac said calmly. And then Stiles saw stars, smelled oil and felt the carburetor of his Jeep smash hard into the side of his head.

- New Moon 2:39 am -

Track 13 - Elastic Heart by Sia (Ft. The Weeknd & Diplo)

{Monday; Mid-Morning - Human Anatomy, Beacon Hills High School}

Stiles started his first school day, officially, and realized it wasn't as easy to 'coincidentally' run into his best friend as he intended. Instead, he collided with a lot of young men, much crankier and surrounded with a lot more friends.

Of course by the time Stiles gave up, there sat Scott and Allison, shooting conspiratorial glances back and forth across the aisle in the last row of Mr. Helisek's classroom. The two watched Stiles through the small glass in the classroom door, giving the sort of theatriecs a thespian would be
proud of. But their teacher only conceded, allowing his lateness because it was too early to deal with tracking down Stiles' schedule, or listening to his voice a second longer. Mr. Helisek warned, next time unless Stiles came up with a better excuse than explosive diarrhea he wasn't going to get off so easily.

"Oh, I've got a much better excuse for being late than that," he whispered to Scott. Stiles took up residence beside him after annoying Ramirez out of the seat, by trying over eagerly to share the chair until the guy got fed up and left.

Scott pretended not to notice and pretended not to hear him but couldn't pretend not to be completely troubled by it.

But when Mr. Helisek picked on Stiles, with a multiple choice question concerning bone cartilage, he answered before the teacher finished asking; "epithelium layer... because it heals quickest after an injury." Mumbling after, he had a special interest in broken bones and added after an awkward pause, the lessons from those injuries.

Returning his attention to excitedly whispering Stiles started in, "I've figured out the reason why Erica stalked Danny's party and why she jumped the two of you on the road to Kira's house." Stiles' sense of drama on point, his lingering pause was enough it made Scott's chair teeter backward despite the fact his hearing had been keen enough to hear Stiles whisper through a tornado. Maybe. "It's you."

Scott's chair scraped distractingly loud as he nearly toppled backward. Jerking forward to right himself, he apologized to the classroom and teacher for the distraction. After a calming moment he twisted around to face Stiles whose calm and certain expression nodded back. Words weren't needed to assure Scott what Stiles said was true, or that he needed to feel afraid or unafraid about it. Only that it was a thing they would deal with it together.

"Have you heard from Isaac since the party?" Scott asked and Stiles made a grimace of negation that didn't exactly say no.

"Have you seen Lydia, since then?" Stiles asked and Scott squinted in thought, and didn't think getting blown off via text quantified 'seeing'.

They sighed in unison and Scott faced forward.

"I'm sure they're fine," Stiles shrugged, sinking back with exaggerated ease into his seat.

"I'm sure. Do you know why this is happening?" Scott partly meant the thing about Erica, but mostly he felt like this was another 'why us' situation.

Unable to answer, they pretended to focus on the words their teacher said but it was like the volume had been turned down on the world. Instead there was obsessive nagging worst case scenarios playing on repeat in the back of their minds.

In a great convergence of the minds, Allison came over to them at the sound of the bell. Rather than ask whether or not they had or hadn't seen their missing appendages, she insisted they walk to homeroom together, the long way around campus.

Looking thoughtfully at the photo Kira shared with Allison, Scott paid no mind when Stiles ate Scott's store bought lunch after skipping breakfast.

"I think Stiles is right," he gave a small shrug handing Allison's phone back, his instinct told him those weren't lights. "They look like eyes to me," said Scott and she nodded, giving a little smile of
relief, filing it away that they would work on this together. Scott's assurance bolstered her confidence plus they always did work better together than apart.

"Has anyone gone to staff parking to look for the car?" Scott looked between the both of them, while he continued to lead the way.

"Yes!" they answered in unison, although it was only Stiles who spat up a little lettuce when doing so. Allison frowned over at him. She fished out a napkin from her jacket to hand him, while explaining "But staff parking isn't assigned. And they're pretty strict about students being nowhere near there. I guess, sticking around to watch who picks up the car today won't work. And if Jackson is driving it back and forth to school on his own it won't matter. So, Stiles," she looked to him with a light concern growing, "any word from Isaac?"

"Yes, and the word is 'Betrayal'." And with shocking little detail, Stiles regaled them with a tale of running into Erica and Isaac outside of his home the night before. "They cold-cocked me, and I'm pretty sure Isaac's moved out."

"That's it?" Scott gripped the straps of his backpack, nearly blown back in surprise.

"Nope. That's it," he munched loudly. It was hard to tell if it was a burnt bit of carrot or a potato chip, but it was loud and Stiles chewed on it to keep from babbling. After a long drawn out uncomfortable moment (for them, not for him), he went on to explain. "You've got to understand, they were bitten within a month of each other. It makes a difference."

"That can't be all," Allison chuckled lightly in disbelief, her small face flushed in dismay.

"Look," Stiles leaned back a bit, he gestured between the two of them like he wanted a private little sanctum to trade his ancient wisdoms. Scott nodded in tow. "Between us turned-Betas, we might be the same age but we're not as old as each other. I'd already been doing this for a while but it was like they got to be newborns together. They might as well be twins. The destruction twins," he chuckled, "that's what Cora called them. They didn't really settle down until Boyd came around a little later."

Scott nodded along, considering and smiled as though he got it and then his expression went a bit vague.

"Does that mean Lydia and I are part of the same pack?"

"I don't know what it--" Stiles began.

"Weren't you always?" Allison cut in. They turned startled to still have her standing there, but she
watched attentively, her arms crossed, head at a tilt and eyes at a squint. "I mean, you said you guys practically lived in each other's houses, that you were completely 'entangled' with each other way before this, right?"

"Ah," the one syllable seemed to draw out forever as Scott looked to Stiles, to Allison and back again. It seemed the simplest question in the word but the hardest to answer.

"This isn't a pop quiz," Stiles reminded clapping a hand on Scott's shoulder. "It's just a leisurely walk to class." Stiles said as he went back to munching through Scott's cheeseburger.

Allison rolled her eyes, making a rotating gesture of her hand she displayed Scott's best-friends for the whole world to see "well obviously. I think you're missing the bigger picture here."

"No, I think he means it's back to class and we're missing half our friends," Scott sighed, pushing off the wall and led them out into the open air of the courtyard. Stiles nodded enthusiastically, full-mouthedly at his best-friend's concise and exact analysis.

"I was sure they'd be back by now," Allison's brow creased while she stared off into the horizon. "Whatever, I get that you're a nervous eater."

"I'm a nervous everything," Stiles reminded. He sighed and tossed the little bit left of Scott's sesame seed bun one-handed into a nearby bin. "This goddamn town is a mess. I get jumped on my front step by some hooligans, my girlfriend's house gets looted and my best-friend's bike got stolen. All in the same night. At least I know my Dad is safe, he gets to carry a gun."

"None of that is true," Scott looked at him, grinning lopsidedly and clapped a hand on Stiles shoulder. He shook him hard until the other one laughed then half hugged him. "I think you need a reality check."

"Okay, you can at least give me the last one." Looking meek, he blinked owlishly between the two, "my Dad does get a gun. I've seen it."

Chewing his lower lip in thought Scott refocused, "having a gun doesn't make anyone safe. Think about Kate, we can't sit around and do nothing. How do we stop her if we don't know why she's doing what she's doing?"

"Isn't it obvious?" Stiles waved his hand between them, excited and expecting them to answer. "Derek cheated on her!"

"Seriously." Allison rolled her eyes, and led ahead a little "why would she instigate a revenge plot between the Hales and the packs because she's the jilted lover?"

"Okay maybe not, but you've got to admit cutting a guy in half is pretty drastic." Stiles deflated and began to feel a little nauseated.

"But if she staged the scene at the Hale House and staged Derek's body, then she is only responsible for disposing of bodies." Scott wondered aloud, when he looked up Allison and Stiles looked at him with hard stares. "Look, I don't think she's innocent, but I don't think getting revenge for something we don't know or understand makes sense either."

"I know she's a killer," Stiles rubbed at his face harshly, "I can feel it in my bones!"

Surprising both of them Allison didn't jump to disagree, she hesitated to move and just clasped her hands before her and gave it deep thought. There was no way she could admit to proof without betraying the last piece of privacy her family had to them. Sighing deeply, Allison shook her head
and nearly missed the shouting match that caught the attention on the front lawn. If she hadn't grown used to the crowd Lydia attracted she might have been alarmed, she might even have been curious to know how it was two people could have a row that could start curbside but trail all the way along the school toward them.

"Guys. Guys! Incoming," she whispered, tapped them hard on the shoulders to get them out of their little game of boyish one-upmanship.

There was a mixture of relief and distress to see two people you care deeply about finally appear just to tear each other apart. Bits and pieces of their words carried over the distance and from the glares cast in their direction it was obviously not a safe bet to run over and stop Isaac and Lydia from breaking up all over again.

Once over, Lydia stomped off toward the front of the school, blowing out a huff of derision. Following soon after, Isaac sped past them, hunched and disagreeable, toward the west side entrance. Suddenly the spell broke, and the three friends were set back in motion.

"No," Scott had hand on Stiles right shoulder stilling him, "I've got this one."

When he opened his mouth to argue, Allison materialized beside him and placed a firm hand on the other shoulder, "don't worry bestie you just go find your homeroom. We've got this covered." Scott gave a grin at the playful endearment, Allison smirked back and without words they had already decided what to do next; Allison took off after Isaac and Scott ran to catch up with Lydia.

"Great!" Stiles half stood gesturing to the air, "what am I supposed to do? Stand around and talk to myself? Fine." Disinterested in class and not wanting to (but a little wanting to) obsess about events, he adjusted his worn backpack and headed inside when a honeyed voice broke his disharmony.

"Was there a fight?" Kira asked catching up from the opposite side of the courtyard. She gulped and wondered aloud "did something happen?"

Stiles grinned widely, threw an arm over her shoulders and guided her to walk along beside him. "Oh, Kira. Hi! Just the norm. So, how're things going?"

Track 14 - Now You by Gjan

{Monday; Morning -- Entrance/Courtyard, Beacon Hills High School}

There was a surreal and almost perfect nature in the act of curbside service straight from the Lake House to BHHS, cutting out all the crap in between. With her arms wrapped around Aiden, Lydia had the moment to cling to a freedom of mindset, to hold onto a sense of self before getting thrown back into the deep end. When she dismounted his bike Lydia memorized the way he held her, his hands on her body, sliding over her hips she could swear she felt them molding along each rib. She wanted to memorize it, not because it was him, 'Aiden', him but because it meant holding onto something away from Beacon Hills freakishness.

Sure enough, in that moment he let her go, just across from them another motorcycle pulled up with another Werewolf, her on-again, off-again, friend-again Isaac with a mystery blonde, exactly his type. Aiden's hold changed and Lydia wanted to be let go of. She walked away shrugging and hoped the two of them drove off a cliff together.
"So, she just pops up out of nowhere and you're fine with that."

Lydia practically appeared beside Isaac, despite all his active wiry instincts. The look on Lydia's face warned Isaac that she was in an opposing mood, arms cross, head at a calculating tilt, eyes discerning and lips in a smirk of scrutiny.

"I guess," Isaac shrugged and started to turn, but before he headed toward the school he faced her. She didn't just have the air of someone combative. It was worth a second analysis, and a moment of his time to remind himself this was her concerned.

"You've got a problem with that?" Isaac wanted to sound snarky, but he shrugged, stuffed his hands into his jean pockets and blinked rapidly, bashfully as he sometimes did. He came off a bit like he wanted her approval.

"I'd be suspicious," Lydia's smirk said she judged him unworthy of anymore of her time, so she spun on her heel and started away.

But suspicious is right and Isaac realized what threw him off about her before. She had that scent about her, the one that reminded one of the Twins Stiles texted him about. The one Lydia vanished with and from the look, smell and sense of it that had only just left her side.

They dodged through the students wandering the campus without much thought, leaving a path of eyes behind them.

"But it's okay for you go running off in the middle of the night with a stranger." His voice wasn't at all low even if he didn't shout after her. Her glare hardened but she wouldn't give him the satisfaction of stopping to aim it at him. "What do you even know about him?"

"You think I need to justify who I'm dating to you?" she said crisply, her lips pursed and voice carried.

"Oh, the two of you are dating now?" Isaac raced around her and stood in her path. With his words, spoken through instinct and out of sleeplessness didn't come off as concern so much as territorialism.

"Shut up," Lydia's glare turned from harsh to villainous, although her tone lowered it felt earth shattering. When she stepped forward he couldn't help but step aside. There were some 'oooh's that murmured around them as it sounded to other students like another jilted ex couldn't take a hint.

"No, wait." Isaac took a moment to recover, his senses coming back to him. "Lydia, don't walk away from me." Rather than attempt to block the raging bull he maintained an even pace alongside her, while instead students learned to dodge out of the way as they walked along the lawn and made it around the school steps.

"Fine. You want to take turns questioning each other's night time companions? At least I didn't take off on a stolen bike to a secret location without telling anyone. She's-- she's hiding something, I know." Lydia bright focused eyes looked around, not at people but at her thoughts as they zipped by trying and failing to organize themselves. Her tone went from defensive to protective, while she hugged her large purse firmly to her side.

"Secrets?" Isaac demanded stepping into frame. "You know everything about him on the first date?" his tone went snappish, a particular peevishness he learned from their fights, "just because he rode off in the sunset and rubbed it in our faces that you could luxuriate in your Lake House,
leaving the rest of us to clean up the pieces." That earned all of her focus.

"So. Now I should check in with you," rethinking, her expression clouded up a moment. The darkness she felt recalculated. Lydia stood bold against Isaac, a statuesque figure made of marble instead of a Floral Romper and Mary Janes. Those eyes fluttering upward toward sterling ones, her gaze from under fly away strands were sharp as knives and aimed to cut through him to strike others. "Should I check with everyone where I go, what I do?"

"That's not what I'm saying." Gap mouthed, Isaac took a step back but Lydia followed through.

"Maybe I don't need you looking out for me anymore," she remembered the way Isaac and Scott liked to take turns playing baby-sitter and assumed she never noticed.

Looking around, he wished they'd started this conversation anywhere but here, the small crowd they attracted continued to grow. With a tilt of his head, an arch to his brow and a light hand on her shoulder he led her further away from the main entrance and toward the west yard.

"I just mean running off with him shouldn't be an alternative," Isaac considered her accusation, but got stuck thinking about her screams and the way they shook him to his core.

"Hypocrite!" she stopped and yanked her arm away from his. He glanced around, anxious and embarrassed, shushing desperately. If Lydia didn't notice their audience before they were definitely brought to her wide-eyed, jaw dropping attention. She gulped and looked back at him, "It's just... I'm not ready for the things you are all asking from me. I know now I never will be."

"I'm not asking you to choose a side." He ran his tongue along his lower teeth, before shaking his head. Isaac couldn't answer for everyone else but as far as his friendship with Lydia went, it was too much to ask of her. He had asked enough already all Isaac wanted, all Isaac ever wanted was Lydia's acceptance. It worried and wounded him to think expanding their little group might cost him that, but it could maybe be worth it.

"Isn't everyone?" she sensed his torn loyalties. Lydia's wasn't so far off. So much talk of war, death and vengeances spun around her it infected her head. It was hardly fair to assume they could take advantage of her 'insight' because she was going nuts. Archaic civilizations did that, where did that land them? At what point should she choose self-preservation?

"If at this point in our relationship all you can ask me about 'sides'- picking a side, seeing your side, choosing their side' then you've turned this into a game and not real life."

"See?" she felt sad suddenly, a little bit of self-pity but more an all-over pitiable sense of regret the others weren't around to hear her finally say it out loud. "It's like if I'm on your team you're already playing my hand but if I'm on theirs you've already made me out to be the enemy. I'm no one's toy to play like a piece on a board. I don't care, I won't play along. Not for anyone."

Speechless to reply, Isaac gulped and broke eye contact. He stared off and stiffened suddenly shocked at something to the side. Lydia followed Isaac's gaze, her feeling of self-righteousness still ran steadily through so the shocked rattled her less to see their friends in the courtyard watching in startled silence.

Track 15 - In Your Dreams by Dark Dark Dark
"Did you come to give me advice, Scott?" Lydia said without looking at him directly. She could have been talking to anyone really, she simply responded to the pair of beat up Converse she saw under the eye-line of her locker door and took a wild stab.

"I actually came to ask for some of yours." Scott said sheepishly, at that she finished applying the last nonessential detail to her lip liner and snapped closed her locker. "I missed couple of exams last week; global studies and government."

"What?" The cock to her brow wordlessly called bullshit on everything about him, from his well-loved but red hoodie to those tattered black sneakers.

"See, Coach forced me to sit down and make up for Econ and Algebra--" he tugged at the straps of his back pack in that adolescent way that made him look like he might be adjusting for parasails.

"You need help studying," though her tone sounded disbelieving Lydia reopened her locker to remove whatever notes he'd ask for next.

"Everyone knows you have the best notes." His classic impish grin began to crawl in at the edges but she gave him a warning glare to hold it back.

"Why are you such a freak?" she shook her head in despair of him.

"I thought I was being normal," he looked crestfallen.

"That's the problem." Before she handed over the notebook Lydia hesitated, searched for Scott's usual signs of lying but heard very little of that brooding tone that didn't seem genuine. "You're all weird when I need you to be normal, you know and when I expect you to come at me full throttle you want exam notes." After handing them over she felt mildly deflated. Fighting with Isaac left her, honestly a little riled up but Scott never gave her the back and forth she was Jonsing for. It would have been like kicking Prada. "You must think you're so cute," she side-eyed Scott while they walked along together, him flipping ravenously through her notes, which Lydia felt rather proud of.

He stared up in thought, "Stiles did once say I had 'gorgeous chocolate brown eyes'."

"Of course he did. Well, I've grown immune to them over time," Lydia's jaw dropped in a long-suffering sigh, her eyes rolled and she let it happen. Scott was aggravating her aggravation away. She hadn't realized she stopped walking until Scott doubled back and stood in front of her, the worry on his face broke Lydia's heart. Or she wanted to feel broken hearted instead she felt worn out and numb. Scott just looked so very un-Scott, and she had a very un-Lydia reaction to his hand touching her arm.

Nothing.

"You can always yell at me," he offered lamely, virtually pleaded, "Don't take it out on them, they can't take it."

"Take what?" she scoffed sharply, and felt a little of something molten bubbling up again. When heads around them snapped, tittering and staring Lydia heard the volume of her voice and realized in retrospect, sound can burn.

Darting his eyes over toward the end of the hall, he took her hand and led them to the Chem. Lab used mostly for experiments and exams. Exam week over it would be ignored for the time being
Lydia didn't feel embarrassed but surprised by the sound of her voice, by the bitterness in it. She slowly paced the room for a moment while Scott saw to it the doors were locked and their little shades were drawn. At first she slumped onto the teacher's desk, then she pulled herself to sit up on it by the time Scott returned to her side. He dumped his backpack on the floor beside her purse and didn't hesitate to hop up beside her, like aligning themselves shoulder to shoulder could never burn him.

For a while nothing changed, nothing moved aside from Lydia scraping a finger on the corner of the desk, in the space between them.

"Everything is spiraling out," Scott said and Lydia nodded slowly, she let her head dip lower so her hair would fall forward and give her a little more time, a little more space. "We can see it worse than any of them can because we're here, they're tourists and we're townies." While Scott spoke Lydia kept needling at the edge, further and further until her hand pressed against his. And then she wasn't scraping the edge at all, just waiting.

"I hate it," she said quietly, then breathed in, sat back and tossed back her head saying firmer, "I hate that he didn't come back like he was supposed to." Lydia gulped thickly and Scott without breaking eye contact moved his hand gently against hers, until just their pinkies overlapped. And she continued, "I didn't think he'd come back and we would fit together and we'd be some perfect family. But I felt like we could. Like there are these holes we're meant to fit. But the more I look at him, Scott--" Her words became angrier but bitterer, too.

"I get it," Scott empathized. He didn't know how to generate the words or thought processes around it even, how everything amorphized and time-lapsed around Stiles and it made Scott feel incapable, never more out of control. That impish smile returned, looking wistful, "--then the more you want to look at him.

"Yeah." Her eyes stared, unblinking and desperate, "No, not exactly. The more I look at him the more I keep realize I don't think there will ever be enough to fill that emptiness. I feel like madness has crept in, it's filled me up instead." By the end she'd somehow slid her palm under his, clammy and trembling mildly.

It felt very different, unlike Lydia but very like a Lydia he knew, to ask for help like this. Scooching nearer, Scott switched hands and pulled her to into a loose embrace. He worried after her, "What if it's just something else or someone else putting this in your head?"

"Because you're in my head, Scott." She scoffed, her laughed tart and light. Her heartbeat was strong and sounded true, Lydia felt solid enough to feel real. But a hopefulness in her, something there and twisted apart felt different. "All of you. You and Stiles. Allison and Isaac. If this is my nature I feel like I've got to follow it instead, even if I keep thinking I want to stay and fill myself up with you. I'm not crazy Scott, I'm not."

"No, you're not." He shook his head, his chin nestled firmly on top of her head. The stayed quiet, letting the air settle again, letting their fingers fall flat and tangled and flat again.

"Why do you still believe in me if I'm crazy?" she sighed, sounding very Lydia like once more. She sat upright and stared him eye to eye.

In his strain to keep a serious face, Scott smirked which only spread into a grin, "Why do you still trust me if I'm a monster?" Her brows rose critically and Lydia sucked her teeth to keep from snipping, but he knew the face too well. To which he stared at her blankly, "come on, Lydia, you're
the smartest person I've ever known, and all my life you're the only thing that ever made sense to me."

It would have been a gentler blow had he punched her outright, her mouth parted, breathing in slow heavy breaths and she gripped his hand tightly. Scott laughed lightly at her dismay to his praise, Lydia glanced at him and glared fiercely then leaned even closer to ask seriously, "What if this turns me into something bad or scary?"

"Same," he smirked but Lydia could tell from his tone there was no humor there. It must have grown to be too much for her, and after sharp breath she collected herself and shoved off the desk. Scott watched while she fiddled with her perfectly fine hair, her already neat clothes and grabbed her purse.

"And anyway how could it scare me away? Your tormenting me has been the core of our relationship," Scott shrugged lightly, and Lydia stiffened in surprise.

"I never tormented you," she snapped, staring suddenly angrily.

"That didn't make me care less for either of you. It just made realize I would never fill my hole--"

"Oh, my god Scott," she groaned, her free hand went to the bridge of her nose and harshly pinched back an urge to throttle him.

Pushing gently past her protest, he urged onward "--I trusted you."

Her face turned red, she looked vital once more, like she would blow up, and while proud of his efforts Scott wasn't sure if this was a good or bad thing. But when she started to squirm away he rephrased, and said "fine, trust me in trusting in you. You're not crazy. You led me through 6 years of self-doubt and 5 miles of twigs and dry leaves to find Stiles. Anything else is a cakewalk."

Lydia pursed her lips to keep from laughing but kept her glare hard, it was always so easy to believe Scott when within his orbit, even after a speech like that. But without him?

Then standing in front of him, she stared mindfully and didn't move to leave. Lydia's mind worked, Scott could see it in the twitch of an eye, the grip of her purse strap and the hardening of her jaw. As much as he looked around, he couldn't scramble off the desk fast enough, not to mention he had locked all the exits.

"Stop being so nice for once," Lydia demanded, reaching out to she clutched the fabric of Scott's hoodie and pulled him into a crooked hug. Just something to lean into, not a full embrace but so that their shoulders and necks aligned, like paper cranes.

If he hadn't had the desk under him, she might have knocked him off his feet. When Scott managed to find his voice again after she startled the life both out of him, and right back into him, he said against Lydia's ear.

"I don't know how to be mean to you, should I take a leaf from your book?"

"Okay, salty." She gave a soundless laugh, "that's close enough."

Somehow it felt less dramatic than leaving this same Chem. lab days earlier. It would be difficult but he would find a way to make the others accept that Lydia needed her space, it would be harder to make himself accept it. Something about it didn't add up on a cellular level. Her reasoning made sense but he felt too connected to just accept it. They were turned by the same Monster-Alpha, just weeks apart but they shared something other than an originator. They had a private world to be
angry, hurt and alone together.

Scott couldn't find a word hurtful enough to express that, but the one closest which he was most familiar with was 'grief'.

"I am, so, so sorry I just--" Kira stammered, unsure as to whether 1) to continue her apology inside the room, with her on the inside with the door closed 2) or slam the door and take off hoping they would forget they had noticed you 3) or close the door and apologize through it, maybe practice knocking and/or 4) hope the earth opened up and swallowed her whole. "--I thought I sensed-- you know, it can wait."

Scott looked surprised enough to arch a brow but not to jump out of his skin. Stiffening minutely, Lydia released him and took a slow step back. She shouldered her purse, her brows went up in a critical way and with a quirk of her lip she wanted an explanation.

"What? I locked it. I totally locked the door," he sputtered. While holding Lydia's demanding glare, Scott waved at Kira to come inside. Kira did so quietly and stared unblinkingly as the other two bickered immaturity, their presence very, very contrary to everything she had ever known them to be on the school campus.

"Oh," Kira looked down at her hand, at why the door wouldn't stay closed and their gaze followed to the plate in the door's frame. "I broke it."

"Yes. Yes, you did." Lydia sighed, then jabbed a finger toward Scott. "Ask Danny to come here after practice and fix it without staff noticing. You guys owe me after almost blowing up my house."

Stopped with his mouth open mid-protest, instead Scott pouted and scooted the rest of the way off of the table. "Alright fine. But that's only because you have a point. What's up Kira?"

No words came to her mind at first but in those moments that came for her to form a coherent sentence she noticed the way Lydia niggled at him. How Scott needled her back. Lydia insisted that Scott speak up, she even argued on Kira's behalf (although for what, since she hadn't even spoken up) while Scott explained "she trusts me, this'll be fine."

Lydia's scoff was as sharp as a puppy's yelp.

Listening to Stiles ramble earlier, and now seeing Lydia and Scott she could almost make out the children outback camping like Scott had described. It seemed freakishly realistic, a little more or less than everything else.

"I really didn't mean to bust in," she spoke to Scott but stared at Lydia. And for someone used to being stared at, the scrutiny in her eyes showed she was quickly losing patience for it. "I was looking for Scott--this is embarrassing."

"If Kate Argent catching him with his shirt off and tongue down Allison's throat didn't send him jumping out of a second story window," Lydia shrugged settling it. "This is a cakewalk."

"I did!" Scott's face flushed and he glared, opened mouthed over at her. "I jumped out of the window to get out of that house." Lydia's smirk told him she already knew that, he turned back to Kira hoping in a haphazard way that proved his point.

"Not embarrassing for you," Kira interrupted. "You're two consenting--" from the mortified expression she was slowly receiving, she learned to also settle that right there, "--illegal trespassers. I meant this is embarrassing for me. After last night, seeing Jackson like that outside of the party I
"Jackson showed up to the party?" Lydia whipped her head around to look at Scott. He only shook
his head a little but kept his eyes on Kira. Then she whispered low, and asked barely above a breath
"Do I want to know what's going on?"

With that familiar, sheep caught in headlights look, Scott answered, "I never know what's going
on."

"Maybe I should come back--" Kira felt like an intruder yet again, but both Lydia and Scott moved
forward to urge her to stay. To her, Lydia looked intrigued at least not so harsh as the hospital but
not as aloof as exams week. If anything, Kira could admit she looked mindful and alongside that
Scott looked hopeful. "When I thought I saw strange things around Jackson on Saturday, Allison
told me I could maybe just be reading auras. Stiles said, I might have latched onto Jackson because
he was the first person I had ever 'sensed' before."

"Ohhh," Lydia tapped a finger to her chin, then looked to the clock on the wall considerately. "You
did well for your next target, Kira. Although, I might want to keep the freakish strength in check,
sweetheart."

"Wai-what?" Scott moved to follow but paused beside Kira, as Lydia slipped through the door and
into the hall. "What next-- I'm? I'm your next target? You sensed my aura?"

While wandering along with students between classes, his eyes drifted, with Lydia’s notebooks
under his arm and with his mind murky he might even have considered cutting the rest of his
classes. Chances are he was failing those classes anyway plus he could catch up with his friends'
better afterschool except Kira asked him to stick around. At least he thought she had.

"You're not mad are you?"

Only Scott realizing too late, with her hand latched around his wrist, as Kira dragged him nodding
along and he seemed to have unknowingly agreed to something.

"I'm flattered actually," Scott smiled a little, tripping to keep up.

"You seem a little mad." Kira looked at him, surprised to notice he wasn't further ahead on the
uptake.

"No, not at all." Closing his eyes, he shook his head mildly to shake away the cob webs.

"No, you seem a little sad though." She shrugged a little, something shy of a wince. "Are you and
Lydia alright?"

"Sure," Scott smiled cheerily with her and held the door open for their next class. Then asked,
"You can't sense lies yet, can you?"

"I can now."

Track 16 - School Friends by Now Now

[Monday; Morning -- Halls/Girls’ Bathroom, BHHS]
When Allison pushed through the double-doors, running after Isaac it became obvious she would have to take chase when someone that tall virtually disappeared from sight. Not Stiles, who he would likely stop Isaac and argue with or Scott who Isaac would likely stop for all together but he moved like he maybe wanted her to follow.

The pace was like a runaway train and while she knew his schedule and his locker, she knew better than he was making for the far off ignored girl's bathroom to disappear into. Allison dropped into his path and blocked Isaac off, smiling with false ease when she knew they could both hear her heart hammering her chest.

"Don't." She gnawed on the word, and superimposed "please." With her hand wrapped gingerly around his left wrist, they glanced to where there wasn't a scar anymore but that hesitation gave her a second chance to talk. "Isaac, I don't understand what's going on. Can you please--?"

He looked off down the hall, while his lip curled at the edge with a tired disdain, "Allison, you are the last person I need to give a statement to."

Glaring, she dug her hand and pulled him into the girls' room with her. Instinct told her they were alone and she suspected if they weren't he would have made a fuss, not that it would have stopped her.

"I'm not asking for an explanation," she said. Her tone was hardly interrogatory, she looked equally frustrated and hopeful. With her back flat against the bathroom door, she kept the world at bay and admitted, "I'm trying to understand."

At this point they had overstepped each other's boundaries enough times they may as well have been dancing. When she gulped, he flinched, and when he rubbed at his jaw, she wrung her hands.

"We're friends," she said, her voice steady and before he could cock his brow, she stepped forward, "I know we are, I've held you while you died and I've lost you twice already."

The path to the doorway was clear but instead Isaac chose to lean against the sink. With a glance, he motioned for her to come stand beside him.

"If I'm losing you again, I want to know why." She said after a pause, butted shoulders lightly and looked up at him inquiringly. Scoffing he rolled his eyes, not at her exactly but to think she felt that strongly. He butted shoulders lightly back, but stayed hanging over her a little, like a tilting palm tree.

"You didn't do anything wrong." "Well, I know that," she scoffed in return. They grinned slightly at each other, but then her smile disappeared, "I just-- can't I keep you, too?"

He shoved his hands into his jacket pocket to keep from holding her, from hanging on and making a promise he couldn't uphold. Probably. After chewing his lip a little he tried to find the words, but he was never very artful with them to begin with. Straightforward was always best.

"You know what this is like," he shifted around to face her better. When she looked a little lost he decided holding her might work, her shoulders at least, something for a human connection. He reminded "you've felt it too. With Erica I feel like I belong."

After a pause, Allison placed her hands over Isaac's like she needed a handhold against blowback. "Right," she replied. Eyes closed, clasping his hand tightly she gave it more thought. "I get that," she responded finally, then with a nod she let him go.
"I'm not-- we're still friends though." His voice spike mildly as he backpedaled and put his body in the way of her and the door.

She grinned, amused because she hadn't even moved yet. "Yeah?"

With that he held a hand out, leading her back toward the hallway, and then he tried to return to nonchalance, "It's not the same either."

"No," she agreed with a little sad smile, hugging her bag to her chest.

"In spite of everything, we went through a lot to belong here," he might not be artful but he could bumble into some good declarations and from Allison's abrupt and beaming grin, he could only assume it had been one of those times. He shied away a little from her sunlight, "Nothing's going to undo that."

They stopped at the cross section of the hallway. She looked unwilling to move but started to back away slowly, hesitantly toward her obligations.

"Isaac, if you ever need me." She promised first.

"Same."

After he turned and walked a few steps away she called for him to stop.

"Deucalion," she said his name with familiarity. Of course she knew all the pack leaders and of course, if she knew Erica had gone after Scott and Kira on the road that was where Erica had to be. But Allison wasn't speaking as a Hunter or a casual friend. She was warning him because of course, Allison would.

"Don't trust him. He's smart. Too smart."

Track 17 - Take It From Me by Kongos

[Monday; Mid-Morning -- Homeroom, BHHS]

The BHHS campus never crowded itself completely, but it always kept busy. Of course by the time he gave up trying to track down Scott and Allison they were already seated in homeroom, sharing weirdly conspiratorial glances back and forth across the aisle in the last row of Ms. Morrell's classroom.

Their happiness to see him made Stiles less comfortable to see them. He dropped down into the empty seat across from Scott, Allison adjacent and barely had a moment to drop his backpack when he heard the scrapes of their desks being drawn toward his.

"Do you still carry Derek's claws?" Allison decided the direct route would be best.

Stiles stammered and stared at her in surprise, sitting possibly the most erect a man can sit before Scott filled in the words "Wait--but why do you need to know that?"

"bu-b-b-bup-" Stiles put a hand up, returning to animated form he breathed deeply in and answered while rummaging through his beaten up backpack. "Yeah, of course."
Allison's sigh in relief said a lot of things, this time around it sounded a bit like she might have come upon another clue. "Aunt Kate gave them to you as a diversion. She coerced personal histories for an uncertain future. I think it was a rush job and a mistake but it can work to our advantage."

With the Zippo firmly pressed between his fingers, Stiles considered the weight of it all. "She figured her story and this artifact would be gesture enough. That's why the container. It's all about presentation."

"The family symbol?" Scott reached delicately and after a surprised second Stiles easily handed the item over. Scott treated it with a lot more reverie than Stiles ever would have. "Like when you freaked out about the burnt blanket with your family symbol on it."

"Wrapped around the dead body," Stiles caught Allison up. "We found that at the Hale House. And I didn't freak out."

"He totally did." Scott handed the Zippo when Allison's put out her hand. "And Isaac had that same look on his face when Kate whipped this out in the Diner."

"Exactly. But that's where she messed up," she looked at Stiles, her faced pinched in wordless asking permission. He nodded that she could open the casement. "I know Aunt Kate wasn't lying, about being here with my Dad 15 years ago. Or the Hale House fire, or even that it became this life-alerting thing but I don't think it went down how she said it did. And when Kate told us that tragic love story between her and Derek, Lydia didn't buy it. As long as I've known Lydia, she has got the greatest bullshit radar I've ever known."

"High praise from a Hunter," Stiles winked.

"Exactly." Allison smiled, and between two perfectly manicured nails she plucked out a claw. A single claw the size of an inch, looked beige and chafed from usage, with ridges along the length from roots to tip that still looked fierce even in their dormant state. "Fun Fact; parts of a shapeshifter carries some of their consciousness, something 'left of their visage' can be used to tap into and get their memories. I know, we all know this but this time around we actually know these are Derek's claws so I'm pretty sure that means this is the key to unlocking his past. We just need someone supernatural to read them, an Alpha, a Druid, a seer..."

"So we'll know if he really dated Kate?" Scott asked.

"Yessss." Allison looked at Scott with a worried gaze. "And more relevantly, who the first murderer is."

"So, how do we get the memories out? We don't know anyone who fits the bill," Stiles scratched the top of his head.

"Lydia might be able to do it. When we were at the Diner, Kate still had no clue Lydia was a Banshee. If she had, she never would have given us Werewolves claws." After replacing the claw she handed back the Zippo.

"We're going to have to find another way," Scott said low.

"What?" Stiles blinked at him incredulously, Allison's gaze was more mindful seeming to understand right away not to push the subject.

"And why are we looking for Derek's killer anyway?" Shuffling upright, Scott became keenly aware of their eyes on him. He spoke clearer, pressed his palms against the table for support.
"When we should be looking for Cora's kidnapper? I mean, she's alive right..." then he fumbled to get the rest out, determined while still unsure. "And we know it's not the same person. One wants your pack dead, the other wants to use them as bait."

"Well, yeah" she leaned forward, "but Scott catching Derek's killer could lead us to catching the kidnapper?"

"How?" he asked.

"Because if you remove a key element, the other player is motivated to--" she carefully pressed.

"It isn't a game." Scott spoke on an exhale. "We shouldn't force her kidnapper to do anything. How much longer are we going to wait to go out and do something?"

"Scott, I understand that you think that if the Monster-Alpha is targeting the teens, then It's likely to have her too but--" she tried again, this time her voice took on more of the flat no-nonsense tone she had when working a case.

"I wasn't thinking that, but I am now!" Scott groaned.

"When was that an option?" Stiles broke in.

"It's just a wild theory." She supposed, between the two of them with brown eyes focused. She was determined to have her words sink in, even if they were harsh. "Before Derek got here, people were getting killed, Werewolves were getting murdered drawing packs into Beacon Hills. Afterward, Mo's changed; there were kidnappings, hostages and tortures not to mention warzones. But if the Hales surrender to death over bargaining, then why keep her captured? The packs have nothing to gain from capturing her, it makes sense only the Monster would. We've just got to figure out why."

It gave her no satisfaction to poke more holes in the comfort zone of just assuming the Monster-Alpha was a shapeless, aimless murderer. She took no comfort in seeing Stiles' face crush under the realization that his pack member was the target of It's rage and hate. Just as she took no comfort to witness Scott's kind face turning disgruntled, in part relief and part disappointment to have his fears validated. But it was business as usual for her, which meant banishing those images from her mind until they worked something, anything out.

Stiles snapped out of it first, "she's an N.P.C. No way anyone makes Cora an N.P.C!"

Scott was quicker on the uptake, "this is beginning to sound like the princess captured in Super Mario Brothers."

"Oh my god," Stiles expression flashed momentary delight, Allison rolled her eyes. "He got one pop-culture reference. I mean, by accident, but he got it!"

"You understand, I don't have any facts to back this up," Allison cut in, sighing.

"How could you, this bastard is untraceable." In an unexpected turn of events, Stiles sympathized her plight.

"But we can try. Stiles and I are going to go back to the trail." Scott said just over his sentence.

"Were you?" When she asked Scott had to force himself to keep her gaze. Was it weird they both felt like that was 'their' place? They were crossing lines all over the place. "Oh. That's a good start. But guys, if we do find something out, a real lead to finding Cora, are we telling Isaac?"
"He'll tell Erica." Stiles started, but on second thought he seemed confused to consider it. "I mean of course he should tell her."

"That's good." Scott's eyebrows met in the middle, like it might have been a question but he preferred it not be.

"No. She stalked us." Stiles sounded alarmed.

"No." With a hand on Stiles' shoulder, he gently pushed him back to sit and reminded calmly, "she stalked me and poor her. I'm real boring, all I ever do is get grounded. Come on, you don't have the heart to cut them out."

"Think about it like this, Stiles," Allison pleaded, her expression very firm. She clasped his hands tightly, across the last of the crooked divides between their seats. Her grip wrapped around his, which wrapped around the Zippo as an intimate reminder. "If Erica were in the loop, maybe someone in her new group of friends can read the claws for us?"

The bell rang interrupting their counsel and Stiles sulked, shoving the artifact deep into the safe trenches of his backpack. "We can talk about this in our next class."

Allison looked to Scott, Scott looked to Allison and then they both looked to Stiles in a mixture of confusion and sympathy.

"I've got Algebra II next," Scott started to look amused.

"And I've got Integrated Math," Allison smiled, then shrugged.

"Oh," he recognized the problem in scheme hatching during school hours.

- Track 18 - Sticks and Stones by The Pierces

{Monday; Mid-Morning - Preserve & Mad River via BHHS & BHU}

"Isaac, you've got this bike on lend?" Erica said, rather than actually asked, with her chin on his shoulder and her voice against his ear. He considered arguing but figured if he said 'no', she would steal it anyway.

"Bring it back in one, functional piece," Isaac demanded, in a kindlier voice handing over the helmet. Languid as a cat, she batted her dark eyes at him and scooted into the driver's position. Sighing, he placed the helmet in the locked compartment under the seat in the back because he figured she'd weasel out of wearing it. "I mean it, drive carefully."

Revving the dirt bike, she gave a little salute before she started back away, slowly at first then with a jolting speed. She circled the lot and waited, the one she spied on at the party would have to go through her to leave the school.

A few 'Bruh' bashes back, Meyers noticed the Twins at the University pounding back a few and reported them to Deucalion. Erica had nothing to do with those peace talks but Meyers didn't like it, not that he liked much except starting trouble.
Those two made it onto campus via the nightlife and earned themselves some RA badges by totally fairly out-drinking and outgunning the kids before them. Tricks like that, flashing that quickly just to assimilate garnished the attention of Betas doing the grunt work but slid just under Hunters' radar.

Much more cautiously, Erica watched the Beacon Hills Cyclones play from the opponent's seats, cheering with their Coaches and squeezed between players' girlfriends. Anxiously she eyeballed every shadow that crept under their seats when she noticed Ethan meeting Danny by the bleachers, simply wishing him good luck on their big game. It made Erica consider the ease with which she could go over to player 14, of course unless Isaac was running away.

The night of Lydia's party, she and Meyers noticed those two immediately and played a game of "Divide and Wait"; they were likely to concur themselves. Which they did. Those Twins were bad luck.

By that same cheap technique of totally fairly out drinking and out gunning the kids by the pool they never questioned Erica's presence. The Twins wouldn't be at the head of a table, winning a game of flip cup, surrounded by party-goers and there was no way she would give up her spot at the garden exit while her friends were still inside.

Throughout the pool party, Erica watched Stiles dancing with one pretty girl after another, quite pleased with himself and Isaac off chatting with his oddball Hunter friends, plus one strange little Scott. And like at the lacrosse game, Erica watched how the Twins maneuvered the room with seeming ease, and talk with friends all while she kept just shy from her friends’ eye line. She could, of course, just go over and warn them but that seemed less stressful last time. So, Erica drank more. But then they started to run out of beer.

Lydia complicated things. She kept complicating things. She threw the party, she ran out of the beer, and then she dated the enemy. And when the boys declared Lydia as 'out of bounds' Erica felt a moral obligation to extend and tweak that scope a bit.

Erica reasoned; since the Twins kept conniving under the radar, they kept spying on her friends and her friends of friends but to what ends? So, it went without saying if Erica wasn't allowed to hurt any of those people there was no way she would allow the Twins to. That felt like a thing, like an important 'spent-the-weekend-out-drinking-and-not sleeping' declaration she just had to make. Across his face.

"Is this the line where you ask, 'are you going my way'?" After the third skirt around ground among the tree line, Aiden caught up with Erica and goaded her to follow.

At the 'Yield' sign, pausing to let the other drivers out of the parking lot, she grinned, not minding that Aiden robbed her of the chance at an opening line. Hell, she'd been waiting for him to catch up. "Nah, it's the line where I say, I'm going to choke you with a bike chain if I catch you spying on my friends again."

Cockily, Aiden reached up with a hand to adjust his jaw and crack it this way and then that. She rolled her eyes at his posturing; growing up among so many foster-brothers, she knew it never mattered how many bodily sounds they made, they all bled when you hit them.

"Let me guess, you'd die for your friends," he leaned his bike toward her, she could sense waves of menace from him. Looking back, tangled strands of blonde couldn't block the glare of an angry Alpha. Correction. An Alpha with a bruised ego.
"Been there," she scoffed, and let her eyes flare to meanest, brightest gold. She growled toward him and revved her bike. "Now, I'd rather kill for them."

Aiden's nostrils flared, "Deucalion said he didn't want to start shit with us."

"Then I won't put a hand on you." Her mouth turned cruel and her teeth became fangs and when she revved her bike between each threat her claws bit little crescents into the metal grip. "But Nik might run into Gus in one of those divey bars he likes to start trouble at, or maybe Meyers might catch up with Bridy over at Pali High. Or I'll find Marta in her cottage at Mt. Hope, chain her under it and burn it down."

As her voice rose, Aiden's eye color changed to the brightest blue Erica had ever stared into. The shaking machine underneath kept her remarkably grounded considering and before Aiden finished whatever threat started with "I'm gonna--" she sped off down in the direction of the Preserve.

Erica had two things going for her that he didn't; calm nerves when driving recklessly and not much fear for death. Well, Erica had a third thing going for her, the vehicle wasn't hers.

Where she sped between cars he went onto the curb and through the pedestrians. Wuss. She soared over speed bumps and at one point honestly feared she'd lost him when she ducked under the gate and drove onto the Preserve proper. Of course, he shot over the next rise and nearly clipped her shoulder. Touché. He had the false confidence of someone who knew the jogging path led behind the campus, so of course he knew where the easy slopes led and the more difficult inclines were. Whereas she had the same Intel, more determination and the cleverness to know when to get off the bike and climb.

Aiden let his emotions drive him, burning as readily and hotly as the gas in an engine. He kept zipping through spans of forestry, ignored the sounds of the track team practicing and listened for any echoes of mechanical sounds or even a slight evil cackle.

The soft grunts and running feet hadn't occurred to him until he turned and watched Erica charge down a steep slope, carrying a Kawasaki dirt bike overhead. While he had taken the long, easy route she dragged the bike up an incline expecting to meet at the bridge. Using natural velocity and just a little Beta strength Erica knocked Aiden, motorcycle and all clear off of the bridge and into the stream.

Heavily panting, she settled the bike carefully onto the ground and surveyed the damage. She dented a mirror and owed Scott a kickstand. It had gone well enough; Erica never intended on killing Aiden but had he fallen into a deep ditch and had a tree crush him she wouldn't have felt bad about it.

Shrugging, looking at her reflection in the warped mirror Erica adjusted her collar, combed her hair out of her face and readied herself. It could have also gone a lot worse; adrenaline could have failed, she could have been smashed under the weight of a dirt bike, at the bottom of a ditch all by her own doing.

"Take your pick, is this the part where I say dramatically 'sit bitch,' or 'you've got to chill out'," her voice roused him from unconsciousness.

Neck deep in freezing water, Aiden lay in tatters while on the shore opposite lay his bike. Well, most of it. Parts lay scraped along the bridge, the rest of it lay sprinkled in the stream between. Erica perched overhead, leaning on crossed arms and watching with a straight face. It wasn't a state she was unfamiliar with and while she could relate she couldn't empathize.
"E-ethan... he's--"

"I know," she said numbly. "He's going to come and get you real soon and put you back together again. Lucky, lucky humpty dumpty."

After a moment, his throat gargled low and deep and with a groan he sat forward. Erica started and stepped away from the banister but didn't run. He hunched over, with a twitching hand he touched the wound on his chest and pulled debris from it. In a fit of distress, he flung the branch near at her, without aiming and it spiraled wide, still cutting her shoulder.

"They're going-- they're picking sides," he glared back at her, eyes taking on their bright fighting colors.

Erica clutched her right shoulder, holding onto the pain. "No. Leave the kids at the school out of it."

"They're fighters. They are too smart to stay still for any longer." Seeing her upset, he dug in grinning as he did so.

"No," sucking on her lower lips she shook her head. "This isn't their war."

"Look at you," Aiden said, but when he said it Erica couldn't keep her eyes from trying to timestamp everything about him, from the position of the stones pinning him to pain, snapping him back between hurt and healing. "You're not stupid enough to think that." There was something to that, but she was very foolish too. Aiden wasn't angry at her at all. As an Alpha he understood the language of 'territory' but he knew how to mess with those lines better than Erica did.

"Don't come for them," Erica shouted savagely, her eyes flared.

"I won't have to," Aiden answered, then closed his eyes and laid back to wait like she no longer qualified as a threat at all.

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**Track 19 - Left Behind by Wilde Child**

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*{Monday; Mid-Morning -- Hallways, BHHS}*

In the northwest stairwell, between his Environmental and their Chemistry class would be the best place to catch Jackson alone. So, Allison waited on the landing, staring into her phone, wondering what others saw in the photo she didn't. Bennet was nice enough to install a program to run forensic filters on images through the phone but it didn't work miracles and didn't tell what to look for.

They don't say hello but Jackson looked a little pleased to see Allison.

"Saturday night," she looked down to her phone, "you borrowed a car and went to Lydia's party."

"Are you accusing me of something?" he suppressed the urge to roll his eyes. She found the original degraded photo and showed it to him, then briefly wondered if he would see the same nothingness she did or something special like the specials did. "What's this?"

"You tell me," Allison said. She studied Jackson's face but saw no recognition and then he handed back the phone.
"See? Never got to the party. Never even got to her street," he forced the words between his teeth. "Didn't try to burn my ex's house down."

"No," she gave a sweet smile, "that was me. I bet you're sorry you missed out now."

"Really?" Jackson scoffed, he kept his laugh behind tight lips but smiled anyway. "Shame my car broke down."

"The car you drove Kira home in," Allison definitely sounded accusatory. "You know I can't exactly help you out if you're not telling me everything."

Jackson sucked in air through his teeth like a whistle and narrowed his gaze, "look, just because I'm amazingly photogenic doesn't mean every paparazzi picture you grab of me has magical properties."

After a thought, she scoffed. His defensive mechanisms were high which led her to believe she was onto something, he then lounged against the lockers beside her and didn't rush away. That was a sign of something, too. "Alright, alright, I didn't mean to offend you I was just wondering... I just feel like there's something else here. Something I'm not seeing that can help. Can I ask you something else?"

"I get the feeling I couldn't stop you if I wanted to," he smirked slightly.

"If you didn't want to go to Lydia's party, then did you end up there because you wanted to or because someone made you?" Allison kept voice direct and eyes steady.

For a moment Jackson's eyes seemed to cloud over, like the question did not compute and after stretching his neck, he exhaled loudly. As if the answer enough made him deflate from the pressure of it. "It's just a party. Everyone turns up at one of Lydia's parties. Everyone."

"Sure. So you went there to meet someone? Did someone send you there to meet--?" She put a hand on his arm in understanding.

"No, Jesus. Can't I just go to a party?" He lifted his head, glancing up and down the hallway, from World History on one end to English on the other end, with teachers urging students to 'run along' to class. Allison had a good suspicion of how to read the gesture.

"But you didn't get to the party. It looks like you stopped to perform animal control," Allison blinked a few times, then her shoulders and everything deflated. Jackson's frown softened a bit, he gave her statement a long hard think.

"What are you talking about?" he forced himself to continue.

"Are you talking about the Coyote? That thing was amazing," Kira answered for him, interrupting as she walked in the opposite direction on her way to Music. She crossed over the intersection of students as if she were magnetized by their conversation, not that Allison or Jackson could cut her out at that point.

"Big deal," Jackson shrugged, looking sullen and stepped away out of their sphere. "She shouldn't have been there to begin with."

"I mean, she wasn't just some urban Coyote. He couldn't just abandon her." Kira cast him a worried look as she explained to Allison.

"No, that doesn't seem to be his way." Allison hugged her books to her chest, her decision to
question him had been an impulse and she needed time to calculate its worth.

Kira nodded at Jackson, then Allison gave them an appraising eye. She thought Jackson might make a more epithetical point. Instead he walked out. Just like that.

Along their way as she insisted on walking Kira to class, as she explained the real reason for her turning up, Allison took that into consideration of her investigation. There were a lot of things Allison began to put together in her evidence file about Jackson v Kanima and his selective 'hero-ing' was a calculated detail. Not to mention his squirreliness, his whole 'cool-guy' façade shattered to bits for fear of answering a few question on the northwest side of the school, on the first floor. He calmed a little when Kira turned up to answer for him but not enough to stick around. Her other questions, more significant questions would have to wait until she could catch Jackson well away from there.

Track 20 - Bloodflows by SOHN

{Monday; Noon -- Chemistry Classroom, BHHS}

"Hey, you made it to school," Stiles slid onto a stool beside Lydia. She looked up blinking, displaying little, if any, emotional reaction in her face.

"Hey, you made it back at all," she said, with that she turned back to her notes. Stiles felt like someone turned a cold faucet on over his head.

"I just meant--"

"It doesn't matter what you meant, sweetheart." She barely glanced over her shoulder and flicked a pen in his general direction, showing him where he should go. "It matters what you have to offer and today we're seated by assigned stations. Maybe you should move back with the rest of the basics."

Nearby students already used to Lydia's nastiness laughed at his expense. Too stunned to reply, Stiles clumsily collected his things and let Sydney have her assigned seat.

"Stiles. Stiles!" Scott waved him over into their row at the back, his exaggerated arms flailing to prevent him from stumbling backward. "Don't take it to heart man. She gets like this."

Unblinking, he dropped into the seat beside Scott and behind Isaac. And when he noticed Isaac sniggering, he mock laughed. "Hey Isaac, ha-ha, shut up." Then took a swipe at his head with a notebook.

Further to the right, seated in front of Scott he could hear Allison, making shushing noises, swiping at the air as though it would calm them. But he was too busy seeing red to hear much until Mr. Harris went on some embittered rant about the permanence of stupidity and death. Stiles snorted at that, showed how much he knew. The guy was obviously was really ignorant about death.

When class was further underway Allison leaned over, asked in a whisper toward Scott if he had any clue why Erica would be so interested in him. When he shrugged in reply Allison's brow raised in amusement. "Could you ask Stiles?" she intended to ask of him, but didn't laugh. Ah, well that made more sense. Scott turned to whisper over to Stiles who had begun to highlight passages of the textbook he found daunting, that is to say two thirds of the page.
"Hey, Stiles, do you know why Erica is interested in me?"

"Well," he said without looking up, sounding marbled mouthed with a marker cap hanging out of the side of his mouth like a cigar, "she did say you looked 'hot.'"

"Hot?" Scott blinked in surprise.

"Yeah," Stiles paused, leaning back in his chair he glanced over and removed the marker cap. "Not the descriptive I'd use. Smoldering, maybe? Possibly, sexdorable."

"That's not-- aw, thanks dude."

"Anytime man," Stiles gave him a pat on the shoulder, a quick grin and went back to the textbook.

With a grin Scott turned to face forward but found Allison waiting expectantly for an answer, and remembered the task. "No, wait, Stiles. I meant, you said Erica stalked me."

Sighing Stiles put down the textbook, "that makes a lot more sense, in this context. Nope, she didn't say."

Isaac yawned, widely and at a stretch he dropped a rolled up ball of paper that bounced off Stiles' desk and Scott caught before it hit the floor. When he looked at it in confusion, Allison gestured for them to hand it over. "It just says, 'Scott's different'."

They looked to each other in confusion, and Allison rolled her eyes, "Come on. Guys, how long did you think it would stay our secret. Oh, don't even look at me like that, Lahey. This was one secret I didn't even spill."

"Stiles?" Scott seemed the more concerned with the blank expression on his best-friend's face.

"It's nothing, just a feeling." Then he smiled, before ducking his head down low behind his book so Mr. Harris' glare couldn't catch him catching. "If every pack is looking to add numbers to their ranks, wouldn't it be easier add someone unattached? Scott's looking very attractive in that department. In fact, he's looking pretty hot."

"And he's been getting stronger on his own over time," Allison whisper-hissed to Stiles over the distance, leaning nearly over Scott's lap.

"Not exactly on my own." Scratching at the back of his neck with one hand, Scott looked down and away while delicately settling Allison back into her seat.

"Did she say--" Stiles leaned forward, he nearly entirely ignoring the grunting discomfort of the freezing metal counter between them. Stiles grabbed at Isaac's jacket sleeve and almost made him fall backward. "Isaac, do you think that's why she came back for you?"

"Because she wouldn't have just come back--" Isaac grumbled, loudly and flung Stiles off of him.

"Neither did you," Isaac replied angrily, getting onto his feet and turning to engage, ignoring the counter between them. The room around them went hushed with surprise not seeing the escalation or understanding at all the context.

"Oh, and who wouldn't want to join 'Team Good'!" Lydia commented wryly, continuing to face
forward as she did her work.

Whatever it was Mr. Harris said next, it was hardly his threats that put an end to their upset but rather her criticism of their small-mindedness. To keep the peace, Mr. Harris switched Sydney and Isaac’s seat, and Stiles’ seat with Allison’s.

Isaac waited until a lull before whispering to Lydia, "Do you really think that?"

"That Gold is the least reactive of metals? It's shocking but true," Lydia said it slow and dripping with sarcasm, choosing classwork over drama.

"No, I mean before everything you said about choosing sides--" while Isaac thought he was whispering, and maybe he had been he probably forgot everyone he wished to keep from overhearing him had super-hearing, excepting the Hunter sitting right behind him. And the one sitting right beside him was the only one not wanting to hear any of it.

With a harsh exhale through her nostrils, Lydia put down her pencil heavily and glared over at him. Her eyes were bright and penetrating but she thought through her words and said quietly, "stop listening to them. You have got to figure it out for yourselves. Hiding in each other’s shadows is what's keeping you where you are while everyone else is in flux."

Pretending to clear her throat, with a delicate out breath Allison said over toward them low, "if you're in flux, then where is the security of knowing where you stand?" Lydia and Isaac looked at her, then each other.

There seemed a little disconnect and Lydia shook her head, flicking her hair over her shoulder she faced forward and said sharply back, "being in flux refers to the metals that surface and doesn't sink, Allison."

Pacing through the desk to see that they were paying attention Mr. Harris caught the comment and seemed pleased to interrupt with the correction, inferring a question about Flux -- "what sinks but doesn't swim?"

Displeased with the attention, Lydia pursed her lips, laced her fingers tightly and answered "Flux, or Metallurgy is the process of refining metal by combining it with impurities so it's easier to make into a molten mixture."

To which Stiles scoffed and added "a definition which is not at all symbolic."

To which Isaac sardonically added "and a symbolism which is not literal, otherwise we're going to have to start looking very close at what impurities means."

Track 21 - The Lightning Strike (What If This Storm Ends) by Snow Patrol

(Monday; Afternoon - Library instead of Lunch & English/Integrated Algebra respectively, BHHS)

After Chemistry class went off with a bang (no pun intended), it wasn't as hard as they thought to get Isaac to come over to listen to Allison's supposition.

Stiles sat opposite, doing his best James Dean impersonation throughout, while Allison tried her best to present the facts without seeming too teacher-y in the scholastic setting.
"We probably shouldn't have picked Lydia's favorite table if we really didn't want to run into her," Isaac said when they finally asked his opinion.

Stiles scoffed loud enough to garnish them some glares. Sighing Scott explained, "Lydia is trying to avoid us, because of that she will be avoiding any place she thinks we'll think of looking for her."

"But that isn't really an answer to what you think about this," Allison braved re-asking. Exploring Derek's murder further, well it felt like it needed to be an 'all-in' venture with or without Erica's assistance.

"Why?" Isaac leaned forward onto his elbows and brought himself nearly halfway across the table. "This one will do whatever she wants with or without our permission like the rest of her family. That one thinks he has the right to speak on behalf of my entire childhood and this guy here, nothing touches him. So, what's this got to do with me?"

Scott had his hand restraining Stiles' arm before he could rise to stand, and calmly corrected Isaac, "it's got everything to do with you. If you tell us not to, we'll find some other way of figuring it out--"

"Although that'd be idiotic--"

"Even if we think this might be the most straightforward," Allison corrected Stiles, her voice like a much needed balm to his barbs.

"And if you really don't care, if we go on but we do it, we figured let you know we're going to try out of respect because he's your... he's family," Scott smiled and lowered his voice, hoping Stiles would follow in suit. And after a pause, looking at Stiles and waiting for a reply, when none came he added with a sigh, "and we think Erica should know, too."

Isaac gave a crooked smile of disbelief. "No, you don't. Stiles?"

They held a glare that warned of oncoming storms, and after digging his nails into his biceps Stiles gave a nod.

Isaac gulped thickly, and glanced around the table before giving it a little more thought. "Yeah? If you really wanted everyone's input, where is Lydia?"

"She doesn't want to be here anymore," Scott said, sighing quietly. Stiles sat upright, his and Isaac's eyes shot over to him in surprise.

"She can't mean that." Stiles laughed a humorless laugh and looked to Allison for confirmation. Her expression was pitiable and said he should have seen this coming.

Making a steeple of his hands, Isaac leaned his chin on the tops of his fingers. "So, if I walked away, too... but what you really want me to do is bring this to Erica, isn't it?" he eyed Scott mindfully and then side-eyed Allison a little more ruefully. "Yeah. I'm in," he smiled briefly, shoved his chair out from beneath him and stood abruptly with a scraping sound.

On his way out, Isaac put a hand on Stiles' shoulder and gave it a sympathetic squeeze that he barely registered, only closed his eyes like it hurt to feel. Once someone else began to talk, Stiles jumped to stand and made an excuse of being late to class despite the fact that he'd already intentionally missed half of it.
Track 22 - Smile by Mikky Ekko

{Monday; Afternoon -- Economics, BHHS}

There was a gem of a moment while stationed in the brain numbing class of Econ with the Coach (and would-be teacher) that he sat one seat behind the fit creature that was Danny Māhealani. From what had been reported, this godsend of a man was a key witness to all things the Alpha Twin related. Stiles scooted his seat forward once, then again to the obvious notice of his classmate.

"Heey," Stiles said in an attempt at causality and Danny strained at nicety by humoring him with a head tilt. "So, we didn't get a chance to catch up at the party."

"No. No we didn't." Danny barely registered him and stayed married to his classwork. Stiles respected that. Sometimes, just not right now.

"Stiles," he introduced himself and leaned further over his desktop thrusting his hand out for a hearty-handshake.

"Everyone knows who you are," he sighed, glanced toward Stiles, while this was progress and he followed it up with an "I'm Danny." He didn't shake hands, and he had a tight expression, confused to think that he and Stiles even spoke the same language.

"Cool, very cool." Stiles withdrew his hand and dropped back grinning into his seat when the Coach looked in his general direction. He gave a wave and a wink like he had any clue as to the numbers and lines of hieroglyph the Coach drew across the blackboard. "So, the party, do you throw blowouts like that often?"

"Not exactly like that." Danny broke character and smirked at the memory of Saturday night's mayhem. "But I guess."

"You're like known for them, right. If I were to ask for you to help arrange a coming out party for me-- I don't mean, I mean like a home coming-- I mean like a welcome home-- you know."

"Yeah, I guess I could help. If you foot the bill, we could arrange something," he shifted a bit further back in his seat.

"We?" with a seemingly slow suggestiveness Stiles reminded the point of his real inquisition, "Your boyfriend, he helps you set up?"

"Sure." Danny said stretching his neck and Stiles heard him breathe deeply, like there was some extra consideration going on under those neatly combed backed dark locks of his.

"I've seen him around," Stiles pursed his lips, beat his pencil on the edge of his desk and tapped his Nikes against the foot of his chair in an attempt to look chill. "But he doesn't go here though. Where'd you two meet?"

"Ethan and I met after doing some suicide runs with the team, over by the high trails behind the college," it seemed like he deliberated mostly with himself, not exactly reflecting but trying to figure what Stiles tried to figure out.

"Cute," Stiles added flippantly sounding a little rushed and only mildly sincere, "so you were like all tired and running through, what the high hills? Or like exhausted and at the bottom slopes and he was there?"
"Dude, we're not swingers," Danny sat forward and reached for the handout being passed around, grabbed one and sent the stack along.

"What?" Stiles sat upright, his voice hit a bright pitch that upset his seat and unsettled his desk. He grinned again when the Coach glared, and ducked low to avoid any continued eye contact. "No, I was just trying to figure out-- with the paths--" he tried desperately to repair the damage, and on second thought, "wait, do you not find me attractive? Danny?" Stiles hissed in whisper, half demanding and pleading but practically toppling from his seat.

Already off in a different world, the rest of the students, Danny included, hunched over the lecture questionnaire Coach handed around, completely ignoring the fact that exams were last week and the kids deserved a break.

Track 23 - Zephyrus (Holy Fuck Remix) by Bloc Party

{Monday; Afternoon -- locker room, PE, BHHS}

"You haven't really talked to Isaac since you've gotten to school?" Scott didn't sound nearly as surprised as the question posed.

Shrugging mostly toward his newly assigned locker, Stiles continued to mutter his combination. "This thing is a sphinx. A rubix cube monolith, for god's sake, openopenopen or I'm going to-- AHAH!" He swung the door open with a loud flourish, "I'm amazing. Oh my god, that smell is amazing, who killed death in there? It's rancid."

"Stiles," Scott smiled while sighing, and finished yanking on his gym T-shirt. "You can't avoid this forever. Your Dad is going to ask. My Mom-- people, people are going to ask you."

"Whyyyy?"

"Because you're his brother, don't you want to know how he's doing?"

Stiles huffed in amusement. "Drop it. If there was a problem, we'd know. We wouldn't be able to shut the drama queen up. Help, I'm dying! Egads, a Banshee is creeping on me! Oh, no the big bad Hunters have got me, waa-waa..." he finished while fighting with his change of clothes, each upset making him more tangled. Mostly changed but with his arm stabbed through the neck hole of his T-shirt Stiles dropped onto the bench and glared up at Scott.

"Look, if Isaac had anything he wanted me to know, he knows where to find me. I haven't moved since he's lived there."

"Okay," said Scott, leaning on his locker door. He closed it gingerly and then gave it a kinder thought, "but it's not him I'm worried about. If there's something you want to tell him Stiles, or if you wanted to go and tell Erica, no one would judge you. But you should get it off your chest before it becomes--"

"I've got it," Stiles got to his feet quickly, he stood on par with Scott and stared fiercely into those dark eyes. Stiles eyes were challenging and although he didn't yell or scream, his tone stayed low he left no room for argument, "I heard you loud and clear. If you were me, you'd know exactly how to fix my messed up little family."
Scott opened his mouth but said nothing, he struggled against the crawling sensation moving over his skin. He stood his ground against the growling sounds of warning rumbling in the back of his head.

"I know you mean well but," Stiles shut his eyes and exhaled long and slow, "It's not like anything before. Isaac's not murdered, kidnapped or going off on a joyride to prove a point. He is leaving." And when he opened his eyes, he released his hold on his locker door's latch, he'd crushed it. When Scott reached to help close the door and Stiles snapped at him to just leave it.

It was a grief revisited from the Argents’ study, the phantom limb pangs for a brother while he stood on the sidelines. Finding Erica should have meant the opposite of this; everyone should have understood that keenly and groaning Stiles wiped at his face.

"I'm okay. I'll take it under advisement, alright," he tried to smile and stepped out of Scott's reach, once and then once more. "Tell the Coach, tell him something..." with that he snatched his backpack out of the broken locker and left.

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**Track 24 - The Warden by Chelsea Wolfe**

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*Monday; Afternoon -- Student Parking/Lacrosse field, BHHS*

After getting persistent, suggestive texts all afternoon, Lydia was happy to call it quits on the school day early. Escapism stood only one door and one bike ride away. But the moment she passed through the exit closest to student parking and saw Scott's bike instead of Aiden's her stomach lurched. Clutching tight her phone instead, she tried to make out how or why Aiden wouldn't meet her out back but there was something about Scott's bike that set off red flags.

"Excuse me, do you happen to know where I can find the puppy-eyed brunette that goes along with my ride?" Erica said with a curl to her red lips. In her tiny leather jacket, brow-grey jeans torn up and dusted over for all their wear, she leaned against the school door behind Lydia after she sealed of any escape.

Spinning around to face her, Lydia remembered Scott's grounding, Scott's perpetual grounding and Isaac arriving at school on that bike this other girl hanging off of it. The second that realization came, she shoved her iPhone in her purse and understood, if Scott's bike was the only one in sight than Aiden hadn't texted and Erica had to have his phone. Logic dictates Erica had to have done something to Aiden, something bad.

"No, but you should probably be more concerned with where to find a makeover consultant for your whole asphalt deal," Lydia ground down her heels, crossed her arms and ignored the bitter whipping breeze that snapped at her hair, bag and coat. Unlike everyone else in school today, Lydia hadn't asked for this confrontation but she wouldn't run from it either.

Scoffing, Erica shoved off from the wall and admired the scent of adrenaline and anger Lydia gave off. No fear at all. Not even when they stood nose-to-nose. Erica studied Lydia's face for a good long moment, admiring it in good humor and then chuckling as she stepped back.

"Well, I'm just a little worse for the wear, something I think you know a lot about," Erica's smile could have been misinterpreted as lecherous or aggressive but Lydia saw something else behind those eyes.
It made her breathing speed up and her mind raced. Still she snapped, "My last boyfriend was a homicidal lizard. If you're trying to intimidate me, you're going to have to do a lot better than that."

"Me? Intimidate you?" Erica looked flabbergasted, her brows knit as she struggled to convey the relevance of their working relationship. She grabbed hold of Lydia by the shoulder, then ran her hand down until held one narrow wrist. Lydia wriggled to get out of her grip but Erica held her fast and pulled her up closer, to whisper quietly, "it must be terrifying to be you..."

"Get your hands off her," said a familiar voice in unfamiliar gnashing tones.

Erica swung around toward the door where Stiles appeared, dressed in gym clothes, his backpack dropped to his feet and his face a hard expression of warning.

"I'm fine," Lydia snapped thanklessly at Stiles while rubbing her wrist. "I had it handled."

"See," Erica gestured at Lydia with a little flourish, "we're fine."

"I said that Lydia was off--" Stiles started while stomping over than thinking better of it, dread silenced him while Lydia caught his words.

"You said what about me?"

After watching him squirm for a millisecond, going from Gung-Ho one second to 'Ruh-Roh' the next was priceless. Erica had missed that about him.

"He said that you would wear the ring," Erica lied and it took a moment for Stiles to catch up. Erica was too good at bullshit sometimes, Stiles hadn't missed that about her. But it worked because something struck a defensive chord with Lydia, he could tell from the way she cradled her hand. On her left, dominant hand was a band of topaz and pearl, resting securely on the ring finger.

"I told him you wouldn't bother. Guess I was wrong, and he knows you better than I thought, even after all these years," Erica gave it an exaggerated shrug.

Even if Lydia knew it was a diversion it unsettled her, so she aimed herself home instead. "Just give me the keys." When they stared at her in dumb suspense she waved that same hand toward them, "to Scott's bike."

With a chuckled, Erica rummaged slowly through her jacket pocket and glanced back and forth between them both. Stiles groaned, squeezing his eyes shut for a moment to relieve the pressure between his ears. Lydia glared, snatched the keys from Erica's grasp and looked at them critically.

"There had better be a full tank," she said stiffly and walked away without looking back.

They watched her leave through the double doors, the wind slammed them with a thunderous finality. Immediately afterward Stiles turned to glare daggers at Erica, "What the hell did you do that for?"

"What? Now, she's angrier at me than at you," she tucked her thumbs into the loops of her jeans, turned toward the woods and tilted her head so that he might follow. Hesitating, Stiles looked back toward the school and Erica started to grin. "That wasn't a freebie, now you owe me one. Come for a walk."

Track 25 - Waiting Game by BANKS
"I'm freezing," Stiles muttered bitterly, climbing behind Erica through the brambles. His gym attire left little safeguards from the elements. "How far out are we going?"

"So that no one can hear the screams..." her voice went willowy.

Stiles stopped dead in his tracks, "What? Really?"

"No," she laughed and pointed toward the equipment shed with the broken lock. Then climbed out of the bushes and sprinted across the way, under the benches. "If we go the long way around instead of across the lacrosse field we have less of a chance of being seen. Plus, it's fun."

"I'm bleeding," Stiles said as he closed the door.

"Oh, you'll heal," Erica snorted while she set down her phone above them to reflect light all around the room. "Alone, just the two of us. Now for the awkward silence to begin."

"Oh, it'll be awkward but anything but silent," Stiles said accusatorially then recanted, "not like in a perv way so don't give me that look."

Erica shrugged, sat on the edge of folded aluminum benches and looked down over him benignly in the incandescent light. It became difficult to be mad at her suddenly when he became reminded how recently she had returned to him from the dead.

"Tell me something," he sighed and moved to stand beside her, facing away from her.

"Like what?"

"Anything. I've spent so much time thinking the worst things happened to you, I feel like anything else can't be half as bad. I know I'm wrong, but--"

Laughing she kicked her feet a little and then bemoaned his self-pitying. "Bad things happened to you, too. How come you don't want to talk about that?"

Stiles glanced up at her, his dark eyes felt watery and he blamed the difficult light, "because I'm fine now."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

"With your new school, your best friends and your Dad... your new dirty gym clothes."

"Yeah, all that."

"Good," she leaned back and away from him. She sighed deep, and tried to sound sincere "I hope it's everything you dreamed of, everything you pined for."

Immediately he turned around to face her, he had enough of this drama when leaving Red River the first and second time, he didn't need it from Erica.

"What is so wrong about wanting my family back?"
"Nothing," she sniffed, and wiped at her nose with the back of her hand. "I just wished for a minute you looked us, at me, the way you look at them. It doesn't matter anyway."

Looking lost and feeling out of his element, Stiles hands fluttered through the air unsure of how to bring comfort. "What are you talking about, of course it matters."

"No. It's okay, I'm fine now, too." She insisted, she swayed back and forth slightly with the crossing and uncrossing of her ankles. "Things are different now. I've been hunting, with a capital H."

"What does that mean?" Stiles gave her a stern appraising look. That brotherly one he trained years for.

"We've been calling it an Anomaly," Erica smirked, a little amusement piqued in her voice. "You guys have been calling it a Monster-Alpha, which by the way I would have thought you'd have come up with a cleverer nickname than that."

"Wha-- Erica, what do you mean?" Stiles' voice spiked with concern, he jumped forward without thinking and very nearly grabbed hold of her face. Very nearly. "You can't hunt that thing on your own."

"Reiaka does." She said with flat finality, unamused by his assertive possessiveness. Stiles edged back at that. "Someone's got to. You didn't really think 'Erica' would just sign up to a Werewolf army and join a war, did you?"

"I didn't know what to think. I didn't have time to think."

"Liar." She scoffed, rolling her eyes with a sigh. "You spend so much more time thinking than doing. They're banking on that. Because there are armies and they are recruiting. You know this county is getting crowded with more Packs every day. Pelt's Pack turned up, who are now led by a pair of completely, unreasonably hostile Twins. Satomi won't be too far behind. It's going to be a blood bath but if you remember it started with the murdered Betas." She held up a finger and brought it near to between Stiles eyes for emphasis. "It's always been about the first murderers. It's been about 'the Packs'. Not about the Packs or what they're doing."

"Are you trying to help me?" Stiles asked, his face screwed like he tried to withhold a sneeze. "Are you off playing Nancy Drew?" she said with a still face after a lengthy torturous pause.

"Your quips. Are cruel." Stiles stood further upright and faced her, shaking his head back into focus he asked, "What the hell do you mean? Anomaly?"

"Anomaly." She shrugged. When Stiles waved for her to continue, she added with a tasked groan, "Abomination. Hybrid. Whatever you want to call it, it's something that's supposed to be cleaned up by their own pack. But this bastard hasn't got a pack. Remind you of anyone?"

"Don't." Stiles said with an unexpected rawness to his voice...

"It's just an unhappy coincidence." Erica pressed her lips together, her brows pinched together in thought. "He's not ringing any 'monster' alarms for me anyway. Hell, Scott practically raised Isaac from the dead."

"Are you looking for the Anomaly at the school?" Stiles voice settled and became very even.

"We both know It's been here, but that's not why I'm here." Running her fingers through the hair
over her left shoulder, she shook out splinters and indecipherable debris, glowering in thought as she did so. After a still moment, she looked up and the fear read clear in her eyes, "It's not safe to be a bystander anymore. The Packs are going to try to pick you apart if the Anomaly doesn't."

There was a frozen moment between them as across the field the period bell rang and the two of them listened to children panic toward freedom.

"That's it." Stiles flung out a hand, like he could smack at words in the air. "That's your pitch. Did you know Derek didn't die by those captors?"

"That doesn't matter now." She stared at him patiently, her expression said she wished could be anywhere else but there. "Derek doesn't matter now."

"Well, the guys will be happy to know you said that," Stiles snorted in amusement. Erica's brow quirked at that. "It can't not matter to you. Think about it, aren't you curious to know what did happen since the Monster-Alpha didn't kill him either." Stiles voice rose, ricocheting in the small space. "There are more murderers, more conspirers at this trying to get us at each other's throats."

"Derek was killed because he let himself become a bystander," she said low, glaring as she leaned forward.

"Derek sacrificed himself so that Cora can live." He hissed back, staring hard and leaning in.

"Cora's... alive." Swallowing hard, Erica sat up and clung to the edge of her seat. Sensing his hostility, she hopped down from the ledge. "You can't tell me something like that, and then you can't just expect me to stay out of action."

"I know, I know what that feels like but it's just going to get you blown up or worse--"

"That's because you're alone." Erica snarled, feeling as though a vortex were about to open up inside of her.

"But we've been reunited. Now, it can be different..." when he tried to reach for her it looked as though she would lunge for him, her claws were out and eyes alight.

"No." She stepped around him slowly, clipping his shoulder as she did so. It hardly mattered, their hearts ached more than their shoulders anyway. At the door, she swung around and leaned on the doorframe, her hand on the handle while she hooked the heel of her boot onto a wedge. She didn't owe him an explanation, especially because he knew this always but she wanted to say it out loud to hear it admitted. "Being without an Alpha was like being lost in the dark and I can't live like that again."

Stiles nodded, even if he didn't agree. "Even if you don't love your new Alpha."

"Oh it's definitely easier if I don't love him. No one is coming out of this war intact." Erica predicated with a grinning purr and then kicked open the door and tilted her head for him to follow her out.

Chapter End Notes

CREDITS;
Argents - Team1; Victoria, Chris & Allison.
- Rumy - [Sgt] Recon; Special Forces & espionage. Chris' right-hand & Allison's godfather.
- Axel - [1st Lt] expert tracker, marksman & Allison's 2nd cousin.
- Bennett - [Field OFC] Technical Intelligence, 19yrs. old & Allison's friend.
- Ulrich - [Field OFC] Recon; Civil-Orientation.

Argents - Team2; Kate.
- Livy - [1st Lt] Recon; Force-Orientation & close-combat expert with above average weapons training. Kate's closest friend.
- Tyhurst - [Lt] Recon; Civil-Orientation, Cyberwarefare, has CIA background. Referred to as 'try-hard.'
- Norm - [Sgt] specialty in Medical Intelligence & as an archer/longbow. JR's brother & Roman's Uncle.
- Fry - [Field OFC] specialty as a Tactician.

Argents - Team3; Gerard.

Hale (Present Day) Pack; Derek Alpha
- Stiles - bitten [Omega] returned to BH & reconcile his family(s).
- Isaac - bitten [Omega] taking refuge in BH.
- Erica - bitten [Beta] refuge w/ Deucalion's pack.
- Boyd - (missing) [Beta] ?
- Cora - (missing) [Beta] possibly held hostage. *Ch16

Hale (Heyday) Pack; Talia Alpha
- Peter - [Beta] Talia's brother, Uncle to Derek, Laura & Cora.
- Laura (17yrs) - [Beta] was last seen struggling to pull survivors from the Hale House fire.
- Derek (15yrs) - [Beta] pulled from the flames by sister Laura & ushered to safety by their emissary.—next seen, dead in Preserve *Ch16

Other Specials
- Braeden - [Mercenary] Former U.S. Marshal, freelanced after becoming personally invested in supernatural cases. *Ch22
- Lydia - [Banshee] ’A Banshee screams preceding a supernatural death not as a premonition but to highlight the likelihood of supernatural events that result in deaths.’ *Ch8
- Jennifer Blake - [Kanima's Master] *Ch20
- Kira - [Kitsune] "There hasn't been a documented case of a fledgling Kitsune..."
(manifesting attributes) this powerful, to carry a thunderstorm in her back pocket on a whim. Not in a hundred thousand years."

**Twins' Pack; Aiden & Ethan Carver Alphas**
- Marta - [Beta] Feisty old lady, motor head. #2
- Bridy - [Beta] Older than she looks, because she's easily underestimated she makes good spy.
- Gus - [Beta] loyal highly skilled fighter with a tendency toward the psychotic.
- (missing) Luna - [Beta] a full Shapeshifter, partnered to Naylor.
- (missing) Naylor - [Omega] partnered to Luna.
- (deceased) Deb - [Omega] former Alpha, killed by the Monster.
- (deceased) Coot - [Omega] Deb's partner & killed by the Monster.

**Kali's Pack; Kali Alpha**
- (missing) Marsten - [Beta] hot-headed #2 & thief/tradesman & held captive in Fairvale.
- Lark - [Beta] cousin to Kali & closely bonded to Huntington.
- (captive) Huntington - [Beta] Friends w/Gus & partner to Lark, kidnapped by Deucalion *Ch21
- (captive) Santos - [Beta] Stern mentor, kidnapped by Deucalion *Ch21
- Levi - [Beta] neurotic mostly but has some anger issues.
- (deceased) Ginger - [Beta] strong-willed & romantically associated to Aiden.

**Ennis' Pack; Ennis Alpha**
- (captive) Herveaux - [Beta] Ennis' #2, genderfluid, Werelynx -- kidnapped by Deucalion *Ch21.
- (deceased) Dr. Kane - [Omega] both a Doctor & their torturer. *Ch21
- (deceased) Quint - [Omega] eager to please teen & Dr. Kane's son. *Ch20

**Deucalion Pack; Deucalion Alpha**
- Søren - [Beta] #2, Danish man, a skilled negotiator until his temper is piqued.
- Jonsen - [Beta] she is Deucalion's partner.
- Nik - [Beta] thief in residence, Mac's daughter.
- Meyer - [Beta] Reíka's partner in crime.
- Reíka - [Beta] formerly missing, presumed dead, Erica of the Hale pack. *Ch23
- Lennie - [Omega] captor of Reíka/Erica during her missing season, Jonny's fiancé.
- Jonny - [Omega] captor of Reíka/Erica, Lennie's fiancé & Nik's half-brother.
- (deceased) Mac - [Beta] thief, the Monster's 1st victim.

**End Notes**

The tracks included are not a MUST listen to, they are "what I listened to" while writing. Chapter by Chapter playlist can be found http://8tracks.com/bhanesidhe/

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